Last month marked the tenth anniversary of Stewkley Youth Club’s first session on 15 February 2010.

The March 2010 Grapevine reported that at the first official session of Stewkley Youth Club: “there was a tally of 17 for the first session, for 11 to 14 year olds, and later 12 for the older teenagers. David Lett was the club leader for the first night and had arranged a variety of ice-breaker games so that everyone got to know one another. After games, a vast quantity of cakes were produced and quickly consumed and remarkably there were very few crumbs on the floor.

“It was past eight o’clock and the second session was underway for 14-18 year olds, the music had changed, there were groups discussing different topics in both rooms and business increased further in the Tuckshop. There was a group of lads playing a video game and plans being made for all the things that could be arranged at the youth club.”

The youth club was started up thanks to financial support from Stewkley Parish Council, while some members also made a successful grant application to the Youth Opportunity Fund. As a result, the club was awarded £3,750 which helped with the purchase of a Wii console controller and games, a PC, projectors, screens and seats.

Fast forward ten years and the youth club is still going strong, with a completely different team of volunteers, and averages around 20 lively and enthusiastic Year Six to Year Nine pupils per session – which runs from 6.30pm to 8pm on Monday nights at the Rec Pavilion.

Sessions are currently held every two weeks during term-time as there are not enough volunteers to run it every week.

Entry charges have also been slightly increased in the past couple of months, going up from £1 to £1.50 per child per night, in order to cover costs.

This writer became involved with the youth club in the summer of 2017, after the Grapevine ran a front page appeal for more volunteers to enable the club to continue functioning.

It has been great to see kids come, and sad to see them go, and it has been a source of satisfaction to know that the youth club has given them the opportunity to have fun and relax with friends in a safe and supervised environment.

Hopefully the youth club will be able to carry on for many more years and will continue to help the village’s youngsters grow up and practice social and life skills that will serve them well as they become adults.

DOUBLING THE DISTANCE FOR STEWKLEY SCOUTS

High Street South resident Fiona Weekes is running the London Marathon on Sunday 26 April to raise funds for the 1st Stewkley Scout Group. The Leaders and Scout family have all signed a neck scarf which she will wear on the day. Having previously contributed to the Scout Hut fund by running the Silverstone Half Marathon, Fiona is now ‘doubling the distance’, this time to help the Scouts replace tents and camping equipment in time for their July Summer Camp in Staffordshire.

Help get the Scouts back in the outdoors by kindly donating whatever you can to: www/justgiving.com/crowdfunding/fiona-weekes-1

Also in Grapevine:

- p4 Brownies seek new leader
- p5 Trees, Tiles and Trampolines
- p5 Soulbury Road Development Open Meeting
- p7 Winning Ways at St Michael’s School
STEWKLEY WALKERS’ PROGRAMME from Alice Horne

Walks Programme for March
Visit the website or contact individual leaders for more information. Optional lunch available unless otherwise stated.

Wednesday 4 March  Totternhoe to Eaton Bray
Meet at The Swan at 9.30am or at the Old Farm Inn, Totternhoe (LU6 1RE) at 10am. Parking at the pub or on the road. About 5 miles with one stile. Mixture of field and road-walking. It could be muddy. Regret no dogs.
Leader: Carol (07802 815255)

Friday 13 March  Stockgrove Round
Meet at The Swan at 9.30am or at Stockgrove Country Park car park on Brickhill Road (nearest postcode LU7 0BA) at 10am. About 4 miles, can be varied on the day depending on people and weather, with a few stiles and a bit of ‘up and down’. Well-behaved dogs on leads welcome.
Leader: Margaret and Malcolm (07985 064705)

Wednesday 25 March  Heath and Reach
Meet at The Swan at 9.45am before going to the Axe and Compass, Heath and Reach (LU7 0AA) for 10.15am. About 4.5 to 5 miles, no stiles. Well-behaved dogs on leads welcome.
Leaders: Thelma and George (07860 654325)

Web: www.stewkleywalkers.org.uk
Grapevine deadline: 15th of month
email: team@stewkleygrapevine.co.uk

SAVE THE DATE

Stewkley Vicarage Cricket Club
EASTER LUNCH
Sunday 19 April, 1pm, Village Hall
Tickets £12.50 adults, £6 children
from Alan Hardings (242227 / 07548 979636) and Jilly Scrivener (07522 862929)

COMEDY NIGHT
at the Pavilion
Friday 1 May. Doors open 6.45pm
Mark Cram returns as compère
Tickets: £11 members / £12.50 non-members
tel : 240330 over 18’s only

STEWKLEY SINGERS’ SPRING CONCERT
Saturday 9 May, 7.30pm
All Saints Church, Leighton Buzzard
Commemorating the 75th Anniversary of VE Day
Haydn’s Nelson Mass, Handel’s Zadok the Priest
plus a ‘Last Night of the Proms’
Tickets on sale next month

1st Stewkley Scout Group
BARBECUE
Friday 3 July
Recreation Ground

Do you need somewhere to hold an event, meeting or classes?

To hire facilities at the Pavilion
call 240347

To hire the Village Hall
call 07582 580229

To hire the Chapel Schoolroom
call 217795
WHAT’S ON IN MARCH

BOOK CLUB
Monday 2 March
The Carpenters Arms, Stewkley at 8.30pm
Book to discuss: *Found* by Erin Kinsley
(Book for March: *Becoming* by Michelle Obama)
For further details, please contact Greg on 240487

COFFEE STOP
Thursday 6 February
10.30am – 12noon, Stewkley Pavilion
In aid of PACE (Helping children with motor disorders)

Community Bus Trial
DAY TRIP TO POPLARS NURSERY, TODDINGTON
Garden Centre browse & lunch
Tuesday 17 March: Bus tickets £6
Contact sandy@flewin.net or call 240076 after 2 March
also
Anglesey Abbey on 5 March – one place left at £15

