

Holton, Waterperry & Waterstock News

DECEMBER 2024



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Holton, Waterperry & Waterstock News is delivered monthly and free-of-charge to all households in the three parishes, with additional copies left in the parish churches.

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We welcome letters, articles and announcements from individuals and organisations, but reserve the right to edit or to publish or not.

All copy must be received no later than the 18th of the month prior to publication and with its author's name attached - anonymous entries will not be considered.

The views expressed are not necessarily those of the Editor.

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December Church Services

December 1 st	9.30 St Leonard's Waterstock
December 8 th	11.00 St Bartholomew's Holton 4.00pm St Helen's Albury Christingle 6.00pm St Mary's Waterperry
December 15 th	9.30 St Helen's Albury 5.00pm St Leonard's Waterstock Carol Service
December 22 nd	9.30 St Helen's Albury 2.30pm St Mary's Waterperry Carol Service 5.00pm St Bartholomew's Holton Carol Service
December 24 th	6.00pm St Helen's Albury Carol Service
December 25 th	9.00 St Mary's Waterperry 10.15 St Leonard's Waterstock
December 29 th	Services in Wheatley
January 5 th	9.30 St Leonard's Waterstock 6.00pm St Helen's Albury Epiphany Carol Service



St Leonard's Waterstock

Flowers and cleaning rota

December 1st	A. Abdo
December 8th	A. Abdo
December 15th	W. Court
December 22nd	W. Court Xmas Day
December 29th	C. Tyce
January 5th	C. Tyce



St Mary's Waterperry

Flower rota

December 1st	Zena
December 8th	Susan Fonge
December 14th	Whole Flower Team at 10am
December 22nd	Jan
December 29th	Jacqui
January 5th	Rebecca



Letter from the Vicarage

Hello,

This is now my eighth December as your Vicar. I'm not sure if I feel eight years older than when I started but I'm aware that for many of us life has changed a lot in that time. I see this in what the church calls 'occasional offices' and what are more colloquially known as 'hatchings, matchings and dispatchings'. Children have become adults (even if their behaviour does not reflect that all the time!) and some have married, grandchildren have arrived, jobs have changed or retirement has started. We have received and given much good and love in these last eight years. However at the same time for some of us there has been the loss of loved ones that means our lives carry the weight of a hole where there was once a person who was a part of us.

The world around us has changed hugely as well and in most cases not for the better. We have faced a pandemic and climate change is no longer an academic subject but an increasing reality in many lives. And we have been appalled at the wars that have started and continue to show the evil that humanity is capable of. Governments have come and gone here and round the world but has the sum total of human happiness increased? Globally there are record numbers of refugees and displaced persons and record numbers who are victims of slavery in different ways.

I'm not trying to paint a bleak and pessimistic picture here, we are blessed to live in peaceful and caring communities and I'm sure most of us can, as I can, reflect on much joy and happiness as we prepare for Christmas and the arrival of another year. Most of December is the period of Advent. Advent is the first season of the church year so December is not the end of the year but the beginning of it, although you would be forgiven for thinking that the season started at the beginning of November if you look at the average supermarket and high street where the Halloween goods are replaced with Christmas ones without a break or pause.

And the reason that the church year starts with Advent is that it marks the preparation for the event that changed the human world more than any other in recorded history, the event that we celebrate at Christmas, the arrival of Jesus Christ. And in that preparation we are asked to reflect on who we are and how we relate to God and our 'neighbours' (Jesus defined a neighbour as anyone we encounter or have a relationship with). And that reflection of course, if are honest with ourselves, encompasses both the good and the bad in our lives, our successes and our failures. The festival of Christmas is a celebration of good news, the best of news, and Advent, which this year actually starts on the 1st December, can be the opportunity of a kind of personal deep clean before the VVIP guest arrives.

So as we reflect on the changes in our own lives and in the world we can prepare ourselves to align with and then celebrate that deep sense of permanence, joy and hope that Christmas offers, both in the moment of the festival and also throughout the months to come.

Stay blessed,

David
Rev David Bendor-Samuel
01865 872102,
dbendorsamuel@btinternet.com

Holton & Waterperry W.I.

Former Sandhills Primary and Wheatley Park School pupil, Dee O'Brien gave us a superb, professional talk on the life of a woman police officer at our November 4th meeting. Dee always knew she wanted to help people and began her career in nursing. Realising it was not for her she joined the Metropolitan Police in 2000, rising spectacularly through the ranks to her present role as chief inspector - and bringing up two daughters, one of whom has joined the police training scheme recently. She began by telling us that women have celebrated 100 years in the police force starting with the prosecution of the suffragettes. However, women are still under-represented. Dee has been a detective, worked in undercover surveillance and been involved in Grenfell. She emphasised the training and empathy needed when police have to deliver bad news. It was an enlightening talk, with Dee continuing to be very enthusiastic about her job.

