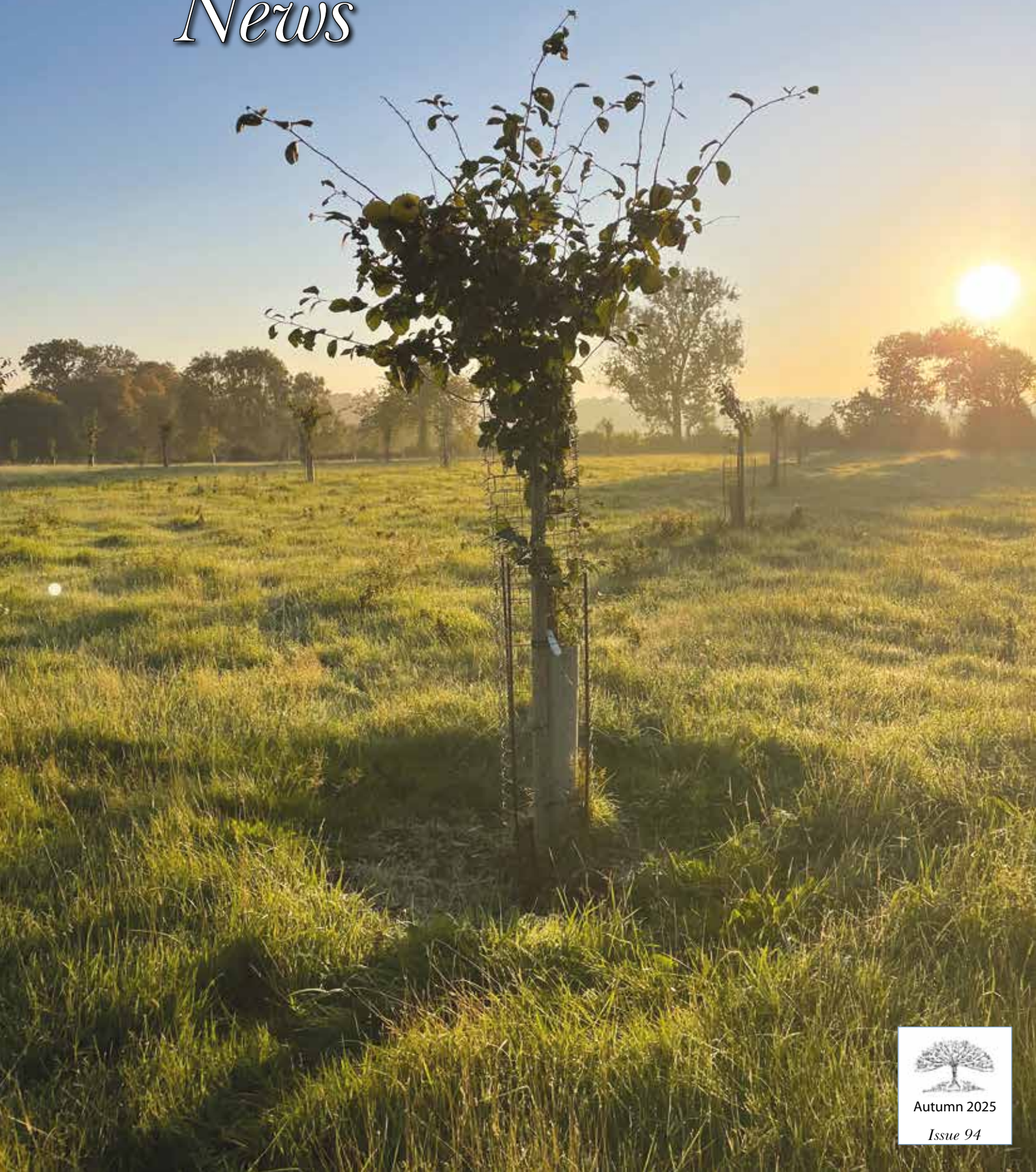


THE SPEEN & NORTH DEAN *News*



Autumn 2025

Issue 94

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Welcome!

to our Autumn Edition of Speen & North Dean News. A huge thank you to everyone in Speen and North Dean who has given us such fond memories of 2025.

We are a community filled with enthusiasm and pride, a rare thing these days. The fact that I can fill this magazine highlighting what you all get up to never ceases to amaze me. How wonderful it is to witness this community spirit at its best and long may it continue.

Taking over the helm from Cat Cook who organised Speen Festival so fantastically for several years, Liz Patroe did an amazing job with Speen Festival 2025 and we look forward to Festival 2027. Cat Cook is now Chair of Speen Village Hall so look out for exciting things to come.

A big thank you to Clare Morris who did an amazing job with co-chair Helen Davies organising Speen Fete over the past few years, and welcome to Lucy Johnston who has taken over from Clare and will be co-chairing the role of Fete organiser with Helen.

Lots to look forward to in 2026, keep up the good work!

