# South Stoke Parish Newsletter

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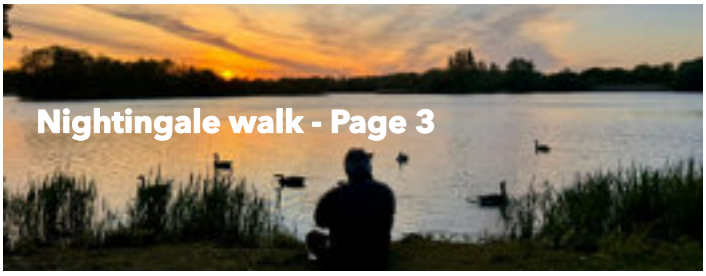

## VACANCY on the Parish Council

## We need another volunteer, please!

Not always the easiest job but one where you can make a real difference to your local community.

- Keeping the village looking great
- Shaping Village initiatives for the benefit of all
- Ensuring everyone gets their say

**Interested? - email clerk@southstoke.org.uk**












# Lime Tree Alpacas

We started farming alpacas at Christmas 2014 with a group of 4 males given as a present, just to keep the grass down on several acres of grassland, as an alternative to mowing.

Two years later we bought three females and the fun started. Males and females were kept apart, genetically the girls were better breeding stock than the original males. The girls were subsequently put to outside stud males and the breeding started in earnest. We now have 33 animals and counting.

Our first cria (baby alpaca) was born in June 2019 in the middle of a dawn thunderstorm. Last summer we had10 crias, a record number for us. We have so far had four of our expected cria so far. Sadly two were premature and despite our efforts died quickly after delivery.



*Lime Tree Ragnar reserve champion South of England Show, with Lou Verrill*

Alpacas are members of the camelid (camel) family and related to the llama, both originate in South America, in the case of alpacas, the Peruvian Andes. There are two main species, the huacaya and the suri. Our herd is exclusively huacaya. Our colours are white, fawn and brown

We started showing our fleeces in 2021. Since then we've had good results, a highlight being reserve supreme champion at the BAS National Alpaca Show.

We started halter (live animal) showing in 2023 at the national show and since then our animals have won prizes at every show attended. Our product, woven from yarn made from the spun fibre harvested from our herd also wins first prizes, including the national show.

We learn a great deal from showing the animals. Being able to see and examine leading stud animals and females provides a really valuable insight into genetics and breeding excellence for which we are aiming. Our last show of this season, the South of England saw each beastie collect a rosette including two first places. Shearing was at the start of May, followed by unpacking (birthing) which continues until early July. The cycle also includes remating the mothers for next season. Gestation is around 350 days.



Keep an eye out for farm days when you can visit us. The next likely date will be August bank holiday to coincide with the village open gardens.

**John and Lou Verrill, Lime Tree Alpacas**

Melrose Cottage B & B



Rose Howarth
36 Milldown Road
Goring-on-Thames Berkshire rg80bd
01491 873040
e.mail
howarthr523@gmail.com
07798663897

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# South Stoke Wildlife and Conservation Group

## May Fair By Tats Nsamba



South Stoke Wildlife and Conservation Group once again held a successful stall at the May Fair, focusing this year on bat conservation. The stall included displays by Angela Mills, author of Bobby The Brown Long-Eared Bat, and bat boxes made by Goring Cubs group and Andy Cruse (aka Bat Man).

The infamous SSWCG cake naming competition was a hit again this year. Boris the Bat flew his way to the winner in Goring who shared him with her grandchildren.

## SSWCG Nightingale Walk By Nathalie Weekes

On 28 April 2026, a very windy evening, SSWCG was lucky to have the expertise of Paul Rainsden. He very kindly agreed to lead a walk around the Theale lakes to hear nightingales sing. Having never heard a nightingale before, the thought of hearing one was very exciting. A male nightingale can make over 1000 different sounds and around 250 different songs. Nightingales are famous for singing at night during their mating season from mid April to early June. They arrive from Africa where they spend their winter months to South-east England and have been heard in places around southern England including at the M4 Reading motorway services!