Third time lucky for the walk and another one planned, meal to be arranged, and a talk in Beckley about Oxfordshire blue plaques to enjoy.

OFWI (Oxfordshire) run many courses which all WI members are entitled to attend - some in person and some online. There is a lot on offer.

Our 3rd December meeting will be our Christmas craft night with festive nibbles.

Barbara Martin

F.J.WILSON

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Holton Parish Council

Holton Parish Council website and emails

There is a new Parish Council website www.holtonoxford-pc.gov.uk and new Parish Council emails all now .gov.uk:

clerk@holtonoxford-pc.gov.uk

bpridmore@holtonoxford-pc.gov.uk

aeast@holtonoxford-pc.gov.uk

rbarter@holtonoxford-pc.gov.uk

amurray@holtonoxford-pc.gov.uk

The .gov.uk gives more security to emails and website and the new address will not get Holton Oxford confused with other Holtons in the country. We regularly get requests from residents of Holton Suffolk so there should be no confusion now.

Vacancy for a new Parish Councillor

Are you looking for a new challenge?

Do you want to make a positive difference?

Would you like to influence decisions that affect your community?

You will need to attend Parish Council meetings held once a month and spend some extra time on areas of specialism or interest.

You must be aged 18 or over, an elector and have been a resident or worked within 3 miles of the Parish for the past year. The position is unpaid

To express an interest or for more information, contact the Parish Clerk or any Parish Councillor on emails above.

Christmas Waste Collection Dates.

Normal collection day

Monday 30th December

Monday 6 January

Revised Collection Day

Tuesday 31st December

Tuesday 7th January

Hedge Cutting in Holton

We have appointed a new contractor for mowing the verges and another service they offer is hedge cutting using a tractor and hedge cutting arm. This is only suitable for field hedges not well-kept garden hedges, I think. But if there is sufficient interest from land owners with country style hedges then we might be able to arrange a visit from the tractor. We need to keep overhanging hedges in check and it is the owner's responsibility to carry out this work.

If there is any interest please let the Parish Council know, any work will have to be carried out by February 2025.

The next Parish Council Meeting will be held on Monday 9th December 2024 starting at 7.00 pm In Holton Village Hall Committee Room.

Agendas will be on the village notice boards and Parish Council website.

Contact details below.

Clerk to Holton Parish Council (Sonja Barter) Home Farm House, Holton, Oxford OX33 1QA

Email: clerk@holtonoxford-pc.gov.uk

Tel: 01865 872334



A great place to grow

Merry Christmas from The Maple Tree!

Join us for a play session with your little one this winter. We are open every weekday – the heat and kettle are always on!

Here are some dates for your diary;

6th December - Wreath-making with Becky

7th December – Christmas Tree collection event

20th December - Christmas Disco

Mondays: Messy Mondays at 10:00-11:30am and Twinnies at 2:00-4:00pm

Tuesdays: Once Upon a Rhyme-Time at 10:00-11:30am and Celebrating Sounds at 1:00-3:30pm (ideal if you need an afternoon session for your little one before school pick-up!)

Wednesdays: Baby Cafe at 9:30am-12:00pm

Thursdays: Little Explorers at 10:00-11:30am and The Maple Tree at Forest Hill Village Hall from 10:30am-12:00pm.

Little Chatterboxes at 10:00-11:30am

Family Fun at 10:00-11:30am, 3rd Saturday of each month

Have you seen our Maple Tree Wish List in our entrance or on Facebook? Many thanks to Helen, Julia and James, Neil, Linda and Chloe who have donated essential items to help us keep our sessions running!

We still need volunteers, a trustee or two and a small group of parents and carers who would like to help with fundraising events. The Maple Tree needs £100k to keep going each year!

Check out our Website and Facebook page for more details about our programme and special events. For details, please go to www.mapletree.org.uk

Please also have a look at our Maple Tree Market page on Facebook or just come to The Maple Tree for a browse! We have some wonderful children's clothes, baby essentials, toys, and games available. This aids the environment by recycling, helps families during these difficult financial times and helps to sustain our charity when families are able to make a small donation.

We are here to help if you need advice or support: 01865 236700 or 07849 466249.

