

NORTH ASTON

NEWS

January 2026

#423



*Happy
New Year!*

NORTH ASTON NEWS

JANUARY 2026, No:423

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Notes from the Chair

Firstly, a Happy New Year! I never anticipated taking on this role again, at least, not yet. As explained by the Minutes from the December Meeting, we have had a complete change-round of Officers for the Village Meeting, and some familiar names are now back in roles they have variously performed several times previously.

That prompts a huge thank-you to Christopher Woodhead, who valiantly fulfilled the tasks of being Chair for the last three years. We are all enormously grateful. I spent a little while trawling the archives, and discovered a convoluted trail of succession. Christopher took over from Lucinda Fuoco in May 2022, but before her, Mark Stay had been Chair from 2016-2019. He inherited the post from Kildare Bourke-Burrowes (2013-2016) and he, in turn, from the late Chris Tuffrey (2009-2013). Chris, who spent longer than most as Chair, did so much for this village, and much of the money still in the Village Fund is largely due to his efforts, even today. I was a little surprised to discover that my past tenures were from 2003 to 2006, and again as Acting Chair from 2008 to 2009, with Mary Healey occupying the post from 2006 to 2008.

Stephen Walters took over as Treasurer from Niel Nicholson in January 2024, and has now handed over the reins to Bev Rees. It's a task she is very familiar with, having occupied the position for a generous four-year stint between 2014 and 2018. Thank you to them both. Sue Hatzigeorgiou, who was Treasurer from 2009 to 2014, has kindly offered to relieve Bev of the responsibility for the 100 Club. We need fresh impetus to grow membership there, so Sue may have a task on her hands.

With Richard Hinzl's departure, we're very grateful to Annie Savage for stepping back into the breach as Secretary. She has huge experience of the duties the role demands, having been there from 2018 to 2022.

So we have a familiar team at the helm. As the events of the last few months have shown, we face challenging times in North Oxfordshire, but also exciting possibilities. Here in North Aston there is the very real chance of Traffic Calming actually arriving on our roads, after almost thirty years of repeated discussion. We also have the rewarding prospect of the North Aston Farm Shop. The Honesty Shop has been a revelation, but all credit to Nick Miller for his colossal efforts in getting the shop at Peach Barns up-and-running. His idea of using the facilities there as a Community Hub also opens up alternative venues for village events, and more chances for the community to get together.

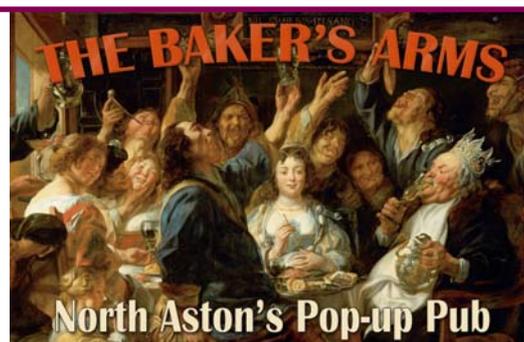
I look forward to working with Bev and Annie over the coming months, and invite anyone with village-related concerns to get in touch using the contact details on the left.

You can phone Marcus on 340296
or email: chair@north-aston.co.uk

Marcus

North Aston's Pop-up Pub, the "Baker's Arms", will be a week late this month, and will take place on Friday 9th, from 7pm.

Bring your own drinks, a selection of your favourite nibbles, and enjoy a convivial evening with friends at The Old Bakery.



Cover: The first snows, overlaid by an extraordinary original gouache painting of a pocket watch. MP

Mail to: info@north-aston.co.uk

Planning

No new applications this month. To examine any of these applications in detail, search for "North Aston" on the CDC Planning Register web page, which can be found at www.planningregister.cherwell.gov.uk/

The Hall, St Mary's Walk, OX25 6AA. A decision on the Discharge of Conditions 3 (doors & windows) relating to planning ref. 22 / 02859 / F is expected mid-January. Ref: 25 / 03041 / DISC.

Middle and Nether Cottages, St Mary's Walk, OX25 6AA. The application to carry out roof repairs to both properties is now at the consultation stage, and a decision expected by January 20th. Ref: 25 / 02869 / LB.

The Parish Safeguarding Officer

You may have spotted last month that North Aston now has a designated Safeguarding Officer. Sarah Godwin offers an introduction to her role, and what it means for the community:

I have lived in the village for the past 23 years and many of you will know me as Bramble's owner (the black Lab). I spent my working life as a nurse and Care Home manager, and have now retired. I tend to horse ride on Sunday mornings, so am rarely in church but I have become the Parish Safeguarding Officer and would like to explain a bit about my role.

Safeguarding is preventing abuse and supporting those who are victims of abuse. The Church of England is trying hard to redress the awful abuses that have occurred in the past and is now suggesting that every parish should have a Parish Safeguarding Officer. My responsibility is to promote and uphold safeguarding practices, protecting children, young people and vulnerable adults within the community.

Should you wish to contact me with any questions or concerns about safeguarding or worries about someone who may be at risk of abuse then my contact details are at the front of this newsletter and also on the noticeboard in the Church porch. I am also available as a point of safeguarding information, advice and support for anyone in North Aston Parish, whether church related or not. Anything reported to me will be in the strictest confidence.

There are several ways of reporting abuse. If it concerns abuse within the church, however historical, then please do come and talk to me or Harriet Orridge, the Vicar. You can also contact OCC on <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/social-and-health-care>. If the situation is an emergency and the safeguarding concern is happening now, then call 999. If the situation is not an emergency, such as reporting crimes or concerns not representing immediate danger, then dial 101.

Wishing you ALL a happy, healthy and safe 2026.