Paul identified a variety of different bird songs and the group witnessed a pair of Cetti's Warblers wing flapping at each other in a nearby bush and Oystercatchers at the start of the walk. Despite the wind trying to drown out all sound, it was possible to hear 4 nightingales, one of which was very clear and produced a range of sounds from deep croaks to high trills, bubbling sounds and whistles. All of the birds were showing on the Merlin app which helped identify which birds were singing around us for those with less birdsong experience. As the light began to fade and the sun dipped toward the horizon, the walk ended with a refreshment break at the Fox & Hounds pub.

It was a truly magical experience and one to look forward to again in the future. Although we didn't manage to spot any of the nightingales that were singing in the bushes, maybe it will be possible to spot one next time. It wasn't Berkley square or the m4 services but Theale makes a very good runner up. Be sure to sign up early if we run the event next year as the places booked up very quickly this year.

## Charity walk along The Ridgeway – Thursday 4 June

Tim Goodman (aged 67) and Sara Chegwidden (50) are walking an inspiring 100-miles in 5 days, in aid of Cancer Research UK. They will walk from the iconic Avebury Stones in Wiltshire to Ivinghoe Beacon in Buckinghamshire, tackling the full length of The Ridgeway.

Day 3 of the challenge will take place on Thursday 4 June. They will stop at The Bull in Streatley for lunch at approximately 1pm before continuing on through Goring towards the White Hart at Nettlebed, where their day will finish at about 6pm.



Every bit of encouragement – whether it's a cheer, wave, or people lining parts of the route, will make a huge difference as they take on this challenge for everyone affected by cancer.

# South Stoke School

## May Fayre



We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to everyone for your wonderful support during the May Fayre. The children were immensely proud of performing on their brass instruments with the Goring and Streatley band for the first time and they all enjoyed following this with the May Queen crowning and a lovely maypole dancing display. The May Fayre raised around £1,000 for the school from the sale of raffle tickets, bottle stall and teddy tombola. The money will be put towards building a new library in school as part of our activities involved in the National Year of Reading, helping to develop the children's love of reading. The remaining money will be spent on extra-curricular activities and equipment, including transport for school trips, after school clubs and playground equipment. Thank you everyone who helped with the event, bought tickets and attended the event on the day – it was lovely to see the school and village looking so wonderful.

Look out for us at our next event which will be the Wallingford Carnival on Saturday 20th June, which this year has the theme "Wallingford Rocks!"

## Ofsted



In February we were visited by the Ofsted inspection team and we are pleased to say that the new report is now available on the school website. The report highlighted that the school is a friendly place where children feel happy, safe and well looked after and behave well. The children are treated as individuals and the school's inclusive ethos is one of its strengths as well as its pastoral care. Pupils enjoy coming to school, show curiosity about new learning and take pride in what they do. The children benefit from a range of activities and a broad curriculum that help them grow in confidence, independence and resilience.

In essence the pupils themselves describe the school as a place where they feel happy, known and valued.

## Friends of South Stoke School

Are you passionate about the village school, children and the community? If yes, then please consider becoming a 'Friend of South Stoke School'. You'll be kept informed about school activities and news, as well as being able to engage in fundraising activities and school events.




Joining is a great way to make new friends, get to know the school environment and make a real difference to our school community. There isn't a set expectation of the level of involvement needed, but any amount of time you can give really helps!

If you'd like to join us, please contact us by email at fosouthstokeschool@gmail.com or find us on Facebook.



# South Stoke WI



We met in the Village Hall on Tuesday 12th May. Rita told the members of the recent death of Jean Dixon. Jean had been a member of South Stoke WI since 1981 and until the last few years she had been involved with many various village and W.I events.

Celebrating their birthdays this month were Ann Powell and Pam Seymour, we hope they enjoyed their special day.

The May meeting is always our Resolution Meeting. This year we had two resolutions for discussion, 'Action on Women's Homelessness' & 'Accessible Public Toilet Facilities'. Both resolutions were passed, and will now go forward to our Annual Meeting in June. If passed there, further action will be taken.

With the business side of the meeting concluded we played several games of Bingo followed by a delicious tea, provide this month by Selina Bond & Rita Mann.

Next month we have a speaker from the Pangbourne Cheese Shop talking about Cheese. Also next month on the 23rd we will be hosting the Group Lunch with members from Woodcote and North & South Moreton. Our speaker on this occasion will be Peter Hague who will be talking about Ian Fleming's Life & Local Connections, giving background to this hard drinking, womanising, chain smoking creator of James Bond and his links to Oxfordshire.