Email: info@mapletree.org.uk

Website: www.mapletree.org.uk

Facebook: www.facebook.com/TheMapleTreeWheatley Instagram: @themapletreecentre

Laura Spencer , The Maple Tree Centre Manager



Holton Christmas Bring and Take
Sunday 8th December 10am – 1 pm

As I write this a carpet of snow blankets the ground. It is that time of year again. My better half suggests we should throw open the curtains, let in the light and seize the day. My daughter is pulling strings of tinsel from boxes and demanding we begin the Yuletide celebrations.

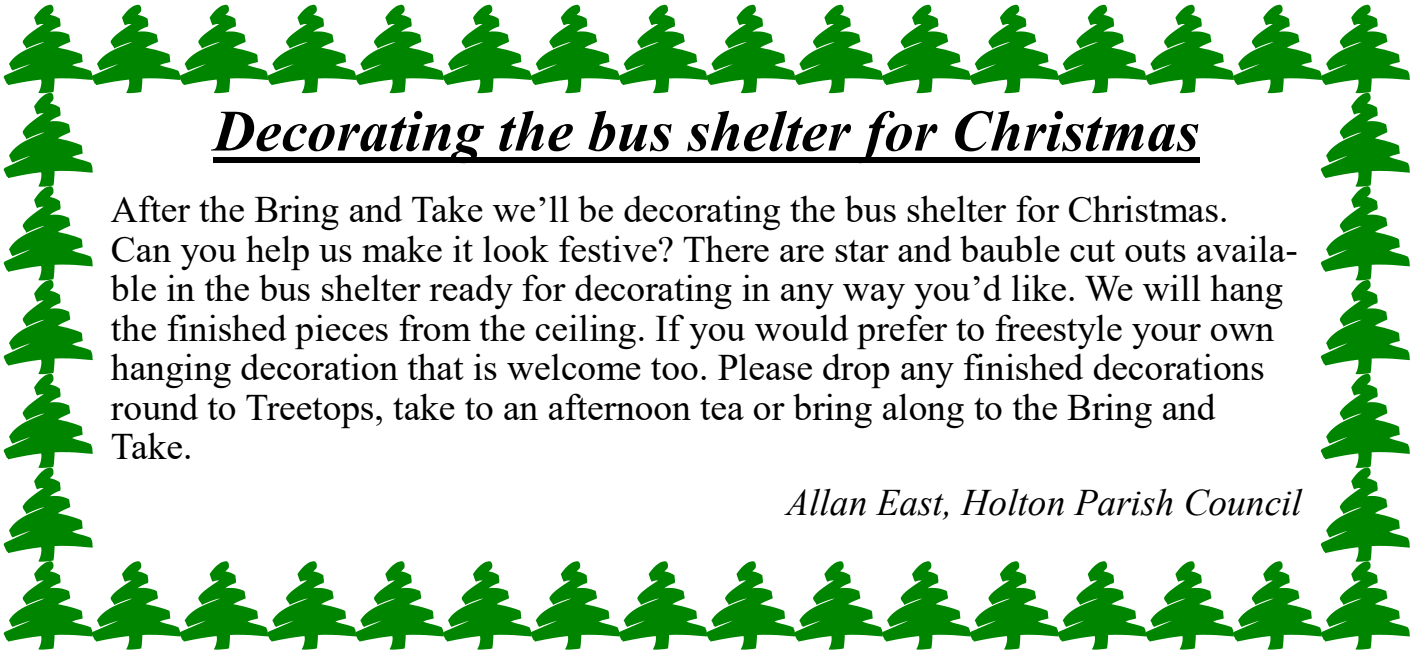
The trouble with Christmas isn't over-consuming food and drink or receiving surprising and well-meaning presents but the jobs that are so closely associated with it. A trip to the attic is destined never to go well. Why I put the tree lights and baubles in the far corner behind the broken highchair, rocking horse and two rolls of unused insulation is anyone's guess. And this is just the start. There is an advent window to construct, a Christmas tree to be ordered from the MapleTree website, a quiz team to find and, most important of all, a Christmas Bus Shelter Bring and Take to go to!

Remember, Sunday 8th December, 10am until 1pm. This is a chance to bring along and swap any good quality Christmas items, plants, produce, toys, games, puzzles, books and DVDs. If you have any unwanted (new) gifts from previous birthdays and Christmas that need discreet disposal then this is also the place for you. Part rolls of wrapping paper and part packs of cards welcome. Please don't bring any general items to this one. Check out in advance if you aren't sure. If you want to leave items before 10am on Sunday please bring to Treetops (near The Green).