December's winners were:

1st Prize (£10): Annie Savage (#129)

2nd Prize (£5): Noah Hack (#21)

Congratulations! Every month, two lucky winners get drawn out of the hat. If you'd like to learn more about the 100 Club, please contact Sue: Telephone 347727 or email info@north-aston.co.uk.

You've got to be in it to win it!



Please join
us for



The Gathering

an informal discussion group in

The Snug at The Red Lion
Every Tuesday evening 7:30-9pm
Starting 13th January

As we gather Cliff and Jenny Royal will lead us in our exploration of the meals Jesus shared and their relevance to us in 2026.

Come and join us and connect with others - open to everyone.

Further details from:

Jenny: jennysroyal@gmail.com or
Harriet: harriet.sntchurch@gmail.com

Banbury Tractor Run 2025

Many congratulations to Robert Hite for his bright and imaginative entry in last month's Best Dressed Tractor competition.

The annual Tractor Run in aid of Katharine House Hospice took place on 13th December and raised just over £104,000.

For the third year in a row, the winner was Toby Nunnely, but Robert's score of 133 was good enough to be ranked fourteenth out of the 100 tractors which took part.

Robert was sponsored by SJB Hearing of Deddington. At the time of writing, more donations are still coming in through the JustGiving appeal page, and it's not too late to add to the total: Visit: <https://www.justgiving.com/campaign/khh-banburychristmastractorrun-2025>



Photo: Liz Hite

North Aston's Festive Spirit!

The traditional North Aston Wassail did an all-requests tour of the village on December 22nd, pausing at a number of houses (by invitation only) to sing carols and spread the festive spirit. In the process over £200 was raised for charity.

That was bolstered on Christmas Eve by a very well-attended *Carols on the Green*. North Aston was probably outnumbered by the many visitors from neighbouring villages, all made very welcome by offerings of mulled wine and mince pies. Thanks to all those who helped with wine, pies and bonfire, sang so enthusiastically, and donated very generously. In the process a further £300 was added to the Crisis charity coffers.

North Aston History Notes

With Stephen Rees

Firstly, we hope you all had a nice Christmas and we wish you all a Happy New Year.

It was with great sadness that we all got together in the church a few weeks ago to say a fond farewell to our old friend Norman West. He was a true cornerstone of life in North Aston.

Born and bred here, he was known by many, and was something of a legend. His granddaughter Becky very bravely stood in the church and gave a moving history of his upbringing and life in our village. I won't try to follow that, but having lived next door to him for some 25 years I thought I might share some of my family's memories of a proper Good Old Boy.

I remember as clear as if they were yesterday the times when we were little, and our family would go round to the West house one night each Christmas to play games. Then, on another night, they would all come round to us. Dad and Norman would have gin and orange, and that was probably the only time I ever saw them drink together.

However, and talking of a drink, there was many a Sunday afternoon when I'd catch sight of Norman, Eileen, Richard and Tracy sitting out under the gazebo, in their back garden, enjoying a drink and watching the world go by.

We sometimes called round, as did Tony and Bev and others, and before we even got through the gate, Richard or Norman would disappear into the house and come out with drinks. Norman, in true Sidney Larkin manner, would pour me a half-tumbler full of enough whisky to drown a small donkey ... and half way through it would be asking if I wanted a top-up!

The Wests and the Browns are all the same. Any party thrown by Linda and Andy will see Tony and me staggering home and facing huge hangovers the next day ...

NORTH ASTON ORGANICS

Vegetable Stall

Open Mon-Sat from 9.00am
In the car park behind the Old Bakery

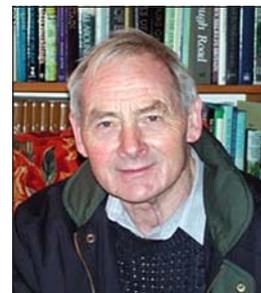
- Wide variety of fresh seasonal organic vegetables at affordable prices
- Minimal packaging & zero food miles
- Supporting the local economy



Too busy?
Why not try our Veg Box Scheme?
Fresh vegetables delivered straight to your door!

Email: northastonorganics@gmail.com
Tel: (01869) 347702
visit the website at:
www.northastonorganics.co.uk

I remember with happy memory the time I interviewed Norman for the *Millennium* book. It started off well enough, but he soon got the whisky out, and within the hour, he was interviewing me! That was another occasion when I had a job getting home.



Everyone who knew him will know how much he loved gardening. There was a time when his garden was always full of the most stunning chrysanthemums. People would come from far and wide to buy cut stems. They were truly amazing! His allotment was impeccable and a weed wouldn't dare to peek its head through the soil.



North Aston Cricket Club ran for many years, and when they played at home we all spent the afternoon laying around the boundary watching the match. There was always a raffle, and we'd buy our tickets, and then wait for the draw at the end.



Norman and Eileen West (née Paviour) on their wedding day in 1960.

Norman and Mrs West really were the mainstay of that club, and I'm sure it was because of them that it continued for so many years.

Norman West will be missed by all who knew him for a very long time to come, I'm sure. He was one of the last of an era; a North Aston boy born and bred, missed by many, remembered by all.

Steve & Wendy

Thank you ...

Eileen, Linda, Tracy and the Family would like to thank everybody for all their messages of condolences, cards and flowers following the death of Norman.

We would also like to thank everyone who came to his funeral service and afterwards to his wake to share lots of stories and memories.

Many thanks, Becky Brown



Glass Recycling & Ardley Tip



From 1st January 2026 it will be possible to include **glass** items in the blue wheelie-bin for recycling. Cherwell District Council is introducing this service as part of a national *Simpler Recycling* initiative.

