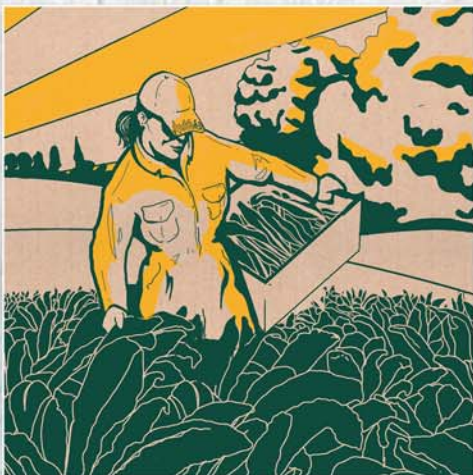


NORTH ASTON

NEWS

May 2026

#427



OXFORDSHIRE
art
WEEKS

NORTH ASTON NEWS

MAY 2026, No:427

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Notes from the Chair

We have the Parish Meeting AGM this month, with various important matters to debate - the Agenda is below. If you're able, please do come along. As those who regularly attend such Meetings will know, the village is facing a number of significant costs. One of those is the need to replace the bus shelter on the main road, which is in a poor state. It might also benefit from being resited, and we appear to be making good progress on that front. However, we do need to consider ways of raising money, and there have already been some imaginative suggestions. In association with the annual Flower & Produce Show, there are plans on creating a North Aston calendar for next year (see pages 3 & 6), and we can look forward to a village quiz in the autumn. There are also plans for events in the newly-created Community Hub above the Farm Shop - and that prompts a mention of Oxfordshire Artweeks, which will see several North Aston artists getting together to stage a joint exhibition there - see page 8. They'd appreciate your support.

The Fête is drawing close, and the first Committee Meeting will be held this month. If you'd like to be involved, please volunteer ... before you get dragooned!



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

Village Meeting & AGM - May 12th

The official Parish Meeting AGM will take place in the Old Bakehouse on Tuesday 12th May, starting at 7:00 pm. The Agenda is as follows:

Parish Meeting

1. Welcome
2. Election of Officers
3. Approval of Minutes:
AGM (09/01/25, published February 2025 *North Aston News*) Village Meeting (19/02/26 published March 2025 *NAN*)
4. Treasurers Report
5. Constitution of the Parish Meeting
6. Precept
7. Any Other Business

Village Forum

8. Approval of Minutes (19/02/26 published March 2025 *NAN*)
9. Constitution of the Village Forum
10. Treasurers Report and Village Bank Accounts
11. Traffic Calming
12. Mid-Cherwell Neighbourhood Plan and other developments
13. Bus Shelter
14. Village Fête
15. Fundraising
16. Mikron Theatre
17. Marquees
18. Defibrillator
19. Any Other Business

Village Fête - July 4th

A regular reminder regarding the Fête. Please could you continue setting aside items for the various stalls at the Fête, including:

- Books and DVDs in good condition
- Bottles & Cans for the Bottle Stall
- China plates, bowls and ornaments for the China Shy
- Top quality Bric-a-Brac
- Plants for the Plant Stall

High-value prizes are also needed for the raffle. The Fête Committee will meet this month. Please watch out for messages on the WhatsApp group.

Cover: North Aston artists will be exhibiting as part of this month's Oxfordshire Artweeks. See p8.

Planning

There have been no new applications relating to the village in the past month, and all previous applications have now been dealt with. To examine past applications in detail, or check for new ones, search for "North Aston" on the CDC Planning Register web page at www.planningregister.cherwell.gov.uk/ Please see the feature on the proposed Ardley Rail Freight Interchange on Page 10.



Thank you ...

On behalf of North Aston PCC, may we most warmly thank the Village, and everyone who helped at the fête, for their contribution to the church.

With dwindling congregations, we rely so much on the generosity of our wider community to keep the church open and available as a resource for us all, and for future generations.

With thanks again, Vicky Taylor, PCC Secretary

The Village Forum shared the profits from last year's Fête with the Church, and Vicky kindly sent a card to say thankyou.

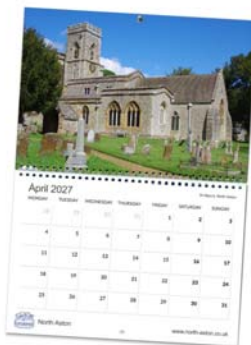
On the Buses

The village is still waiting to see those elusive temporary chicanes. The latest update suggests they will arrive by the end of this month, and confirmation has been received from the constituency MP, Sean Woodcock.

