



The Parish Magazine for

£1

STOCKBRIDGE LONGSTOCK & LECKFORD

March 2025



The Parishes of Stockbridge, Longstock and Leckford in the Mid-Test Benefice

Rector : The Reverend Joe Sweetnam

All Enquiries, including enquiries about Baptisms, Weddings and Funerals:

Please contact the Benefice Administrator, Lois Opperman
Phone No: 07900 927913 or midtestbenefice@gmail.com

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To subscribe, please contact David Barnes 810516 or email editorsstockmag@gmail.com

Editors: Frances Candler 811776 Jennifer Kidd 811179 Thea Taylor 07730 964481

Distribution: Sylvia Shepard 810603 **Advertisements:** advertstockmag@gmail.com

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<i>Hon Treasurer</i>	<i>Hon Treasurer</i>	<i>Hon Treasurer</i>
Jean Farnan 07590 532460	Madeleine Hedley 810284	David Barnes 810516
Beavers	Neighbour Care 0845 0943713	Stockbridge Music
Frances Waghorn 01962 776048	<i>Calls cost 7p/min +network charge.</i>	Rob Dewing (Chair) 07749 797005
Bell ringers (Longstock)	Pastoral Visitors	Stockbridge Parish Council
Chris Reynell 810569	Vacancy	Chair: Derek Halle
Bell ringers (Stockbridge)	RBL (Houghton branch)	Derek@stockbridgeparishcouncil.org.uk
Micki Nadal 810567	David Williams (Chair) 811072	Clerk: Belinda Baker 07770 406607
Brownies (meet in Chilbolton)	New Secretary to be appointed	clerk@stockbridgeparishcouncil.org
Julie Shone 01962 761269	Angela McMeekin: Poppies 810236	Stockbridge Pharmacy 810624
Church Mouse Books	Scouts	Stockbridge Police Station
Micki Nadal 810567	Mark Lovell 07786 435847	(Non emergencies) 101
Cub Scouts	Scout Group Explorers	Stockbridge Primary /Pre School
Mo Collins 01256 895534	Andrea Zanchi 07747 720735	Emma Jefferies (Head) 810550
Danebury School	Louise Henderson 07436 899054	Stockbridge Rec Ground
Nicky Goodrich (Head) 810555	St Thomas More Church	Michael Porter (Chair) 810595
HCC County Councillor	Father Mark Hogan 01962 852804	Mob 07775 632632
Cllr David Drew 357024	Stockbridge Church Flowers Sec	Jill Webb(Sec) 01264 810819
mob 07738 289902	Angela McMeekin 810236	Stockbridge Surgery 810524
Kent Hill Scout Hall	Stockbridge Community Cinema	<i>Out of hours urgent treatment /advice</i>
Leigh Dance 811074	Paul Kidd 07732 580721	<i>Hants Doctors On Call freephone 111</i>
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Longstock Garden Club	Stockbridge Court Leet	<i>On-line bookings</i>
Peter Moore 07881 573493	Guy Boney (Lord of the Manor)	www.stockbridgetownhall.co.uk
peter.r.moore@gmail.com	810614	or phone 513299
Longstock Parish Council	Andy Soper (Bailliff) 07776 258398	Trout 'n About
Chair: Alice Foster 07846 173217	Stockbridge Dramatic Society	Bob Powell 07802 524433
Clerk: Gill Bulpitt 07763857512	Mark Frank 810562	TVBC Councillor
Longstock Village Hall	Stockbridge Football Club	Cllr Ian Jeffrey 01794 388872
Selina Musters 810459	Trevor Dance (Chair) 07780 661223	Unity Transport (Dial-a-Ride
Longstock & Leckford WI	Kieran Wilson (Hon Sec) 07883 624808	shopping bus) 356808
Selina Musters 810459	Email: stockbridgefc@hotmail.co.uk	



From the Rectory

As we enter the month of March, the days are lengthening, there is a sense of anticipation in the air and many of us start thinking about the changes that come with the changing seasons. In the Christian community, March marks the beginning of an important season in the Church's calendar: Lent. But before we dive into the reflective, spiritual and solemn journey of Lent, we celebrate with the much-loved tradition of Pancake Day or Shrove Tuesday; a day of indulgence before Lent begins. Traditionally, it's a time when people used up rich ingredients like eggs, butter, and sugar, which would be given up during Lent. It's a day for pancakes, fun, and community gatherings; a light-hearted and joyful occasion, but it also marks the beginning of a time of preparation.

The 40 days of Lent begin the following day, Ash Wednesday, mirroring the time that Jesus spent in the wilderness. They lead up to Easter and are a time for reflection, repentance, and renewal. (Do come along to our Ash Wednesday service on March 5th at 7.30pm at St Mary's, Longstock).

Traditionally, people give something up for Lent in order to make space for more prayer, reflection, and connection with God. It's an opportunity to slow down, step back from the busyness of life, and think about what truly matters. This year, I invite you to consider what you might give up or take up during Lent. It could be something simple but meaningful, like spending more time in nature, being more intentional about connecting with family, or taking time each day for quiet reflection.

Lent also offers us the chance to engage in acts of kindness and charity. It's a time to look beyond ourselves and think about how we can support others, particularly those who are struggling in our community. Whether through volunteering, donating to a charity, or simply being more present for a neighbour in need, Lent challenges us to live out our faith in practical ways as we prepare for Easter.

In this month of March let us all, no matter our faith, take time to reflect, to grow, and to prepare our hearts for the new life that Easter promises. I look forward to walking this journey with all of you. May this season be one of renewal, peace, and growing closer to God's purpose for our lives.

With every blessing,

Rev'd Joe Sweetnam

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Magazine Subscription - Urgent Appeal

If you haven't yet paid your 2025 subscription, we would be grateful to receive it as soon as possible, please. See Page 27 for details on how to pay

Cover Photo: March Hare (stock image)

Footers this month include some perspectives on the natural disasters and catastrophes that have featured so prominently in the press recently.

From the Editorial Team

We are well into 2025 now and the year has presented us with some unexpected and unwelcome challenges, the first of which was the devastating fire in Los Angeles in January. Elaine Sperber, who many of you will remember was the owner of Book Mark, our much-missed local bookshop, and who continues to share her enthusiasm for books in our columns, is from Los Angeles. She has responded to the shock of the destruction of parts of her home town with an appraisal of the city, good and bad, and by recognising the amazing strength and resilience of its citizens, who despite knowing the risks, are determined to rebuild their houses and their lives - see page 11.

The dreadful situations in Ukraine and in the Middle East are constant reminders of the challenges to our expectations of a stable world, and peaceful life. In our footers, we have picked up examples of resilience in overcoming and learning from not only natural and man-made disasters, but also the challenges in our own lives. You can't help but be impressed by the challenges facing the education sector, and how positive our local schools are in overcoming them - see pages 9 and 13..

Of course we want the magazine to leave you smiling, so we thought you'd like to know a little more about Hares, both Mad March and otherwise, and we remind you of our Hampshire heroine, Jane Austen, whose life is being celebrated 250 years after her birth throughout the county - see page 16.

And please don't forget those subscriptions!.

Frances Candler, Jennifer Kidd and Thea Taylor



Stockbridge Community Market

**Every Thursday morning
9.30 - 11.45am
in Stockbridge Town Hall**

Selling the very best local and home-made produce

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Handmade crafts, toys, books, plants & bric-a-brac.

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Stockbridge Community Cinema



SMALL THINGS LIKE THESE (12A)

Friday 14 March

7.30 pm (1hr 38min)



Christmas 1985, and devoted father and coal merchant Bill Furlong (Cillian Murphy) discovers startling secrets kept by the convent in his

town, along with some shocking truths of his own. The film reveals truths about Ireland's Magdalene laundries - horrific asylums run by Roman Catholic institutions from the 1820s until 1996, ostensibly to reform "fallen young women." Adapted from the Booker Prize nominated novel by Claire Keegan.

CONCLAVE (12A)

Wednesday 19 March

4.45 pm and 7.30 pm (2hrs 0min)

Cardinal Lawrence is tasked with running this covert process after the unexpected death of the beloved Pope. Once the Catholic Church's most powerful



leaders have gathered from around the world and are locked together in the Vatican halls, Lawrence uncovers a trail of deep secrets left in the dead Pope's wake - secrets that could shake the foundations of the Church.

Tickets £6.00 (£5.50 + £0.50 booking fee)

available online via our website

stockbridgecinema.org.uk or via the
TicketSource telephone booking service

0333 666 3366 (no additional fee)



The Royal British Legion Houghton and District Branch

Contact David Williams (Chairman)
01264 811072

Social evenings are held on the first Wednesday of most months in the Greyhound on the Test

**MANOR and BOROUGH OF
STOCKBRIDGE
in the County of Hampshire
COURT BARON & COURT LEET**



The annual meeting of
Stockbridge Courts Baron and Leet
has been called by

The Lord of The Manor, Guy Boney, KC,
to be held on

**Wednesday 5th March 2025 at 7.00pm in
THE TOWN HALL, STOCKBRIDGE**

During the evening, The Clerk to the Court will
appoint members to sit on the Jury for 2025/26.