You can recycle any colour, size or type of glass bottle or jar, from wine and spirit bottles to jam and sauce jars. You are asked to rinse items before disposing of them in your recycling bin, to remove food or drink residues, but there's no need to remove labels or lids. If your bin is full, please place extra glass bottles and jars safely in a cardboard box next to it. Broken glass should **not** be included, and if spotted, your bin may not be emptied.

In addition, from January 14th, Oxfordshire County Council will insist that you pre-book any visit to **Ardley Recycling Centre**. You can do so either online or by phone.

You can book a slot up to two weeks in advance, or at least 30 minutes before your visit, subject to availability. For asbestos (household only) you must book at least 48 hours in advance. Each slot is 15 minutes for cyclists and car drivers, 30 minutes for vans or cars towing a trailer.

This service is free for Oxfordshire residents, so you will need to take proof of address with you (such as a utility or council tax bill) and you may need to apply for a permit if you are visiting with a van or trailer. Certain vehicles and trailers, including those that are signwritten, are not allowed on site.

Waste should be sorted before you arrive, to speed up the process. Main categories include: asbestos, metals, bikes and tyres, bulky household items, batteries, cardboard, oils, electrical appliances and 'white' goods, timber, gas bottles, green (garden) waste, chemicals and paints, paper, hard or soft plastics, and textiles or clothes.

Booking a slot helps reduce queueing times, makes it easier for you to plan your trip and to park on site, and improves site safety and efficiency.

On the plus side, disposal of **DIY waste** will become free. However, you can only claim your free allowance once every 7 days. Any DIY waste over this will have to be paid for.

You can find more details here: www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/waste-and-recycling/book-recycling-centre-visit. Those unable to access the online booking system should contact OCC's customer service centre on 01865 895999.

A reminder that **used batteries** should **not** go in the bin. Instead, they should be left on top of the recycling bin in a clear bag or taken to a supermarket drop-off point. Don't put them inside the bin, as they can become a fire risk. **Coffee pods** can also be bagged and placed on top of the bin. **Small electricals**, such as old Christmas lights, should be placed in a tied carrier bag on top of the general waste bin. Larger items will not be taken. **Real Christmas Trees** can be put out for recycling with the blue bin between 6th and 16th Jan.

Finally, a heads up that some neighbouring Councils are now refusing to empty wheelie-bins where the lid is not fully closed. So far, CDC is being more tolerant, but that may change. Try not to over-fill your bin. Additional recycling can be placed in a bag beside the bin, but it must be see-through.

NORTH ASTON FARMS & DAIRY

Organic, pasture-fed meat, ice cream & more - on your doorstep!

Order online	Farmers' Market	Join a milk round
<p>Order ice cream and pasture-fed meat from the farm</p> <p>Free delivery within 15 miles (on orders over £100) or collection from the farm</p>	<p>Find us at Deddington Farmers' Market on the fourth Saturday of every month</p> <p>Fresh dairy Pasture-fed meat Ice cream</p>	<p>Twice-weekly deliveries Monthly invoice Reusable glassware Delivery before 7.30am</p> <p>Milk, yoghurt & cream plus extras including kefir, eggs, meat & ice cream</p>

Find out more at www.northastonfarms.co.uk

New laws came into effect in December that will effect all dog owners, as well as farmers and livestock-owners.

The new *Dogs (Protection of Livestock) (Amendment) Bill* is aimed at tackling the persistent problem of dog attacks on livestock. There are a number of important amendments, and they apply everywhere, including along public footpaths and rights of way. The key points to note include:

- **Unlimited Fines.** The old £1000 limit has gone. Courts can now impose unlimited fines.
- **More Animals Protected.** 'Livestock' now includes alpacas and llamas, as well as sheep, cattle, goats, pigs, horses and other farm and domesticated breeds.
- **More Places Covered.** The law now applies equally in fields and enclosures, on public footpaths, along roads and verges, and wherever there is livestock.
- **Stronger Police Powers.** The police can now seize and detain dogs, enter premises with a warrant and collect forensic evidence.
- **Clarification of "Worrying".** The definition of *Worrying* now includes any form of chasing, running at, harassing, causing fear or panic, and simply being loose among livestock and not under proper control.
- **Clarification of "harm".** The definition now states that no injury or physical contact is needed. Stress alone is now a legally recognised *Harm*. It can lead to miscarriages, mis-mothering, exhaustion, broken limbs and long-term fear responses. Understandably, physical attacks are even more serious, and include biting, grabbing, causing injuring and, *in extremis*, killing.

Consequently, both *worrying* and *attacking* are now deemed to be criminal offences.

The police will have extended rights to collect evidence, which can range from demonstrable injuries to livestock (bites and wounds) to blood, tissue or DNA. They may also collect evidence from the dog (blood, saliva, bite patterns), as well as collars, leads or other items. The dog itself may also be taken for examination. A case does not need to be witnessed.

MCNP Draft Revisions

The modified draft for the Mid-Cherwell Neighbourhood Plan is now available for examination. The Plan proposes revised policies to be used in the determination of development and planning applications within the Neighbourhood Plan Area.

The draft Plan and supporting documents are available for examination and comment on the CDC website at <https://cherwell.citizenspace.com/>

Hard copies are also available to view at the Cherwell District Council Offices in Castle Quay, Banbury from 8.45am to 5.15pm, Monday to Friday. They can also be found at Bicester and Deddington libraries (opening times vary), and several local cafés, pubs and shops, including The Grain Store Café in Middle Aston, The Oxford Arms Kirtlington, Kizzie's Bistro in Lower Heyford, and Wrighton's Butchers in Fritwell.