An update is also anticipated soon on the status of the bus shelter and bus-stop on the main road, currently situated just south of the crossroads. Concerns have long been expressed about the current siting, and the fact that any buses stopping there obscure the view of traffic approaching from the dual carriageway. The shelter itself is also in a very poor state of repair, and will need to be replaced. Doing that, and moving it to a new position at the same time, seems like the best solution. We have now had an update from OCC regarding ownership of the existing lay-bys, both north and south of the junction, which may have a bearing on what happens next. Further details at the Village Meeting on May 14th.

A Year in the Making

As a community, we need to raise funds to replenish the Village Fund. There are plans in hand for community events, including an Autumn Quiz, a supper evening and music events. Another suggestion is to create a village calendar, linked to the F&PS photography competition. If you'd like one of your photos to be *Picture of the Month*, then get snapping! Photos must have been taken since August 2025 and either featured in the *News*, or entered into the F&PS competition. Images must be available as high resolution digital files at A4 (300 dpi) or larger.



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



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

Life's a Flutter ...

100 Club memberships are due for renewal this month. Envelopes will be dropping through letterboxes to all existing members over the next few days. Please can these be returned with the annual subscription to Sue Hatzigeorgiou at Meadow Cottage (the house with the white VW van in the driveway!) as soon as possible.

Sue would love to welcome new members to the 100 Club. For newer residents who may wonder what it is and how it works, the 100 Club was set up in 1999 to raise money for the village's Millennium celebrations. It's still going strong, but it could be so much stronger! Annual participation is £5. Every member chooses at least one number from those available, and each month two prize-winners are drawn from a very special tin. You can subscribe as many times as you like, at £5 per number. Prizes vary through the year. Most months the first prize is £10 and the second is £5. However, each quarter the first prize increases to £25, and once a year there is the big one - £100! Money left over after the prize money has been allocated goes into village funds.

The more members we have, the more money is raised. If you would like to join or know more about the 100 Club, please contact Sue directly on 07887 854708. This could be your chance to win one of the prizes and contribute towards the village - but remember, you have to be in it to win it!



April winners were:

1st Prize (£100): Valerie Short (#27)

2nd Prize (£5): Tom Godwin (#103)

Congratulations! See feature above for more information.

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



North Aston Nature Notes

With Stephen Rees

Hello to all, and a thank you to those people who've recently said how much they look forward to reading my bit in the News. It's good to know.

Firstly this month, a bit of good news and a bit of bad. The good news is, we have seen four or five Swallows in the last couple of weeks, down in our little corner of the village, but the bad news is ... we have only seen four or five Swallows, and no more. Just a few years ago, well a bit longer maybe, we could sit in our summer house and count perhaps a hundred or more, swooping along a foot above the grass, catching all the flies, and then sitting in a long row along the electric cables. Well, there are no electric cables now, no long meadow grass, and no Swallows.

We also didn't see a single House Martin last year at all. Sadly, I think we won't see any this year either, but they do go to other places in the village. Please keep an eye open for them, and let me know if you spot any.

On another note, Wendy and I walked down to the flood meadows a couple of weeks ago. It was freezing cold and windy, but we took hot sausage rolls and a drink and sat and watched for an hour. We were lucky enough to see a Barn Owl in the air, and lots of ducks, but what we were really there for was to see the return of our beloved Curlew. As usual, it was Wendy who spotted one first. She always does! Her eyesight and patience is so much better than mine. We only saw one, but hopefully a mate will have returned by now. We didn't hear its ghostly call, which we so love, but will stay away from the fields now, at least for a while, so as not to disturb them. It is always wonderful to have them come home.

One of my other favorite moments this month was in Somerton, in the field where we have our little clay pigeon club. While we were shooting there last month, we watched four Hares not a hundred yards from us. One was in its *form*, the shallow depression in the ground where they rest and hide during the day, but the other three were chasing about and 'boxing'. It was flipping brilliant! I haven't watched boxing hares for years, and it's a real treat. When Wendy got home from her bike ride I couldn't wait to tell her, but she just said "Oh yes, I saw lots of hares today." Flippin' heck. I never seem to win any more!

We have a very clever Great Tit in our garden. I has learned how to be a woodpecker. I see him every morning, while I sit and have my smoke and cup of tea. He has worked out that our bee hotels are full of juicy grubs, and he stands on the hotels like a woodpecker, pulls the mud plug out, and gets the grub. Very clever little bird. It's a good job we have loads of full bee hotels.