Best Wishes

Jill Roberts

*Front Cover Photo
by Charlotte Downing Darvills Hill Farm*

Contents

Welcome	3
What's On	5
Book Review - SEAG	5
Speen School & Little Apples Preschool	6
Speen School PTA	7
North Dean News	9 & 11
In Remembrance	12 & 13
Speen Helping Hospices	14 & 15
Speen Fete Update	15
Speen Heritage Group	17
Speen WI	18
Recipe	19
Speen Festival 2025	19, 20 & 21
Speen Playing Fields	23
Pigotts Music Camp	25 & 27
Lacey Green Parish Council	27
SEAG	29 & 31
Speen Church	31
Wildlife Watch	33
Darvills Hill Farm	35
Studridge Lane Pond	37
Who's Who	38

SPEEN & NORTH DEAN NEWS COMMITTEE

JILL ROGERSON (CHAIRMAN), TOM DENT (ADVERTISING/TREASURER), JILL ROBERTS (EDITOR), CHRISTINE RYMAN (NORTH DEAN)

Next Edition

Copy for the next edition is due by 20th March 2026 with a planned publication date of early April. Please send photos separately from text, together with captions and a consent form (downloaded from the SNDN website www.speenbucks.org.uk) if any photos are of children. Please send to editor.sndn@speenbucks.org.uk.

With grateful thanks

To all our advertisers for their support of this magazine and to all the volunteers who deliver it to your door.

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Welcome Packs

The Good Neighbours scheme was set up many years ago and is now run by Pat Richardson in Speen. The service is to provide new Speen residents with a Welcome Pack of village information, so if you know of anyone new to the area please call Pat Richardson on 01494 488627.

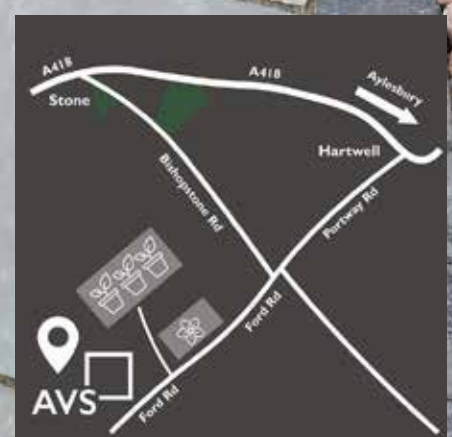
Village News

If you are not already signed up to The Village Messenger do email Village@SpeenBucks.org to be put on the mailing list, with the word 'include' in the subject line - they will keep you up to date via email on a monthly basis with all the latest village news and important dates.

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WHAT'S ON

in Speen & North Dean

REGULAR EVENTS

Sundays	Regular Service of Worship	Speen Chapel 10.30am	Speen Church 488 753 pastor@speenchurch.uk
Tuesdays Term Time Only	Speen & North Dean Tiddlers & Toddlers	Speen Chapel Hall 9.30am - 11.30am	speen-northdeantoddlers@gmail.com
3rd Thursday of each month	Memory Cafe	Speen Chapel Hall 10.00am - 12.00pm	trudi@ashridgehomecare.co.uk
1st & 3rd Sundays	BCP Holy Communion	St John's Parish Church, Lacey Green 8.00am	tony.bundock49@gmail.com
Tuesdays	Said Communion (Common Worship)	St John's Parish Church, Lacey Green 9.30am	
Sundays (1st Sunday All Ages)	Parish Communion with Hymns	St John's Parish Church, Lacey Green 10.00am	

DECEMBER

Sat 13th	Family Fun	Speen Church 10-12pm	Grainne Suter 07778 803 260 Christineryman3@gmail.com
Mon 15th/Tue 16th/Thur 18th	SHH Evening Carol Singing	Around Speen	
Fri 19th	Carol Singing	North Dean Village Hall 6.30pm	Grainne Suter 07778 803 260
Sun 21st	Service of Nine Lessons and Carols	St John's Parish Church, Lacey Green 6.00pm	
Wed 24th	SHH Christmas Hamper Draw 2025		
Wed 24th	Christmas Eve Carols	Speen Church 6:00pm	
Wed 24th	Crib Service	St John's Parish Church Lacey Green 3:00pm	
	Midnight Mass of the Nativity	St John's Parish Church Lacey Green 11:00pm	
Thur 25th	Christmas Day Celebration	Speen Church 10:30am	
Thurs 25th	Parish Communion with Carols	St John's Parish Church Lacey Green 10:00am	
Sun 28th	Parish Communion with Carols	St John's Parish Church Lacey Green 10:00am	

JANUARY 2026

Tues 6th	Eucharist of the Epiphany	St John's Parish Church Lacey Green 9:30 am	Jenny Pearce Speenwi@gmail.com
Thur 8th	Speen WI Celebration Supper	Speen Village Hall	

FEBRUARY

Thur 5th	Speen WI AGM/ An Illustrated History of British Piers	Speen Village Hall	Jenny Pearce Speenwi@gmail.com
Sat 7th	Quiz Night SHH	TBC	Grainne Suter 07778 803 260

MARCH

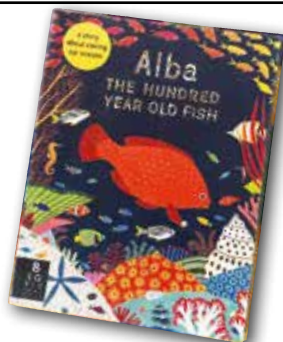
Thur 5th	Speen WI The Wild Rose Flower Company	Speen Village Hall	Jenny Pearce Speenwi@gmail.com
Fri 27th	Quiz Night	North Dean Village Hall	Christineryman3@gmail.com