Visitors are always welcome.

**Contact either Rita Mann 01491 872208 or Eve Thynne Secretary 01491 875346**

# News from the Tower at St. Andrews Church

A huge thank you to everyone from South Stoke and beyond who kindly donated delicious cakes for our May Fayre refreshments table in St. Andrews Church. Thanks also to those who helped before, during and after the event, and of course, to everyone who purchased tea and cake during the afternoon.



We were delighted to be invited to ring a few rounds to open the Fayre and Doug and Janice were kept busy showing visitors around the tower (some people will do anything to avoid washing up). Simon Booker made time in his busy May Fayre schedule to support us with one of his amazing professional presentations, accompanied by some inspirational films and photographs. Thank you Simon! In total, the refreshments table raised an incredible £890.00. After a donation to the school, the remainder of the funds will go towards maintaining our beautiful church and the bell tower.



**Lynn Jenkins**

# 400 Club

## Support community projects with the chance to win 1 of 5 monthly cash prizes

The 400 club monthly 'Prize Draw' usually takes place on the third Friday of the month at the Perch & Pike. YES…the perfect excuse (if one were needed) to raise a glass, catch up on news and welcome the weekend. This Community Prize Draw, founded in 2013, has remained constant in its mission, "to improve services and amenities in South Stoke for villagers and visitors alike." With 50% of the monthly prize pot allocated to amenity maintenance and development, these essential funds work to support spaces like the recreation ground, delivering tip top facilities for families, children, dog walkers and fitness enthusiasts alike throughout the year. Helping to cover ongoing costs such as mowing, maintenance, equipment replenishment development and repair; planting, safety improvements and community projects. ..the list goes on. The money also goes a long way to maintaining the village hall as a venue for parties, exercise classes, clubs and meetings.

For just £2 a month, you get the chance to win 1 of 5 cash prizes; joining a wonderfully philanthropic club that works tirelessly to deliver the best for villagers and visitors. Doubly brilliant, is that as our membership grows… so does the Prize Pot! To join the long list of lucky winners simply follow the link: www.southstoke.org.uk/village-hall-and-recreation-ground/amenities-charity/south-stoke-400-club or email Mark Taylor & Nicola Astles-Jones: 400 Club Trustees - 400Club@southstoke.org.uk

**Congratulations to our 400 club May Prize draw winners:**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1st Prize | £142 | Vanessa Guiver |
| 2nd Prize | £119 | Elisa Beamson |
| 3rd Prize | £95 | Neil Aldridge |
| 4th Prize | £71 | Dave Lucas |
| 5th Prize | £47 | Anne Smith |



Special thanks goes to Lesley Best, a regular walker to South Stoke from Goring, for drawing the winning numbers this month. Next month's draw takes place on **Friday 19th June, 8pm at the Perch & Pike.** We look forward to seeing a great turn out for the local prize draw that gives so much more!

# Advertise in our Newsletter

Not only do you reach all of South Stoke but our newsletters are always available on the South Stoke web site www.southstoke.org.uk. Local businesses and charities may attract a discount.. Contact Neil Proctor on neil.proctor@southstoke.org.uk.

| Advert | Height cm | Width cm | Cost per issue |
|---|---|---|---|
| Full Page | 27.5 | 19 | £75.00 |
| Half Page | 13.5 | 19 | £40.00 |
| Quarter Page | 13.5 | 9 | £22.00 |
| Eighth Page | 6.5 | 9 | £12.00 |
| Small (Classified) | 2.5 | 6 | £5.00 |






# Cholsey Repair Café

Saturday July 18th will be the date of the next Cholsey Repair Café at the Cholsey Pavilion. Doors will be open from 10.00 until 12.45 and you can bring along all manner of domestic items, including bicycles, for the expert attentions of our volunteer fixers, who will do their best to help you repair them. If the session is busy, you can make the wait more pleasant with a really good cuppa and cake from Cholsey Community Café, right next door. We are one of the longest-running and most respected repair cafes in Berks and Oxon. More detail can be found at www.cholseyrepaircafe.com.