Tony and Bev have two equally clever birds that keep them glued to their front window, and have done for a few years now, every spring. They are lucky enough to have a pair of Mistle Thrushes on their lawn. They're one of my favourites, steeped in folk lore and extraordinarily clever birds. They hop along, turning their heads to one side and then the other, listening to the ground, hopping a bit more, doing it again, and then suddenly stabbing at the ground. Seconds later, they're pulling out a worm. Tony believes they can hear the worms moving, just like the Blackbird I mentioned last month. I wonder if it's a vibration they can sense, through their feet? Either way, they have taught themselves, or been shown by



An artistic interpretation of Hares Boxing, in deference to Oxfordshire Artweeks.

parent birds, how to catch worms and they know that Tony's short grass is a good hunting ground.

I'm self employed now, and one of my regular jobs, which I do a couple of days each week, is looking after a deer park and three lakes. One lake we re-stocked last year with some beautiful carp and big bream, the correct old English fish for an old English pond. Last autumn I noticed some fish scales on the bank, so we put some wildlife cameras out and, just as I thought, in the middle of the night, along came an Otter. Oh, flippin' heck ... that's the end of that project!

I know many people are excited to see an Otter, or love that they have been re-introduced, but I'm not so sure. Our poor River Cherwell, the river that my Dad loved so much, and taught us to respect, is nearly dead. So many things have changed in the countryside in my lifetime, and while I accept that things do change – that's life and the countryside – I'm not sure the Cherwell can support Otters.

Times change, and sometimes it makes me a little melancholy, but there are still wonders of nature to behold. Wendy called me out the other day to witness a proper Indiana Jones moment. A hundred ants were chasing a spider across our patio. They caught up with it, attacked and mobbed it, and then dragged it back across the patio. It was a vast journey for them, and then they hauled it down a crack into their nest. I felt sorry for the poor unlucky spider, just out minding its own business, and then game over, but that's nature for you.

Cheers, Steve & Wendy

A decorative poster for Deddington Antiques & Flea Market. The text reads "Deddington ANTIQUES & FLEA MARKET" in stylized fonts. Below the text are illustrations of various antique items including a clock, a teapot, a vase, and a glass. At the bottom, it says "Every Friday - 8:00 to 12:00 Holly Tree Hall, Horse Fair". The entire poster is framed with ornate, golden scrollwork.

St Mary's APCM

The Annual Parochial Church Meeting, or APCM, will take place on Wednesday 13th May from 7.30 pm in St Mary's.

This is a crucial gathering in the church calendar, and begins with the *Meeting of Parishioners*. All parish residents are welcome to attend this first part of the evening, during which the Church Wardens will be elected. It will be followed by the APCM itself, which is open only to lay persons whose names appear on the parish electoral roll.

The APCM starts with the Election of PCC Members, and will be followed by various reports that will highlight what the PCC has achieved in the past 12 months, and what is planned for the future. There will be a Financial Statement for the year ending 31 December 2026.

The Blandford Menace!

There was a brief mention in last month's issue, but since then the threat levels have increased. Yes, the Blandford Fly is with us again.

These notorious little flies are now getting more daring, and entering homes, so please be especially alert. They are tiny, but vicious. The larval stage develops in damp ground, such as ditches, ponds and streams, but when the adult female emerges, her first instinct is to seek out fresh blood. They rarely fly above waist height, so keep ankles and legs covered, especially on warm days. Some people are much more reactive, and an untreated bite can easily turn septic.



Slowing Down

As a result of last year's consultations, it has been agreed that various speed limits along the A4260 between Banbury and Kidlington will be reduced. Indeed, some, such as the limit in Bodicote (40 mph down to 30 mph) have already been introduced, and now have warning signs for motorists.

The reductions elsewhere vary. A drop from 60 mph to 40 mph will apply around Hopcrofts Holt. The limit at Shipton-on-Cherwell, currently 50 mph, will reduce to 40 mph. Elsewhere, most of those sections not already limited to 50 mph will now match that figure, including the A4260 past Rousham, Tackley, Steeple Aston, North Aston, and from Deddington to Adderbury. The limit along the dual carriageway will be cut from 70 mph to 60 mph. Similarly, the adjoining A4095 at Bunkers Hill and westwards towards Upper Campsfield will drop from 60 mph to 40 mph.

In all instances, keep an eye open for new roundels announcing the change, and the temporary display of red rectangular warning signs advising of the changes.

Feeling on Top of the Wold!