BOOKREVIEW

Sarah Wilde

Alba the Hundred-Year-Old Fish by Lara Hawthorne

A gentle and beautifully illustrated tale, suitable for ages 3-7. An ancient fish watches the coral reef depleting, and litter fill the ocean. Caught in a bottle, it washes ashore, where a young girl quickly enlists her community to clean the plastic-strewn beach. Released back into a



cleaner ocean, the fish celebrates its 100th birthday with renewed optimism. The final page of the book contains a simple explanation of what plastic is, and how it can harm sea life, as well as five child-friendly tips for saving the oceans.

SPEEN SCHOOL & LITTLE APPLES PRESCHOOL

Lisa Davies



What a busy and uplifting start we've had to our school year!



Our pupils have thrown themselves into every opportunity and are already making a positive difference both in school and across the wider community.

One of the highlights of the term was a special visit from the Bishop of Buckingham, Bishop Dave Bull. After receiving a heartfelt invitation from the children, he joined us for a whole-school assembly. His inspiring message about kindness, compassion and looking after one another resonated with pupils and staff alike.



The children have also taken part in first aid training, an invaluable life skill. They learnt how to respond calmly in an emergency, place someone in the recovery position and apply a

simple bandage. Their enthusiasm and confidence during the sessions were impressive, and we are proud of how seriously they approached such an important responsibility.

As always, community support remains at the heart of our school. This term, the children have contributed generously to two local charities.

They helped collect donations for The Wycombe Food Hub and prepared gift boxes for The Rotary Club, living out our school values of caring and responsibility.

It has been a wonderful start, and we look forward to a year filled with learning, service and community spirit.



SPEEN SCHOOL PTA

by Charlie Harrison

It was a very busy end to the last academic year and the start of the current one for Speen School and the PTA.

June ended with the Speen Ball which, as always, saw fantastic support from the village and school communities alike and raised just shy of £6,000 to support the PTA's funding activities. To everyone who supported in any way (including all our wonderful volunteers) a very big Thank You!!

September saw the appointment of our new PTA Chair – Dishan Popat – who takes over the reins from Fleur Ridley and Lucy Johnston. We all welcome Dishan to this role and look forward to helping him with the work that the PTA continue to undertake for the School. It would also be remiss not to thank Fleur and Lucy for all that they have done over many years.

October closed with our annual School Quiz which saw lots of cheer and epic battles to claim the glory of being the PTA's greatest minds (with even the teachers attending(!)) and raised over £600!! Thank you to everyone who came, including our Quiz Master Chris Harrison!

The PTA has committed a significant sum to the School towards the building of an outside classroom and this will be our main funding priority in the short-medium term. It is expected that these works will be completed by Spring 2026. This will provide an all year round space for all children to learn within the beautiful surroundings of Speen as well as supporting the School's ongoing efforts to encourage those children who may need a quieter space in which to learn.



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CHRISTMAS DAY CELEBRATION 10.30AM
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THE BENEFITS OF HOME CARE

For many, the ideal future involves staying in the comfort of home, surrounded by cherished memories and familiar possessions. However, as families become more dispersed and health challenges arise, the thought of moving to a residential care facility can feel like the only option. Fortunately, there's a better solution: home care.

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North Dean Ladies take a table at SHH Ladies Autumn Lunch

On Wednesday, 1st October, The Horse Trust in Speen once again opened its doors to host another delightful charity lunch in aid of SHH (Speen Helping Hospices) Fundraising in the Chilterns for Four Local Hospices. The event brought together supporters, friends, and members of the local community for an afternoon of companionship, fun and delicious food.



Among the attendees were four ladies from North Dean - Alison Kent, Melinda Pooley, Judith Broadley and Karen Mudie, each accompanied by their octogenarian mothers, Edwina, Grania, Ruth and Valerie with Judith also bringing along her daughter, Jem - creating a wonderful three-generation gathering. Christine Ryman also joined our table, adding to the fun atmosphere at the table.

The conversation around the table was marked by laughter and nostalgia with the mothers all sharing fascinating stories of their evacuations during the Second World War, recalling where they were evacuated and the challenges of those times special memories.

The food was absolutely delicious. Guests enjoyed a beautifully prepared three-course meal, cooked and served by dedicated volunteers from the

charity, despite the kitchen being incredibly small. The meal began with a tuna mousse served with melba toast, followed by a main course of Mediterranean chicken (with tomatoes and olives) accompanied by baked mint rice and a pomegranate and olive

salsa and finishing with a raspberry and meringue semifreddo. Each ticket included a free glass of fizz, wine, or cordial, which went down very nicely.

There were smiles all round when Val won a beautiful outdoors potted plant and Melinda won an Anthurium indoor plant, in the raffle draw.

