

ASTON ROWANT, KINGSTON BLOUNT & CROWELL

PARISH NOTES



Carol Cross

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USEFUL PHONE NUMBERS

CAB Local office www.adviceguide.org.uk	01844 214827
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Dial-a-ride (for people with mobility problems)	01869 327048
Highways Pothole Hotline	0845 310111
Highways Street Light Hotline	0800 317802
Library-Chinnor	01844 351721
Oil Syndicate adam.bernstein@mac.com .	01844 350440
Oxon County Council www.oxfordshire.gov.uk	01865 792422
Police-Thame (Thames Valley)	101 or 999
Poor's Hillock Allotments: Francesca Musaeus francesca.musaeus@hotmail.com	
Porch: S Thompson	01844 351334
Porch: J Rooksby	01844 352320
Post office-Chinnor	01844 351214
Schools:	
Aston Rowant C of E School	01844 351671
Icknield Community College Watlington	01491 612691
Lord Williams School Thame	01844 210510
Mill Lane School Chinnor	01844 352106
St Andrew's C of E, Chinnor	01844 351353
SODC Main Customer Services	01235 422422
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SODC Planning	01235 422600
Reporting Fly-tipping	03000 610610
SODC Environmental Department	01235 422403
Chinnor u3a [Chair]	07711 337243
Village Hall Hire/Bookings: Andrea Tinson	07470 441857

PARISH NOTES

Please get in touch if you have anything you think we could feature in future issues of the Parish Notes: If you have a new neighbour, or would like to announce any births, marriages or deaths. Maybe you have an interesting story about the area or someone who lives in the area. It would also be great to feature photos and illustrations – I'm always looking for photos to add to the pages! All ideas welcome.

If you have anything you'd like to see in the next issue please get in touch.

Copy deadline for the April/May issue is 20th March.

Email: sallyparishnotes@gmail.com

PARISH COUNCIL & LOCAL CONTACTS

Parish Website

www.astonrowantparishcouncil.gov.uk

Parish Clerk

Tracy Lambourne
clerk@astonrowantparishcouncil.gov.uk 01844 353989

Parish Councillors:

Chairman Adam Bernstein
adam.bernstein@astonrowantparishcouncil.gov.uk 07785 905120
Councillor Helen Birks
helen.birks@astonrowantparishcouncil.gov.uk 07921 840360
Councillor Deborah Chaplin
deborah.chaplin@astonrowantparishcouncil.gov.uk 01844 354648
Matthew Day
matthew.day@astonrowantparishcouncil.gov.uk 01844 351300
Councillor Trelawney Hill, Aston Rowant
trelawney.hill@astonrowantparishcouncil.gov.uk 01844 353051
Councillor Joanne Hunt
joanne.hunt@astonrowantparishcouncil.gov.uk 07825 789251

District Councillors:

Ali Gordon-Creed ali.gordon-creed@southoxon.gov.uk
Ed Sadler ed.sadler@southoxon.gov.uk 07842 602398

County Councillor

Kate Gregory kate.gregory@oxfordshire.gov.uk
Nigel Champken-Woods nigel.champken-woods@oxfordshire.gov.uk

MP

John Howell 01491 613088 john.howell.mp@parliament.uk

Police Community Support Office

tel: 101 ThameHPT@thamesvalley.pnn.police.uk

Village Hall Hire/Bookings

Andrea Tinson 07391 139707 bookings@kbvh.org

Play Area

Tracy Lambourne 01844 353989 clerk@astonrowantparishcouncil.gov.uk

Aston Rowant Cricket Club Chairman

Josh Smith 07894 201 929 chairman@astonrowantcc.com

LETTER FROM JOHN HOWELL MP

Even before the Christmas decorations were down, or perhaps before they went up, speculation on the date of the General Election has been hotting up. It could actually be as late as January 2025, but whatever the date, the campaigning is already underway. Not just in the battle for media attention and getting messages out, but also in more subtle ways. In Parliament the increase in emails on specific issues referring to the next Party Manifesto is noticeable. In parliament the use of mechanisms to promote specific issues, such as Early Day Motions and Westminster Hall debates appears to be increasing.