The Lord of the Manor will welcome our
National Trust officer and report on issues
relating to the past year in Stockbridge and
surrounds. While the Jury retires to appoint
its Officers, Catherine Hadler, from The
National Trust, will give a short update on the
work to be undertaken in the coming year.

Any questions you may wish to present to
The Lord of the Manor should be emailed to:
The Bailiff at andysoper73@btinternet.com
or tel 07776 258398
whence they will be placed before his Lordship
for response on the evening.

Wine and ice creams will be on sale
before the meeting.

We hope to welcome you to this annual event.

The Bailiff

STOCKBRIDGE MUSIC

Friday , 7th March 2025 at 7.30pm

Doors open at 6.45pm

St Peter's Church, Stockbridge



David Owen Norris

"Yes, yes, we *will* have a pianoforte!"

A 250th anniversary concert for Jane Austen, born 1775

Tickets £25 (U18s £5)

from stockbridgemusic.uk

or on the door, if still available

Test Villages u3a

Thursday 13th March

at 2pm in Chilbolton Village Hall

*(Please note change of date from 1st to 2nd
Thursday this month)*

'Eat to fit your Genes'

Dr Maninder Ahluwalia

molecular biologist, specialising in DNA, genetics
and genomics at Cardiff Met University
explains how your diet can impact your health
through your genes

Thursday 3rd April

at 2pm in Chilbolton Village Hall

**Predation control in the conservation
of threatened wildlife, especially
ground-nesting birds**

Professor Nick Sotherton

recently retired Director of Research at the Game
and Wildlife Conservation Trust (GWCT) will
describe experiments conducted by the Trust to
quantify the impact, if any, that predators such
as foxes have on threatened native species,
leading to a discussion of how conservation is
conducted in the UK today.

Doors open at 1.40pm for the presentation,
followed by refreshments.

New members are very welcome.

u3a is a UK-wide network of groups that provides
the opportunity to socialise and learn for fun.

Find out more about our Test
Villages group at:
testvillages.u3asite.uk

u3a
learn. laugh. live

Andover Concert Series

Mandolin Quintet

Saturday 29th March 2025 - 3:00pm



Likely to include:
The Buttermere Waltz,
Loch Lomond, The Spider
in the Shed & many more

Simon Mayor's Mandolinquents

Tickets: £18 from *The Lights* or on the door

Performed at:

the Lights
andover



Presented
by:



Stockbridge Town Hall Events



Weekly

Mon am	Pilates with Paula
Mon am	Pilates Unlimited with Clare
Mon pm	Sing for Fun
Tues am	Iyengar Yoga with Melissa
Weds am	Yoga with Dionne
Weds am/pm	Su Joy Art Class
Thurs am	Stockbridge Community Market
Thurs pm	Jo Caley Joga
Fri am	Moo Music
Sat am	Jo Caley Joga

This Month

Mar 1	Antique Fair
Mar 1	Winchester Operatic & Musicals Soc
Mar 2-3	Jules At No.43
Mar 4	Stockbridge Drama Society
Mar 5	Courts Baron and Leet
Mar 7	Kuoni Personal Travel Expert
Mar 7	Stockbridge Music Society
Mar 8	South Central Makers
Mar 10-11	Capital Cashmere
Mar 12	re:dress Winchester
Mar 13-19	The Stillwell Art Group
Mar 14	Stockbridge Community Cinema
Mar 19	Stockbridge Community Cinema
Mar 20	Stockbridge Parish Council
Mar 21	Ellie and Bea
Mar 22	New Forest Produce Limited
Mar 23	Claire Hanley
Mar 24	Access Care
Mar 25	Longstock and Leckford WI
Mar 27	Romsey & Sth'ton N. Cons Assoc
Mar 29-30	Hawkmoor Books
Mar 29-30	Antiques and Curios
Mar 31	Wild Bazaar
Mar 31	Orvis UK

Stockbridge Amateur Dramatic Society's

Curtain Calls . . .

Come and be entertained by readings and performances from plays, poems and novels – and often songs

Tuesday 4th March

at 7.30pm

Stockbridge Town Hall

Our theme this month is

'Getting the Message'

You don't have to be a member of SADS to come along, (but we'd love it if you'd join).

We're also looking for new blood to act, direct and be part of the backstage team.

No experience necessary!

stockbridgeamdrams@gmail.com
or find us on Facebook



Longstock Garden Club

Tuesday 11th March

Clare Mitchell

will give a talk on

Climate Change and Gardening

This should be an interesting talk about how we adapt to growing plants in conditions which are either too wet or very hot and dry.

The weather has always been a topic of discussion in England but in recent years we have had to contend with extreme weather making gardening a challenge.

We meet at 7.30pm in Longstock Village Hall

(Doors open at 7.00pm)

Guests welcome, £3 each evening.

Don't forget the raffle tickets are still only £1 or bring a prize.

<https://longstockgardenclub.com/>

Peter Moore 07881573493



LONGSTOCK & LECKFORD WI

Tuesday 25th March

Stockbridge Town Hall 6.45pm for 7pm start.

Peter Ashburn

presents

**Orchids, wild and beautiful -
wild British orchids and
their cultivated counterparts**

Guests always welcome.

Further details from Selina Musters on 810459

Copy for Magazine

Copy date for the April Magazine:

15 March 2025

Please send emails to:

editorsstockmag@gmail.com

or phone Frances on 01264 811776

Jennifer on 811179 or Thea on 07730 964481

The Worshipful Mayor of Test Valley
Councillor Ian Jeffrey & Mayoress Maura Jeffrey
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'A Night To Remember'
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Stockbridge
PRACTICE

**Patient
News**

We have sent out information to all patients with online access to explain that sometimes there are no GP appointments available to book online – this does not mean we have no routine GP appointments. It just means we are being careful only to book patients in who actually require a GP. You can always book by telephone or send an eConsult.

Targeted Lung Health

The Targeted Lung Health Check programme is being rolled out to our practice. Patients aged 55-74 years who have ever smoked will be invited. The scanning will take place at Shepherds Spring Car Park from 24th February 2025. Further information is available online at www.hampshirehospitals.nhs.uk/our-services/az-departments-and-specialties/targeted-lung-health-check-programme

Breast Pilot

Some patients will be aware that we were participating in a pilot scheme where women aged 30 and over who had a breast lump could self-refer directly to the hospital. We are sorry to advise that this scheme ended on 31st January 2025. If you have any concerns about a breast lump, please ring the Surgery.

GP Trainees

GP Trainees are qualified doctors who are doing extended training to qualify as a GP. We are pleased to welcome Juliet May back from maternity leave. Charlotte Hobby will be leaving to go on maternity leave at the beginning of February. Also in February, Khaled Almfrdi will be finishing his placement with us and Laura Dinsmore will be starting.

Ann Spooner
Practice Manager



Houghton WI

**10am Monday 17th March
at Houghton Village Hall**

Jane Glennie
gives her talk entitled '**Who's Wearing the Trousers?**'

Visitors welcome. Further information from
Jane Anderton 01264 810928

Wherwell History Group

**Friday 21st March
8pm at Wherwell
Village Hall**



**Paul Chamberlain
presents**

**After the Battle :
French Prisoners of War
from Trafalgar**

For further details, please check our website at
<https://www.wherwellhistory.com>
(£5 entry fee for non-members)

A Defibrillator Near You!

Defibrillators for public use are located at: -

- Stockbridge Fire Station** (available 24 hrs)
- Longstock Village Hall** (available 24 hrs)
- Leckford Estate Office** (restricted hours).
- Leckford Farm Shop** (restricted hours)

For further details, and for other UK locations, go to www.defibfinder.uk

Instructions for use are given when the device is commandeered but for anyone who would like prior understanding of how to use one, see <https://www.aeddonate.org.uk/events/>

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Stockbridge Primary and Pre-School News

Building Resilience

I wrote in the last article about resilience and how we're fostering this in our children – never an easy task or a quick one, but crucial for helping them not merely to survive, but to thrive in their future lives.

The current educational climate is certainly testing the resilience of leaders with several significant changes coming our way. It cannot have escaped your attention, I'm sure, that OfSTED is currently consulting with the education sector, parents and the public about the way forward for their inspections. Last year, in the wake of the Ruth Perry tragedy, they conducted a 'Big Listen'; the largest consultation they have undertaken in their history. As an immediate interim measure, they removed the single-word grading for schools so we will no longer be simply 'good' or 'outstanding' or, indeed, the lesser categories of 'requires improvement' or 'inadequate'. In the current system, a school is graded in 5 key areas with each area receiving one of these judgements but no simple overall grade.