Although there was no formal guest speaker this time at the lunch, Grainne Suter gave an engaging talk on the origins and purpose of Speen Helping Hospices, sharing how the charity began and the vital support it continues to provide to local hospices and families affected by life-limiting illness. Her words reminded everyone of the support and difference SHH continues to make.

The afternoon was a great success - a perfect blend of good company, good food and laughter. Events such as these not only raise valuable funds, in this case £2,274, for Speen Helping Hospices but also strengthen the bonds of friendship and community. Well done SHH.

Neighbourhood Watch - The Dark Side of Winter

Stan, Chair WDNHWA

As the clocks go back and days get forever shorter, burglaries become more common. Have you done all you can to ensure you are not a victim? Being part of a Neighbourhood Watch Scheme has been shown to reduce the likelihood of you becoming a target. Do you have a NHW scheme in your area? If not, would you be prepared to start one? Road signs and house stickers are supplied at no cost to you. You might also consider outside motion activated lights, cameras (real or realistic fakes) or camera doorbells. Wycombe District NHW have a

number of free helpful leaflets. Also we could set up a table at any event with leaflets and a selection of competitively priced products. Let's make our villages no-go areas for burglars.

Welcome to North Dean

We would like to welcome new residents to North Dean since July 2025, Philip & Victoria Mitchell, of 1 Deanfield Cottages. May you spend many happy years in this friendly village



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SPEEN vs NORTH DEAN GOLF DAY

Dick Pooley



It was Speen's turn to organise this Autumn meeting, which Captain Jo Allan did superbly well.

The course was in good condition and the greens were undulating and difficult to read, but 27 keen golfers turned out for another crack at winning the Janet & Ivor Beeks Figure Trophy.

Bacon rolls and tea and coffee onboard and off we set at 10.00 am.

The Speen team played really well and won the day, but other results were as below:-

Nearest the pin James Kent (ND)
Longest drive James Kent
Gerry Cranley Model Car for Best Gross score James Kent with 78. (ND)

1st place with 39 pts Mike Cowell (Sp)
2nd place with 36 pts Pete McKenna (Sp)
3rd place with 35 pts Tim Crossley (Sp) on count back
4th place with 35 pts Andy Thompson (Sp)

Overall Beeks Trophy winners - Speen with a winning margin of 6.2 average stableford points.

So North Deaneers, we have to improve for the Spring meeting which will be my turn to organise.

Wedding Announcement

Huge Congratulations to our loved-up couple from Cournswood House in North Dean, Martin and Sharon Watkins, who, after becoming engaged in South Africa on 5th January 2025, finally tied the knot, locally, on 20th September 2025, in a most spectacular and lavish wedding ceremony at their splendid home. The momentous event was enjoyed by all. We all wish you many many more years of joy and health, shared together.



We are a small catering butcher who visit the market daily to ensure we supply high quality, fresh produce and try to source locally where possible.

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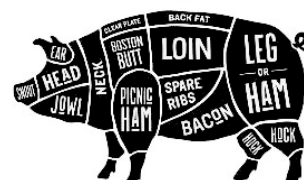
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INREMEMBRANCE

PETER KEEN

By Sarah Keen

Peter and his family moved to Rosebank Cottage in Speen in 1975 and then moved to Upper North Dean Farm in 1981. His two older children, Sarah and James, attended Speen school where the family made long lasting friends.

Peter was a founder member of Rotary in Princes Risborough, and he went on to support numerous local charities and organisations.

He loved playing golf and set up the Lodge Hill Golf Society. Lots of fun golf days were enjoyed.

On moving to North Dean, Peter became chairman of the North Dean Village Hall committee. He organised lots of amazing events raising money for the village. Does anyone remember the ferret racing evening which was so much fun. He went on to be chairman of the Trustees of North Dean Village Hall and even though he did retire from this role, he still



remained a key figure at the meetings and events.

His other interests were being a trustee of Heart of Bucks, a volunteer for Bucks Vision and he drove the community bus in Risborough for many years. He also took over the role of organising the Speen and North Dean golf competition which still runs very successfully.

He absolutely loved his house/home in North Dean and could often be seen

sitting in his chair by the front door waving at anyone who walked or drove by (always accompanied by a glass of wine in the evenings).

He also loved driving his beloved Massey Ferguson tractor which he had for years. He could often be seen driving up to Speen causing traffic tailbacks.

He will be greatly missed by many.

WILLIAM SUMMERS

1946 – 2025

Written by his family

William was born on 1st December 1946 in Barnet to loving parents Gerald and Marjorie, as the youngest of four children. Gerald was a pioneering modern furniture designer, and together with Marjorie ran an engineering supply company specialising in roller and ball bearings.

When Gerald died unexpectedly, twenty-year-old William stepped in to run the family business

alongside his mother. With quiet determination, he continued to lead the company until his retirement decades later.