Watch England in
SIX NATIONS RUGBY
at the Rec Pavilion
BAR OPEN
Saturday 7 March 4.45pm
Saturday 14 March 4.45pm
Bar open every Saturday 4 – 8pm. New members welcome

Linslade Singers celebrate
WOMEN COMPOSERS
in aid of Riding for the Disabled Association
Sunday 8 March, 4pm
(International Women’s Day)
Methodist Church, Free entrance
Retiring collection/donations for light refreshments

Stewkley Local History Group
OPEN MEETING
Wednesday 25 March
A talk by Sarah Roe & Wing Heritage Group
A talk by Martin Sirot-Smith
*Daily Life in Tudor Times*
All welcome to this meeting. At the Pavilion 7.45 for 8pm
Admission £3 includes refreshment

ELECTIONS TO STEWKLEY PARISH COUNCIL
Nominations open: Tuesday 31 March
Nominations close: Wednesday 8 April, 4pm
Voting: Thursday 7 May, Village Hall, 7am – 10pm

VILLAGE DIARY

March

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wed</td>
<td>4 Refuse: blue tops and food bins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thu</td>
<td>5 Bus Trip to Anglesey Abbey nr Cambridge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sat</td>
<td>7 Six Nations Rugby, Pavilion, 4.45pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sun</td>
<td>8 Linslade Singers for RDA, Methodist Church, 4pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wed</td>
<td>11 Refuse: green tops, food bins and garden waste</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fri</td>
<td>13 Mutual Fellowship, Japan – World in Union, Chapel, 7.30pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sat</td>
<td>14 Six Nations Rugby, Pavilion, 4.45pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tue</td>
<td>17 Bus Trip to Poplars Nursery nr Toddington</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wed</td>
<td>18 Refuse: blue tops and food bins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wed –  Sat 18-21</td>
<td>Stewkley Players, Village Hall, 8pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sat</td>
<td>21 Chapel lunches, Methodist Hall, 12-1.30pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wed</td>
<td>25 Refuse: green tops, food bins and garden waste</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History Group, Tudor Times, Pavilion, 7.45pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fri</td>
<td>27 Mutual Fellowship, Humorous Verse, Chapel, 7.30pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tue</td>
<td>31 Election to Stewkley PC: Nominations open</td>
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April

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fri</td>
<td>3 St Michael’s School Easter Break begins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wed</td>
<td>8 Election to Stewkley PC: Nominations close, 4pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sun</td>
<td>19 SVCC Sunday Lunch, Village Hall, 1pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mon</td>
<td>20 St Michael’s School reopens</td>
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</tbody>
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Weekly Regulars

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mon</td>
<td>Songbirds – Village Hall, 10am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Explorer Scouts, Scout Hut, 7.30pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tue</td>
<td>Brownies, Rec Pavilion, 6.15pm-7.30pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wed</td>
<td>Daisy Club, Methodist Hall, 10.30am</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Knit and Knatter, Blackthorn Nursery, 11am-1pm</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Running Club, Rec, 7.30pm</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Badminton, Village Hall, 7.30pm</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bell Ringers, St Michael’s Church, 7.30pm</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SVCC winter training, Sir Thomas Freemantle School, 8-9pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thu</td>
<td>Beaver Scouts, Scout Hut, 6pm</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Short Mat Bowls, Village Hall, 7.30pm</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stewkley Singers rehearsals, School, Term time, 8pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fri</td>
<td>Cub Scouts and Scouts, Scout Hut, 7.30pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sat</td>
<td>Tennis Club, Rec, 9.30am</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bar Open, Rec Pavilion, 4-8pm</td>
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</tbody>
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Monthly Regulars

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mon</td>
<td>Parish Council, 1st Mon of month, Village Hall, 7.30pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Book Club, 1st Mon of month, Carpenters Arms, 8.30pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wed</td>
<td>Wl, 2nd Wed of month, Village Hall, 7.30pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thu</td>
<td>Coffee Stop, 1st Thu of month, Rec, 10.30am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sat</td>
<td>Knit &amp; Knatter, 1st Sat of month, Blackthorn Nursery, 11am - 1pm.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
St Michael’s School’s Eco Council raises awareness of environmental issues and how the School might help. The Council’s latest idea is to recycle crisp packets. The packets can be deposited next to the Eco Pledge tree in the school entrance and will be delivered to the Willen Hospice shop in Leighton Buzzard. Here they are washed, sorted and sent off to be recycled.

Other planet-saving initiatives overseen by the Eco Council include turning off lights and computers when not in use, recycling plastic, paper and batteries and making compost from fruit peelings. The animal-friendly grounds attract foxes, badgers, rabbits, pheasants and other birds. During the year there is a ‘Switch off fortnight’ to remind people to save electricity. The Council also monitors the solar panel display to see how much electricity the School’s 54 solar panels are producing. In addition, the Travel Plan team encourage children to bike to school, and the Friend’s Association asks parents to recycle clothes through the ‘Bags 2 school’ scheme.

**READERS WRITE**

The article in February’s Grapevine about Bucks County Councils highways award for customer service resulted in the following being sent to Grapevine:

“How did Bucks CC win the award for fixing potholes when Stewkley has some very dangerous ones which have been neglected for years? Does Bucks CC assume that Stewkley is in Bedfordshire as we have a Luton postcode? Their press release is false propaganda and a bad omen for what we can expect from the new ‘Passing the Buck’ Authority.”

Robert Spier

A further email from another observer who wishes to remain anonymous, stated:

“Someone needs to remind Bucks CC and the Institute of Asset Management [who gave the award] that an important element of customer service is actually getting the job done, i.e. fixing the potholes. Prompt and polite communications alone are not enough!”

**BROWNIES SEEK NEW LEADER**

2nd Stewkley Brownie Unit requires a new leader to ensure its long-term survival. The thriving unit of seven to ten year-old girls which also has a waiting list, meets on Tuesday evenings (6.15-7.30pm) at the Recreation Pavilion. The current leadership team need a new member to take on the long-term running of the unit to help it successfully continue.