The most recent consultation moves us from these five key areas with the possible four judgements to a 5-point graded scale in what is set to be ten different areas. It's possible that a school could be 'exemplary' in one area (a synonym for outstanding??) to 'attention needed' (a new grading which surely just replaces 'requires improvement'?) or even 'causing concern; the lowest quality provision' (another synonym for 'inadequate'?). OfSTED says, quite rightly, that 'children and learners come first' and yet the report card is designed entirely for parents and I'm not sure that this complicated grading gives parents the clarity they're seeking. It certainly does put the emphasis on an 'inspection' process rather than an 'improvement' process and I'm a long way from being convinced that this is a healthy way to genuinely improve and support schools to achieve the very best for children.

In addition, the new Government is revisiting the curriculum and reassessing the content levels to alleviate the 'stuffed' curriculum, especially at the Primary level. This is still in its relative infancy but changes to the curriculum that come with the time to really assess and adapt what you have already in place, should be all for the better to support children's development.

At a more local level, we are facing changes as the Hampshire catering provision ceases in December 2025 and we need to look for new providers. Procurement of these things takes time, and it has fostered renewed ways of working together in our local schools to see if we can collectively find a solution. This collaboration is a real positive for

everyone's long-term future. Also, our IT system requires an overhaul as Windows 11 comes on stream later this year and, after recently visiting BETT, the Educational IT exhibition, it became clear that a hybrid system of Windows and Google is not effective financially or practically, so we are considering embracing 'the cloud' for storage and day-to-day working. This is potentially very exciting as our digital world becomes ever more powerful and AI has such potential if used wisely in schools.

There are changes afoot in other areas of our provision too. We have embraced the recent changes to childcare hours and offer, in our pre-school, fully-funded places for 3 and 4-year-olds and places for 2-year-olds (for 15hrs currently) which are now funded by the government. From September 2025, all under-fives whose parents are eligible will be able to access 30 hours of funded childcare. We will, of course, embrace this too to support our families but the government must make it affordable for settings. We are currently hugely underfunded in the early years, despite the rhetoric you may hear, and the cost of this policy to settings far outweighs the income received – an untenable situation for all. Wrap-around childcare is also changing, and pilot projects are underway to investigate how this can be sustainable. We offer childcare in school from 7.45am to 6pm every day of the week, chargeable, for our school-aged children. The Government has issued a new 'Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill', which includes many sensible recommendations to support families and schools. It does require us to consider how we can provide, from September 2026, a free breakfast club which currently comes with, as yet, no funding from the government.

Another challenge on the horizon.

Resilience is not just something we're teaching our children!

Emma Jefferies

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STOCKBRIDGE CHIROPODY



L.A. - Smoke and Mirrors

Up until January of this year, when I told people I was born and bred in Los Angeles, everyone immediately asked me why I ever left. The wonderful pictures painted by books, movies and television have convinced everyone who has never been there, and even many of those who have, that it's heaven on earth. Blue skies and sunshine, gorgeous beaches and manageable mountains, glamorous people everywhere you look! What's not to like?

Well, a great deal of life as I knew it disappeared from two vast sections of LA in about 48 hours in early January 2025. The Pacific Palisades and Altadena fires wiped out 18,000 buildings, including houses, businesses, and beachside properties which had been there for generations. And this wasn't the first time. Because, alongside all the wonderful things about LA, there have always been earthquakes, wildfires, floods and mudslides, riots and violence. Beneath the superficial glamour of life there is a darker scenario – not just in terms of natural disasters, but also in terms of the marginalised parts of the population, and the steamy underside of the city so well-known to fans of *film noir* and the most famous crime-novelists of the 20th century.

Hollywood has a lot to answer for. The image of a fabulous life that could be achieved by, well, almost anyone, was planted and nurtured throughout the world. So Los Angeles grew and prospered, expanding with homes built into brush-covered canyons, strips of beach houses and small bits of commerce dotting the coastline roads. Some think it was tempting fate – because, all along, hot winds called the Santa Anas, blew from the desert and regularly wreaked havoc. The lack of regular rainy seasons in this sunny idyll, followed by predictable summer droughts, created the ideal situation for the wildfire months which now stretch from August to March.



Raymond Chandler, in the opening of his short story RED WIND, put it this way: 'There was a desert wind blowing that night. It was one of those hot dry Santa Anas that come down through the mountain passes and curl your hair and make your nerves jump and your skin itch.... Meek little wives feel the edge of the carving knife

and study their husbands' necks.... Anything can happen.'

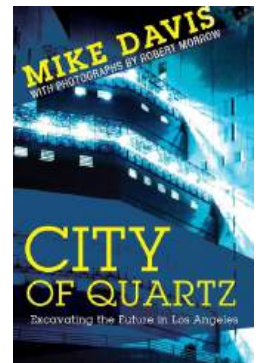
The dark side of life in LA has been wonderfully depicted in hard-boiled detective fiction since the 1930's. Raymond Chandler, James M Cain and many others have found it a perfect setting for exposing what the city can do to people who want

too much. Illusion can be quickly traded for disillusion and the most famous of their novels (Chandler's THE BIG SLEEP, Cain's THE POSTMAN ALWAYS RINGS TWICE, James Ellroy's LA CONFIDENTIAL, and Walter Moseley's DEVIL IN A BLUE DRESS) are brilliant in their detail and despair. There's something about the two sides of the city that fits the genre so well.

When thinking about Los Angeles and the other great writing that captures both sides of it, there is of course Nathaniel West's THE DAY OF THE LOCUST. Written in 1939, it is a biting satire of life in Hollywood, and the judgement of fire with which the book ends was made even more famous in the film adaptation. In many ways, not much seems to have changed.

The late Joan Didion is virtually required reading when people speak of LA-based writing. With her cool, modern detached prose, she brilliantly captures the conflicted moral tone of the residents. The essays in her collection SLOUCHING TOWARD BETHLEHEM are especially striking at the moment, particularly 'Los Angeles Notebook'.

Hands down, the number one nonfiction book about LA is Mike Davis's, CITY OF QUARTZ, which includes his essay, THE CASE FOR LETTING MALIBU BURN. Published in 1990, it's a sweeping history of the settlement and growth of the area, including the social, political and cultural history which created the modern city we know. He has a definite point of view which is worth considering.



Something has struck me about the events of January and the reactions since. In all the writing about the fire, and side-by-side with the terrifying imagery on the TV screens - interviews with people who fled and had to find out via the media if their houses were still standing, were still overwhelmingly in favour of rebuilding and moving back 'home' as soon as possible. Even though they know so much of their history is now gone and can never be replaced, their infatuation with Southern California life remains.

No doubt more haunting stories will rise from the recent ashes. To borrow (and paraphrase) from Los Angeles journalist Gregory Rodriguez as he watched a smoke cloud hovering over the city... "It reminded me that in a very real way, we can't [seem to] have one without the other. The cloud is just what it looked like: two sides of the same coin; the one defines the other. Heaven, hell. Ugly, beautiful. Apocalypse, paradise. Los Angeles."

Elaine Sperber

. . . that here on Earth, we're still at the mercy of nature. (N. de Grasse Tyson)

Hare Today, (Gone Tomorrow?)

March is the month of the hare and the UK has three types - the brown hare *Lepus europaeus*, the mountain hare *Lepus timidus* and the Irish subspecies *Lepus timidus hibernicus*. The brown hare is most common, usually seen on open areas of grassland and arable farmland such as the wide plains of East Anglia and our own southern Downs. They tend to forage at dusk and dawn and are active at night.

The mountain hares of Scottish and northern English uplands are smaller than brown hares and turn white in winter to blend with snow. (The mountain hare and the stoat are the only British mammals with this ability to turn white.) Irish hares are also smaller than brown hares, thought to be the only species of hare or rabbit native to the British Isles (the others were introduced by humans).

The brown hare was probably brought to Britain by the Romans from the Netherlands and is now naturalised here. With golden brown fur, a white belly and amber eyes, it is roughly twice the size of a rabbit with longer, black-tipped ears and longer more powerful hind legs. The brown hare is Britain's fastest land mammal, reaching up to 45mph, speed and agility being its main defence from natural predators such as foxes, weasels, stoats, polecats and birds of prey. When they run, hares tuck their tail down to hide their eye-catching white underside.