In 1969, William married Diana. Together they raised four children and were later blessed with eight grandchildren. While he worked hard, family was always at the heart of everything he did. A devoted husband, loving son and brother, and an endlessly supportive father

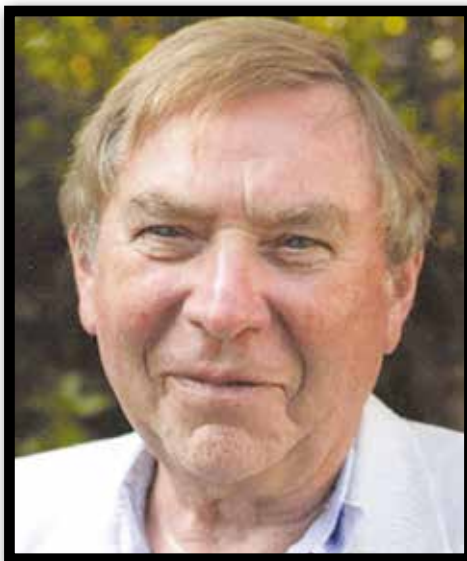
INREMEMBRANCE

and grandfather, William was always ready with advice, help, and words of encouragement — and never missed a chance to say how proud he was of those he loved.

Shortly before his retirement in 2006, William and Diana moved from Northwood to Speen, a village which they quickly grew to know and cherish. They poured energy into renovating “Cottage Farm”

with William’s trademark meticulous care. “If a job’s worth doing, is worth doing well” he often said, and we think he made a fine job of it.

A friendly and welcoming man, William found this returned as he became part of Speen village life, making many new friends in the process. For many years, he was involved in running the Fete, designing and building stalls,



putting up marquees and quietly helping everything run smoothly behind the scenes.

He was also an active member of the Rotary Club, notably organising the car parking for the Kop Hill Climb (“you can never have too much tape”). And he enjoyed providing technical support for The Arts Society, with over 20 Speen members and Speen W.I. Those who knew him will remember

his ready smile, dry humour, and the twinkle in his eye whenever a practical challenge or good joke came his way.

William passed away at his home on 5th August aged 78. He will be deeply missed by Diana, their family and the many friends whose lives he touched with kindness, humour and generosity of spirit.

IAN WATERMAN

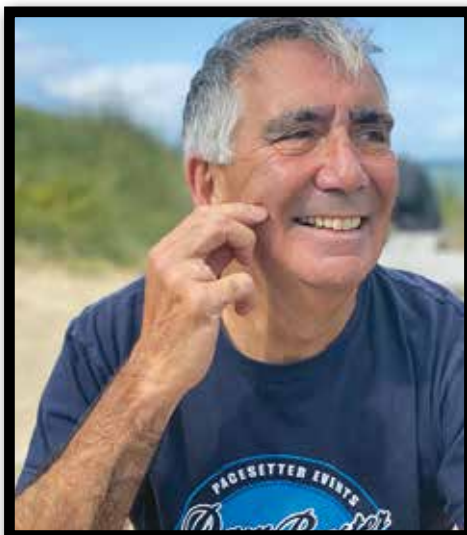
19th October 1956 – 26th August 2025

Written by the Waterman Family

Ian moved to Speen with his new wife Debbie, in August 1990, after their return from honeymoon.

Ian embraced life in Speen and in the mid 90’s he commenced the role of compere of the Speen Bonfire night, a task he thoroughly enjoyed and continued right up until last year’s bonfire night.

Ian also compered the Speen Fun Day for many



years and in more recent times the Speen Fete.

Ian, was a keen runner and triathlete, and he ran the London marathon in April 2002 to raise funds for the Speen Helping Hospices charity.

As a fitting tribute to Ian, often referred to as the “voice of Speen”, his celebration of life was held on the Playing Fields in the village marquee on September 19th.



SHH shh-shop.org

Fundraising since 2001 for local hospices in Chiltern Villages

Helen & Douglas House for Children - Rennie Grove and Peace Hospice Care

South Bucks Hospice at Butterfly House - Florence Nightingale Hospice Charity

SHH - Raising Funds in Chilterns Villages December 2025

by Gráinne Suter, Chair SHH

It has been a very busy summer and autumn for our fundraising group these last few months.

In July we ran a plant, flowers and preserve stall at **Speen Fete** on one of the hottest days of the year. Fortunately, the SHH stand was in the shade and we kept cool with some very chilled prosecco! Hildreths in Prestwood donated a large quantity of the plants which all sold very well.

Then early September the group organised a very successful **"Sip and Sparkle"** luxury afternoon tea at **Speen Festival 2025**. It was very well attended with tea, sandwiches, scones, cakes and fizz. The chintzy crockery and white tablecloths made it a very classy affair as did the quartet entertaining the visitors with cello, viola and violins.

SHH received donations from both Speen Fete and Speen Festival for our contribution to their events.

The High Wycombe branch of **Tangent** invited us to speak at their Friendship Lunch in September and Jill Roberts, their new president nominated **SHH** as their charity for the year. The lunch raised £600 which was donated to SHH.

On the 1st October the first **Ladies Autumn Lunch** was held in the Sefton Barn, at The Horse Trust. For many years, apart from during the Covid era there has been a Spring lunch in May at The Horse Trust. The ladies attending the Spring Lunch were asked if they would be interested in an Autumn event. The answer was a definite yes and 60 tickets were sold (the maximum that the barn can accommodate). The £40 ticket covered a complimentary glass of wine and a three-course lunch followed by coffee and chocolates.