Early Day Motions (EDMs) are motions that formally call for debate in the House of Commons but there is no timeline, simply at an 'early day' and few ever get debated. They are often used on behalf of campaign groups the reality, known by all involved, is that they rarely achieve anything. In any one Parliamentary session there will be well over a thousand EDMs tabled, and at an average cost of a several hundred pounds each, this is a substantial cost to the taxpayer. Given that they are ineffective, along with many colleagues on both sides of the House, I decided some time ago that I would not sign EDMs. Instead, there are many other more effective ways for an MP to raise an issue or lobby government. Whilst EDMs can only be signed by MPs we now have e-petitions which can be signed by anyone. These have much more success in raising awareness of different issues and some do get debated.

There is also a note of caution on Westminster Hall debates. I said above that I have often held a Westminster Hall debate. An MP uses a Westminster Hall debate to raise issues of concern to them. They are formal debates recorded in Hansard, but there are not votes. However, they do get a response from a Minister. So, whilst the debate is important to the MP holding it, the attendance of other MPs is neither critical nor representative of the wider support for the issue. Sometimes it is just not possible to attend.

I have already made public that it is not my intention to put myself forward as a candidate for the next General Election. I have served the Constituency since initially being elected in 2008 and have been returned to Parliament in four subsequent elections. I continue to take an interest in the views of constituents and, with the support of my team, assist those constituents wanting help. However, I am in the happy position of being able to sit light when an email tells me that the senders vote at the next General Election depends on my reply to their email. Such emails often spring from campaign groups and, whilst I will continue to reply with my view, it is really the views of the various Parliamentary Candidates for the Constituency that should be of greater interest. I will have moved on to pastures new.

John Howell MP

CHAIRMAN'S NOTE

Residents cannot have missed the recent floods and torrents of water running down several roads in the parish. The B4009 was closed for the best part of a week, the Stert Road had (has) a permanent lake, and Aston Rowant Road and Church Lane were awash with water.

The problems appear to be the result of a perfect storm of too much rain in too short a period of time, a very high water table, and blocked drains and ditches.

The parish council did what it could to have ditches and drainage cleared and lobby to have the B4009 opened as fast as possible. However, our hands were tied somewhat by the powers and funds we possess. Thankfully, we have now established a link with a very much onside Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) highways officer who, as it turns out, lives locally.

One thing that became very apparent was the willingness of drivers – not necessarily from this parish – to ignore the road closed signs. Some chanced their arm and got through water that was beyond knee height. Others, however, didn't and broke down. At least three vehicles were abandoned and will most likely be write offs – uninsured as drivers chose to ignore the road closed signs placed at either end of the blockage.

We have been assured – to the extent that it is possible to be so – that the highways officer went further than he needed to in having the drainage cleared along the B4009 to ensure that the parish shouldn't suffer such an extended closure again for many years. It also needs to be said that OCC had recently cleared the grates on the B4009.

Going forward, the advice from OCC is that to minimise the risk of a reoccurrence ditches should be kept clear and that where a pipe is in place, that the ditch bed is below – ideally by several inches – the pipe opening.

In other allied matters, the parish now has what OCC terms a 'superuser' who can report road and pavement defects. The public can already report issues via FixMyStreet (fixmystreet.oxfordshire.gov.uk) which sends a defect report to OCC's Highways Department for investigation and who may subsequently choose to action a repair.

The superuser uses the same system as the public to report defects but uses a 'backdoor' to immediately move a report along from 'investigate' to 'action'. It's still possible that OCC will decline to effect a repair, but it's less likely as defects will only have been reported if they met OCC's definition of a failure. Further, the report-to-repair timeframe will be shortened considerably.

OCC's definitions state that a road defect must measure 150 x 150 x 40mm deep while a pavement defect must be 150 x 150 x 20mm deep. The definitions can be sidestepped if the defect is considered a danger to road users or pedestrians. Kerbing issues can also be reported. If residents see defects that match these definitions, they can be sent to the superuser via the clerk, clerk@astonrowantparishcouncil.gov.uk.