# Gardening tips for June

## Want to help garden birds?

Don't feed them in warmer months. The RSPB have released guidance on feeding birds, stating that putting up bird feeders in your garden could be putting some species at risk of disease. Stop filling bird feeders with seeds and peanuts from 1 May to 31 October as this will prevent too many birds gathering in one place. Instead, still put out small amounts of mealworms, fat balls or suet all year round.

## Let the grass grow

June is peak time for insects like butterflies, bees, and beetles. Leaving even a small patch of lawn uncut creates shelter and food for the likes of Meadow Browns, Large Blue butterflies, and Thick-legged flower beetles.

## Go chemical-free

Gardening organically is a good way to ensure that the food and plants you grow are free of pesticides or chemicals, and the wildlife will thank you for it too.

By stopping the use of chemicals, slugs, snails, and insects such as aphids will return, but don't worry! In time, so will their natural predators, such as hedgehogs and slowworms to help keep pest numbers down.

## Keep Bird Baths Topped Up

Fresh water is essential for birds in warm weather. Keep a shallow dish with a few pebbles and help insects drink safely. However, only put out a bird bath if you can replace the water daily and clean the bird bath weekly to prevent the spread of diseases, especially in the warmer months.



# Benson Choral Society

Handel's gem of a mini-opera or masque, *Acis and Galatea*, will form Benson Choral Society's Summer Concert. It is a simple tale of Acis, a shepherd, and Galatea, a sea nymph, whose happy romance is broken by the jealous monster Polyphemus who kills Acis, but Galatea uses her magical powers to turn Acis into a fountain in whose waters she can bathe forever. It has a fine libretto by John Gay and Alexander Pope. After a successful première in 1718 it was revived in the 1730s and was Handel's most popular stage work in his lifetime. To realise this lovely work we have as soloists Anastasia Bevan, Dominic Bevan,(both from the celebrated Bevan family) William Searle (well-known Welsh tenor)and Ben Davies(who has sung with the Sixteen) and our authentic baroque orchestra a return of the Instruments of Time and Truth, all under the watchful baton of Tom Neal. This will be at 7.30pm on Saturday 20 June in Dorchester Abbey. Tickets @£20 or £17 can be booked on our website http:/www.bensonchoralsociety.org.uk Book now, first come, first served!



# Distric Councillor's Report

## SODC AGM

Full council meetings are now streamed so people can watch them during and after the sessions by following the link in the QR code.

## Local Government Reorganisation and Devolution

Since the consultation period on the three proposals for local government reorganisation ended, officers across Oxfordshire and West Berkshire have continued collaborative work to prepare for the transition phase following the Secretary of State's Decision which is due in July.

At South Oxfordshire, work is progressing on programme structures, resourcing plans and work packages to support both local government reorganisation and devolution requirements. However, the inclusion of Swindon has continued to be a thorny issue. Leaders have shared concerns about it not being part of health and police structures, and the impact of what adding another town that scores high on the indices of multiple depravation could mean for tackling rural deprivation in Oxfordshire and Berkshire. It is safe to say that it is unlikely that the Thames Valley would reach the unanimity required by the now ex minister of devolution. I am of the view that in order to power ahead with a strategic authority, by far the easiest thing would be for Oxfordshire and Berkshire to go it alone for the time being.

## Joint Local Plan and Planning Update

The Joint Local Plan examination is progressing positively having been salvaged from the brink, with additional public hearings expected in July 2026. All being well we will be able to adopt it early next year.

In Government's infinite wisdom SODC is also required to commence work on the next Local Plan under the new 30-month process by the end of June for a local authority area that won't exist.

A new Head of Planning, Jeni Jackson, will join the council in July replacing Adrian Duffield

## Waste

South Oxfordshire District Council has now signed the new waste contract with Biffa ahead of the July start date. Although the contractor is the same, SODC now owns the vehicles as well as the waste vehicle depot.

The contract is designed to be flexible so that the successor authority can review how to best deliver the service post vesting day. It is for a minimum of 8 years, Maximum of 16, with a break clause after 4.

Residents are encouraged to complete the annual waste and street cleaning survey before 4 June 2026. It can be found on the SODC web site under Recycling, rubbish and waste.

I am following up on a request from cllr Robin Williamson for more regular street bin emptying in the summer months in Goring.