On the 11th October we had another brilliant **Comedy Night** organised by Elliot Wengler at Lacey Green village hall. Elliot had booked some class acts headlined by Michael Akadiri, Kathryn Mather, Phil Alexander, Nick Byard and Caitriona Dowden. Ticket sales were good, the bar was busy and everyone

had a great evening out.

The Annual Bridge Afternoon at North Dean village hall rounded off the autumn events and this year we had more tables than ever participating and everyone enjoying the now legendary afternoon tea.

The **Christmas Market** in the Chapel on the 16th November had a very good footfall again this year and we did a good line in bacon rolls and mulled wine.

We round off the year with the **Christmas Hamper raffle** with four great prizes, tickets are for sale online at £5 a ticket @ www.shh-shop.org/ and in the shop, and finally the **carol singing 15th, 16th and 18th December**. Dates and routes will be posted on **Sales and Wants**.

We are always keen to try new fundraising events and if you have suggestions or would like to help get in touch and contact me at events@shh-shop.org or on 07778 803 260.

For 2026 we have a **Quiz Night** planned for **7th February**.

For detailed information about all our events check out our website www.shh-shop.org

On the 29th July the Chairman of **Hypnos Bedding** – **Peter Keen** from North Dean passed away. His wife Judy has been on the SHH committee for many years, and she and her family requested that any donations in Peter's memory be donated to SHH. We are very grateful to the family for this as over **£5,000** has been raised and this has made a significant contribution to the fundraising for the hospices.

At the end of the year, we will divide the money raised in 2025 between the four hospices and full details will be posted on **Sales and Wants and on the SHH website**.



SPEEN FETE UPDATE

Lucy Johnston

Save the Date - Next Year's Fete is on Saturday 11th July

Thank You to Attendees and Volunteers

A heartfelt thank you goes out to everyone who attended and volunteered at this year's Speen Fete, especially those who braved the heat to make the event a memorable one. Your support and enthusiasm were greatly appreciated.

Charity Donations and Community Support

We are delighted to share the fantastic news that this year's Fete has enabled us to donate a total of £4,300 in profits. Each of the 11 Speen organisations that participated has received £300, recognising their valued contribution and involvement. Additionally, our Charity of the Year, The Getaway

Thank you,
Speen Village
Fete.

Committee and
all Villagers



The Getaway Foundation

"It's a lovely heartwarming thing you do"...

"Seeing my children being free with a smile on their faces is priceless" Staff Family Feedback

Foundation, has been awarded £1,000. This donation is a significant step towards covering the £1,864 required to provide a family in need with a holiday through their initiative.

Get Involved: Join the Fete Team & Volunteer

The Fete team is a small, friendly group. We would warmly welcome new members from all generations to join our committee, as all types of skills are needed to ensure the event's continued success.

**For more information please contact
Lucy Johnston 07770868029**

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Flowers Bottom – a glimpse into its history

by Peter Symonds

In the Chilterns the name "Bottom" is used to refer to locations set within a valley. The hamlet of Flowers Bottom, an outlier of Speen, is indeed nestled in a picturesque valley with steep hills rising all around it. The chalk grasslands on the hillsides around the hamlet support many interesting flowers including several species of orchid. However, the name "Flowers" may be connected to a prominent family name (albeit this name does not appear in census records) or to Flows of water.

Almost certainly the oldest property in the valley would be the former public house and restaurant, The Old Plow. Records suggest it dates from around 1610 when it served as a village inn. Notable visitors are said to have included Samuel Pepys and Charles II. Apparently, Pepys mentions the Plough Inn in his diaries whilst the King visited when hunting with the Earl of Buckingham. (The name varied, over the years from the Old Plow, related to the constellation, to The Plough related to agricultural machinery). The site may have originally been developed at an early date because of access to a water supply. It was apparently situated close to a well, which was of great importance to the hilltop community of Speen, and on a crossing of two tracks.

Adjacent to The Old Plow, which was run by the Janes family, was a blacksmiths workshop. In the 1860's this was run by the Baldwin family, who had seven children between the ages of 2 and 15. In addition to the Old Plow and the blacksmiths there were four further cottages with a population of about 26 in total. One of the other cottages was occupied by the Parslow family, a name which is still associated with the

hamlet. The other men resident at this time were labourers and stonecutters whilst the women were almost all lacemakers ranging in age from 10 to 70. In 1871 the Janes in the Old Plow had six children between 1 and 13 and Father Henry must have supplemented his beer house income by working as an agricultural worker. By 1891 son George had taken over the pub following Henry's death. He and his wife Emma had three children and lived with Henry's widow, Ruth. Records for this period show

many of the local men now employed as bodgers or sawyers. A pattern is apparent of quite large families supported by male agricultural labourers, stonecutters and bodgers and female lacemakers.

In 1938 an RAF Hawker Demon, ran out of fuel and crashed in Bowers Bottom whilst on a night exercise.