Lastly, your parish council is precisely that – your parish council. All are welcome to come along to meetings to not only see what we do on your behalf but also hear about current issues of interest. Meetings feature a ten-minute Open Forum where parishioners can raise concerns.

The council meets on the second Wednesday of each month in Kingston Blount Village Hall October to March, and Aston Rowant church April to September (with no meeting in August).

Adam Bernstein

Chairman, Aston Rowant Parish Council
adam.bernstein@astonrowantparishcouncil.gov.uk

YOUR VILLAGE HALL NEEDS YOU AND YOU AND YOU...!

The Village Hall committee are looking for new committee members who are happy to take on specific roles of treasurer, booking clerk and a secretary. We are a friendly group of people who volunteer to help run the Village Hall. We meet formally four times a year and use email to contact each other outside of those times. One perk of the roles is that you have two free hirings a year.

We are looking for a new treasurer. The role includes monthly bank reconciliations and invoicing for some hall users, making payments to suppliers, providing monthly utility readings, checking that payments have been made via the online booking system, producing quarterly accounts and managing the annual return to the Charity Commission. If you have a head for numbers and think you can take on this role please contact Rachel on rachellockwood.hillwerktrust@gmail.com

To manage the bookings we use an online booking system which hirers use to book the hall and we use to confirm and raise invoices. There is also the occasional query from potential hirers. If you have a maximum of an hour a week, most times it is less than that, please call or email me on the number below.

We need someone to help set the agenda, with input from the Chair, take and produce the minutes. We only meet 4 times a year so if you think you can spare some time to help us please call me on the number below.

The treasurer and booking clerk won't be disappearing just yet and will be on hand to help with any query you may have as well as giving full guidance and training.

We are a friendly group of people and if you think you can help us please give me a call on 07470 441857 or drop me an email on KBVhall@gmail.com

Andrea



ASTON ROWANT PARISH COUNCIL NOTES

Parish Council meetings were held on Wednesday 13th of December and Wednesday 10th January where the planning applications detailed below were discussed. The next meeting of the Council will be held on Wednesday 14th of February.

PLANNING APPLICATIONS:

P23/S3257/DIS Conditions 4 (Tree Protection) and 7 (Construction Environmental Management Plan) on planning application P23/S0321/FUL (amended Ecology information received 17 October 2023 and 1 November 2023), at the following location: Warren Farm Aston Hill near Aston Rowant. FYI ONLY, NO DECISION REQUIRED.

P23/S3843/HH Construction of orangery following demolition of conservatory, replacement windows, replacement of window with door to living room, replacement of raised patio at Little Gables, The Green, Kingston Blount, OX39 4SD. NO OBJECTION

P23/S4304/HH Proposed single-story rear extension at Avila 4 Plowden Park Aston Rowant. No comments from neighbours either side and both properties either side have had rear extensions so a precedence has already been set. NO OBJECTION.

P23/S4262/FUL ## NOT IN THIS PARISH ##

Proposed development by Bloor Homes on River Thame Flood Plain – discussion surrounding area not in Thame NP, within level 2/3 flood area, lack of infrastructure, secondary school places, doctors/dentists etc. Response agreed as appropriate given impact on residents of this parish. COMMENTS TO BE MADE BY 1/FEBRUARY.

P23/S3384/DIS Amendment (no. 1), on application P23/S3384/DIS, for development work at Aston Cottage 18 Church Lane Aston Rowant as amplified by drainage information received 11 December 2023. FYI ONLY, NO DECISION REQUIRED.

WITHDRAWN APPLICATIONS:

None

PLANNING DECISIONS OF SODC:

P23/S2916/FUL Construction of new pavilion on Pitch 2 at Aston Rowant Cricket Club. GRANTED.

P23/S1704/FUL Change of use from a public house to a three bedroom dwelling at The Shepherds Crook, Crowell (FYI only, not in this parish). GRANTED.