A new leader will be supported by the current team and full training will be available. No experience is necessary. If you would like to know more or just have chat and a visit to see what goes on, please ring Sally on 240742.

**SCHOOL SHOWS US HOW**

Rehearsals are well underway for the Stewkley Players’ next production; Dinnerladies, which will open on 18 March and run for four nights. In the photo below you may think our actors are sitting around having a relaxing cup of tea but in fact they are rehearsing a scene from Act One! Don’t delay in securing your seats – ticket sales have got off to a flying start! Looking forward to seeing you when the shutters go up in the canteen.

**MOVING ALONG NICELY**

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**STEWKLEY WI**

At the February meeting Alec White came to talk to us about peonies. He has won various medals at Chelsea Flower Show, culminating in a Gold Medal in 2019. He showed us slides and talked about the journey and hard work it had taken him to obtain this medal. He also gave us tips and hints on the best way to grow and look after peonies.

The next meeting is on 11 March. The speakers will be Ken and June Brazier, who will be talking about Mercy Ships. These are ocean-going liners, fully equipped as floating hospitals, sailing to the poorest countries in the world. It is probably the biggest international charity that most people have never heard of.

The meetings are at the Village Hall starting at 7.30pm. For more information contact Sheila Fellowes (240596).

**SVCC - AN EVENING WITH SIR ALASTAIR COOK**

On Friday 21 February Stewkley Vicarage Cricket Club once again packed the Pavilion when an audience of over 120, spanning all generations, enjoyed another fundraising evening. The Jonathan ‘Aggers’ Agnew role of compère was taken on by ex-1st XI skipper, Dan Owens, who interviewed Sir Alastair before fielding a session of questions from the audience (photo right). This was followed by photos and autographs with the former captain of the England Test and One-Day International teams. Treasurer David Wheeler receives a special mention for organising the successful evening, which raised over £1500 towards new sight screens. SVCC would also like to thank those who manned the bar.
The Pavilion hosted a drop-in event in late February for Dandara, the new owners and developers of the Soulbury Road site, to showcase their proposals and answer residents’ questions.

"Unwanted" five-bedroom homes:
The proposed 67 homes consist of 47 open-market properties, most of which are eligible for the Government’s Help to Buy scheme for first-time buyers. There will also be five shared-ownership and 15 social-rent homes. Altogether, 13 two-bedrooms, 31 three-bedrooms, 19 four-bedrooms and 4 five-bedrooms are planned. Stewkley Parish Cllr Gill Morgan and Stewkley Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee member Steve Nichol both expressed disappointment that five-bedroom homes were included, given that the draft Neighbourhood Plan concludes that Stewkley does not want or need more large houses but requires more two-bedroom homes.

According to the Dandara promotional material, the homes have been designed to “respect the character of the village”.

Open-market sale prices for the freeholds range from just under £300,000 to about £600,000. There will also be an ongoing service charge to a management company for the maintenance of the landscaped areas and play equipment. The Housing Association for the ‘affordable’ homes has not yet been decided; it is they who will decide these sale discounts, rents and service charges.

Car parking, roads and footpaths:
In addition to the two-to-four parking spaces (including garages) for each property, there will be over 20 “visitor” spaces. In response to safety concerns, Dandara will fund an extension to the 30mph speed limit further along Soulbury Road.

Currently the only confirmed pedestrian access is via the main Soulbury Road entrance. Dandara would like to provide a footpath to link the new development with Orkney Close but cannot yet commit because of a ‘ransom strip’. (This is a narrow strip of land that is retained by a previous owner, often to prevent future development of land by denying access to it, so as to extract payment for its release.)

Drains and sewers:
Some residents at the event expressed concern about surface water drainage, given that the drainage ditch that also serves Orkney Close and Walducks Close will be filled in. A spokesman for Dandara said he was confident that the Surface Water Drainage Strategy, being prepared by independent civil engineers and overseen by the Planning Authority, would attend to this issue through, for example, permeable road surfaces and drains, that will collect in an “Attenuation Basin”.

Regarding the site’s sewers, these will link into an existing foul-water network as directed by Anglia Water, who are the legally responsible authority. One option to link to Griffin Field has proved unviable.

What happens next:
Outline planning permission, i.e. the principle of developing this site, has already been granted. A full application incorporating the above details will be submitted within the next four weeks, and residents will have an opportunity to comment in the usual way. It is not yet known when the application will be determined.
The following is as noted by an attendee of the February meeting.

In and around the Recreation Ground: During the open forum, an update was provided on the ongoing projects at the Recreation Ground. A quote of around £70,000 was received for upgrading the play equipment, which will not be installed until May at the earliest. A quote of around £50,000 was received for upgrading the toilet block.

Planning and Development: Planning applications were then discussed with the Council agreeing to support the application at Red Barn Farm (new entrance porch, internal alterations to provide a self-contained apartment with en-suite and replacement of two existing velux windows with dormer windows and an additional dormer window). The Council agreed to support an application at 22 High Street South (elevation of gate set 6.8m from the existing entrance, estate fencing and replacement pedestrian gate along the front boundary). A retrospective planning application at Sunhill Farm, Dunton Road (change of use of land from agricultural to campsite) was discussed with the Council agreeing to reinstate its previous objection, on the grounds of inappropriate change of use and the site being an area of outstanding natural beauty.

Buckinghamshire County Council says it is “only too well aware of Buckinghamshire’s roads.”

An update was given on a meeting between the Council and the developers at Soulbury Road. It is believed that an application for the site will be submitted to Aylesbury Vale District Council by the end of February and a drop-in was scheduled at the Pavilion on 24 February.

Regarding the Neighbourhood Plan, work continues to finalise site allocations and responses to comments received at last year’s consultation.