Even if you have nothing to swap do pop down for a browse and a chat. There will be a Christmas theme to it all – some dodgy lights and tinsel from the loft, mulled wine and hot chocolate and some festive treats to nibble on.

We will have a cash collection tin to raise funds for Shelter. We will also have a box for donations to Thame Foodbank. They have a food list including items such as UHT milk, breakfast cereal, tinned soups, meats and vegetables and packets of rice. If you want you can find out more at: <https://www.sharinglifetrust.org/foodbank-detail>.

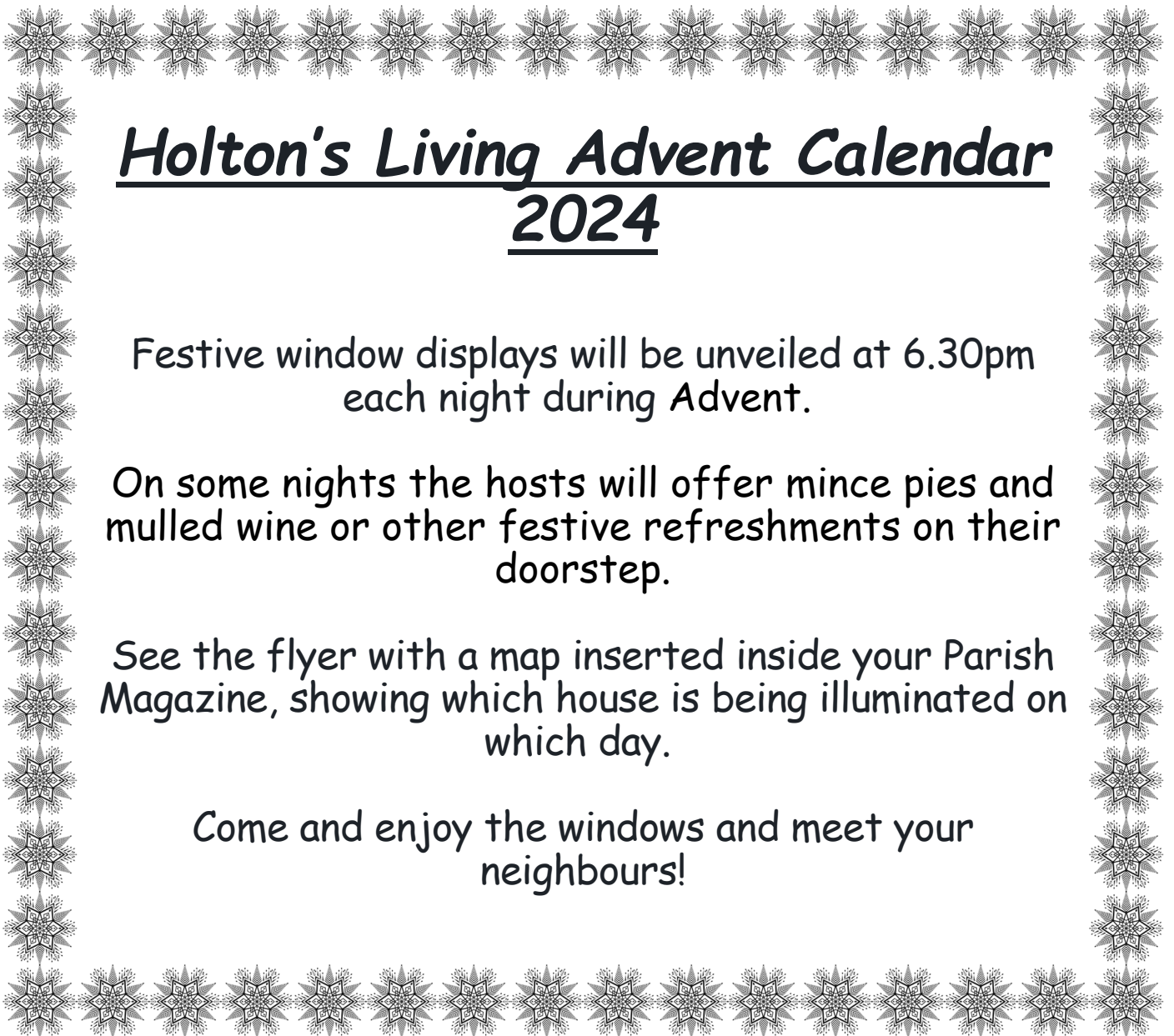
As you may have noticed, from previous events, we have a direct line to Mother Nature. If this cold, wet winter is getting you down, and the need for food has forced you to rise from bed, at least you know that Bus Shelter Sunday is the one time you can be sure of a dry day. Now that is tempting fate. Especially as I write this that carpet of snow still blankets the ground. Which reminds me, I need to clear the path. Now, where did I put the shovel? I think it might be at the back of the garage behind the broken dishwasher, old shelving and half used bag of cement.