With a lifespan of 2-4 years, brown hares live above ground (unlike rabbits in their burrows) and are often seen resting in shallow depressions in the ground known as 'forms' or 'scrapes'. They are renowned for their 'boxing' mating ritual. A female doe can produce up to four litters of 1- 4 young (leverets) a year which are born open-eyed and covered in fur. Within a few days of birth, they are left by the doe in a form a few metres away. Each day for the first month of their lives, the leverets will gather together at sunset to be fed by the mother, but otherwise there is no parental care.

Sadly, the UK's hare population has declined by over 80% in the past 100 years. Rabbit haemorrhagic disease virus has been found in hares, whilst hare coursing and poaching remain a scourge, but the main cause is habitat loss due to intensive farming, use of pesticides and hedgerow removal so many conservation organisations now work with farmers to ensure wildlife-supportive management.

To see a hare zigzagging across open countryside, leaping vertically and twisting mid-air, or boxing a potential mate, is one of nature's most joyous encounters.

Editors

For an enchanting, true account of the author's experience of raising a leveret to adulthood during the Covid lockdown, we recommend the book *Raising Hare* by Chloe Dalton. (Also read in serialised abridged form on Radio 4 BBC Sounds)



**Your
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cubs

Stockbridge Scout Group is looking to recruit more volunteers to help with our wonderful Beaver colony and Cub pack as, sadly, two of our leaders are moving out of the area due to their work commitments.

Beavers are girls and boys aged 6- 8. Cubs are girls and boys aged 8-11. Both sections meet on a Wednesday evening (5.15 - 6.30pm and 6.45 - 8.15pm) at the Scout Hut in Stockbridge.

We run a traditional group with a modern twist. There is no age limit to being a helper. You don't need to have any prior experience in working with children. You do not need to have a religious belief and we are open to all genders and sexuality.



We are looking for people with a sense of fun, who are kind and willing to have a go. We offer a wide range of activities from first aid, fire lighting, cooking and hiking to digital skills, understanding money, rocket making, mock parliaments and indoor curling. We offer trips away, camping and skills for life.

Not pictured: the mini bus driver, sandwich maker, photo taker.



You do need to be able to pass a DBS safeguarding check which we will provide. We will give any training that you need.



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stockbridgescouts@yahoo.com or 01256 895534

We can't wait to meet you.



Danebury School News

Yet another wonderful term at Danebury School! Our students have been showcasing their talents during the many wet breaks so far this spring term. They sound so incredible; we almost hope that the rain keeps coming!

At Danebury, we are proud to live our school values every day; we ask our pupils to demonstrate kindness, resilience, excellence and empowerment.

An excellent example of them rising to our challenge can be seen in Classchart points. We have challenged all the pupils to achieve at least 97% positive to negative point ratios this term. Today, they have risen to the challenge and will be rewarded with a non-uniform day!

Team Danebury staff have been undertaking training to support the education of our students, trying to increase the participation ratio even further. We are using whiteboards in lessons to receive maximum engagement, checking the learning of pupils throughout lessons. During an INSET day, we zoomed right into assessment with KS3, ensuring they are equipped with the skills needed at KS4 during their GCSE examinations.

Speaking of GCSE examinations, year 11 have undertaken their final set of mocks before sitting their real exams this summer. They are beginning to feel the pressure! It is amazing to see their faces as they receive their results, as they realise just how incredible they truly are.

On to the fun things! All of year 11 have been out to the Mayflower Theatre to watch 'An Inspector Calls'. They are an asset to the school and presented themselves extremely well. For many, this would be their first experience within a theatre – they got to experience a lighting glitch on stage, seeing the real realities of working life within a theatre. A small group of year 9s had an experience beyond the classroom and travelled to Alton to experience 'Jane Austen's House'. They got a guided tour of the museum along with a creative writing session; again they were excellent ambassadors for the school.

We have been focusing on careers and options for GCSEs since January. Year 10s have been promoting their favourite subjects to the prospective year 9 students. To follow this, some of our students have been to a careers fair in Basingstoke to get some additional information on jobs they may like to partake later in their lives.

Hopefully, the lead-up to Easter will be just as exciting as this half-term has been!

Charlie Barton

Southern Voices announce new concert season

Southern Voices celebrated in style last year with a sold out 40th Anniversary concert series placing them firmly as one of our finest and most popular local chamber choirs.

This year, they invite you on a journey exploring four pillars of human existence: HOPE, FAITH, LIFE, LOVE.

For the first concert on **Saturday 29th March** at 7.30pm, in Holy Trinity Church, Winchester, Musical Director, Jamal Sutton, has created an awe-inspiring soundscape with a programme centred around two works: the first, one of the greatest unaccompanied pieces of the 20th century, Frank Martin's monumental *Mass for Double Choir*, the second, Eric Whitacre's contemplative *Three Songs of Faith*, together with a stunning group of *a cappella* works by Bach, Holst, Briggs, Celia McDowall and William Harris' ravishing *Faire is the Heaven*.

In a change from their normal venue, the music will explore the larger space offered by Holy Trinity, Winchester and Jamal has chosen the programme specifically with this in mind, he says "an evening of great meaning and reflection awaits you".

Full details and tickets from: southernvoices.co.uk or telephone 0333 666 3366 (booking fees apply). Registered charity 1086868.

SOUTHERN VOICES
Jamal Sutton, Director

Saturday 29th March
Holy Trinity, Winchester
7.30pm

Frank Martin: *Mass for Double Choir*
Eric Whitacre: *Three Songs of Faith*
Bach, Harris, Holst and more

Book now
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registered charity 1086868

Tickets: £18
ages 21 and under: £10



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Harebrained - Myth, Madness and Magic

Our familiar British simile 'Mad as a March hare' - used to describe unpredictable, excitable or wild behaviour - is centuries old and relates to the hares' erratic and athletic behaviour during the early months of their long February-to-September breeding season.

March is when male hares (bucks) are often seen in a madcap chase for a female mate (doe), sometimes reaching speeds of up to 40mph on their strong hind legs. An unreceptive female will turn and try to repel the over-zealous male using her forelegs; the two engage in a standing ritual which looks like boxing. Male hares with the determination and stamina to overcome this courtship sparring will succeed in mating. Until recently, it was incorrectly thought that these 'boxing' bouts were between males competing for breeding supremacy.

An early record of the hare's energetic springtime behaviour appears in a poem *Blowbol's Test* of c.1500:

'Thanne þey begyn to swere and to stare,
And be as braynles as a Marshe hare'
(Then they begin to swerve and to stare,
And be as brainless as a March hare)

Similar references appear in 16th century works by John Skelton:

'Aiii, I saye, thou madde Marche Hare' and
'As mery as a marche hare',

and Sir Thomas More, in *The Supplication of Souls*:

'As mad not as a March hare, but as a madde dogge.', so distinguishing the daft from the rabid. Our (usually) affectionate teasing epithet 'harebrained' is also an age-old expression, found in Edward Hall's *Chronicle* of 1548.

Of course, for most of us, it is Lewis Carroll's enduring character, the 'March Hare' from the tea party scene in his 1865 book *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, which comes to mind. Sir John Tenniel's familiar illustrations show the Hare with straw on his head, a Victorian depiction implying madness. Indeed, Alice anticipates of the gathering: 'The March Hare will be much the most interesting, and perhaps as this is May it won't be raving mad - at least not so mad as it was in March.'



In another representation, the hare's unusual and entertaining courtship ritual and its natural habits led to its adoption as an ancient pagan symbol of fertility. When running hares suddenly pause or hide from predators by crouching down into shallow depressions in the ground, they seem miraculously to disappear. Ground-nesting birds such as lapwings, were much more common before intensive farming techniques developed and so observers, searching where a hare had seemed to disappear, might find an egg from a ground-nesting bird and believe it to have been left by the hare. Evolving with time, and with fewer people understanding the origin story involving hares rather than rabbits, we now have our tradition of an Easter Bunny hiding or bringing chocolate or coloured eggs for children at Easter.

Depending on circumstances, hares can be good or bad omens, as illustrated widely throughout folklore and mythology. The brown hare, 'star-gazing' under a night sky and appearing fleetingly almost more spirit or ghost than animal, is said to bring good luck. In distress, a hare can produce an almost human cry and, standing on its hind legs, would easily be interpreted as an uncanny and unsettling female manifestation. Men would be led astray!

Hares have also long been associated with witches, perhaps because of their ability to 'vanish' when on the run and their human-like 'mad March boxing' being interpreted as a witches' dance. Witches were said to shapeshift into hares to gain entrance into fields to bewitch cattle and to then flee capture.

Clearly, the hare has intrigued and delighted people since ancient times and so frequently features in the visual arts both secular and religious; to Graeco-Roman gods, the hare was sacred and, in Christian art, the depiction of three hares often symbolises the Trinity. Many Romano-British archeological finds such as mosaics near Cirencester and stone carvings from Vindolanda in Northumbria portray hares as creatures both to be revered and yet also to be hunted

From more recent times, many may remember the tantalising mystery of *Masquerade*, the 1979 book written and exquisitely illustrated by Kit Williams, which incorporated clues as to where he had buried a valuable hand-crafted and bejewelled golden hare. When eventually found in 1982, a further mystery arose over the disputed circumstances of the discovery.