Highways: An update was given on the 20’s Plenty campaign with the Council agreeing to purchase five village entrance boards to reinforce the message of the campaign at a cost of £205. The Council had received good feedback from St Michael’s School about the SID device positioned by the old school garden. A second SID on the opposite side of the road will be installed to monitor traffic heading in the other direction, and these may in due course be reprogrammed to 20mph to support the campaign.

Wildlife Reserve: A donation has been made to the Stewkley Wildlife Reserve by the family of Hugh Mellor, following a collection at his funeral.

Events: Plans were discussed for an event in the village to mark the 75th anniversary of VE Day (8 May). Ideas from residents are welcome and a grant of up to £150 is available from the District Council to organise an event.

It was confirmed that RecFest would not be taking place this summer, but there are plans for other smaller music events.

Finance: The following payments were ratified: E.ON £332.21; Staff costs including expenses £642.65; 20’s Plenty bin stickers £180; Deben (battery pack repayment) £331.80; EHA Web design £99; Airport Monument spinneys expenses £240.39; Enterprise Agency mower £180; Enterprise Agency grass cutting £681.09; Morelock signs £165.60.

Dates of Annual Meetings: The Annual Parish Council Meeting and the Annual Meeting will both be held on 18 May.

Date of next meeting at the Village Hall: Monday 2 March at 7.30pm.

PC MATTERS

Helpful information has been uploaded onto the Stewkley Parish Council website at https://stewkley.org.uk/ that covers useful topics for those thinking about standing for election this May. The information has been provided by the National Association of Local Councils and answers questions such as “What do Local Councils do?” and “Where do Local Councils get their money from?”

Potential candidates are also encouraged to attend Parish Council meetings to see first-hand the decision-making process; Stewkley PC usually meets the first Monday of the month at 7.30pm in the Village Hall. To talk to any of the current councillors, please contact the Parish Clerk at stuwkleyparishclerk@gmail.com

Nominations for the Council open on Tuesday 31 March and close at 4pm on Wednesday 8 April. Elections take place on Thursday 7 May. There will be more information in next month’s Grapevine.

THINKING OF STANDING FOR THE PARISH COUNCIL?

Buckinghamshire County Council says it is “only too well aware of how wet this winter has been, and all this extra water has meant a rise in the number of potholes and other defects on Buckinghamshire’s roads.”

The Council is starting a substantial programme of ‘Plane and Patch’ treatment across the county, which will continue throughout the spring. This will address the weather-related deterioration seen in recent months, particularly where there are multiple defects. Sometimes however, until the larger area can be attended to (requiring dry conditions), any dangerous individual defects within these areas have to be repaired quickly and will probably involve a temporary repair until the larger more permanent repair can be undertaken.

Members of the public are asked to continue reporting potholes through fixmystreet.buckscc.gov.uk/ or 01296 395 000 so that they can be correctly assessed and prioritised for treatment.

20’S PLENTY TO TALK ABOUT

The first month of the Parish Council Traffic Subcommittee’s advisory 20mph speed limit trial has drawn some questions and welcome feedback to the Subcommittee from many villagers, and prompted a lively exchange on Facebook.

While the legally enforceable speed limit throughout the village remains at 30mph, it is hoped that drivers will voluntarily respect the 20mph limit, which is not legally enforceable but is considered a safer and more environmentally appropriate maximum driving speed.

Most comments have been favourable and in support of a reduced speed limit, with concerns expressed about some drivers’ “terrifying speeds” while children are walking to school on the narrow pavements. One resident commented that she had lost three cats in ten years on the High Street. Some people liked the idea but wondered if 20mph could be enforceable throughout the whole of the village, suggesting instead a limited 20mph zone, from Dove Street to Sycamore Close for example, that would be more practical. Some felt the presence of 20 and 30mph signs was confusing. Others felt that if drivers were not already adhering to 30mph now they would not slow down for a 20mph limit.

To give your feedback to the Subcommittee or to request a waste-bin sticker enforcing the 20mph message, please phone 240950 or email stewkley@20splentyforus.org.uk

UNEARTHED - NOTHING OF IMPORTANCE

Further to the report in last month’s Grapevine about an archaeological dig at the Soulbury Road development site, it has been confirmed by Dandara, the developers, that nothing of importance was unearthed.

TICK-TOCK REMEMBER THE CLOCKS

In the Church columns on page 9 and Nature Watch on page 12 are the first indications that Spring is just around the corner.

Another annual marker is when the clocks move forward to British Summer Time, which this year is at 1am on Sunday 29 March.
THE 5P CHALLENGE
St Michael’s School Friend’s Association is challenging each class to collect as many 5p coins as they can up to Friday 27 March. Each classroom has a two-litre bottle to fill with these pesky small coins, and the class with the most coins will win a non-uniform day at the end of term. All money raised will go towards The Friend’s Association. Not surprisingly, volunteers are needed to count the coins.

SCHOOL IS SQUEAKY CLEAN
Following an unannounced visit from an Environmental Health Officer last month, St Michael’s School has retained its five-star rating for food hygiene, thanks to their cooks, Mrs Grimshaw and Mrs Keen.

WINNING WAYS AT ST MICHAEL’S
Thursday 6 February brought the second match against Swanbourne in the Girls Football League. The first half proved tougher than the first encounter and ended 0-0. But a fabulous goal from Lottie at the start of the second half turned out to be the winner. Well done to Sarah, Emily, Anna, Baylie, Issy, Ava, Darcey, Matilda and player of the match Lottie on an excellent performance.

Despite the bitter cold winds on 11 February, the Year 6 boys team gained their second league win of the season against a good Edlesborough team, thanks to a first half goal from Philip. Player of the match went to Patrick for his strong all round play across the pitch. Well played Freddie, Fin, Sam, Patrick, Matthew, Max, Syd, Stuie and Philip on an energetic and determined performance.

ST MICHAEL’S C of E COMBINED SCHOOL
At the Central Bucks Branch Annual General Meeting on Saturday 8 February, Stewkley resident Sherri Woodland was nominated as a member of Stewkley Tower, having achieved the required standard of being able to ring unassisted for Sunday service. Sherri (pictured above), described as a quick learner, has achieved the standard in just six months.