Decorating the bus shelter for Christmas

After the Bring and Take we'll be decorating the bus shelter for Christmas. Can you help us make it look festive? There are star and bauble cut outs available in the bus shelter ready for decorating in any way you'd like. We will hang the finished pieces from the ceiling. If you would prefer to freestyle your own hanging decoration that is welcome too. Please drop any finished decorations round to Treetops, take to an afternoon tea or bring along to the Bring and Take.

Allan East, Holton Parish Council



Holton's Living Advent Calendar 2024

Festive window displays will be unveiled at 6.30pm each night during Advent.

On some nights the hosts will offer mince pies and mulled wine or other festive refreshments on their doorstep.

See the flyer with a map inserted inside your Parish Magazine, showing which house is being illuminated on which day.

Come and enjoy the windows and meet your neighbours!

Holton Village Hall

www.holtonvillagehall.co.uk

Afternoon Teas at the Village Hall.

The coffee mornings and afternoon teas at the Village Hall continue to be a great success. Many thanks to everyone who helps for all their hard work. The dates in November will be on the 28th and on Thursday December 12th. These will be from 2.30pm until 4.00pm as normal. These events are really well attended so come along for Tea, Coffee, Cake and a chat with friends and neighbours.

Quiz Night Friday 6th 7:30 for 8pm

Tickets are £10 per head and include a ploughman's supper but must be paid for in advance. If you don't have a team, just contact us and we can slot you in with another team. The bar will be open.

Contact; Brian Dobson at email; briandbsn1@gmail.com

Living Advent Calendar 2024

This is being organised as usual by Clare Wright and to express an interest or get a schedule please contact Clare on clare99wright@gmail.com. Festive window displays will be unveiled at 6.30pm each night during Advent. On some nights the hosts will offer mince pies and mulled wine or other festive refreshments on their doorstep.

See the flyer with a map inserted inside your Parish Magazine, showing which house is being illuminated on which day. Come and enjoy the windows and meet your neighbours! Clare will be doing a demonstration of how to create an Advent window - Sunday 1st December at the Village Hall from 2pm.

St Bartholomews Church Carol Service - 22nd December 5-6pm followed by refreshments at the Village Hall afterwards from approx. 6pm

Booking the Village Hall

If you would like to book the Village Hall please call **07873 857063** or please E-mail bookings@holtonvillagehall.co.uk

Mel Ault



November Birthdays



A very Happy Birthday this month to:

Charlotte who will be turning 14
Aoife who will be turning 15
Thomas who will be turning 17

(to have a birthday included in the magazine, please email Dominique - domisqueak@gmail.com)



Quiz Night

At Holton Village Hall

Fri 6th December

7.30 for 8pm start

**£10 per head including 'Ploughmans
supper'**

Bar Open from 7.30pm

**Tickets in advance only - by
Monday 2nd December**

Book your team of up to 8 in advance – If you don't have a team, just contact us and we can slot you in with another team.

Contact; Brian Dobson at

Holton News

Your intrepid reporter was out testing the evening buses from Thornhill Park and Ride to Oxford and back after 9pm, so missed an excellent evening with Jan Marlow on the subject of 'The Village at War'. My sources tell me that the talk was very interesting and well-presented using much material from the Village Archive. There was an excellent turnout and much post talk discussion where stories and information were exchanged. Well done Jan for providing so much information and for the effort you put in to making this such a successful evening. Thanks are also due to Sue and Dave who kept bar and helped to make things go smoothly as usual. The displays used in the talk will go out at an afternoon tea in a couple of weeks if you missed it and you would like to see the available information.

The reason we missed a great evening was because we had free tickets to a musical event at the Holywell Music Room with Eva Oertle (flute) and Vesselin Stanev (piano) which was both unusual and very high quality. This was booked weeks in advance via the Alliance Francaise d'Oxford who throw in such treats to help defray the cost of the course and the debilitating effect on an old brain of 2 hours of French with no English each week (plus homework). Oh, by the way, the buses were fine.