Hop aboard the most charmingly quirky mobile library you'll ever encounter! Mikron, now marking its 54th year, is back next month, on Thursday 18th June at 7pm, with an all-new production. Entitled *Top of the Wold*, this laugh-out-loud quest through a patchwork of culture and community celebrates the forgotten, the resilient, and the wonderfully eccentric enigma that is, was, the Mobile Library.

With other Oxfordshire villages keen to book Mikron, we continue to be so fortunate that they return here every year. Be sure to set the date in your diary.

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

NORTH ASTON FARM SHOP

NEW OPENING HOURS!

From **THURSDAY 14TH MAY!**

THURSDAY - SATURDAY
9AM - 6PM

SUNDAY
10AM - 4PM

FRESH, LOCAL & ORGANIC PRODUCE

THE PEACH BARN, SOMERTON ROAD
NORTH ASTON, OX25 6HX
/// diplomats.lunge.beakers

SCAN FOR UPDATES
(news, offers & what's on)

@northastonfarmshop

Join our weekly newsletter

Follow us on social media

North Aston Gardening Club

It's time to get growing again!!

This year's Flower & Produce Show will be held on Saturday 29th August. Entry forms will be circulated with the July issue of the *NA News*, with all the usual classes, both for produce and flowers, as well as a number of cooking classes.

The Tuffrey Cup will be awarded this year for heaviest beetroot, and there will be a return of the photography competition. The theme will be *North Aston* and photos should be taken within the previous 12 months. We understand that there are plans to produce a village calendar this year and it is hoped that some entries may be included in this (see more elsewhere in the newsletter).

There will of course be the ever-popular Spud-in-a-Tub competition. Pots and potatoes can be collected from outside Bev and Tony's house on the Green (No 21).

We are hoping for lots of entries this year and that many members of the village will find a class suitable for them.

Green Fingered?

Do you fancy yourself as a gardener? Are you running out of space for growing plants in your back garden? Perhaps you'd like to tend your own vegetables, or think the idea of fresh strawberries is just too juicy to be missed?

Well, there is currently some limited availability on the village allotment, ranging from a half-size to a full plot. The only prerequisite is that allotmenters must be residents of North Aston. For further information please contact Tuck on 347727 or email tuck56h@gmail.com

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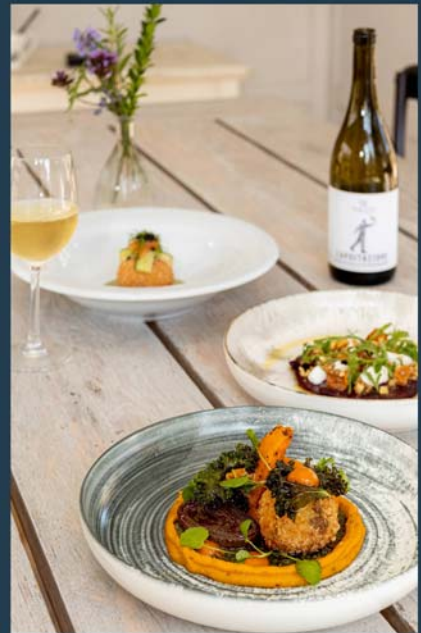


LIFESTYLE

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PLANT NURSERY



MICHELIN YURT

Rosara, The Park, North Aston, OX25 6HL

News from NORTH ASTON FARM SHOP

Greetings ...

It's been a little while since I've written anything for the *News*, but with a few things changing over the coming weeks — and an extra pair of hands in the shop — it felt like a good moment to give a bit of an update.

Firstly, a quick welcome to Hannah, who many of you will have already met. She lives on the neighbouring farm in Duns Tew and has been a brilliant addition to the shop - not just in helping keep things running smoothly on our very busy Saturday mornings, but also in freeing up a bit more of my time to step back and think about the bigger picture.

After the busy run-up to Christmas, combined with some unexpected health challenges, I made the decision in January to strip things right back and focus on the basics. So our plans for the community hub and events schedule took a back seat, and the past few months have really been about finding a rhythm that works, and just trying to run a really good farm shop.



On 14th May, it will have been six months since we opened the doors, which feels slightly mad. It's flown by, but also feels like we've been here much longer. There have definitely been a few challenges along the way — particularly around cash flow and a bit of chopping and changing on the staffing front — but things are starting to settle now, and it feels like we've landed on something that works.

As well as all the fresh organic veg and dairy straight from the farm, we now have a huge selection of fresh bread and pastries every Friday and Saturday from Forge House Bakery (and I



usually try to make sure a few survive into Sunday...), and the coffee machine is slowly but surely becoming part of people's routines — a quick stop for a croissant and a takeaway coffee seems to be catching on.