P23/S3843/HH Construction of orangery following demolition of conservatory, replacement windows, replacement of window with door to living room, replacement of raised patio at Little Gables, The Green, Kingston Blount OX39 4SD. GRANTED.

PLANNING DECISIONS MADE SINCE THE LAST MEETING:

None

PLANNING INSPECTORATE APPEAL:

None

Please note that all Planning Applications for the Parish can be found on the Parish Council Website: <http://www.astonrowantparishcouncil.gov.uk> under 'Parish Council' and then 'Planning'.

All past minutes of Aston Rowant Parish Council (Including the Annual Parish Meeting) can be found under: <http://www.astonrowantparishcouncil.gov.uk> under 'Parish Council' and then 'Meetings'.

Occasional updates concerning the Parish are added to the Parish Council's website and Facebook pages as well as the Kingston Blount/Aston Rowant (KBAR) Facebook page.

Tracy Lambourne

Clerk to Aston Rowant Parish Council

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ARPC FOOTPATH AND AMENITIES GROUP

Happy New Year.

It is impossible to talk about footpaths without mentioning the weather up to and around Xmas. The sheer volume of rain has been barely believable, the effect of the flooding in Aston Rowant is covered elsewhere in the notes, but the consequences in Kingston Blount have also been felt. Both the Stert Road and Brook Street have been flooded, mainly due to blocked grates and the high water table means the 'stream' down Brook Street is flowing continuously. But the biggest surprise is the stream now flowing through Pleck Wood – in 20 years I've never seen this before.

During icy weather please be careful if you are out walking – please use the salt in the bins and if the bins need refilling please contact the Tracy Lambourne the Parish Clerk.

Mike's Fiveways notes refer to the Duck Race on the 18th Feb from 2pm with cream teas at the church, even if you don't have small children, it is a delightful afternoon, just hope we can have the weather we had last year.

In other bits of news:

The next FAAG meeting is on Feb 13th at Kingston Blount Village Hall at 7.30, this is an open meeting and anyone is very welcome.

The copping of the hazel in Pleck Wood has started. This is the start of a long process to bring (a little) control to Pleck Wood. Any volunteers will be very welcome – if you are interested please contact either the parish clerk or myself.

Finally, can I remind everyone that newcomers to the parish are entitled to a free copy of the parish booklet of 'Walks at the Foot of the Chilterns' if you would like a copy once again contact either Tracy or myself. If any residents would like a replacement copy the price is £3.

The permissive path to Crowell is not yet repaired but we are chasing Thames Water.

The bridge at Fiveways has been repaired again and we are looking at a more permanent replacement.

Finally, whilst we are still in winter there are the usual signs that spring is not far away, the hellebores and cyclamens are in flower and by the time the notes are published the snowdrops and daffodils will also be in flower. Let's hope the frost doesn't kill them.

Steven Sowerby

Chair of Footpaths and
Amenities Group
stevensowerby@hotmail.com
01844 351392



THE UNITED PARISH TEAM

Rector

Rev'd Dr. Jacky Barr 07769 825305
rector@unitedparish.church
01844 352027

Associate Priest

Rev'd Joan DeVal 01844 353404

Licensed Lay Minister (L.L.M)

Margaret Poole 01844 281042

Retired Priests

Rev'd Des Foote 01844 355945
Rev'd Dr. Brian Griffiths
01844 355953
Rev'd Tony Whittaker
01844 352472

United Parish Office

Tricia Prescott 01844 352472
office@unitedparish.church

Parish Safeguarding Officer

Jane Tucker 07890 346781
safeguarding@unitedparish.church

Churchwarden at Aston Rowant

Richard Boarder 07795681263
Vacancy

Churchwardens at Crowell

Andy Warman 01844351909
Maggs Warman 01844351909

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CROWELL CHURCH

Firstly let us wish everyone a very happy New Year and trust you were all able to find some way to celebrate. Our thoughts go to those who were ill or bereaved over the festive season.