By 1939 there were some eight properties in the hamlet. The Parslow's were tenants at Flowers Bottom Farm whilst The Old Plow had been purchased in 1930 by Ishbel MacDonald, daughter of Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald, who drew in visitors from further afield. William Sheldon, the blacksmith had retired, and the smithy was removed or converted to form part of the Old Plow. Other properties included Flowers Cottage, the Thatched Cottage, the Sanctuary, the Retreat and Wayside. Wayside, which occupies a more remote site

halfway up the hill towards Darvills Hill was built during the Victorian era. It served for many years as a Youth Hostel and records show Madge Turner as the warden in 1939. In around the early 1950's the hostel closed and was relocated to Bradenham and Wayside became a private residence as it is to this day.



The Plow Inn



The blacksmiths at Flowers Bottom, probably around 1920. The high roof behind the smithy is the back of the Old Plough.

As befits the WI motto of 'Inspiring Women', our October speaker, Jo Laurie, engaged us with a stirring account of her mother's nursing experiences in the 1930s, from 'Charing Cross to China', pieced together from documents and photos found after her death. Her independence, resourcefulness and courage at a time of international instability, taking every opportunity to develop her skills in new areas of community care was inspiring. In an age of decluttering, it also highlighted the value of keeping mementoes, without which Jo would not have fully appreciated her mother's astonishing life.

This followed an equally stimulating talk in July by Liz Whetton and Carol Hardy, from Waddesdon Manor, on the role of "The Rothschild Women". As visitors to National Trust properties will realise, the females in families rarely get much appreciation, but our speakers effectively highlighted the strong female characters and their influences on the dynasty.

Our September meeting was a film night, watching 'A Handful of Dust', and in November, fittingly in the run up to Remembrance Day, Stephen Barker, a local historian, talked about 'Trench Humour in the First World War' and how coarse jokes, puns and songs directed at their superiors or the enemy helped alleviate the stressful conditions the ordinary soldier found himself in.

As well as talks, there was a **Summer Social** in the Village Hall and a **Garden Party** hosted by Gill Biffa, with tea and cake provided by the committee. Speaking of cake, synonymous with the WI in many people's eyes, we hosted a stall at **Speen Fete**, with generous donations of baked goods by members and the wider community available for those who braved the heat of the tent. Seaside themed artwork for the stall was produced by member Loiz Bale. A **Macmillan Coffee Morning** in September raised a healthy sum for this worthy cause. We also enjoyed a trip to the **World's End Garden Centre**, Wendover, in October.

Of course, being a member of Speen WI is not limited to local events. Membership provides access to the Learning Hub, featuring talks on diverse topics such as travel, art, history, as well as creative tutorials for crochet projects, eco-friendly wrapping ideas and sketching. Courses such as BSL for beginners and well-being sessions are some of the topics on offer. As part of the Buckinghamshire hub, there are activities with members outside Speen. And as part of a nationwide movement founded in 1915 to ensure that women can play an effective role in their communities, the WI is known for its campaigning. Did you know that some of the issues championed include equal pay, breast cancer screening, banning smoking in public places, cleaner rivers and awareness of autism and ADHD in girls? 2025's campaign is **Bystanders Can Be Lifesavers**, aiming to increase public confidence and training in the delivery of CPR and improve access to defibrillators.



What's not to like? We meet at **Speen Village Hall at 7.30 pm on the first Thursday of the month**. Come and have a glass of wine and a chat before listening to a stimulating talk, followed by coffee and cake. There is no obligation to join until you have seen what's on offer, and you can be assured of a warm welcome by our friendly group. For further info, contact Jenny at speenwi@gmail.com

Future Meetings

Thursday, January 8th
Celebration Supper

Thursday February 5th
AGM

An Illustrated History of British Piers

Thursday March 5th
The Wild Rose Flower Company

RECIPE

Chocolate Orange Energy Balls

From Mandy How - recipe by @doctorbowl (Instagram)

Makes about 25 balls.

Ingredients

- 2 cups of oats
- 2 tbsp cocoa powder
- 2 tbsp chia seeds
- 13 medjool dates
- Juice from 1 large orange
- Toppings: melted chocolate and orange zest (optional)



Method

Blend all the dry ingredients together. Add the orange juice slowly.

The mixture should come together. If too dry add more orange juice. If too wet add more oats.

Roll into balls.

Roll in melted chocolate, top with some orange zest.

Refrigerate until set.



by Liz Patroe

It's nearly Halloween (as I write this) after which minds will be turning to Christmas and the New Year so now seems a good time to pause and look back to late summer when Speen played host to its 14th Festival - photo spread on the following pages.

The Playing Fields, the Marquee, the Village Hall, the Chapel, the village itself and the surrounding countryside made it possible for us to stage 21 very different events. Without these, most of which rely on fundraising efforts and bookings to keep going and looking good, we would not be able to bring the village together, make new connections, learn new things, and generally enjoy ourselves. So thank you to the volunteers that take care of these important and irreplaceable village assets.

Through the generosity of our event organisers, many of whom gave their time, and the enthusiasm of those attending events, we were able to raise just under £8000. This has now been distributed to charities proposed by event organisers and to

village organisations mentioned above. This is a fantastic outcome. I won't divulge how much was raised by those who enjoy a tippie or two but safe to say, The Dragon Tavern, played an important role (thank you, Helen)!