The fresh meat side has also really taken shape. We've got a regular supply now, with locally sourced wild venison coming in most weeks, alongside organic pork, chicken and beef (and lamb coming soon!). We also have a good range of fresh pies every week, and have just started stocking some incredible sausage rolls and pork pies from the Salt Pig Curing Co in Chippy.

We've also now got our premises licence sorted, which has allowed us to expand the drinks offering quite a bit. There's now a good range of organic wines, beers from Hook Norton Brewery and other local producers, a growing cider selection, and plenty of non-alcoholic options as well.

And we've been expanding the pantry side of things too, which can sometimes get a bit overshadowed by the fresh stuff. So as well as the more eye-catching bits, there's now a really solid run of cupboard staples and household supplies (including cleaning liquid refills), so you can do your whole weekly shop without leaving the village!



Change to Shop Opening Hours

From 14th May, we'll be extending our opening days to include Thursdays and our opening hours will be as follows:

Thursday, Friday & Saturday: 9am – 6pm
Sunday: 10am – 4pm

What's Coming Up

We're looking forward to gently restarting our events programme over the coming months:

- ★ **ArtWeeks Exhibition** – featuring local artists, running from 8th–17th May
- ★ **Open Mic Nights** – 3rd Thursday of each month (starting from May 21st)
- ★ **Slow Sundays** – relaxed craft mornings on the 4th Sunday of the month

Our upstairs space is also now available to hire for small gatherings and events (with discounted rates for the village).



OXFORDSHIRE
art
WEEKS

**Food, Farming and
Life in North Aston**

To mark this year's Oxfordshire Artweeks, there will be an exhibition at North Aston Farm Shop to celebrate local life and agriculture through art and craft.

Artists and makers from North Aston will come together this May for a group exhibition exploring food, farming, and everyday life in the village.

Entitled *Making & Farming in North Aston*, the exhibition will be staged in the Community Hub at the North Aston Farm Shop and will be open on May 9th and 10th, and from 14th to 17th, between 10 am and 6 pm.

In recent years, the name North Aston has become synonymous with local organic food. The beef and arable farm went organic in 1992, and today hosts several small-scale food and farming enterprises, including North Aston Organics, North Aston Dairy, and the North Aston Farm Shop & Community Hub. These independent yet interconnected projects share a common mission: producing food in ways that care for both land and people, whilst strengthening the local economy and food security.



Inspired by this rich farming heritage, the exhibition brings together a range of practices including painting, basketry, textiles, photography, and illustration. The group includes people who work on North Aston's farms, alongside residents and regular customers, offering a wide range of perspectives on the landscape and community.

Works on display will include baskets woven from gleaned crop residues, ceremonial clothing marking key moments in the agricultural calendar, mixed media prints exploring hedgerows, dry point intaglio prints of vegetables, and textiles and sculptures made from plant and animal fibres, among other pieces.

"The exhibition reflects the diversity of making that happens here in North Aston, as well as the breadth of materials, stories, and voices. As our first exhibition together, it's a celebration of some of the creative practices that emerge in response to this landscape. Rather than a comprehensive picture, it offers one set of responses, and we hope it opens up further conversation" said Fred Branson, who works at North Aston Organics and has been involved in organising the exhibition.

The exhibition is free to attend, and visitors are welcome to drop in during opening hours.



Above: Annie will be exhibiting a series of dry point intaglio prints of vegetables.

Left: Beth, who works at North Aston Organics, will be exhibiting illustrations that depict scenes from work there.

Right: Fred also works at North Aston Organics. The B&W picture is a portrait of Rachel (previous veg grower on the farm) taken using a camera obscura made from the soil, grasses and trees in Mill Field, along with discarded internet cable.

Front Cover: A montage of illustrations by the exhibiting artists, including Ed Hathaway, a North Aston resident.



Ed Hathaway will be taking part in the North Aston Group Exhibition for Oxfordshire Artweeks (Artist Reference 221). His works include semi-abstract line drawing and paintings, reinterpreting popular cultural imagery through the lens of absurdism and fantasy. You can contact Ed by email on edhathawayfineart@gmail.com or by calling 07957 472801.

Wash, rinse, repeat ...

That old adage about hair-washing seems old hat now – does anyone still follow it? However, with more material now going to recycling, an appeal has come through from the binmen. Please, rinse your plastic waste before throwing it in the bin!