Stewkley ringing master, Ailsa Knightley, was elected as branch treasurer at the AGM.

A branch outing has been arranged for 7 March to ring the five towers in Cambridge, followed by lunch at, and a tour of, St Catherine’s college.

St Michael’s Church continues to host advanced practices every other month and learners’ practices every three months.

Anyone interested in seeing what bellringing involves, or giving it a try, is welcome to pop in to the ringers’ weekly practices at St Michael’s on Wednesday nights from 7.30pm to 9pm.
Three Picturesque High Street Buildings

Almost in spite of the traffic, the gradual meander of the High Street gives the impression of a lane, reinforced today at the southern end of Ivy Lane by three picturesque historic buildings. These are all Grade II Listed and located one next to the other on the outer curve of High Street North.

No 24 High Street North and Old Timbers, Ivy Lane were originally farm labourers’ homes, built around 1640, of timber-frame construction and thatched. The present Old Timbers started life as two cottages, Nos 1 and 3, explaining why there is no longer a No 3 Ivy Lane. The former front door to No 3 can just be seen in the 1930s photograph.

The third dwelling, peeking out from behind No 24, is Pear Tree Cottage, No 28 High Street North. Dating originally from the 15th century (but rebuilt in brick in the 19th century), it has remains of a cruck truss frame of long, naturally-curved timbers, leaning inwards and secured by horizontal beams. Historically the roof would also have been thatched.

Until the 1960s, the group was augmented by Woodlands, No 22 High Street North. Also a 17th century property (seen in the 1930s photograph), it was demolished in 1963 prior to the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments listing of Stewkley in the 1980s. No 22 was the family home of William and Becky Clarke, village builders and undertakers. It had a large builder’s yard at the rear fronting Ivy Lane. The iron railings in the old photograph were removed for munitions in WWII and replaced by a brick boundary wall after the war. The wall has recently been repaired and attractively radiusied with characteristic, half-round, saddleback copings.

FROM THE GRAPEVINE 10 YEARS AGO...

From March 2010, Robert ‘Bob’ Dickens, a giant concerning Stewkley’s heritage and all things natural, both locally and nationally, passed away aged 91, and is still much missed today...a Stewkley diary to prevent events clashing was launched by the Grapevine...St Michael’s headteacher Kieran Salter wrote about an Arts Week in school...Bill Chappell and Joan Beaumont-Lewis were honoured with Royal British Legion long-service certificates at a village lunch party...nothing changes, the Parish Council was concerning itself with highway potholes...tickets for Stewkley Film Archive’s The Way We Were and The Things We Did film show proved so popular, a second showing was announced...Stewkley Singers hosted a lively and successful Burns Night...and Stewkley FC fixtures continued to be postponed because of the adverse winter weather.

FROM THE GRAPEVINE 20 YEARS AGO...

From March 2000, the village hall was reported to be ‘in crisis’ and in desperate need of £65,000 to fund essential repairs and improvements...Faith Kemp regretfully announced the demise of 1st Stewkley Guide Unit after 32 years due to lack of numbers...Stewkley’s bus service from Milton Keynes to Aylesbury was being poorly supported by villagers and only kept afloat by demand from Aston Abbots’ folk...Stewkley FC stood third in the North Bucks Premier Division at the halfway season stage...unusually the Tennis Club team was narrowly beaten into second place in the Scouts’ Annual Quiz by a team called ‘Friends and Neighbours’...and a first, the Grapevine now had its own web page where contributions could be sent electronically to the editorial team.
and the hope that is found in the one who dies on a cross and rises to hold onto that hope that can be found even in the darkest of places, how life truly is, how difficult it can be, but most importantly may we hopeless place, and walks with us too. This Lent may we talk, talk about God who knows us as we truly are. Jesus walked in a deserted place, a camera and through social media, and yet inside she was struggling. felt that life no longer offered her hope. Her life was played out on television presenter has committed suicide. A life taken because she something you're not. How many of us post only the nicest part of our lives on social media and ignore and hide the messy difficult parts? We often remember at this time of year Jesus being in the desert with their own ends. But despite our human nature often being such, the temptation to make food and water because the devil tempting him. These temptations encourage Jesus to make his situation better. The temptation to make food and water because there is nothing in the desert for him to eat or drink. The temptation to become powerful and recognised; something that our world is often tempting us to be. But it can often feel exhausting to always be something you’re not. How many of us post only the nicest part of our family life on social media and ignore and hide the messy difficult parts? As I write this, I hear the news that Caroline Flack, a 40-year-old As I write this, I hear the news that Caroline Flack, a 40-year-old felt that life no longer offered her hope. Her life was played out on camera and through social media, and yet inside she was struggling. Lent reminds us of the God who walks the most difficult path, and a God who knows us as we truly are. Jesus walked in a deserted place, a hopeless place, and walks with us too. This Lent may we talk, talk about how life truly is, how difficult it can be, but most importantly may we hold onto that hope that can be found even in the darkest of places, and the hope that is found in the one who dies on a cross and rises to new life. With blessings Donna And remember my kettle is always on x
OBITUARY: JOAN BEAUMONT-LEWIS

Joan Beaumont-Lewis, who died aged 82 suddenly at her home in Manor Drive last month was a stalwart of various village organisations.

A regular member of the congregation at St Michael’s Church, she served on its fund-raising committee, contributing both in effort and financially.

When her husband John Lewis died in 2003 she took over his role as organiser of the Royal British Legion’s Poppy Day appeal in the village. The photograph (right) was taken in 2010 when Joan received a Certificate of Appreciation from the Legion.

Joan Beaumont was born just before the outbreak of war in the London borough of Westminster. She had four older brothers and when war broke out all were evacuated to Roade in Northamptonshire. The brothers were placed with different families but Joan was too young so she and her mother moved back to a flat in London in 1940. They lived through the Blitz, narrowly avoiding a ‘doodlebug’ exploding close by.