There are few creatures that inspire such affection and interest as hares. Impossible to tame, seen so rarely and unpredictably - and spell-binding when you do - we love the hare in all its madness and magic. Good luck hare-spotting this Spring - and please send us photos if you succeed.

Editors

The 250th Anniversary of the Birth of Jane Austen

In 2025, Hampshire will be celebrating the 250th anniversary of the birth of our famed and much loved author, Jane Austen (1775-1817), with special events taking place across the county throughout the year.

Jane's life in Hampshire - in brief

Jane was born on 16 December 1775, the seventh of eight children, six boys and two girls. Jane was two years younger than her much-loved sister Cassandra and a year younger than her brother Francis. At the time of her birth, her father, George Austen, was the Rector of St Nicholas, Steventon, where the family lived a sociable and seemingly comfortable life, though George did have to supplement his income with farming and tutoring. From the age of about 11, Jane was writing poems and stories. By the time she was twenty, she had written *Lady Susan*, and by 1798 early versions of what were to become *Pride and Prejudice* and *Sense and Sensibility*. By 1800 she had drafted *Susan*, which would become *Northanger Abbey*.

In 1801 after 40 years as rector of Steventon, George Austen retired, and his eldest son James took over the living. George moved with his wife and two daughters away from the quiet Hampshire countryside to the bustling city of Bath, which everyone seemed to find difficult. A highlight of the years in Bath was the acceptance of the novel *Susan* in 1803, by a London publishing firm, Benjamin and Crosby, who paid £10 for the copyright. But disappointingly it wasn't published, and Jane couldn't recover it until 1816 when she could afford to repurchase the copyright.

Jane's father died in 1805 and finances were precarious. Edward, James, Henry, and Francis Austen (known as Frank) pledged to make annual contributions to support their mother and sisters. The family moved briefly to Worthing and then in 1806, to Southampton, where they shared a house with Frank and his new wife. During these years much of the time was spent visiting and staying with various branches of the family. However, everything changed for the better in early 1809, when Jane's brother Edward who had inherited considerable property, was able to offer his mother and sisters the use of a large cottage which was part of the estate around Chawton House.

This brought them security and it was here that Jane wrote, revised and had published her best known novels: *Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Mansfield Park*, *Emma*, *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion*. and became a successful published author. Jane became ill in 1817 and moved to Winchester for medical treatment. She died two months later on 18 July 1817, aged 42. Her memorial gravestone is in the nave of the Cathedral

Celebrating Jane Austen

The villages and towns in Hampshire with which Jane Austen had a particular connection are celebrating Jane's life

Steventon, where Jane was born is three miles from the small town of Overton, whose Parish Council has drawn up a series of **walking and cycle trails** through the footpaths and bridleways of Overton, Steventon and the surrounding countryside, following in the footsteps of Jane Austen, her friends and family.

The printed leaflets are available from Overton Parish Office and from shops and cafes in the village, or they can be downloaded at <https://overtonparishcouncil.gov.uk/overton-jane-austen-trails/>

Jane on Parties

"We are to have a tiny party here tonight; I hate tiny parties – they force one into constant exertion." 1801 letter from Jane Austen to her sister Cassandra

"One cannot have too large a party."
Emma (1815)

"Without music, life would be a blank."
Emma (1815)

The National Trust property **The Wyne**, just north of **Basingstoke**, is exploring Jane's connection with the Chute family who lived at the Wyne in their **Regency Revisited - Celebrating Jane Austen 250** exhibition, from Sat 29 March. You can see first editions of Austen's books, and beautiful Regency costumes.

There will also be free **Jane Austen tours** every Wednesday and Saturday from Saturday 29 March until Saturday 1 Nov, from 2.30 – 3.30pm. More details at <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/visit/hampshire/the-vyne/events>

Southampton, where Jane lived after the family left Bath. The SeaCity Museum is hosting **A Very Respectable Company – Jane Austen and Her Southampton Circle**, an exhibition exploring an unexpected group of women, several with connections with the West Indies and also including the actress Sarah Siddons, all of whom could have inspired characters in novels such as *Mansfield Park*, *Emma* and *Sanditon*. Contact <https://seacitymuseum.co.uk/whats-on/jane-austen-exhibition/> for more details.

Jane Austen's House is to be found at **Chawton** and throughout 2025 has a permanent exhibition - **Jane Austen and the Art of Writing**. The house will also be hosting a series of festivals to celebrate this special anniversary year. Details at: <https://janeaustens.house/visit/jane-austen-250/>

Nearby, **Chawton House** is the Elizabethan manor house that once belonged to Jane Austen's brother, Edward, and where Jane was a frequent visitor.

Chawton House

Library is an independent research library and study centre which focuses on women's writing in English from 1600 to 1830. The house and gardens are open to the public and during the anniversary year the house is offering a monthly tour - **Jane Austen at the Great House** - see further details at www.chawtonhouse.org



Being a woman in a man's world

"There is a stubbornness about me that never can bear to be frightened at the will of others. My courage always rises at every attempt to intimidate me." *Pride and Prejudice* (1813)

"A woman, especially if she have the misfortune of knowing anything, should conceal it as well as she can." *Northanger Abbey* (1817)

Winchester - Celebrating Jane in Winchester **Winchester Cathedral** has worked in close partnership with many Hampshire organisations to present a vibrant programme of events, which includes **The Storytellers, an immersive tour**, which runs from 11 -15 March. Visitors are invited to explore a series of captivating light and sound installations, celebrating the rich tapestry of literature, poetry, and the oral traditions. Dedicated areas honour literary giants from Jane Austen to Shakespeare, and children's literature and classic tales are also celebrated - see <https://www.winchester-cathedral.org.uk/event/luxmuralis/> for further details.

All year round - Visit Jane Austen's grave in the Cathedral.

And finally, Jane Austen spent her dying weeks in **8 College Street, Winchester**. Between June and August, Winchester College will open the house to the public for the first time to join the anniversary celebrations for their illustrious neighbour.

"It is a satisfaction to me to think that she (Jane) is to lie in a Building she admired so much... I have lost a treasure, such a sister, such a friend as never can have been surpassed. She was the sun of my life, the gilder of every pleasure, the soother of every sorrow, I had not a thought concealed from her, and it is as if I had lost a part of myself"

Cassandra Austen

The Austens Jane's remarkable family

Jane and her enormous family were prodigious letter writers and it is through their letters that we get such an insight into their lives, especially those from Jane, some of which were a bit too forthright for her sister Cassandra, who, to the regret of Austen scholars and fans, burnt some of them, possibly to protect the sensibilities of the people mentioned.

As well as sister Cassandra, Jane had six brothers, several sisters-in-law and thirty two nephews and nieces. Cassandra was her dearest friend and confidante to whom she left "every thing of which I may die possessed, or which may be hereafter due to me".

Jane's eldest brother was James, who became a cleric and, by taking over the Rectory in Steventon, displaced his parents and sisters, making their lives much less settled,

Her second brother, George, had epilepsy and was said to have "never learned to speak". He was boarded out for most of his life with a local family, and was hardly mentioned in family letters.

Jane's third brother, Edward, was adopted by his fourth cousin, Thomas Knight, and in 1812 inherited Knight's estate and took his name. He found himself a wealthy landowner, able to provide his mother and sisters with the cottage in Chawton.

Next was Henry, who had a mixed career, briefly as a soldier in the Oxfordshire Militia, and then as a banker and 'man about town' in London, and had useful literary connections. When his bank collapsed in 1816, in the aftermath of the Napoleonic wars, he became an ordained deacon and was appointed curate of Chawton, Hampshire, where his mother and two sisters had lived since 1809.

The two youngest brothers both joined the navy, Francis (Frank) in 1786 at the age of 12, fighting throughout the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars. As the Commander of MS St Albans, he observed the Battle of Vimeiro from the deck of his ship before embarking British troops retreating after the Battle of Corunna. Considered by Admiral Nelson to be 'an excellent young man', he rose to become Admiral of the Fleet and was knighted in 1837.

Charles also joined the navy at the age of 12, He served during the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, and beyond, eventually rising to the rank of rear-admiral on 9 November 1846, and was appointed commander-in-chief in the East Indies and China Station on 14 January 1850. He commanded the British expedition during the Second Anglo-Burmese War but died of cholera at Burma on 7 October 1852, at the age of 73.