Emptying the bins is a largely thankless task. Occasionally the binmen may find a box of chocolates or a six-pack on the bin-lid at Christmas, but that aside, it's a drudge that demands strenuous physical effort and a strong constitution. The last thing they need is to have to contend with smelly, sticky waste. A warning has now come through to say that some councils are now advising their operatives to ignore over-filled bins and any that contain smelly, un-rinsed materials.

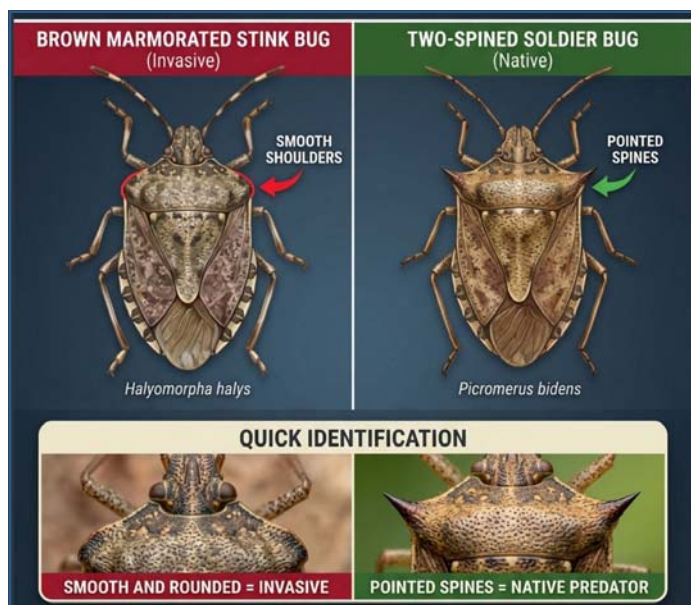
Many sceptics claim that recycling still ends up in landfill, but the *Recycle Now* campaign is keen to dismiss this widespread misconception. "More and more people recycle everyday. This helps to reduce the need for landfill and more costly forms of disposal. Recycling also reduces the need for extracting (mining, quarrying and logging), refining and processing raw materials all of which create substantial air and water pollution. This helps to save energy, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and helping to tackle climate change." They continue: "Recycling is a real success story and we should be proud of what we have achieved as a nation."

In the UK, recycling saves about 10-15 million tonnes of carbon emissions a year, the equivalent of taking 3.5 million cars off the road. So, please, wash, rinse, recycle ...

Is it bugging you?

Have you noticed an increase in shield bugs recently? That may be because there's been an invasion from the Far East.

The familiar British shield bug now has a rival - an invasive species that is proving remarkably adaptable, and persistent. One, the native variety, is a "Goodie". It lives in the garden and is a voracious predator on garden pests. The other, the invader, is a "Baddie". It causes significant damage to crops and vegetables, moves into our homes in autumn, and displaces our home-grown species. It also smells foul if you accidentally squash it, which is probably why it's known as a Stink Bug. The two are easily distinguished by the shoulder spines, so if you spot one, check for those, and feel free to crush the smooth-shouldered Brown Marmorated Stink Bug ... but be sure to do that outside!



Local Elections

Elections are taking place on Thursday 7 May 2026. The poll cards have now been issued to all registered electors. You will have one vote, and can choose from the following five candidates, who are standing for the Deddington Ward:

- Aaron Bliss Green Party
- Gail Collingwood-Turner Reform UK
- James Hartley Liberal Democrats
- Annette Murphy Labour Party
- Eddie Reeves Conservative Party

The polling station in North Aston will be in the Old Bakery. While you do not need to take your polling card with you, it can be helpful for the clerks. However, you will definitely need to take photo ID with you, and you must vote at your assigned polling station. Counting and verification will take place on 8th May, and results will be published that afternoon.

Looking for a Home?



The *English Rural Housing Association* is the landlord of a development of affordable homes at Shepherds Hill, Steeple Aston. The homes were built to meet the housing needs of local people, and there is a "local connection" criterion in place for the allocation of these homes.

One of these shared ownership properties has become available for resale and the Association is looking for a local person who may be interested in purchasing the property.

Initially, applicants needed to have a direct connection to the Parish of Steeple Aston. However, the Association is now opening this opportunity to applicants with a connection to the neighbouring Parishes of Lower Heyford, Middle Aston, North Aston, Duns Tew and Somerton.

If you would like further information about the resale process or the development, please feel free to call Terri Browning, Sales and Lettings Manager on 01483 540872.

The deadline for applications is Tuesday 21st April 2026.