Scarecrows in hi-vis are beginning to appear in the Village as part of National Road Safety Week. I am sure the display will be excellent and the point of all this? You may have noticed that since the clocks changed it is much darker in the evenings and as winter draws on the days become shorter until about Christmas. Wearing Hi-Vis even during the day when walking is not a bad idea due to the light and the weather so please go safe and make a nice scarecrow.

There are lots of events coming soon – see the Village Hall piece for this and next year is already in planning! Next year is of course the 50th anniversary of the Village Hall opening in October and there will be special events to celebrate that. There was no Holton Players play this year due to clashing commitments elsewhere stealing all the male leads but there will be one in April so look out for that.

You may have noticed that there is an appeal to help decorate the Bus Shelter which is used for bring and take, art installations etc. Whatever you or yours can do, please can you help with this. Many thanks.

'Those autumn leaves drift by my window, those autumn leaves of red and gold'. It's been quite an autumn this year. First we had a lot of rain and then we had a prolonged mild and dry spell and the leaves this year have been a picture. I hope this will last but you can never tell what the weather will do next.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year

Watch out for all the other events in the village on the village website <https://www.holtonvillagehall.co.uk/events/> or in the magazine under Holton Village Hall. Do let me know if you have any village news that you wish to appear in these notes in future, especially if you are new to the village.

Mel Ault
mel_ault39@outlook.com

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Choose the number of tickets to buy. (You can amend at any time.)

Watch out for a win – you've a 1 in 50 chance of a prize!!

Remember: you're really helping keep the Hall running and improving**

**Did you know, it can cost around £22,000 a year just to maintain the Hall?

**HAVE FUN
GOOD LUCK AND THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING YOUR
VILLAGE HALL**

Holton Cock and Bull

The impression that the English like do things differently often forms the subject of comment within Europe but the following seems to be stretching the point a bit.

Hearing a case of gross indecency, a court in Belgium heard that before prescribing contact lenses an optician ordered a woman to strip naked and then dance around the consulting room while he played the accordion. The optician's defending lawyer stated that the man had qualified in England where the technique was commonplace.

Name and address supplied

Get into the *festive spirit* this November and December 2024 at Waterperry Gardens



Waterperry
Gardens

CHRISTMAS AT WATERPERRY GARDENS

Get into the Christmas spirit at Waterperry Gardens with Christmas shopping from our Gallery, Gift Barn and Christmas Shop, along with British grown Christmas trees and hand-finished wreaths. *A shopper's delight with great gift ideas for all the family!*

CHRISTMAS MARKETS

Sat 23 & Sun 24 Nov and Sat 7 & Sun 8 Dec – 10am till 4pm.

Join us for our Christmas Markets - Arts and Craft Stalls with gorgeous handmade gift ideas and festive food and drink (*free entry to markets*).

COME & MEET REAL REINDEER Sat 23 & Sun 24 Nov – 11.30am - 2.30pm

A little taste of the North Pole will arrive right here in the Walled Garden at Waterperry Gardens! You'll get the chance to learn all about these unique creatures and their natural habitats (*normal garden entrance fee applies*).

FIND SANTA'S REINDEER TRAIL!

Sat 23 Nov till Tues 24 Dec – 10am till 5pm

Help Rudolph find his friends lost all around the gardens and win a prize!

£3.95 per child. Children must be accompanied by an adult paying garden entrance fee.

Christmas Closure: We will be closed between Christmas and the New Year.

For more details on all our events please visit www.waterperrygardens.co.uk



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msmelectrical61@gmail.com

Waterperry News

Driving out of & into the village twice a day, I have over recent years – since lockdowns? – noticed certain characteristics of motorists visiting our village:

The Bumbles: Often, usually on a Saturday morning returning from Asda, I find myself stuck behind Mr or Mrs Bumble dawdling along the Wheatley road at 35-37 mph. This little procession continues all the way to the road into Waterperry where they lurch across the bend, very unsafely, and into the village, still travelling at 35-37 mph. Through the speed sign, probably wondering why that annoying sign is flashing 20 mph at them, and then at the same speed all the way through the village to the gardens. This really is not unusual: as we pass the Holton turn I say to myself “Ah, they will be heading for Waterperry”..... and they do.

Mr or Mrs Grumpy: Why does nearly everyone visiting Waterperry enter the village, take in a breath or two of our air, and then turn immediately into Mr or Mrs Grumpy? It happens time and time again that I find myself faced with drivers heading towards me, hunched up over their steering wheel, stoney faced and with no intention of slowing down, moving over into a passing place or giving any sort of thanks or acknowledgement when I pull over. What happens to our visitors to make them so grumpy?