Soul Space was brought forward in December. Jo and Joanne presented a special fun event, 'Holly and Ivy (and a bit of tinsel!)', with quips and quotes and even a shortened Nativity Play. They both donned various items – tinsel, hats and the like to take on the role with suitable voices for the naughty children, a jolly Santa as well as his reindeer amongst others. Those attending enjoyed it and expressed a thought that it should be repeated in 2024.

The Carols and Readings service on Thursday 21 December was well attended with some enthusiastic singing from Maggs and guests from Sydenham choir leading the carols. Mulled wine and mince pies were enjoyed by all.

No Christmas Day wedding this year. What an event that was last year!

Work parties are now paused until March.

An event for your diary on 17 February at 2pm – meeting at Crowell church, is a Winter Forage. This is on behalf of Chinnor Churches Go Wild and involves a walk along the local byways, discussing what is safe to forage. This will be led by an expert.

Some really good news. We had a call from TVP to advise that those who stole number plates from the church carpark were recently caught using them on a car and more arrests have been made. As a note, this is the fifth incident over a period of time. Don't know yet whether they are all connected.

The church will always be open when the Wardens are working in it or working in the churchyard. Please call if you would like access for private prayer at other times.

Copies of the United Parish Magazine are available in the church porch and inside the church. If anyone would like an e-copy of the monthly United Parish Magazine and/or the weekly on-line service booklet then please e-mail the parish office at csarc@btinternet.com

Andy & Maggs Warman

(Church Wardens) 01844 351909 themwarmans@btinternet.com





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FIVEWAYS

Happy New Year!

Well it has been an interesting year so far with the flooding. Fiveways was impassable without wellies and the Holbrook was so high it covered the bridges.

The main Winterbourne runs from the Aston Rowant junction down Church Lane and meets the Holbrook about half way down the track. The Holbrook comes in from Aston lake. It has been in full flow all the way because the aquifers are now full. Historically I believe Church Lane was more often aquatic, as there was no abstraction then for drinking water, etc. I think the Holbrook originally ran on the left hand side, not the right, as now. The wide band of shrubs and trees hides the original stream bed.



The River Thames Trust is working to improve the aquatic environment of what are rare chalk streams. Trout have been seen in the Holbrook at Fiveways in recent decades, but I have never seen one - only Sticklebacks and Bullheads. The water levels are low in summer, but trout are often seen by me spawning in Winter/Spring at Lewknor in only a few inches of water. They then drop downstream into deeper water, hopefully out of the way of otters. All the spring sources are relatively warm all the year round.

We do have some gorse in flower – “When gorse is out of bloom, kissing’s out of fashion”. A new plant this season is the yellow Monkey Musk and the biggest four plant group is in the Dog Pool. Also, other parishioners have planted some in other areas of the parish, so hopefully we will succeed in getting it to flourish, as we totally failed on our last attempt. It is a native plant for water margins only and is choosy.

Mike Smith and I have cleaned the stream out, pre -flooding, ready for duck racing, which is on February 18th, 2- 4pm. The excellent cream teas in the church will continue until 4.30pm, by special arrangement. Fingers crossed for good weather. I am grateful to Mike, who has also helped with maintenance and looking after the ditches in the bottom part of Church Lane which is flooding free!

It is finally worth saying a few words about Black Poplars – the two big trees at Fiveways. There used to be three, until sadly the Electricity board had to fell one. These are one of the rarest native trees in Britain. Oxfordshire has the most and it is mainly down to the flood plain of the river Thames and its tributaries. The trees are either male or female but only 8% are female. These trees need wet soil or shallow water for their seeds to germinate. Fiveways is ideal as it is so wet at the bottom of the Chilterns. Historically they were used for flooring as they are hard to set fire to! There are only 7,000 in Britain and they are at risk. We need a tree curator in the parish.

Mike Eaton

mike.eaton@btopenworld.com

NOTICEBOARD

WHAT'S GOING ON IN KINGSTON BLOUNT, ASTON ROWANT & NEARBY

A Hunger Lunch for the homeless of Oxford

A hunger lunch in aid of The Porch's Steppin' Stone Centre will be held on Monday 18th March, 12.30-2pm, at the church of St Peter & St Paul, Aston Rowant. All are very welcome for a simple lunch of soup and bread. Cash donations and gifts of dry and tinned foodstuffs will be gratefully received.