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Golly! I cannot believe it's March already! I thought I'd let you know that I have finally succumbed to an Air Fryer! Being a rather traditional cook, slow cookers included, this has been a big decision. So far, the Hasselback potatoes have been amazing. Once I have worked out the benefits of this so-called amazing kitchen gadget, I might suggest some new recipes using the device this year. I will keep you updated on my progress.

In the meantime, March means Pancake Day this year and recipes abound in the media so I thought I would share one of my favourites with you.

American-Style Pancakes with Caramelised Banana and Chocolate Almond Sauce.

Pancake Ingredients, makes 12

240g plain flour
2 tsps baking powder
1 tsp bicarbonate of soda
1 tbsp caster sugar
2 large free-range eggs, separated
450ml of buttermilk
Knob of butter for frying
Pinch of salt

Caramelised Banana Ingredients

75g caster sugar
3 large firm bananas sliced thickly on the diagonal
Greek yoghurt to serve

Chocolate Almond Sauce Ingredients

50g blanched almonds
100g quality milk chocolate, in pieces
100ml single cream (plus 50ml of single cream optional see tips)
Splash of a liqueur of your choice
1 tsp sunflower (flavourless) oil

To make the pancakes.

Mix the dry ingredients in a large bowl. Make a well in the centre, then add the egg yolks and stir. Slowly pour in the buttermilk, stirring constantly, to form a smooth, thick batter, you can use a whisk if you prefer.

In a separate large bowl, whisk the egg whites until they form soft, floppy peaks. Using a metal spoon, gently fold the whites into the pancake batter, starting with a tablespoonful and gradually adding the remainder for a light, fluffy batter. Rest the mixture for 10 minutes.

Heat a large frying pan and lightly grease with butter. Space small ladlefuls of batter into the hot

pan and smooth to around 10cm wide and 1cm thick. Cook over a medium heat for 2-3 minutes until firm and golden underneath, then flip and repeat until fluffy and cooked through. Keep them warm in a low oven while you cook the rest.

For the sauce

Heat the oven to 180°C/160°C fan/ gas 4 and spread the blanched almonds on a baking tray. Toast the nuts in the oven for 8-10 minutes until light and golden.

Put the chocolate, 2 tsps of the cream and the alcohol in a bowl over a pan of steaming (but not simmering) water. Do not let the bottom of the bowl touch the water. When the chocolate has melted, stir to combine, and remove from the heat.

When cool, blitz the nuts in a food processor and add the oil slowly to form a smooth paste. Pour in the melted chocolate mixture and whizz again then add the remaining cream and pulse briefly to bring the sauce together.

Return the mixture to the chocolate bowl, cover with cling film and place over the saucepan of steaming water to keep it warm.

Spread 75g of sugar evenly in a large frying pan. Place over a low heat and, as the sugar starts to melt, add the bananas and let the sugar melt around them. Once melted adjust the heat until the sugar turns to caramel. When it has turned a red brick colour, turn the bananas and cook until well caramelised. Don't move them around too much as they will break up.

To serve, layer the pancakes, top with bananas and a dollop of Greek yoghurt, then pour the sauce over.

Tips

The sauce can be made up to 24 hours in advance. You can keep it in the fridge, then warm, as above, to serve.

If you want a runnier sauce, add an extra 50ml of cream.

Any leftover sauce can be stored in the fridge for up to a week.

Linda Hotchen





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Views from the Potting Shed

Last month I was musing vaguely on, amongst other things, the plans for the Chelsea Flower Show 2025 and, as we gardeners patiently grit our teeth to get through February in the hope of spring arriving in some form by March, Chelsea is still in my thoughts. On the ticketing webpage, members' and public tickets are only available for the entire day, with half-day and evening entries sold out. Perhaps some had decided that up to £140 was not what they wanted to pay, although this year the RHS has initiated 'buy now pay later' facilities and, on the same page, offer a 25% discount for new members' fees (always irritating to long-term members renewing membership annually).

This led to my own private bugbear about the emphasis television presenters pay to gold medal winners - the implication by some that only gold is worthwhile, whilst ignoring other beautiful gardens which, in their terms, have failed to make the televisual grade. Judges' assessments are to 9 strict standards - success in carrying out the brief, ambition, overall impression, design and layout, spatial composition, construction, planting design, association and implementation. They do not judge lightly and do not have a certain allocation of medals to award, so some years fewer medals may be awarded. A Chelsea medal of any colour is a huge honour. Show gardens are expensive to build and are usually sponsored by a company or charity; they may be cutting-edge, introducing us to modern design ideas, new products and new methods of gardening. They sometimes make a social statement - this can be a grim message which in all honesty, we would not choose for our own corners of paradise - personally, I have never wanted to recreate a bleak urban landscape in which to relax.

For the past two years, show gardens must prove they will be 'relocated, reused or repurposed' with the aim of constantly reducing the RHS's carbon

footprint. And with a jaw-dropping cost estimated at around £200,000 per show garden a couple of years ago, this seems only

sensible. However, this is not how Joe and Joanna Public judge the gardens; the BBC People's Choice Award rarely mirrors the views of the judges and nor should it.

So, what do we look for when assessing a garden? Most of us want something which looks and feels beautiful, shows us new plants we could try for ourselves and maybe inspires a corner of planting we could incorporate into our private spaces. When prairie planting became popular with Piet Oudolf's spectacular garden at the 2000 show, we were all inspired to do something similar - but without sufficient sunny, open space to plant long strips of plants, and the courage to leave large skeletal brown clumps through the winter months, we can't really copy this style on a small scale.

Where does this leave the average gardener, with a relatively small patch but the desire to make our garden 'special?' For myself, I thank heaven for Carol Klein, Rachel de Thame et al for their walks around the Great Pavilion as I sit, pencil in hand, to note down my selections for the coming year.

To finish - a happy memory from when I worked in London and two diminutive female colleagues, nearing retirement age and thus not suffering from the vanities of youth, solved the problem of taking home plants bought after 4pm on the final day - a broom handle, strung with potted plants and carried on their shoulders between them - with plants swinging they processed into the tube system and home. A joy to behold!

Micki Nadal



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... and just because we love it and have a little space left over, here is 'Young Hare' by Albrecht Dürer, 1502. Eds.



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In Memory of a very special teacher, Miss Sue Mansergh

I was lucky enough to be a pupil at St Swithun's School, Winchester in the 1960s. I remember her coming into the class and introducing herself and from then on, she opened up a new and very special and exciting world for me. She made Geography my favourite subject and taught me so much. She actually cared that her students were happy learning from her. I certainly was. She was also a very fair teacher. I was a wayward pupil and spent lots of time in detention, and sometimes she took the hour-long class. It was originally supposed that to read the dictionary would be a suitable punishment, but she quickly realized I found it fascinating and told me I needed to sit quiet and still for the hour at the end of which she said, "I can see you thinking up your next story. That is not going to work, so I will bring you in a book to read." She often provided me with a book she knew I would find fascinating, and I was most grateful. The best one she loaned me was a world atlas. Thank you, Miss Mansergh! I now live in retirement in Yorkshire and another ex-pupil of St Swithun's worships at the same church as I do. She was a friend of Miss Mansergh. I have dedicated my next novel due to be published soon to Miss Mansergh's memory. It is called *Going, Going, Gone*. I now write for the Yorkshire Post and have been a police officer in Hampshire for many years, then a shepherd in the Yorkshire Dales. I now live in the Wolds.

Sue Woodcock, nee O'Dowd

The novel is published by Vanguard Press (Pegasus Elliot Mackenzie.)

A VERY Small World

I first met Sue Woodcock soon after I moved to Pocklington and I was doing the "rounds" of churches in the area. There are seven in this benefice and most are in the Wolds. They are all lovely, different and set in beautiful unspoilt countryside, but the one in Nunburnholme stood out in that it is in the midst of fields, a short walk from the village. It was a bitterly cold day and I met Sue in jeans and a sweater but no coat! I remarked about how cold it was and she said she never was as she used to be a hill farmer in Grassington (a village used in the early filming of the James Herriot books), In the course of conversations in the next few weeks, we found we were both pupils at St Swithun's and her favourite teacher was Sue Mansergh. I am older than Sue W so I only remember Sue M in her retirement years but we all know how much she contributed to village life. I remember walks with her and her pointing out archaeological landmarks on the horizon which I had just taken for granted. I used to phone Sue every so often and she remembered her old pupil well and was glad to have news of her.

Ninya Van Galen

. . . which is one of the oldest subjects of art. (Susan Sontag)



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Stockbridge Parish Council News

Hampshire County Council Devolution

It has been confirmed that Hampshire's application for devolution has been fast tracked. This means that there will not be County Councillor elections in May as had been scheduled and it has now been confirmed that HCC will not be holding a referendum on the Council tax they wanted to charge. Instead, Mayoral elections will be held in May 2026. The Borough Councils are required to work together in order to draw up robust and sustainable proposals for unitary authorities. There may also be opportunities for community anomalies to be addressed. The government is asking for the first draft of these proposals by the end of March this year and for them to be firmed up by September. The timetable is therefore demanding. The process that has been set out is that for the first year the new authorities will shadow the previous ones.