Comments can be submitted online through the link above, by email to NeighbourhoodPlanningConsultation@cherwell-dc.gov.uk or by writing to: Planning Policy, Cherwell District Council, 39 Castle Quay, Banbury, OX16 5FD.

Response forms are available at the locations above and can be downloaded from the website link. The deadline for comments is Sunday 15th February.



The law also clarifies what "*under proper control*" means. A dog is now deemed to be properly under control only if the handler can prevent it from worrying livestock at all times. That means being able to stop the dog before it approaches livestock, prevent any chasing or rushing, and act instantly, not after the event. Even if the dog is stopped after it has approached or chased livestock, control is considered to have been lost. The bar is high. If a dog runs towards livestock, hesitates before recall, or backs off after a brief chase, it will still be considered to have been *not under proper control*.

Even a dog on a lead may not be fully under control. Flexi-leads, long lines, or dragging leads may not be considered "proper control". Ignorance of the law, or claiming the dog has "never done it before" will not be viewed as legitimate excuses. The law is about risk and stress, not intent.

The Act does include a new defence for dog owners where their dog worries livestock whilst in someone else's charge without their consent, such as if it had been stolen or taken without permission.

Dogs seized may not necessarily be destroyed. Courts are expected to focus on owner responsibility, not punishing the dog. Destruction orders are rare and would only arise if a dog posed an unmanaged, serious risk.

You can find out more by visiting <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/unlimited-fines-for-dog-attacks-on-farm-animals>.

Counting Traffic

For ten days in September OCC fitted a pneumatic tube vehicle counter across the road near Peach Barns to recorded all traffic movements, in both directions.

On weekdays, the average number of daily vehicle movements was approximately 1750 (833 Eastbound, 908 Westbound), but over a 7-day period the average dropped to around 1600 daily — the road is a little quieter at weekends. Predictably, peak movements are between about 07:00 and 08:30 in the mornings, and then between 3:30 and 4:30 in the afternoons.

The mean speed recorded was around 35 mph. However, a few vehicles were recorded exceeding the current 60 mph limit, typically late in the evenings. Approximately 6% of movements were attributed to so-called "Heavies", including buses.

There is a proposal to install solar-powered Vehicle Activated Signs on the A4260 to warn higher-speed traffic that there is a staggered junction ahead, and the text will prompt extra awareness of crossing or turning vehicles.



North Aston Village Meeting

Tuesday 9th December 2025 ~ The Minutes

Officers present: Christopher Woodhead (CW, Chair), Stephen Walters (SW, Treasurer), Richard Hinzel (RH, Secretary).

Those present: Bev Rees (BR), Chloe Woodhead (CW), Trudy Busby (TB), Clive Busby (CB), Marcus Potts (MP), Franca Potts (FP), Mark Stay (MS), Gurli Andreassen (GA), Mary Healy (MH), Jeremy Taylor (JT), James Taylor (JaT), Kildare Bourke-Borrowes (KBB), Councillor Gareth Epps (GE, OCC), Councillor David Rogers (DR, CDC).

1. Welcome. The Chair welcomed everyone to the Meeting, and then invited the two local Councillors to speak first, due to their need to go to further appointments the same evening.

Formal Business

2. Councillor David Rogers

David Rogers, Cherwell District Councillor for this Ward, gave an update on his understandings of the present, ever-changing role of both Cherwell District Council and Oxford County Council in the future structure for local governance in Oxfordshire.

The proposed alternatives to the present authorities under the planned reorganisation range widely, from a single unitary council for all of Oxfordshire; a split into two areas comprising Oxford City and The Shires to the north, with Ridgeway Council to the south; or three authorities, with Oxford at the heart (with expanded boundaries). Ultimately Westminster will make the final decision. He anticipated that there will be government cuts, possibly of up to £10m, which would leave just enough for essential services to continue if that occurs.

With regard to devolution, he explained that there were plans for the appointment of a regional mayor for a large part of the Thames valley. National government has so far delayed several mayoral elections scheduled for other areas of the country, and thus there is no firm completion date in sight.

Councillor DR stated that he expected May elections to go ahead as planned, and then another election of councillors will take place in 2027. This to be set in future for a fixed five-year term; likewise, parish council elections will go into a 4-year cycle that councils will all have to adopt.

Detail as to the local illegal dumping of waste at Kidlington was given. Initial notification of the illegal landfill was made on June 6, although dumping still occurred after that date; the matter was confirmed as an Environmental Agency problem. Similar circumstances relating to a site called Hoads Wood near Ashford in Kent cost £15m to clear.

Councillor DR then moved to a discussion regarding the expansion of primary medical care. It is supposed to be funded through site redeveloper contributions. In this area, the Buckinghamshire / Oxfordshire Independent Care Board (ICB) is responsible. However there has been very little done to expand on primary and secondary care facilities to correspond with the area's growth in population. He explained that sometimes funds are inadequate to meet the demands of an area, so cannot be used, and may then be returned to a developer if they are not spent.

Councillor GE went into further detail on local matters of importance. These included:- Cherwell District Council's limited powers over traffic concerns; there is likely to be another round of discussion with local parishes before further Council discussions next March; the Cherwell local plan is silent on Heyford new town and the Puy du Fou theme park because these developments became more formalised after their local plan was developed; it is uncertain as to its applicability once the new unitary authority is confirmed; further that there are also numerous speculative developments beyond what's already allocated in the plan.

At this point Councillor David Rogers requested permission to be excused, was thanked for his contribution to the Meeting, and departed for another appointment in Hook Norton.

3. Approval of Minutes

The Minutes of the last meeting, held on 9 September 2025 and as published in the October issue of the *News*, were deemed to have been a fair and accurate representation of the Meeting. Proposed by CW, seconded by MP, and approved by all present.