The 10 o'clock Coffee Cravers: These are another version of the Grumpies – hell bent on getting to the teashop or farm shop for their caffeine fix and woe betide if you're in their way! It costs nothing to smile and be courteous and is a so much nicer way to start the day! Maybe they're more cheerful as they leave after their coffee.

The 20 Doesn't Apply to Me drivers: The speed limit of 20 mph is a legal limit, not an advisory and it genuinely is there for a very good reason. Thankfully no children have been hurt but they and our dogs and cats too often have to take their chances on the road. It's such a short road, half a mile end to end, so why on earth can drivers not keep their speed down to suit the surroundings? The Coffee Cravers are perfect examples of this – seriously, there are plenty of tables, lots of delicious cakes and the coffee will not have gone cold if you keep your speed under 20 miles per hour and arrive 20 seconds later.

The Should-go-to-SpecSavers drivers: these are specific to the entrance to the Gardens. Throughout the day, when the gardens are open, so many drivers totally ignore two large blue signs and an arrow painted on the road directing people to turn left to the Exit – no, they simply drive out through the entrance gate with absolutely no concern for incoming vehicles, cyclists or pedestrians. There is even a large red and white No Exit sign next to the gate but if challenged these people will say they didn't see any signs!

These are my personal observations about Waterperry visitors, but my daily drive takes me through Oakley and Brill – roads with vehicles parked on both sides and frequent need to give way to oncoming cars – and I can honestly say that driving through those villages is a whole lot more civilised. We give way to each other, acknowledge each other with a smile and a polite wave and I get to the end of the village with my belief in human good nature restored.

So those are my December bah-humbugs, without even mentioning courier drivers that feel they have to break every highway rule there is once they get into Waterperry and keep me off the subject of binmen that must throw the green food bins to the ground making the lids break loose!

On that note of seasonal good cheer - Happy Christmas

Sue Parker



Waterperry (St Mary's) Church News December 2024



Please make a note in your diaries for our village **Carol Service at 2.30 pm on Sunday 22nd December** – it's a lovely traditional service of carols and the Christmas story, with beautiful decorations and candles adding to the festive atmosphere. I will be looking for volunteers to read and everybody is invited to help with decorating the church earlier in the month as it looks its best when its festooned with seasonal garden greenery – look out for emails or Facebook information on this.

The book sale shelves in the church have proved popular and have brought in much needed funds. There's a real variety of books on offer - please pop up what's there when you're looking for your next read. Children's books were very popular during half term. If you have any books to donate, please drop them to Frances at No. 24.

David, our vicar, has recovered well from his knee op, although Sarah is still his chauffeuse for services for a few weeks, so our service rota should be back to normal now – please see the front of the magazine for details.

Sue Parker



Recipe: The Bishop



A variation of mulled wine given this name in the 19th century by Oxbridge students.



6 Seville oranges (if unavailable , substitute 5 sweet oranges and 1 grapefruit)



4 oz. Sugar



Cloves



1.5 bottles inexpensive red wine



1 bottle ruby port



- Bake the oranges in a moderate oven for about 20 minutes until golden brown and then place in a warm bowl with 6 cloves pricked into each fruit.
- Add the sugar and pour in the wine.
- Cover and leave in a warm place for a day.
- Squeeze the oranges into the wine and pour through a sieve.
- To serve, add the port to the liquid and heat in a pan - but do not boil.
- Serve in warmed goblets and drink hot.



Holton and Waterperry WI



Waterstock News

December – almost a wrap for 2024, it seems to have flown by and here we are again at Christmas! Christmas services in Waterstock start with the carol service on Sunday December 15th at 5pm, with a bring and share supper with the Shipperley's at Home Farm afterwards, starting at 6.30pm. Please let Janet know if you are coming, and what you'd like to bring (janet.shipperley@gmail.com or 07808 403166). If anyone would like to help decorate the church for Christmas, you'd be most welcome to come along on Saturday December 14th

On Christmas Day there will be a family service with Communion at 10.15am.

In November, as usual Susie Edmondson collected for the Poppy Appeal, raising around £500, followed by the Remembrance Day service which took place at the War Memorial, raising an additional £209, giving a magnificent total of over £700! This has to be verified and confirmed before it's official and Susie should receive that confirmation in early 2025. She sends a huge thank you to everyone who gave so generously and made her job so much easier by returning their envelopes. You may remember earlier in the year Rob Arthur undertook to clean the War Memorial after an adverse comment from a visitor, so it was looking particularly fine this year.