Joan met husband-to-be John when both worked for Barclays Bank in London and they married in 1975. They retired in 1992 and moved to Stewkley, immediately engaging themselves in village activities.

John became Treasurer of Stewkley Scouts and together the couple got involved in fund-raising for the Scouts.

TREASURER THEN PRESIDENT

Within a short time Joan’s money-handling skills from her days at the bank came in handy as she joined the Mothers’ Union and was given the job of Treasurer, then the Stewkley Women’s Institute, equally swiftly, also appointed her Treasurer. By 2004 she was President of the WI.

Joan became known for her skills in the kitchen, something her family members had always known. She won prizes in the annual Village Hall Show bakery classes and generously brought her skills to work for the church.

In the various ‘Auctions of Promises’ held to raise funds for the church, she offered dinner parties for six, or eight, at her home. They became popular and a good source of revenue.

John and Joan were keen walkers and she became a committee member of the Stewkley Rights of Way Association, the forerunner of the Stewkley Walkers.

Of necessity, Joan’s village activities were curtailed when husband John became ill. It was a year-long illness and she looked after him at home, later visiting him daily in hospital before his death in the autumn of 2003.

Joan liked getting the Beaumont family together, hosting many an annual summer party for her brothers with all their children and grandchildren. The last large family gathering was to celebrate her eightieth birthday in 2017, a party she enjoyed immensely.

A funeral service was held at St Michael’s Church. It was conducted by the Rev Philip Derbyshire, returning to the village two months after his retirement.

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OBITUARY: PEGGY JACKMAN (née Smith)

In 1993, the very first edition of the village newsletter that became the Grapevine featured a request from Peggy Jackman for help in establishing a village jigsaw library. It was a bid to raise money for the ‘Pop-In’, a weekly meet-up for elderly and lonely locals. It was one of her many projects over the years raising money for charities.

Peggy died aged 86 after a courageous struggle with cancer at Willen Hospice in Milton Keynes, an establishment for which she had raised considerable money.

The jigsaw exercise was just one of the fund-raising activities that Peggy became involved in; another early one was for Stewkley Scouts. She continued raising money for the Scouts and some years later was awarded a Scouts’ medal in recognition of her efforts.

Born in June 1933 one of the five children of village newsagent Henry Smith and his wife, Ellen, Peggy was brought up in the village. She attended school and first found work at what was at the time Stewkley’s biggest employer, the Egg Packing Station, now the business park in High Street South. While working there she got the nickname ‘Whistle’, something that stuck for the rest of her life. She moved on to a new job with Stewkley Press, a printing company based in the former Methodist Chapel in Orchard Lane. The building is now housing.

In the late 1950s, Peggy met and fell in love with Peter Jackman from Mursley. They married at St Michael’s Church. The couple lived in High Street North, opposite the southern entrance to Ivy Lane. They had two children, Pamela, and Trevor.

Over the years it is estimated that Peggy raised more than £12,000 for Willen Hospice, as well as hundreds of pounds for the Donkey Sanctuary in Sidmouth, Devon. Her method was producing things for sale ….. knitted blankets, Easter Bunnies and chicks, Christmas nativity sets and knitted donkeys for the sanctuary … the list was endless. And at Christmas time, she went carol singing.

Peggy had a close association with the Grapevine. Using skills acquired at Stewkley Press she became a dab hand at collating copies of the newsletter.

At that time the Grapevine was printed and delivered in piles of each page. Together with husband Peter, every month she sorted the pages into individual newsletters, stapling them together. Once completed and with more than 800 copies of the Grapevine in front of them, the Jackmans again sorted them, this time into individual groups to be distributed to the volunteer deliverers.

In 1998, Peggy and Peter moved into a retirement flat in Leighton Buzzard, but for another two years they returned to Stewkley once a month to collate the Grapevines.

When they retired from that role, the Grapevine printed the following notice:

“The Grapevine Production Team, on behalf of all the people of Stewkley, would like to thank Peggy & Pete Jackman for all their help with the Grapevine since it began in December 1993. Peggy and Pete have voluntarily collated and bundled some 800 copies of the Grapevine every month, even using Mrs Ayres’s house in Dove Street after their move to Leighton Buzzard. The Grapevine depends on volunteers like Peggy and Pete for its very survival.”

After husband Peter died in 2005, Peggy moved to similar accommodation in Bletchley, close to her daughter. In later years, she loved going to whist drives, attending her last one just four weeks before she died.

Peggy leaves behind her daughter and son and a granddaughter. She is also mourned by her wider family, including nephew, Chris Smith who, like her father, is the village newsagent.

The family has asked the Grapevine to pass on thanks for the many kind messages of condolence, and for support.

Obituaries in the Grapevine are researched and authored by John Flewin
OBITUARY: HUGH MELLOR CBE

For most villagers, Hugh Mellor’s hallmark was his wonderful bass voice as he performed among the Stewkley Singers. But, while he loved music it was his passion for nature conservation that dominates his life story.

That story was told in an obituary that appeared in the Daily Telegraph last month. Hugh, whose Blackland Farm nestles at the end of Dean Road, died some weeks earlier at the age of 83. The 180-acre farm is itself a nature reserve, nurtured for more than 40 years by Hugh.

Born in London in March 1936, Hugh Salusbury Mellor lost his father when he was killed early in the war. Growing up in London he went to Harrow, then to Christ Church, Oxford, where he read history. He fulfilled National Service duties in the Coldstream Guards. Most of his working life was spent with agricultural company Dalgety, being posted to Australia to manage the company’s affairs in the farming industry.

It was in Australia that Hugh met and, in 1966, married Sally Wawn, an Australian concert pianist who studied under Claudio Arrau and Rafael de Silva. Together they came to Stewkley and took over Blackland Farm in October 1970.

Hugh retired in 1989, already holding various non-executive directorships that continued to keep him busy.