4. North Aston Constitution

It was confirmed that the NAPM has a Constitution, and that this was adopted by the Meeting in 2019. MS explained that the need for a Constitution was prompted by an application for funding to

assist with the purchase of the defibrillator. MP clarified that the Constitution had been prepared by the then Secretary, Annie Savage. A draft had been published in the NAN, and approved by the Meeting. CW suggested a copy of the Constitution needs to be passed on to future NAPM Officers, so that they are aware of its contents. Unfortunately, this did not happen when the current Officers were elected, and so they were understandably ignorant of the detail. CW then read the following statement on behalf of himself and RH:

"It has come to light that your Chairman and Secretary have overstepped their remit and behaved unconstitutionally. The context is this; Richard received an email from what is known as the *Coalition of Parishes* regarding the planning permission of the theme park Puy de Fou. They were asking for support for their campaign to object to the planning permission. There was a tight deadline to get responses in. Richard and I discussed the matter and given our experience of the village views of other developments, we decided that we would agree to support the objection on behalf of North Aston. This was done without asking the village and in contravention of the Constitution and Minutes of previous meetings regarding the village and planning. It also goes against the spirit of how we operate in this village. We will discuss in a moment what our ongoing view of this is, but before then we would like to acknowledge our error and apologise for the cavalier way that we treated the views of the village and its constitution. This is a serious matter and there is an opportunity in the item Election of Officers for the village to express views about whether it would be appropriate to have a change in the membership of the committee. But I hope our apology is accepted."

A brief discussion then followed during which some clarity was offered on the detail of the Parish Meeting's policy on planning. As mentioned by MP, this stemmed from a vote held in 1994 at which a proposal by Eric Maslen, seconded by CB, moved that the Parish Meeting would not get involved in any planning matters that didn't have direct relevance to the village. This had been further clarified during a Meeting of 2013, when it was established that it was deemed unconstitutional for the Meeting to comment on any planning issue. After some further thought by all present, the joint apology was accepted and the Meeting continued.

5. The Coalition of Parishes

CW asked attendees to consider whether NA should remain in the *Coalition of Parishes* or remove ourselves. MP stated that he had contributed several articles to the North Aston News dealing with the various developments that were being proposed for the North Oxfordshire area, and that we faced an unprecedented pressure for change. He said that the idea of a Coalition of Parishes, or a group to speak on behalf of the diverse communities of the area, was a good one. However, he expressed concerns about the organisation that stood behind this Coalition. Under the formal name of North Oxfordshire Residents Action, or NORA, the group appeared to have been founded with very positive intents, stating that its purpose was to offer a unified voice, able to challenge all major developments affecting the area. However, since its formation in January this year, the group had focused solely on opposing the Puy du Fou. MP argued that the Puy du Fou, of all the many developments under consideration, would have the least impact on North Aston. Councillor GE indicated that the independent impact assessments and solutions proposed by Puy Du Fou require more close study.

SW suggested that, due to the late receipt of the request to join the *Coalition* and the fact that NAPM only met three or four times a year and needed to be consulted, a reply seeking more time to give a formal response should have been sought. This would give more time for the North Aston community to consider and make a decision. However, it was pointed out that, under the current wording, any involvement would be deemed unconstitutional, and the Parish Meeting could not comment on the plans or join the Coalition in any case.

MS suggested that there was scope for further debate regarding the *Coalition*, but moved that the Meeting should withdraw from the *Coalition* to avoid further disagreement. Seconded by BR. CW requested a show of hands, and all but four of those present voted in favour. CW declared the motion carried. The result was a decision to withdraw North Aston from the *Coalition of Parishes*. GA and CW suggested that, notwithstanding the vote's result, it may be helpful for members of the village to meet with the *Coalition of Parishes* to understand better their purpose and plans. MP also said that he had been contacted by representatives of the Puy du Fou, who would be interested in staging a joint presentation to the village, together with Middle Aston and Duns Tew. It was concluded that this would allow residents opportunity to consider their own personal views, either in support or against.

6. Treasurer's Report

Village bank accounts and setting Parish Precept for 2026/27. The Treasurer reported that, as of 9th December, the NA Parish Account stood at £6391.48 and the NA Village fund had £4105.46. SW confirmed that the Santander account had been closed as of March 2024.

SW also reported notification of a planned standard nominal increase in the precept for 2026. However, the village insurance premiums alone are currently £473 and the present precept is £450, and that there are other ongoing and ever increasing costs, not least next year's insurance.

SW said he was unaware if the village could ask for an increase in the precept. Various attendees indicated that it was possible, and that the village had, in the past, requested that the precept be reduced, as NA had been running a surplus. CB suggested that it had, at one point, been £600 per month. MP recalled a higher amount. CW proposed an increase in the precept; BR suggested an amount per household; MP proposed to request £640, sufficient to cover the anticipated increase in insurance premium. This was seconded and approved.

7. Election of Officers

As had been previously announced at the last meeting, SW would be standing down as Treasurer. It was confirmed that BR had offered to act as the new Treasurer. Her appointment was proposed, seconded and approved.

CW then pointed out that the recently re-examined Village Constitution showed that an Officer's term of office should be restricted to three years, with the need for re-election to remain. As a result CW offered to stand down. FP proposed MP as new Chair. This was seconded by JT and approved by those present. RH stated that due to pressure of work he would have to stand down, but would remain in office until a replacement could be found as Secretary.

8. Traffic Calming - Update

Councillor GE spoke on matters relating to traffic. He suggested that not enough local development has yet been built to get full S106 funding, and that he was still awaiting the designs for the traffic calming trial.