A piece of news which I found particularly interesting is that the Arthurs have discovered that one of their old varieties of apple trees is unique and unknown on the national apple database – and they have the opportunity to name it! Lorna writes:

'We have discovered that we - Waterstock has a unique apple tree. No-one knows the variety and it is not listed on the national database. We have been invited to name this apple and all we have come up with is 'Waterstock Wonder' as we thought it would be good to have Waterstock in the name. So please let us have your thoughts. The reason we discovered the tree is unknown is that Rob has been trying to preserve the old varieties of apple tree that we inherited in our orchard which was previously part of the kitchen garden of Waterstock House. He found Bernwode Fruit Trees <https://bernwodefruittrees.co.uk/about.htm> at Ludgershall who know just about everything there is to know about apples and asked them for help with the grafting of the old stock onto new plants. They were very pleased to find many old varieties and had the apples they'd grafted from here compared to the national apple database. However, there was one (see picture) which came back as 'unknown'. Bernwode describe the apple from this unknown tree as relatively large fruit, slightly flattened with five prominent ribs. 9cm wide and 7cm tall. The skin is pale to mid green with scattered small dark lenticels, and with amber blushes and merged streaks in the sun. The apples are of fine dessert quality, juicy, sweet and with a good flavour.'

If more name ideas are wanted, here's a couple to kick off: Waterstock One-Off, or Arthur's Apple! Contact Lorna with yours!

Looking back over the year, it initially seemed just like a blur of rain, and more rain. I'm pretty sure it literally rained solidly until the end of April, and then of course we had the devastating rain in September which flooded houses. Ironically, back in the April news Keith Stubbs reported on a Thames Valley Flood Scheme, the brainchild of the

Environment Agency, with Waterstock being one of 17 sites being considered for flood storage. Perhaps the events of this year will hasten some decisions on this. Thames Water seem to be an increasing (and not altogether welcome) part of our lives, having spent a lot of time in the village over the past few years trying to fix inadequate drainage; they are now here again lowering the level of the manhole cover at the entrance to the Oxfordshire Way footpath near the church. This has sported its own cone for a while now, to alert drivers and walkers to a potential trip hazard, so I guess this is a welcome development.

If it's possible to see a silver lining to the wet weather, Johnny Powell reports it's been a bumper autumn for water-loving birds, with plenty of Lapwing, Teal, Wigeon and Shoveller Duck spotted taking advantage of the temporary lakes, as well as the less common Pintail, and two very rare Great White Egrets. Large numbers of Snipe are still around along with every UK raptor including Peregrine and Hobby. Good numbers of Greylag geese are still present but probably too many Canada Geese.

The battle to protect our Green Belt and the golf course has been epic this year, with key players led by Henry Manisty investing huge amounts of time marshalling our troops and experts to provide a powerful defence and backup to South Oxfordshire's own defence of the refusal. We are well over halfway through this gruelling process, which should wind up in mid-January. The latest depositions being made as I write should have been Chris Shaw, an expert on highways, and Rob Arthur on sustainable transport, although due to overrunning Chris was postponed. Nick Edmondson will be taking the stand on behalf of golfers, backed up by a representative from Golf England, which shows how seriously they take this case. Let's hope 2025 will kick off with some good news on this front, saving what we and all our visitors love about Waterstock, whether it's golf, riding, cycling, walking or just watching the river go by on Bow Bridge.

There have been some other high points of the year: in May Sophie and Ruvern from the Waterstock Riding School got married at a beautiful ceremony in St Leonards Church, with horses and dogs playing their part on the procession back!

In September Keith Stubbs undertook a London to Paris cycle in aid of the Myeloma UK charity, dedicated to supporting people with this incurable blood cancer, for which Keith has spent the last five years developing new medicines. As a non-cyclist, this was quite a challenge but he completed it successfully despite some horrific weather! He writes: 'Day two was particularly challenging with torrential rain all day and a cold crosswind. The amazing French food helped and most of the low points were forgotten as we cycled past the Arc de Triomphe with a police escort, finishing at the Eiffel Tower. It was hugely rewarding to cycle with patients and the myeloma community and I would like to thank everyone in the village that so generously contributed to my fundraising efforts.'

And finally there seem to be a decent community of hedgehogs in the village, particularly as reported by Caroline at Home Farm Barn. I've also had a large hedgehog hanging around the garden and making a lot of noise – it got stuck under the gate which was pretty alarming, and I had to remove the gate entirely to get it out, but with no apparent ill-effects as it subsequently scoffed quite a large plate of dog food.

Wishing everyone a very Happy Christmas and all good things for 2025.

Sarah Godowski

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