As the name implies, The Steppin' Stone Centre supports the homeless to re-integrate into the community – the Parish has supported it for many years.

Rona Knight

01844 351315

DUCK RACES • SNOWDROP WALK • CREAM TEAS



Sunday 18th February 2024 2-4pm

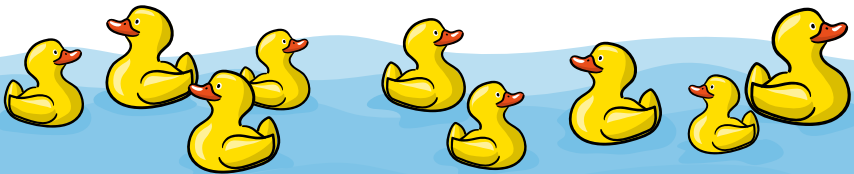
Aston Rowant

Duck Races on the Holbrook stream

Cream Teas served in Aston Rowant Church

Please wear boots/wellies!

Organised jointly by Aston Rowant Parish Council and the church



Thank Yous

It has been suggested that we might try a very small section where people could send in one-off appropriate comments, thank yous, useful ideas etc. If you have anything you would like me to include please email: sallyparishnotes@gmail.com

As a starter Mike Eaton has a limited number of left over yellow Monkey Musk plants from Fiveways. They are UK wild plants and need a water margin. Contact him on 01844 351238

Friday Coffee Mornings are back!

Come and enjoy a hot drink and a cake or snack! Everyone is welcome of all ages. We have plenty of toys available for young children. We will be open for business from 10.15 – 12.00noon on:
(please note the slightly later start time.)

February 2nd, 16th

March 1st, 15th, 29th

April 12th, 26th

Browse the bookshelf, feel free to take as many as you like and maybe bring some of your own to donate.

Proceeds will go towards the playground refurbishment.



Parish Walks

Our next Parish Walk will be on Sunday 7 July at 10am from the Crown, Sydenham. Please put that date in your diaries.

The New Year Parish Walk was on 7 January. It was pronounced a big success. Twenty Seven walkers enjoyed a mud free walk over Bald Hill part of Aston Rowant Nature Reserve with views excellent to Wittenham Clumps. Then as we descended into Wormsley we were presented with a beautiful vista looking across the estate.

Now for the downside. Of the 27 walkers, only three of us were from our Parish! Walkers in our Parish, please join these occasions or you will lose them!

Peter Hetherington

OCC Path Warden for Aston Rowant Parish

A Winter Walk with Marcus Woods

(our very own and local countryside expert)

We will begin from the church in Crowell and walk up into the woods, exploring and enjoying our beautiful Chilterns.

Everyone is welcome to join us, families especially!

Marcus will make the walk fun and informative, with insect hunts and there will even be prizes. Please make sure you all wear suitable footwear and dress appropriately for the weather.

Please email or call Rev'd Jacky to let us know that you are coming or if you have any questions.

Call 07769 825305 or email rector@unitedparish.church

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NEWS FROM ARCC

Firstly, Happy New Year to everyone! Hope you all had a good Christmas and the start of the year has been kind to you and not too cold or wet! The first signs that the cricket season is nearly upon us are starting to surface; junior winter nets commence this Friday. The league season itself starts on Saturday May 11th.

One of the biggest bits of news we've had at the club is that we've made exciting progress on the new pavilion for the bottom field and actually put in an order now (deposit paid!) for the building itself. We have also been working hard to raise funds through grant applications and have set up a Crowdfunding page as the project is finally becoming a reality. Check out the 'new pavilion' section on astonrowantcc.com for more details.

All memberships both playing and social are renewable from 1st April. Unfortunately we have had to increase the 1881 membership to £60 – this is the first increase since the club was formed in 2018. Social Membership is now £30. With the cost of the pavilion to be met we would appreciate it if membership could be renewed before the start of the season to assist our cash flow.