He said that the neighbouring parishes of Ardley and Somerton were seeking to have a 40 mph limit imposed upon the road from the B4100 in Ardley through to Somerton. He thought it would be beneficial to have this limit extended all the way through to the B4260 at the Fox Crossroads. He indicated that it is more cost effective for this to occur at the same time as that of the other villages. He also suggested that a relocation of the village signs, and the 20 mph 'zone' for North Aston could be implemented at the same time, for no additional cost. He was asked if this could mean that the western sign could be moved closer to Peach Barns, and he concurred. MH asked if the eastern sign could be relocated so that the entrance to Manor Farm was included.

There was some debate, and it was then suggested that perhaps the Lodge, or the bend just below the lower entrance to the Manor, should be considered as the eastern limit.

SW suggested standardisation of the road speed through the village and it's feeder roads should include a 40 mph limit between Duns Tew and Somerton, and also to Steeple Aston. This would calm speeds down and reduce the cost of implementation as well as work better with the extended 20 mph limit, suggested as operating between Peach Barns and the entrance to the Manor or Lodge.

CB pointed out that the bus shelter on the North Aston side of A4260 is the village's responsibility, and is in a very poor state of repair. If it needs to be repaired, or replaced, there followed some

debate, lead by SW, on whether or not it would be possible to relocate the bus stop, either to the exit of the former lay-by to the north of the junction (towards Deddington) or to the existing lay-by to the south. The former is 'adopted' by the Council, and is in good condition, the latter is not. This point was to be taken up by Councillor GE on our behalf, since there is little point in repairing the shelter if it is to be moved to a new location. In this case a new replacement would be desirable.

MP asked Councillor GE if there was still money available through the Councillor Priority Fund, which GE had offered in September, and whether that funding might be used to help create a footpath between the village and the new Farm Shop at Peach Barns. He offered to look into it.

Informal Business

KBB paused the discussion to suggest the Meeting acknowledge the passing of Norman West. He commended Norman as being one of the last members of a long line of North Aston families, and a person who had made a considerable contribution to the village over many decades. Several attendees added their own personal appreciation of Norman, and it was agreed that the Meeting should express its condolences to Norman's family.

9. Mikron Theatre Company

The Mikron Theatre Company has expressed a wish to return to North Aston on Thursday, June 18, 2026. RH said that the village has been asked to choose between two new productions, and details could be found on the group's website.

10. Christmas Activities

There was a discussion about Mulled Wine for *Carols on the Green*. MS and MP agreed to make batches, and MP offered to coordinate. Three more volunteers were required. A comment from CB was misheard, which suggested he would ask Neil Nicholson to provide wood for a bonfire. This was later clarified, and CB was actually expressing his hope that NN would again lead the singing. It is hoped that this will be the case. CB offered to prepare the bonfire.

It was noted that Annie Savage had offered to coordinate the *Village Wassail*. Originally scheduled to follow the Carol Service on 21st December, it would now take place on Monday 22nd.

11. Defibrillator

MS said there was currently no update

12. Any other business

CB stated that the PCC had expressed a wish that the next Village Fête be staged on July 4th 2026. Those present agreed that, provided it didn't clash with Duns Tew or Steeple Aston, this would be acceptable.

MP asked that the Meeting show its appreciation to Christopher Woodhead for his tenure as Chair for the last three years. This was met with general approval, and thanks were expressed.

13. Date of next meeting TBC.

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The very sad passing of Norman West at the end of November represents a substantial milestone in our village community's history. He was the very last of that older generation who had been born in the village pre-World War II and who had lived here all his life. They have now all gone. It's a significant moment.

When he was 66 Norman recorded five pages of reminiscences about his own and village life for the precious *North Aston - A Millennium* book (thank you Marcus, John and Stephen for it). As you would expect from him, they are very informative and clear, but also modest and amusing.

He was born in 1933, and he talks about life growing up in the village in those days - no running water, just one fireplace for heating and cooking, a bucket under a seat in an outhouse for a WC, no electricity, a guttering candle that got blown out by the draughts as you went to bed.

Out the back were a couple of pigs that were home-butchered, salted and hung up on hooks inside - that was about the only meat they had through the winter unless they caught a rabbit or someone shot a crow.

They got eggs from their chickens, bread from the village baker, milk from whoever had a cow and they grew their own fruit and veg and preserved them as best they could to eat through the winter. They also of course collected many hedgerow fruit and nuts in the autumn.

The village shop provided the few simple essentials that they needed and could afford. That's how life was then and what he describes was almost exactly how his parents and grandparents had lived before him. He, with his brothers and sister and other old village families, lived their lives as a continuation of those previous generations. Norman was part of the shoulder generation, growing up in the old world, but seeing enormous change as the years went by, the latest of which was the installation of the village ground-source heating scheme - previously unheard of year-round hot water and heating.

He followed his father and grandfather into farm work on one of the tenanted farms; it's what most people had always done who weren't employed at the Hall or the Manor, and then went into the building trade.

In their spare time they grew every kind of fruit and veg in their back gardens and in the allotments, and Norman's allotment



was always the very best, the most beautifully kept and the most productive of them all (and his strawberries were famously large and hugely delicious). He worked very hard in all weathers to make it so; of course the veg patch in his back garden was equally productive, and he grew lovely flowers in there too. He made a very beautiful annual strip flower garden on the Green side of his wall, admired by hundreds of people.



It was a life lived, for him, his contemporaries and ancestors, in complete harmony with nature, in spite of all its struggles and setbacks. He was born, grew up and then lived his whole life at 22 The Green. There he brought his new bride Eileen, and there their two daughters Linda and Tracey grew up.