The Queen Elizabeth II Memorial Garden

The garden is nearing completion. In January the trees were pruned to allow more light into the space and Longstock Nurseries have now installed the raised beds, the trellises and the new turf. A new path has been laid from the public toilets which allows disabled access to the garden and the Council would like to encourage this path to be used for access. The garden has been transformed from a dark unwelcoming corner to an open and welcoming space.

A formal garden opening event will be held on Thursday, 3 April at 3pm.

Housing Targets

There is also significant change to the housing targets for councils announced by Angela Rayner last autumn. Test Valley's housing target is to be increased by 75%. This means that, rather than planning for 524 new homes a year, TVBC should instead prepare a Local Plan that delivers 921 dwellings per annum. As a planning authority, TVBC is obliged to provide a 5-year housing land supply and this means TVBC needs to show that it has a plan, for the next 5 years, to deliver the housing for the Government's target. TVBC is keen to ensure that any new housing development includes the infrastructure to support it but there is now a risk of developers getting permission for speculative plans which may or may not include the new infrastructure necessary to support the development.

Council Tax Increase

HCC has now agreed a 4.995% Council tax increase for Hampshire. The Council had asked the Government to be allowed a higher increase as part of an 'Exceptional Financial Support' request but this has been denied. HCC did have the option of holding a referendum on a rise above 5% but has decided not to do so.

In contrast, Stockbridge PC's precept has been reduced by around 8% because the Council has managed to secure funding from other sources such as Trout 'n About for some of the projects it intends to take up. The Council would like to thank the Trout 'n About team for their support and hard work which has meant that the community of Stockbridge has benefited directly from the event.

Food Waste Collections

TVBC has recommended launching food waste collections on 13 October 2025. All councils will need to have food waste collections in place by 1 April 2026 but TVBC is pushing to introduce the collections five months early, in a positive step towards transforming recycling in the area. The new weekly service will see kerbside food waste caddies collected from households. Each household will be given a kitchen caddy to help with the collection of food waste and scraps in the home. Once collected, the food waste will be taken to an anaerobic digestion facility where microorganisms break it down in a tank without oxygen. The methane-rich biogas generated during this process can be used as a fuel and the remaining product can be used as a nutrient-rich fertiliser.

SPC Working Party to respond to HCC's Parking Survey

Stockbridge PC has formed a working party, led by Cllr Norton to provide a response to HCC's parking survey. HCC has said it does not want to impose something on the community but wants to work with Stockbridge, so it is important that the Council's response addresses issues that have been raised to it and in the survey. The final version of HCC's survey has now been published on Stockbridge PC's website under Council Projects tab *Traffic Parking - Stockbridge Parish Council - Stockbridge Parish Council, Stockbridge.*

Stockbridge Parish Council will next meet on Thursday 20th March, 7:15pm, at the Town Hall.

Belinda Baker, Clerk to Stockbridge Parish Council
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Eco News from Lisa Trailor

RSPB big garden bird count

You may remember that we counted birds in the churchyard for the RSPB in 2024. The day chosen had clear blue skies, we saw ten different species and heard many more.

This year, on the closing day of Storm Eowyn, I got very wet, saw 3 jackdaws and a lesser spotted Chris Reynell!

And spent quite a lot of time being impressed by how adept birds are at camouflage, how well they can shelter, and how important all the little nooks and crevices in our gardens are as habitat.

My shelter was in the church porch! (see picture)

Here's hoping for better in 2026!



Churchyard management plan

Chris and I are putting a plan to St Mary's PCC which, if agreed, will ensure that we manage the churchyard for nature as far as possible.

The front (most visible) section will still be managed pretty much as it is now, but we are hoping to extend the wildflower patch and also to extend "no mow May" to at least the middle of June, giving nature the spring to really get established. This is possibly the most impactful thing that we can do with the church yard to help mitigate the severe nature depletion that has happened in the UK during our lifetimes.

And an early 'heads up', please hold the afternoon of **Sunday June 15th for our Church Count on Nature** event in the churchyard.

CAN Bill

Have you heard of the Climate and Nature Bill, a bill which is designed to put in place science-based responses to dealing with our climate and nature crises in the UK?

It was supposed to be voted on in January. Very unfortunately, it was decided in parliament to push a decision on implementing it back to July. I know the government has a lot on its plate, but this had cross-party support and we all know that time is running out to make a real impact to the climate-related catastrophes heading our way.

If you get a chance to add your name to a petition/campaign/talk to your MP (as I will have later this year), please make it clear how important this issue is.

Good news

After last month's article, I thought I'd try to include some good eco news each month. So here goes!

For the first time in five years, toxic bee-killing pesticides won't be used on any fields in England

The previous Government repeatedly ignored their own scientists and allowed the use of these harmful chemicals, despite mass pressure.

This has now been ruled as potentially illegal by the Office for Environmental Protection and DEFRA has announced that these chemicals will not be approved for use in 2025!

Hurray – we need all the bees we can get!

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Our thanks to the many of you who have already paid

Stainer's *Crucifixion* on Good Friday

March 9th is the first Sunday in Lent, which leads us to Easter Sunday on April 20th. Good Friday, on April 18th, is one of



the holiest days in the Christian calendar. This year, led and conducted by Sarah Seymour, the Stockbridge Church Choir with other singers from across the Benefice and two professional soloists will be singing Stainer's *The Crucifixion*.

John Stainer (1840-1901) was a distinguished musician, organist at St Paul's Cathedral, an Oxford professor, conductor, composer and a huge contributor to church music in his time. He is now remembered largely for some very fine hymns and for his cantata, *The Crucifixion*. His intention when he composed this work was to provide a Passiontide Cantata written in a language and on a scale which puts it within the scope of parish church choirs.

The Crucifixion is scored for tenor and baritone soloists, mixed choir and organ. Incorporated into the work are five hymns, including the well-known 'Cross of Jesus', which the congregation are encouraged to sing together with the choir. We will be singing these hymns during Lent so that they become familiar to the congregation.

There are passages of great beauty, such as the unaccompanied setting of 'God so loved the World', and the haunting, final statement from the tenor soloist, 'And he bowed his head and gave up the ghost'. In some large churches, this cantata is sung every day during Holy Week.

We are fortunate to have Toshi Ogita living in our Benefice. Toshi is a professional tenor soloist. Last year, he sang Bach's *Komm Süßer Tod* during our Good Friday service. This year, he will be singing the tenor solo part in *The Crucifixion*. The bass will be sung by Lawrence Gillians, who has sung with the Royal Opera House and Grange Park Opera. Jack Redman will be playing the organ. Jack is a professional pianist and organist and anyone who attended Toshi's concert for children last April will have met Jack, who was playing the piano that memorable day in St Peter's, crowded with children and their families.

Singers, please join us!

We are inviting anyone who loves singing to join us in this significant event. Rehearsals will be every Thursday evening during March at 7pm in St Peter's. You can contact Sarah Seymour on sarah@seymourartandmusic.co.uk or tel: 07833 300504 to ask for more details.

Janet Williams

Church News

Prayer for March

Joel 2. 12,13

¹²Yet even now, says the LORD, return to me with all your heart,
with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning;
¹³rend your hearts and not your clothing.
Return to the LORD, your God,
for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger,
and abounding in steadfast love,
and relents from punishing.

Lord, we know you long for us to turn to you, as your beloved child.

We pray that during Lent, we can reflect on our imperfections, knowing you love us anyway; that our trust in you will grow.

We pray for peace in our turbulent world; in Ukraine for agreement to be reached, which is just and fair, with Ukraine having the opportunity to rebuild and to live in peace, and freedom from fear of attack.

We pray for Gaza, for stability and for a lasting peace to be found.

For the homeless to find homes.

We pray for our environment, that we can appreciate the beauty of the world and the fragile balance of need and care; for agreement that global warming must be slowed.

We pray for our own country, that we can live in harmony with our neighbours, that needs can be met. That young people can live in trust and safety.

We are fortunate to live in this place, with food, water and health care; help us to be generous to those who do not have these things and rely on others.

We pray for all preparing for Christian Aid Week – 11- 17 May 2025.

Thank you Lord for our blessings and the knowledge of your Love. Amen.

Matthew 6.19-21

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; ²⁰but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.'

Church News

St Mary's Longstock



February was a quiet month with the usual services. An interesting All Age, attended by those who are young at heart. The Parish Eucharist with Revd Joe attracted a small, but loyal, congregation. Morning Worship taken by Geoff Cox went well, despite the very cold weather. The Christmas season ended on 2 February and our minds turned to Lent.