We had a very successful AGM in December and welcomed a number of new members to the committee. We'd like to extend our thanks to Matt Grocutt who has been instrumental in organising the junior section for the past 4 years and also Chris Watling for his sterling efforts last year as Club Captain. We are pleased to welcome Ben Knowler (Club Captain), Tim Hester (Junior Secretary), Yovaan Ilankakoon (Sponsorship), Claire North and Karl Penhale (as Co-opted Members) onto the committee. Also, congratulations to David Ridgley who has been made a Life Member of Aston Rowant Cricket Club having played for over 40 years and managed and run the village knockout sides. Jez March and Mike Richards were also elected as Honorary 1881 Members (Vice Presidents) for their dedication to club fundraising, namely their volunteering for over the past 10 years on Astonbury and now Rowachella. Congratulations everyone, much deserved!

Rowachella date for 2024 is June 15th – please make a note in your diaries.

As was said in the November Notes, one of the main aims of the club is to introduce a girls softball/ladies team. If you have a daughter who wishes to play or would like to get involved in the running of this section, please contact us through the club website astonrowantcc.com

The bar will reopen on Friday nights when junior training starts, this date will be confirmed in the next notes.

Finally we have news of one of our old boys – Dan Moriarty has joined Yorkshire and I for one will be keeping an eye on his performance.

Steven Sowerby

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LETTER FROM THE HEADTEACHER



As a church school we are currently in the process of converting from a Voluntary Controlled Church School to a Voluntary Aided Church School. Essentially this impacts how we spend money in our school, gives us greater opportunities to carry out much needed maintenance and remedial works on our buildings and grounds and finally empowers the school in managing its admissions and employing staff. But the transition has

encouraged the various stakeholders of the school to ask: 'What is a church school?'

At first glance church schools are similar to local authority maintained schools and a good church school is just as good as any other good school. However, the way that a church school works should be different and distinctive. This distinctive difference is rooted in our Christian values that influence the way in which we interact with pupils, parents, visitors and members of staff.

Church schools have Christian beliefs and values at their heart. This means that every child and adult associated with the school is not just important because they are members of the school but because they are seen as unique individuals within God's creation.

Church schools believe that in addition to academic and emotional intelligence human beings also have spiritual intelligence. Therefore, church schools recognise and nurture the spiritual aspects of life alongside the academic and emotional elements.

Church schools are places where challenge through questioning is encouraged as through this we can make sense of the world and the purpose of our own personal lives.

As our school text says: 'Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him.' Colossians 2:7. A great foundation for our young people as they grow and prepare for adulthood.

Helen France

Headteacher

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TESSA WYATT'S COUNTRYSIDE DIARY

Well, we have had some rain haven't we? Flooded roads, swamped fields and gardens, and then a week long freeze. I'm not sure which is worse, except the crisp, frosty weather was much prettier than the soggy murk.

I feel very sorry for the poor farmers, having heard that in some parts they have lost up to 40% of their winter wheat and barley crop and now there's a shortage of seed. The effects of climate change are showing now, with wetter winters, hotter summers, and a lot of adaptation needed by humans, animals and plants.

As I write, the daffodils in Sydenham are in bloom, cheerfully nodding at me as I drove past yesterday. They've yet to flower in Aston Rowant, which makes me wonder what the difference is between the two villages to make one lot slower than the other. Perhaps the AR daffs are wiser, given the unpredictability of the weather. However, I have a little pink primula out in my front garden, I suspect it's scouting the conditions for the others which are still quietly sleeping.

The ladybirds behind my curtains are still fast asleep, but occasionally one will drop off the wall onto the floor, and I have to pick it up and pop it on the window sill. Often, I will find it missing the following day, so I suppose it will have woken sufficiently to crawl back to its little group.