He rarely left the village after he retired, and when he did so occasionally for a short family holiday, he always said how lovely it was to be back. The last thing he would ever dream of doing would have been to jet off to Alicante for a week or two. Life in the village that he loved, with all the neighbours that he knew, with the drama of the changing seasons, the beauty of the land and the trees and hedgerows, the panoply of all the wildlife, was more than enough. We should all think deeply about that.

The only time I think that he went abroad was when he was sent to Korea on National Service, during the Korean War. Norman walked with a slightly military gait, even when a bit bent from age, which he may have acquired in the army. You would see him all around the village doing things or visiting people, often with a dog, and he visited every house every month to distribute the *North Aston News* for many years.



Private Norman West, aged 20, of the Sound Locating Company, 61st Light Battery, Royal Artillery. Preparing for the Battle of The Hook near Panmunjom, Korea in 1953.

You would frequently see him crossing the road from number 22 to the allotments - he never seemed to look out for traffic, it just avoided him. If you met him on his rounds he was invariably cheerful and often responded with a twinkle in his eye and an amusing remark.

Norman was a practising Christian, very involved with the Church, and never missed a service or failed to ring the five-minute bell. He was a member of the PCC for decades, mowed the churchyard unflinchingly, and was a long-term bell ringer. He had little need to be reminded what the Ten Commandments were, he simply naturally practised them. He truly loved his neighbours and was always ready to go and help anyone in need, or give them advice from his great store of practical

knowledge and good sense. He was a very kind man and you never heard him say something mean or nasty about other people. What an example to all of us who knew him.

He was as involved in village life as anyone. He would never need to be asked to come and help erect marquees and things; he just showed up and did it, staying until it was finished. He clearly remembered how things had been done in the past and by whom, and that was always hugely useful. So many people will remember him running the *Bowling for the Pig* at the Village Fête every year and produced an immense amount of well-controlled hilarity and good humour. He was very much involved in the village Flower & Produce Show from its inception, and of course won many prizes.

His opinion was invariably sought at meetings and what he said was always sensible and straightforward. He really didn't like complicated arguments (or sermons) - he would say 'I can't be doing with all that'.

A major interest in his life was the work of the Royal British Legion, the wonderful charity that serves members of the armed forces, veterans and their families. He had after all served in a theatre of war himself (where over 1,000 of his comrades-in-arms perished), and had known all the families who had lost fathers and sons in both World Wars. He read their names in Church every Remembrance Sunday, and really cared that they should be remembered properly. Each year he walked round every house in the village collecting for the Poppy Appeal, always raising a good sum of money. He was a long term member of the Legion's Deddington Branch, was their President from 2001 to 2008, and usually bore a standard at their Remembrance Day parade. "We will remember them".

A great feature of Norman's life was his frugality. He never seemed to waste anything and rarely bought new things. Why buy new stuff when you could just as easily mend, or repurpose what you already had? Of course he wasn't in the least bit mean, he just didn't seem to want new things, clothes or shiny gizmos. Many of us may expect new things that we buy to last five or ten years; he expected them to last a lifetime, and they did. He came from a generation whose principle was 'make do and mend'. Such a great example to all of us as our mouse hovers over the Buy Now button on our Amazon Basket full of here today and gone tomorrow things. You can see the result of all that up at the Ardley Recycling centre every day of the week.

Above all he adored his children, grandchildren and great grandchildren and imbued in them a sense of belonging to this place, of loving and cherishing it. They all either live in the village or come frequently and carry on what is now six generations of his family engrained in this lovely place. Contrast that with the fast coming and going of people in all the new builds that are happening everywhere; they hardly have time to say hello to their neighbours before they're off again.

In Norman we have lost a true icon of what it means to belong to and form part of the nurturing of a community, our community. He showed us how to be modestly content with our lot, quietly to celebrate the natural world, to battle on in good times and bad (and in good weathers and bad), and to leave behind an example that is hugely worth following.

We are extremely fortunate in our village that the Taylor landlords are very much in tune with what Norman stood for. He stood for the best. KBB



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The Church MATTERS



Happy New Year!

I pray that you have all had a wonderful Christmas holiday full of Love, Joy, Hope and Peace. One of the things I love most about the holidays is gathering together as a family, particularly over a meal. Gathering around a table to eat is a wonderful social occasion, especially when celebrating. I love the conversations, be they comical or debates about serious topics, all wrapped in silly anecdotes, and tied together with stories, creating a perfect present of new memories.

Even scientists tell us about the enormous benefits of eating together, beyond the increase in social skills. Eating together generally means we eat better food due to a preference for home cooking over fast food, with increased protein and fibre and less sugar, though this doesn't perhaps apply to the traditional Christmas dinner. Also, when we eat together we generally eat more slowly which in turn improves our digestion. Apparently if we eat whilst multitasking, such as working or watching TV, we are more likely to swallow air, which is not beneficial. Eating together also provides enormous benefits for our mental health, reducing our stress levels and combating loneliness and depression.

Virtually every religion and culture has special celebratory meals, which both help tell their faith story and help build community. The Bible both begins and ends with meals, God's first words to humans is an invitation to eat and ending with the wonderful image of a heavenly banquet. Jesus regularly ate with people, from his first miracle at a wedding celebration or providing a picnic lunch for 5000, through to his last meal when he celebrated the Passover with his disciples. Jesus gathered with people, eating with them whilst sharing stories and exploring the issues of the day and building community.

We'd be delighted if you'd like to gather with us each Tuesday evening at the Red Lion for *The Gathering*, an informal discussion group exploring the relevance of biblical stories for our lives in 2026. Starting 13th January, we will look at the meals Jesus shared: it's an opportunity this new year to connect in new ways with our community, with ourselves and with God!

God bless,

Harriet

Please note – my usual day off is a Monday.