## Community Grants

The council's annual grants programme currently stands at approximately £2 million per year.

South Stoke Community Shop and Goring Parish Council's playground have benefited from substantial grants from SODC which shows how by working together we can deliver really important community facilities.

**Maggie Filipova-Rivers**










# Get Fit with Nix

I’m  Nic(ola) and I’ve recently established NixFit, a community driven fitness brand. I’ve been a qualified Level 3 PT and Group Fitness Instructor for over a decade, scratching the ‘ants in my pants’ side of my personality, whilst working in Human Resources. Two and a half years ago, faced with the sad but all too familiar diagnosis of cancer I gave up the day job to focus on recovery. My ‘C’ was endometrial and almost overnight, I found myself propelled into dramatic physiological changes! My training and love of fitness has been my greatest friend, helping me to rebuild confidence, strength and mobility after one of life's heavy  blows. As a coach I understand adversity!  With the blessing of our Parish Council and Amenities Association I have been thrilled to start to introduce some new fitness programmes here in South Stoke on top of the already amazing offerings.

Here my current timetable:

| | |
|---|---|
| Tuesdays | @0930 South Stoke Recreation Ground, Fresh AirFIT |
| | @1800 The Gym@ Streatley, HiiT (High Intensity Interval Training) |
| Thursdays | @1830 South Stoke Growing Plots & Village Hall, Circuits |
| Fridays | @1230 The Gym@Streatly, Suspended Movement@1330 The Gym |
| | @1330 Streatley, Stretch & Strength |
| | @1500 to 1700 Private Gym in Goring, Personal Training |
| | @1730 The Gym@Streatley, Lift & Move |

I offer 5 for 6 class passes to build fitness accountability and personal development (@£40) and block booking 1:1 or 1:few mobile personal training programmes, with a try before you buy a block…making sure the chemistry and goals fit for you..

Strong and steady, I plan to introduce more  community fitness programmes for our village including BIG BAND no impact resistance training and SUSPENDED MOVEMENT (sounds scary but a totally supportive bodyweight training practice). I have all the gear and lots of ideas, but I am nothing without input from you.

**Nicola Text me 07519 194584 Email me nastlesjones@gmail.com**

# Woodcote Volunteers

## Help with Blue Badge applications

Do you think that you (or a friend or relative) might be eligible for a Blue Badge parking permit? The application process can be daunting for some, but we have a team of experienced volunteers who can help our most disabled clients with the task of applying for their Blue Badges. . If you would like help with an application, leave a message on 01491 681171.

## Help with using your digital devices

We are continuing our very successful series of free digital advice sessions. These are aimed at local residents who may be struggling with their smart phones, iPads or laptops, or with negotiating the internet. The friendly 45 min one-to-one sessions are held twice each month in Woodcote Community Centre at 2-4 pm on the 1st Saturday and at 10-12 noon on the 3rd Thursday of each month. The next sessions are on the afternoon of Saturday 6th June and the morning of Thursday 18th June. To book your slot, please call 01491 877749.

## Request a Driver

To request a driver call the Woodcote Volunteers’ office on 01491 681171, giving at least three days’ notice as it can be hard to find someone at short notice . Office opening hours are Monday to Friday 9.30 – 11.00 am (except bank holidays and the Christmas period). Outside these times leave a message and you will be called back the following working day.



# South & Vale Talk Rubbish

We want your views on our waste collection, street cleaning services and our waste reduction initiatives - let us know what you think by completing our waste services survey. Comments are open until **4 June.**

Last year, more than 2,100 people took part in the 2025 survey with more than 81 percent of respondents indicating they were satisfied or very satisfied with the waste collection service.  As a result of the feedback, staff received extra training to help ensure bins are returned correctly after emptying, further checks were put in place around litter bin emptying and measures put in place to ensure street cleaning standards across the area. There has also been increased communication on which items go in which bin, especially around food waste.

The feedback you provide will help us to continue to identify what aspects of our waste service you are happy with as well as areas where you think we can do better.

## Check out our new BinDays web app

Find out when your bins will be emptied for your next two collections at just the touch of a button on your smartphone. To find out more, just visit www.southoxon.gov.uk/BinDays

## Binfluencers are back!



Join our relaunched WhatsApp channels for bin collection updates

We've refreshed and relaunched our Binfluencer WhatsApp Channels. Select the link below to join and receive updates about collection changes, recycling tips and more—sent straight to your phone.