The birds are beginning to tune up for the forthcoming dawn chorus. Almost as soon as the shortest day passed, I began to hear them. A mistle thrush has been singing in one of the sycamore trees, the robins are starting to compete, and just the other day, a little flock of seven long tailed tits appeared on the feeder. Their song is so hard to hear, it's so faint, but such a pretty tune. The blackbirds have been chasing each other around, vying for the seeds dropped by the tits and goldfinches, and I have three big fat squirrels visiting the peanut feeder. The other morning I even found a brown rat trying to reach the feeder from the branch it hangs from. If there's one animal I really don't like, it's *Rattus Rattus*. Too intelligent and opportunistic for my liking, and they carry *Leptospirosis*, which makes pets very ill indeed. Can't poison them though, or any animal that scavenges the body will get poisoned by default. So I suppose we'll just have to learn to live with each other! Tinker, my dear but lazy Maine Coon, certainly big enough to take on a rat, just sits and watches them. Actually I'm quite relieved, because she brings all her kills indoors and tends to present them to me alive, and I really don't fancy trying to retrieve a rat from under the sofa. One good thing, she has never, in all the years I have owned her (or she has owned me?) she has never caught a bird. What a relief!

Tessa Wyatt



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ASTON ROWANT NATIONAL NATURE RESERVE

With the new year upon us, I wanted to share some news and photos taken at Aston Rowant National Nature Reserve, from the start of what I am sure will be a busy year for our team and fantastic volunteers. Some of you may have noticed over the Christmas period, we had some new arrivals on site – and not our typical woolly ones!

We welcomed a small herd of ponies (Bella, Millie, and Bertie), from BBOWT (Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust) on to Aston Rowant NNR in November. The three have done a wonderful job on the south side of the reserve, grazing a paddock where we were seeing scrub encroachment onto good quality chalk grassland. We hope to have them back to carry out some vital spring grazing.

We have a wonderful surveying team, who are out regularly on site recording a whole range of species, including regular bird transect, summertime butterfly transects and fungi surveys in the Autumn. The team had a fantastic start to the year with one survey in January recording four species of raptor within 5 minutes of each other.

More wonderful bird spots, including one of my favourites, the Green Woodpecker. They has a wonderful flight pattern, dipping and lifting over the chalk grassland when startled. On the ground, they'll often be grubbing around in the Yellow Meadow anthills and frequently are heard before being spotted, with a very distinctive yaffling call. It is the largest of the three species of woodpecker which breed in Britain.

With the cooler weather, few fungi species were being recorded, and the colder weather has brought frosty conditions – no good for mushrooms. However, we were pleased when this coral looking species, Meadow coral, was recorded on Beacon Hill. It is a fairly infrequent find in Britain.

I look forward to sharing some photos of the site as Spring sets in

Steph Wilson

Natural England, Reserve Manager



One of our surveyors Mark, being searched for food by Mille and Bertie!



Meadow coral



Some of our Beulah lambs

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FEBRUARY

- 2 Coffee Morning Kingston Blount Village Hall, 10.15am (p19)
- 13 FAAG meeting Kingston Blount Village Hall, 7:30pm
- 14 Parish Council Meeting, Kingston Blount Village Hall, 7:30pm
- 16 Coffee Morning Kingston Blount Village Hall, 10.15am (p19)
- 17 Winter Forage, Crowell Church 2pm (p9)
- 18 Duck Races and cream teas, Aston Rowant 2pm (p16)

MARCH

- 1 Coffee Morning Kingston Blount Village Hall, 10.15am (p19)
- 1 The Big Quiz Night, KB Village Hall, 7pm (p21)
- 13 Parish Council Meeting, Kingston Blount Village Hall, 7:30pm
- 15 Coffee Morning Kingston Blount Village Hall, 10.15am (p19)
- 18 Hunger Lunch, Aston Rowant church, 12.30pm (p18)
- 29 Coffee Morning Kingston Blount Village Hall, 10.15am (p19)

COMING UP...

- May 11 Race Night KB Village Hall, 7.30pm (p20)
- June 15 Rowachella
- July 7 Parish Walk, The Crown, Sydenham, 10am (p18)

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If you have anything you'd like to see in the next issue please get in touch.

Copy deadline for the April/May issue is 20th March.

Email: sallyparishnotes@gmail.com