The Reverend Harriet Orridge is Rector of the Parishes of Steeple Aston, North Aston and Tackley.

You can contact the Rector by phone on **01869 932224** or by email: harriet.sntchurch@gmail.com

You may also contact members of the North Aston PCC: Church Wardens: Clive Busby, (casb@north-aston.com, Tel: 340470) and Richard Bailey, Tony Godwin (Treasurer), Vicky Taylor (Secretary), Annabel Bevan, Ginny Stay, Jeremy Taylor, Kildare Bourke Borrowes, and Sarah Godwin (co-opted).



Church Services in January 2026

NORTH ASTON	S.ASTON	TACKLEY
Sunday January 4th		
9:30 am Epiphany Crib Service	11:00 am Holy Communion Book of Common Prayer	5:30 pm Evensong
Tuesday January 6th		
6:00 pm Taize Service	No Service	No Service
Sunday January 11th		
9:30 am Morning Prayer	11:00 am Family Service	10:30 am Covenant Service at the Methodist Church
Sunday January 18th		
9:30 am Holy Communion	11:00 am Holy Communion	5:30 pm Evensong
Sunday January 25th		
9:30 am Morning Prayer	11:00 am Morning Prayer	5:30 pm Holy Communion
Sunday February 1st		
9:30 am Holy Communion Book of Common Prayer	11:00 am Holy Communion Book of Common Prayer	5:30 pm Evensong
Sunday February 8th		
9:30 am Morning Prayer	11:00 am Family Service	5:30 pm Holy Communion

This schedule is reproduced in good faith. The Editor cannot be held responsible for any errors or changes. To be sure of all this month's services, please visit: www.sntchurch.com

Announcements

Deddington Farmers' Market

The first Farmers' Market of the New Year will take place on Saturday 24th December, from 9 am to 12:30 pm. **Important!** Due to previous parking issues, PCSO officers may be in attendance to enforce sensible parking. Visitors can now use the car park behind Orchard House in Hopcraft Lane (OX15 OTD, W3W: /// guests.gliding.astounded) as well as the school in Earl's Lane.

Dog Walking Service

Evelyn's Dog Walking Service is still available evenings and weekends @ £5 / hr. Message or call Lucinda on 07869 282227.

Pop-up Pub

The North Aston Pop-up Pub will meet in the Old Bakery on Friday 9th January this month, from 7pm. See Page 2 for more details.

Road Closure

The A4260 dual carriageway will be closed for a couple of nights this month, from the 14th to 16th, between 8 pm and 6 am, to allow for re-dressing the road surface. The official detour for Oxford-Banbury traffic is via the A44 (Chipping Norton) and A361 and B4031 (Deddington, via Swerford and Hempton) but expect local traffic to use the Middle Aston and Duns Tew roads.

Congestion Charges

The period of 'grace' for the Oxford Congestion Charge has now expired. Future transgressions will result in PCNs in the post.

Reporting Fraud

Anyone familiar with reporting online fraud will have heard of *Action Fraud*. As of 4th December the name has changed, and it is now known as *Report Fraud*. If you experience an attempt to scam you, or you have actually suffered fraud through Phishing, email or text, then report it to www.reportfraud.police.uk

Driving to Ukraine

Congratulations to Astonites Graham Porcas, Greg Elphick and Cara Cox for making it all the way to Ukraine last month.

They raised over £8000 to procure a good quality 4x4 truck, equip it (including a much-needed drone detector) and then drive it to Ukraine. Their vehicle was delivered with seven other trucks and an ambulance to the Ukrainian military in Lviv just before Christmas. All three have since returned to the UK, safe and sound. The truck has been repainted and is already operating on the front line, helping to save lives.

Date Change

This month's Steeple Talk entitled *When Design Goes Wrong*, by retired engineer Stuart Cummings, will now take place on Thursday 22nd January in SA Church, starting 7:15 for 7:30. Why are things so complicated, and take so long to build?

The North Aston defibrillator is located in the porch at 4 Somerton Road. CPR & Defibrillator training sessions are arranged from time to time. For more information or to book a session, please contact Mark Stay: 347806



January Birthdays

Ava Obinna (4th)

Iona Le Clercq (11th)

Lars Oliver Archie Sharp (12th)

Kyle Hite (19th)

Lisa Honess (31st)



Many Happy Returns to all the North Aston residents who celebrate birthdays this month. If you're not listed, or know someone who should be, please let us know.

NORTH ASTON FARM SHOP

TEMPORARY CLOSURE

After a busy first month-and-a-half, Nick and the staff at the Farm Shop are taking a well-earned break. The shop will be closed for the first two weekends in January, but will re-open on Friday 16th. Please do check the village WhatsApp group for any updates.

In the meantime, the North Aston Farms Honesty Shop will remain open 8am-7pm, seven days a week at The Old Bakehouse. You can find the Honesty Shop at What3Words: /// branch.sunroof.diplomats

Thanks so much for your patience and support, and everyone involved wishes you a very Happy New Year!



North Aston News

The *North Aston News* is edited by Marcus Potts and designed and produced by CMC Graphics. It is printed by Nicholsons of North Aston, and distributed monthly, free of charge, to all the residents of the Parish of North Aston. A full-colour electronic edition is also sent out to an extensive emailing list every month. To be included in that list, please contact the *News*, stating your wish to be added to the mailing list. Contributions are welcome, which need to be in an electronic format (except Classifieds and Announcements, which may be hand written). To submit an item please email: info@north-aston.co.uk. All images should be at the highest possible resolution. The Editor strives to adhere to the Editors' Code of Practice, and reserves the right to amend or modify content, where appropriate, and to express editorial control. All content is copyright the original author and/or CMC Graphics. © 2024.

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