His particular passion was birdlife, and he seldom ventured anywhere without his field glasses. His first involvement with a natural world organisation had already been with the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. He became a member of the Society’s Council in 1983, later being appointed Treasurer, holding the post for 14 years.

He took his knowledge of wildlife and business into a new role for him, as Chairman of the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, founded at Slimbridge, Gloucestershire, by the naturalist Sir Peter Scott. Appointed in 1997, he served until 2003.

MAJOR PROJECT

During that time he steered the organisation through a scheme that saw the conversion of four Victorian reservoirs at Barnes Elm in the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames into the London Wetland Centre. It was opened by David Attenborough in 2000, the first urban project of its kind in Britain. These days it is described as an urban oasis where wildlife and people mix, attracting almost a quarter of a million visitors a year.

For 10 years he served as what colleagues described as a forward-looking chairman of the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust (BBOWT) helping to secure a number of new sites for the protection of local flora and fauna.

Hugh’s ambition to bring natural world educational opportunities saw such facilities installed at the sites, and he was particularly proud of the education centre at College Lakes, Tring, formed from old chalk extraction pits.

A significant achievement with BBOWT saw Hugh encouraging the Board of Trustees to purchase Chimney Meadows in 2003. The 200-hectare farm in Oxfordshire is now one of the Trust’s largest wildlife reserves, showcasing how farming for wildlife is economically profitable.

HONOUNED

In the New Year’s Honours List of 2005 Hugh was appointed CBE for his work in conservation, highlighting his additional work with the trusts. Eight years later he received the Christopher Cadbury Medal, an annual award given to a member of a wildlife trust who had shown dedication to the advancement of nature conservation within Britain. The citation praised him, saying “for decades Hugh has championed the cause of environmental education, enabling organisations such as BBOWT and the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust to give children and young people from urban areas and neighbourhoods with little or no green space the opportunities to explore and discover wildlife for themselves.”

He also had wildlife and conservation interests in Scotland and Australia.

On his own farm in Stewkley, Hugh discovered and managed, with help from the Natural History Museum and Butterfly Conservation, a colony of black hairstreak butterflies, one of Britain’s most elusive butterfly species.

He successfully opposed a plan to open Stewkley Lane to traffic, appointing lawyers and raising a petition. Eleven years ago, Hugh was honoured locally by being asked to open the village’s then new Wildlife Reserve. In the photo (below), he is seen cutting the ribbon with Parish Council Chairman Arthur Lyttle looking on.

It was in the village too that Hugh and wife Sally enjoyed sharing their love of music. Regularly over 40 years they opened their farmhouse for intimate concerts, inviting celebrated musicians from home and abroad, and in doing so raising money for charity.

One memorable event was a day-long concert in 2016, an event they called a “music marathon” with local singers and musicians, other contributors travelling from further afield.

There was music from 8am to 5pm. Donations that reached almost £1,600 were for Médecin Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders) to help the plight of Syrian refugees on the Syrian-Turkish border.

Hugh’s own roles on concert days ranged from car park attendant to page-turner of musical scores.

STEWKLEY SINGERS

A highlight of Hugh’s time with the Stewkley Singers, a choir he joined soon after its inception in 2006, came in 2014. He had enthusiastically suggested a performance of Haydn’s Creation, a work he had loved since performing it at school as a treble. He was passionate about all of Haydn’s works and took along a copy of the vocal score from which he sang at school.

A funeral service for Hugh was held at St Michael’s Church. He leaves behind his wife Sally, their two sons and a daughter. Donations raised over £400, money to be used to the benefit of the Stewkley Wildlife Reserve. Hugh much admired the work of Reserve Curator Alan Dickens.
Weather Watch

February certainly brought some extremes of weather - again. Before the storms, it was freezing fog (header and below). Fog is essentially a cloud at ground level. It is caused by tiny water droplets suspended in the air. There are five main types of fog, classified by the different ways they form. Freezing fog is a form of ‘evaporation’ fog, common during winter. It occurs when the ground cools to freezing overnight. The water droplets in the air remain liquid until they touch a surface on which they freeze. The deposit of ice crystals left on the surface is known as rime.

An interesting fact about fog relates to driving. Everyone knows that driving in fog needs extra care and slower speeds, especially with freezing fog. But fog actually alters a person’s perception of speed. The brain judges speed by the contrast to surroundings, how fast buildings or trees move past in one’s peripheral vision. When those solid objects are obscured by fog drivers perceive that they are driving slower than they are, and often speed up as a consequence.

More Mooning

The February full moon (below) appeared on the 8th and 9th, despite storm Ciara, to proclamations from The Daily Mail that it was the decade’s first ‘supermoon’. But this is contested by other organisations.

According to the Old Farmer’s Almanac there are two definitions of a supermoon, applying to both full and new moons. The Almanac’s specific definition relates to the closest full or new moon to the earth in the year, meaning that there can only be one of each. Others believe that a supermoon occurs when the moon is closest to the earth in its orbit, appearing larger and brighter than normal, the opposite to the ‘micromoon’ described in last October’s Nature Watch. Using this looser definition the Almanac still does not accept that February’s full moon was a supermoon and predicts three supermoons in 2020, in March, April and May consecutively.

Mystery Death

This dead fox was found in a field at Littlecote. Further investigation revealed it to be a young vixen (female) with attack marks around its neck and a wound to its side. It definitely looked as though she had been in a fight with something, another fox, or a badger. Perhaps? But a response from the Fox Project ruled out those potential attackers. Their email said, “Foxes do not fight each other as they have a pecking order within their society and each fox knows its place, which means there’s no reason to come to blows... Badgers get on reasonably well with foxes (their cubs play together) they co-exist happily and are extremely unlikely to fight each other.

"It is most likely that a dog would have caused the injuries to this vixen. It may be that she was ill or injured already... as most foxes will leave the area when dogs are present.”

A dog? Whatever had happened to her, it was during storm Ciara – what dog would have been loose during that storm?