Two-Bedroom House – Shared Ownership
1 Shepherds Hill, Steeple Aston

This property comprises: kitchen, living room, downstairs WC, two bedrooms, bathroom. It also benefits from a garden and parking.

To arrange a viewing and to apply, contact English Rural:



English Rural: 020 7820 7930 option 2
Email: allocations@englishrural.org.uk

Alternatively, visit the website: www.englishrural.org.uk

Ardley SRFI

In early April it was confirmed that Oxfordshire Railfreight Limited had submitted plans to the Secretary of State (on 30th March) for permission to build a new rail-freight interchange on land between Ardley village and the former air base at Upper Heyford.

The development will be adjacent to the existing Chiltern Railways main line (Marylebone to Banbury) and within a mile of Junction 10 of the M40.

The new terminal would be served by a short spur, linking with the main line, and including a complex of new sidings and road-rail interchanges. These would be supported by extensive container storage, around 600,000 square metres of warehousing, ancillary offices, and around 200,000 sqm of additional of mezzanine floorspace. The maximum height of the new buildings would be around 25 metres.

This is seen as a major infrastructure project of “national importance” and is aimed at removing long-distance freight transport from the roads and transferring it to rail. It would relieve the south-east’s network of motorways, such as the M20, M26 and M25, of long-distance and international HGV traffic, heading both to and from the UK, and thereby “reduce carbon emissions and support a more sustainable economy.”

Goods would arrive at the SRFI from across Europe, and be transferred there to lorries, which would then head out onto the M40 for national distribution. British goods heading for export would reverse the process.

Plans include improvements to Junction 10 of the M40 and improvements to the the A43 northwards, with a new roundabout and slip roads on the M40, bypasses for Ardley and Middleton Stoney, and new service roads to Heyford Park. There would also be improvements to Junction 9 of the M40 to reduce congestion on the link between the A34 and M40.

The principal access to the site will be from a new roundabout on the B430, not far from the Ardley Recycling Centre and linking with the planned Ardley Bypass. The current road would be closed to through traffic at the site of the existing narrow rail bridge, although the bridge would be retained for pedestrians and cyclists. It is understood that the creation of the SRFI would not preclude the possible re-opening of the old Ardley Station to passengers.

If approved, the SRFI would take around seven years to build and, once fully operational, would offer employment to around 9000 people.

Because the proposal is classed as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP), it will not go through the standard planning process with Cherwell District Council. Instead, the final decision on whether of not to go ahead will rest with the UK Secretary of State for Transport.

In the meantime, it should be announced imminently whether or not the Planning Inspectorate has accepted the submission for its consideration. If it does, the Mid-Cherwell Neighbourhood Plan Forum will be able to register as an “interested party” and be enabled to present evidence at the Enquiry, which could begin as early as September this year. North Aston is a party to the MCNP, and will be attending meetings of the Forum at which a strategy to consider this major development will be discussed. James Taylor is the village’s nominated representative, but in this instance, will be accompanied by others. If you would like to be included, please let Annie Savage know via email: secretary@north-aston-co.uk.



Book in to The Indian Block Print Co this summer for a series of workshops on all manner of decorative processes, from block-printing on fabric, to working with clay. Begin this month, on May 8th, with a full day of fun focused on Furniture Painting; practising a range of techniques, choosing the right paints, creating test pieces, and upcycling your own furniture.

Full details: www.theindianblockprintco.com

2, Lakeside Farm, Middle Aston, Bicester, OX25 5PP

Open: Monday to Friday 10am to 4:30pm

Email: shop@theindianblockprintco.com

Phone: 01869 349020



The May Blossom has been especially good this year. Photo: Elizabeth Harvey-Lee



The Church MATTERS



After the Resurrection

The Easter Service on the morning of Easter Sunday was a joyful occasion, with enthusiastic singing of favourite hymns as the Paschal candle brought light into the church. There was a warm atmosphere of friendship and fellowship - and of course Easter eggs for all!

In spite of creeping commercialism Christmas and Easter are two moments of celebration in the church calendar which are remembered by most people whether they call themselves Christian or not. They are both part of the rhythm of the year.

It's easy sometimes to think that Easter is more about rabbits and chocolate than it is about the church's most important festival. It also marks a new beginning, for we need to ask - After the resurrection, what then? That's important too!

It started with just eleven fairly unsophisticated men, who began to broadcast Christ's message of hope and to pass on the teaching he had given them about how people should behave to one another. People who believed in and accepted the teaching gradually spread Christianity throughout the world. The idea that everyone should live in peace, demonstrating tolerance, kindness, humility and love for one's neighbours is as fresh today as it was 2,000 years ago. That's the heart of the Easter story. The resurrection made us free from wrongdoing and able to live full, positive and creative lives.