Please note: if you joined our previous channel, you will need to follow the new one to keep receiving updates.

# GAP Festival: One Month to Go!

**The GAP Festival runs from 12–21 June**, and while tickets are selling fast, there is still time to secure yours. With a programme spanning music, creative arts, wellbeing and more, there truly is something for everyone. Full listings are available at www.thegapfestival.org/events.

**Family Day – 13 June** This year’s *Wonders of the Natural World Family Day* has just become even more exciting with the addition of the European Space Agency and an extra Royal Institution Science Live session due to high demand.

**Young photographers** can also take part in the Children’s Nature Photography Competition, inspired by the Family Day theme. Shortlisted images will be displayed during the festival, with winners invited to a special workshop and the overall champion receiving a family pass to Beale Park. Entries close on **29 May**.




**Discover. Create. Perform – 20 June** A major highlight for families: thanks to generous support from Goring Parish Council, South Oxfordshire District Council’s Everyone Active Grant Scheme and the Arts Society Goring, **all Discover. Create. Perform events are now FREE**. It’s a brilliant chance to try something new – from dance and magic to poetry, percussion and more. You can find more details on the events and request your free tickets at www.thegapfestival.org/events.

With so much on offer and just a month to go, now is the perfect time to plan your festival week and get involved in this fantastic community celebration.

## St Andrews Church Services

All are welcome to St Andrew's. The church is open every day, 9am till 5pm. A place to draw breath and touch base with all that is bigger than us and all that has gone before us and all that will come after…

We welcome everyone to our services. Coffee and biscuits are served afterwards.

7th June, Sunday, 11.15am, Family service

14th June, Sunday, 11.15am, BCP Holy Communion service

21st June, Sunday, 11.15am, Morning service

24th June, Wednesday, 10.30am, Coffee morning in St Andrew's

28th June, Sunday, 11.15am, Holy Communion service

Mid-week Holy Communion is on Wednesdays at 10.30am in St Thomas'.

The Benefice Office or the Vicar, Ben can be contacted, Monday to Thursday mornings, until noon, on (01491) 875651.

The website is: www.ThomAndMary.org.uk

Emails can be sent to: vicarofgsandss@yahoo.com

**Ben Phillips, Vicar**

**A new venture 28th June Afternoon Church in Goring**

In the 3 churches of the benefice we are holding an exploratory Afternoon Service followed by tea and scones. We hope to incorporate engaging and relevant ways to be open to God's guiding and equipping us to live. This will be in St Thomas, Goring at 4pm on Sunday 28th June. Feel free to be in touch to offer your gifts and input.

## Diary Dates

**Thursday 4th June** Charity walk on the Ridgeway

**Sunday 7th June** SSWCG Dragonfly Walk

**Friday 12th June** GAP Festival starts

**Friday 19th June**, 8pm at the Perch & Pike 400 Club draw

**Saturday 20th June** School at Wallingford Carnival

**Tuesday 23rd June** WI Meeting

**Saturday 11th July** SSWCG Glow Worm Walk

**Saturday 18th July** Cholsey Repair Café

**Wednesday 22 July** Shop AGM

**Monday 31 August** 1-5pm South Stoke Open Gardens

### Why is no-one cutting the grass….?

We are cutting the edges of paths to keep a smart look, but also following "No Mow May" and "Let it Bloom June". To help us understand the diversity of life in our churchyard a survey will then be done. We hope to bring together a plan to help make our churchyard a place which is home to all God's creatures and also a place of rest and refreshment for all who visit.

## The Next Issue

All contributions welcome. Email **editor@southstoke.org.uk**. Please include a telephone number and an email address if possible. Photos are welcome and encouraged.

**Deadline for the July issue is Thursday 25th June for publication in early July.**

Every effort is made to ensure that any information provided is correct. The South Stoke Newsletter, Editor and South Stoke Parish Council do not accept any responsibility for the accuracy of content or the consequences of relying on it. Any views expressed are those of the contributor at the time of submission and do not reflect the opinions of South Stoke Parish Council or the editor.