Lent Course

This year we are following the Church of England 'A Lent Journey, Living Hope' – a booklet with 40 daily reflections starting on Ash Wednesday 5 March. The course is based on this booklet, starting on Ash Wednesday before the service at Longstock. Then 5 weekly sessions based in three venues in the benefice, meeting at different times, so there is flexibility – if you can't make your usual group meeting, you can join another. The meetings will be either morning, afternoon, or evening.

The course, plus the daily readings, will give us a real opportunity to reflect on the meaning of Lent and our living hope; and to prepare us for the joy of Easter. The last session will take place during Holy Week. (See below for initial information; further details about the venues and course leaders will be available shortly.)

Ash Wednesday

Ash Wednesday on Wednesday 5 March is the beginning of Lent for Western Christian churches. It's a day of penitence to clean the soul before the Lent fast.

Most of us will have used up our 'tempting food' on Shrove Tuesday, usually called Pancake Day. Roman Catholic, Anglican, and some other churches hold special services at which worshippers are marked with ashes as a symbol of death and sorrow for sin. In this benefice, there will be a service at St Mary's Church, Longstock at 7.30pm. At 6.30pm, the first session of the Lent Course will take place at St Mary, Longstock. Tea/coffee and biscuits will be available. After the first session, we will worship together at the Ash Wednesday Service.

Lent is a time to reflect and repent – the sign of this being the ashes the Priest marks on the forehead with the words: *remember you came from dust and to dust you shall return* (based on God's sentence on Adam in Genesis 3: 19).

Church Maintenance

In the spring, work will begin on replacing all the cracked and broken tiles which are under the Lych Gate. I am waiting for the final quote and will need to apply for a faculty, but I am hopeful that the work will be done before the summer.

I am pleased to report that we now have paving stones marking the way from the north door to the rustic toilet. The path was becoming quite muddy and slippery. Many thanks to Rob Allnut who has donated the paving slabs.

Date for the diary:

Saturday 5 April : Church spring clean and churchyard tidy. As usual please bring your own rake, secateurs, green bag, dusters and long poled dusters for cob-web removal. Refreshments will be available.

If you have any queries, please contact Maddie Hedley, Churchwarden, 810284; email mjh723@btinternet, or the Benefice Administrator, Lois Opperman at midtestbenefice@gmail.com. Revd Joe can be contacted on 01264 586726 until the 810810 telephone number can be restored....

St Mary's Service dates are listed on page 31. .

The website is now up and running at:
Midtestbenefice.2day.uk

(If you have any questions on 'The news' please contact Maddie by email or telephone as above.)

Maddie Hedley

Lent Course – Living Hope

The first meeting will take place before the Ashing Communion Service on 5 March, Ash Wednesday. 6.30 for introductions and first reflections.

Then worship together at 7.30pm.
All at St Mary's Church, Longstock

Weeks 1 – 5 take place during Lent in venues to be confirmed. Choice of morning, afternoon or evening

Course ends in Holy week with final session together.

Course booklet available and more information from Revd Joe
(revjoesweetnam@btinternet.com)

David Stone (GoldenWings13@outlook.com)

Maddie Hedley (mjh723@btinternet.com)

Church News

St Peter's and Old St Peter's Stockbridge



We have just celebrated the midway point between Christmas and Lent, half way between winter and spring. It is the final end to the Christmas season. The High Street Christmas trees have been packed away for much later in 2025 and we look forward to longer days. Spring is 'just around the corner' we hope, and the sight of a carpet of snowdrops at Old St Peter's is a joy.



Candlemas marks the time when Mary went to the temple to be purified after childbirth - as was the Jewish custom - 40 days after the birth of Jesus. The candles of Candlemas have been snuffed out. They have represented Christ - wick, wax and fire. The wax is his body, the wick his soul, the light his divinity.

For most of us, the Christmas fun lasts a much shorter time, a tradition set by the Victorians to get people back to work!

Lent begins on 5th March this year lasting 40 days (minus the Sundays) the first Sunday being the one after the full moon (itself a Sunday, 13th April) that occurs after the Spring Equinox. Hence Easter Day is 20th April - later than normal. By then our evenings will be longer and hopefully our weather improved to raise our spirits!

We now move into Ordinary Time, the weeks between Candlemas and Shrove Tuesday, the liturgical colours change from white to green symbolising life hope and anticipation.

The 'Shrove' of Shrove Tuesday comes from the French word 'shrive' meaning absolution following confession of sins before Lent commencing on Ash Wednesday. The 'Mardi Gras' or Fat Tuesday (in French) refers to the practice of eating richer food

before the ritual of fasting during Lent - hence our pancakes! Churches also burn palms distributed during the previous year's Palm Sunday and used during services held the next day, Ash Wednesday.

Mothering Sunday is the fourth Sunday of Lent and always in March in this country. Traditionally, it was a day when children, mainly daughters, who had gone to work as domestic servants were given a day off to visit their 'mother' church. The practice developed into a celebration honouring the mother of the family. Today it is a day when children give flowers and cards to their mothers.

An advance date for your diary on Good Friday, 18th April: An augmented choir, with soloists, will be performing Stainer's *Crucifixion* in St Peter's at 1.45 pm (see page 28). Rehearsals will be underway shortly for this stirring cantata. John Stainer (1840 - 1901) was organist at St Paul's Cathedral and a distinguished musician.

Meanwhile meetings have been taking place with the Church Architect, David Williams and Robin Colenso to identify and remediate the dampness affecting Old St Peter's. Works will include excavation of ground to the north side of the church to inner floor level, and drainage taking the roof water to a soakaway.

Looking ahead:

Sunday 2nd March at 3pm: Tea and Cake for those who live alone at 2 Nelson Close Stockbridge (with thanks to Angela McMeekin for hosting).

Wednesday 5th March (Ash Wednesday): 'Introduction to Lent' Course by the Rector at St Mary's Church, Longstock followed by Ash Wednesday service at 7:30pm. (See details on p29; further information on course leaders and venues to follow).

Friday 7th March: World Day of Prayer

30th March: Mothering Sunday

Chrissie Quayle

The Column for February

Baptisms and

There were no baptisms

Weddings

There were no weddings

Funerals

18 February 2025, 1.00pm at St Mary's Church, Longstock - the funeral for Mrs Sylvia Grant, followed by interment at Longstock Cemetery.

Church News

From the Rural Dean

This year, nearly all of March is in the Church Season of Lent. Ash Wednesday, marking the start of Lent, is on 5th March. Lent lasts 40 days, commemorating the 40 days Jesus spent fasting in the desert.

Lent is a period of grief that necessarily ends with a great celebration of Easter.

The purpose of Lent is the preparation of the believer for Easter through prayer, repentance of sins, almsgiving, simple living, and self-denial. In Lent, many Christians commit to fasting, as well as giving up certain luxuries. Some of the churches in the area host simple lunches – with money given going to charities (such as UNICEF).

Many Lent-observing Christians also add a Lenten spiritual discipline, such as reading a daily devotional (book) or praying, to draw themselves near to God.

There may be a Lent Course in your local church.

Many churches remove flowers from their altars and veil crucifixes, religious statues that show the triumphant Christ, and other religious symbols in solemn observance of the event. The custom of veiling is typically practised the last two weeks, beginning on the fifth Sunday of Lent (known as Passion Sunday) until Good Friday, when the cross is unveiled solemnly in the liturgy.

Do have a look to see what your Church gets up to in Lent.

Your Rural Dean, James

Revd James Pitkin - revjamespitkin@gmail.com

Hampshire Downs RC Parish St Thomas More

Services are held on Sundays at 9.00am



March Services for

Stockbridge, Longstock and Leckford

2nd March (Sunday next before Lent)

08.00 **Leckford** Holy Communion BCP

09.30 **Longstock** All Age Worship

11.00 **Stockbridge** Parish Eucharist

5th March (Ash Wednesday)

19.30 **Longstock** Ashing Communion Service

9th March (Lent 1)

08.00 **Old St Peter** Holy Communion

09.30 **Longstock** Parish Eucharist

11.00 **Stockbridge** All Age Service

16th March (Lent 2)

09.30 **Longstock** Morning Worship

11.00 **Stockbridge** Parish Eucharist

18.00 **Leckford** Evensong

23rd March (Lent 3)

11.00 **Stockbridge** Morning Worship

30th March (Mothering Sunday)

10.00 **Longstock** Mothering Sunday

11.00 **Stockbridge** Mothering Sunday Communion

Prayer for Lent

Almighty and everlasting God, you hate nothing that you have made
and forgive the sins of all those who are penitent:
create and make in us new and contrite hearts that we, worthily lamenting our sins
and acknowledging our wretchedness, may receive from you,
the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Amen



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