Yes, there have been wrong motives and terrible things have happened in the name of Christianity spread over the years and it is difficult to make amends for the wrongdoing of our forbears, although attempts are being made at least to acknowledge wrongdoing, especially the slave trade and the effects it had on countless lives. Apologies do not seem adequate. However, in spite of such activities it is heartwarming to realise that the Christian values referred to above are subscribed to by the majority of people in the UK, even if they do not accept that they derive from the teaching in the New Testament. If only all of humanity could live ethical lives by following the guidance of Christ in the Gospels, how transformative that would be! Try reading the Beatitudes [Matthew chapter 5 verses 1-11] and see if you can rise to the challenge. Oh ... and I forgot patience and compassion. What a world it would be!

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 on **01869 932224** or by email: **harriet.sntchurch@gmail.com**.



Sermon on the Mount, an 1877 painting by Carl Bloch

Church Services in May 2026

NORTH ASTON	S.ASTON	TACKLEY
Sunday May 3rd		
9:30 am Holy Communion Book of Common Prayer	11:00 am Holy Communion Book of Common Prayer	5:30 pm Evensong
Sunday May 10th		
9:30 am Rogation Sunday Meet @ Allotments	11:00 am Family Service	5:30 pm Holy Communion
Sunday May 17th		
9:30 am Holy Communion	11:00 am Holy Communion	5:30 pm Evensong
Sunday May 24th		
9:30 am Morning Prayer	11:00 am Morning Prayer	9:30 am Family Communion
Sunday May 31st		
No Service	10:30 am United Benefice Holy Communion	No Service
Sunday June 7th		
9:30 am Holy Communion Book of Common Prayer	11:00 am Holy Communion Book of Common Prayer	5:30 pm Evensong

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

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.

Announcements

Deddington Farmers' Market

This month's Farmers' Market will be on Saturday 23rd May from 9 am to 12:20 pm. The roadworks along the main road continue to make access and parking difficult. If visiting from the south, head for Hopcraft Lane OX15 OTD and park behind Orchard House (W3W ///: guests.gliding.astounded).

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

North Aston's Pop-up Pub is now on its summer sabbatical. Instead, gather on the Green every second Wednesday for a game of Aunt Sally – see below. Back in the autumn!

Road Closures

Fir Lane in Middle Aston, between Middle Aston House and Lakeside Farm Business Park, will be subject to closures this month, from 11th May, possibly through to the end of the month. This is to enable Thames Water to carry out essential works. Access to Steeple Aston will be via the main road.

The works by Thames Water in Deddington will also persist throughout the month, with the High Street subject to traffic controls that will steadily move south.

Major roadworks are scheduled for the A4260 dual carriageway between the Middle Aston turn and The Fox towards the end of May, potentially from 30th May to 3rd June, and further disruption and diversions are expected.

Blenheim Palace Food Festival

This year's Food Festival at Blenheim runs from May 23rd to the 25th. This has become a major culinary event held in the walled gardens of Woodstock, with a fantastic line-up of celebrity chefs and experts, amazing food and drink from gourmet delights to street food. Entrance is free to anyone with a valid annual pass or a Park & Gardens day ticket (currently £31).

Artweeks Elsewhere

In addition to the exhibition by North Aston artists at the farm shop, there will be studios open and exhibitions in Middle Aston, Steeple Aston, Upper and Lower Heyford, Caulcott and Deddington. For further information, visit <https://www.artweeks.org>



Aunt Sally is Back!

The Green will be a little busier every second Wednesday from 7pm now that Aunt Sally is back.

The first evening is scheduled for Wednesday 13th May, and then every two weeks, weather permitting.

Check the village WhatsApp group for any news or updates. Just bring along

a bottle of beer or a glass of wine, maybe some nibbles, and enjoy! No need for experience or skill.

May Birthdays

Linda Brown
Clive Busby Hal Busby
Holly Busby Iris Busby
Sarah Godwin
Oscar Le Clercq
Deirdre Oakley
Matthew Rees
Loah Sharp Oscar Taylor



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.

Wellness Garden

Steeple Aston Church and the SA Allotment Society is working to create a *Wellness Garden* in Steeple Aston. The garden will be available to adults who may be experiencing a low point in their lives, and seeking solace and reassurance. They are inviting people to sponsor the project. If you'd be interested in helping, please email flourish.sawg@gmail.com

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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. © 2026.

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