It was a full moon that weekend – maybe a werewolf?

Visit the Fox Project for more on foxes or the National Fox Welfare Society (NFWS) to find out how to help an injured fox.

Some signs of spring

Winter aconite (eranthis hyemalis) is a member of the buttercup family and, like all its relatives, is toxic. It is the first flower to open, even before the snowdrop, and provides vital nectar for early-flying pollinators such as queen bumble bees searching for a nest site. A native of deciduous woodlands in southern Europe it was introduced to the UK in 1596 and is now widespread across gardens and woods alike. The photo above is a mass of the little flowers in a Littlecote garden. The green ruff of bracts beneath each bright yellow flower has led to its nickname of ‘choirboys’. They are easy to grow and naturalise quickly. Like all woodland plants, winter aconites flower and die back before the trees come into leaf, disappearing by mid-spring.

Sources: The Met Office, The Guardian
Thanks to storms Ciara and Dennis our soils continue to be saturated and we are still itching to plant up some more fields. Every week that passes potential grain yield is lost, and our clay loam soils do not dry out in a hurry. At least we haven’t suffered too much storm damage, the odd rotten tree has fallen, but all buildings, machinery and animals have survived.

It makes you appreciate living and farming in a fairly temperate climate - as you see flooding yet again in parts of the country, and our friends in Australia have gone from one extreme (fires burning down their avocado trees) to the other (severe flooding, washing out their pumpkin harvest). Chatting openly about how we farm can bring challenging conversations and criticism, but it also creates opportunities. After my previous Farm Watch article, in which I discussed the carbon footprint of farming, I received a call from a researcher asking if I would be happy to audit our farm’s carbon emissions and sequestration, receiving the results on camera for Countryfile.

I jumped at the chance to tell our side of the carbon story, and look like an idiot on TV, but the main attraction was having an expert come onto the farm to discuss how we could improve our efforts to get to net zero. It turns out, although large, our carbon footprint is fairly average for similar farms. The most surprising thing was that it is not our beef production producing the most emissions (30.77% of farm emissions), but our fertiliser use in growing our arable crops (44.8%). The good news is that now we have identified the causes we can make changes to reduce these.

Although filming was fun for a day, I couldn’t get used to saying the same thing five times so they could capture different camera angles, and driving seven people from Bristol to film for a whole day, just to fill a couple of minutes of TV doesn’t seem overly efficient to me. As always jump onto @headysfarm on facebook or twitter to find out more or ask any questions.

For some reason, two plastic carrier bags full of empty wine and spirit bottles were dumped on the side of Littlecote Lane some time in February. Local resident Rachael Webb spotted them while out for a walk and carried them back up the Lane and emptied them into her blue-topped recycling bin. Having seen other litter on the way home, she went back down the lane armed with a litter picker and plastic sacks to collect even more detritus, which became too much to carry so she had to return once more, this time in the car. Coincidentally, Trish and Keith Higgins had also gone litter picking last month, along Bletchley Road, to temporarily tidy their neck of the woods. Their haul also included a huge number of wine bottles. Regular Grapevine readers will remember the front-page story from November last year that featured four Stewkley schoolgirls who had gone on their own litter crusade, having become incensed at other people’s actions.

If anyone reading this has a propensity to dump bags of litter, or drop cans, bottles, cigarette packets, fast food containers or sweet wrappers from their cars, thus ruining our beautiful countryside, would you mind contacting the Grapevine team and explaining why? Because we just don’t get it!
THE GRAPEVINE, STEWKLEY

The Stewkley Grapevine is published monthly, except for January. Copies are distributed free of charge to all households (over 780) in Stewkley. Further copies are made available for visitors at various locations in the village. It is also available for download at www.stewkley.org

Publication date: 1st of each month except January.
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Wing Road, Stewkley, Beds. LU7 0JB  Telephone : 01525 240837
Regular Opening Hours : Tuesday - Sunday 10am to 4pm
(Closed Mondays)

Throughout the year we have a great range of Herbaceous Perennials, Shrubs, Roses, Alpines, Herbs, Cacti and Bedding Plants

WHAT'S ON
Winter sale - 50% or more off selected herbaceous perennials & Shrubs.
Will finish end Feb / beginning March.

Knit & Knatter every Wednesday 11am - 1pm.
Next Saturday Knit & Knatter 7th March 11am -1pm.

Easter egg hunt. 10th, 11th, 13th April.
More details to follow in April Grapevine & on Facebook.

We will be closed Sunday 12th April

Follow us on Facebook: BLACKTHORN NURSERY
Gardening Tips - New Stock - Event Information
Stewkley Cygnets Pre-School

“Dedicated to the provision of outstanding childcare”

We provide a safe and fun environment with a wide range of toys and activities for the children to express themselves and develop.

Our large garden provides extensive opportunity for outdoor play.

Our team of highly qualified staff are committed to providing exceptional care and education that ensures our children’s progress towards the Early Learning Goals.

We offer places for 2 to 4 year olds:

- Morning sessions: Mon to Fri 9.00am - 12.00 noon
- 2 yr old sessions (PAFT): Mon to Fri 9.00am – 11.00am
- Lunch Clubs available: Mon to Fri 12.00pm - 1.00pm
- Rising 4s afternoon session: Wed & Thurs 1.00pm - 3.30pm

For further details please call/text 07925 541118 or email Cygnets@st-michaels.bucks.sch.uk

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TAILPIECE TALE

SCRAPING THE BARREL

In the absence of any other suitable material for this month’s Tailpiece, in desperation the Grapevine Team decided to celebrate The Swan’s newly renovated toilets and the reopening of the village’s joint-favourite hostelry. One Swan regular joked that this was the first major refurb of the loos since 1840, and the Grapevine should consider a feature in Down Memory Lane. However, Tailpiece won out, or drew the short straw depending on your point of view.

Pending the sale of the business to a new buyer, the current leaseholder Jim Woolley is soldiering on, much to the delight of thirsty visitors.