Being a fairly windy and rainy two weeks made things interesting ...! Not least, the partial collapse of the marquee just after the last event. It was humbling to see so many people come to the marquee's rescue at short notice so thank you to all of you who helped that Monday morning.

Inevitably, questions will be asked (and already have been asked!) about Speen Festival 2027 ... The planning team can attest to how rewarding it has been to organise this year's event. So, if and when the call goes out for support next year (with planning starting about a year before the festival starts), I hope there will be new faces with exciting ideas and enthusiasm ready to take up the baton.

Thank you again.







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SPEENPLAYING FIELDS

Matt Davies - (Still) Acting Interim, temporary Chair

It seems like just a blink of an eye since the season of Funday, Fete and Festival, but since then we've been typically busy on and around the Fields.

The Autumn work party was again well supported by a cohort of fellow villagers and therefore we were able to tackle a good number of chunky tasks on top of the usual swathe of necessary maintenance. The fencing and gate post that helps split Ridgely's field between bike park and the forest and kids' play area had long been in need of repair. To enable this work we were generously supported by Briants of Risborough (Thame Road, Longwick), so many thanks to Briants for also providing a replacement post. During the work party we were able to fit the new post, rehang the gate and adjust the fencing. Another large job was the disposal of Oak brash from the main fields – after the necessary safety felling work on the Millenium Oak (The Leaves of Time Tree), located at the corner of the fields, we had to contend with a surprisingly large amount of brash and tree limbs. These were manfully (and boyfully) dragged across the field to be stowed safely in closer proximity to the bonfire site ready for disposal. These bigger ticket items were tackled alongside the more familiar strimming, trimming and general maintenance jobs. We also spent a few precious pounds on new football goal netting and a lick of paint for the frames, so thanks to the efforts of those volunteers overcoming chronic arm-ache, the budding galaticos of the village can hone their crossbar challenge skills and top-bins precision with clarity and with fewer traipses down the field to retrieve balls that formerly fit through much too holey netting.

The work party efforts resulted in a field that was spic and span and ready for bonfire night. With November 5th falling bang in the middle of the week, we opted for the November 8th Saturday, so as not to be too close to Halloween. There's always



consideration to try and avoid other local events, but we feel confident our display, being the most creative and best in the land, would be enough of a draw to bring the crowds again to Speen. Once again the creative team surpassed all expectations and, in our relentless efforts to resonate evermore with the kids, our Minecraft themed fire seemed to be a really big hit. The work on the characters was simply amazing, so enormous thanks are due to the resident artistes (Lucy, Fleur & part time resident Livvie) for working miracles – I am in awe of anyone able to transfer

what they see around them to the canvas, the clay or, in this case, the large wooden boards. As someone who's artistic creations are akin to those of an inebriated baboon happening upon a bag of mushy crayons, the Minecraft creations boggled my little, envious mind. The event itself looks like being another roaring success, friendly conditions and a large crowd witnessed a fabulous fire and a typically excellent display. Big thanks to the bar crew ("the Dragon Tavern breathes fire"), the BBQ team ("expertly handled by those flaming PTA pros") and the firework aficionados (Keith and Charlie, "resident pyros"). The display went off as the fire died down a little after 7pm and lasted a thoroughly spectacular 15 minutes. 2025's Bonfire event was also the first real outing for the newly refitted Pavilion Kitchen – much thanks to the Lanes for their generosity and enabling us to make use of their outgoing fittings!

Next up we have a pop-up pub and from there we'll be steaming (in many senses) into the full-on Festive period. I expect we'll be looking to run the familiar Christmas Tree collection which, like the preceding events, raise the funding needed to keep the fields and pavilion looking in such good shape.

Thanks to all trustees, volunteers and supporters – enjoy all the season has to offer!

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PIGOTTS MUSIC CAMP

by Jeremy Hamilton, General Manager

150 years from now Music Camp at Pigotts may well still be part of the local landscape

Longer term members of Speen and North Dean will remember Nick Wheeler Robinson who took over running Music Camp from his father Bernard who bought Pigotts and moved Music Camp there during the 1960s.

When, in 2022, Nick died in his late 80's, the Wheeler Robinson family came to the conclusion that they could no longer continue to run Pigotts and Music Camp, so plans were put in place for its supporting charity – Music Camp Trust - to take it over. In early October this year, legal formalities were completed, meaning that Pigotts and Music Camp are now the responsibility of the charity until at least the year 2175, after which anyone who thinks they might still be around is very welcome to come up with a follow-on plan!

Bernard started Music Camp elsewhere with a few post-graduate friends in 1927, little imagining, as he later confessed, that it would continue throughout his own lifetime, even less so that it would be thriving nearly 100 years later. Each weekend between April and October, drawing on a community of around 500 regular participants, amateur musicians from all over the UK come together at Pigotts to rehearse a wide range of classical music. Orchestra, choir, opera, chamber music and brass and wind band get together generally start on Friday evenings and finish with an informal final run through on Sunday afternoons. When not rehearsing, participants camp in the adjacent fields and enjoy delicious meals cooked by volunteers, as well as forming volunteer teams to keep things running - table laying, washing up, cleaning and looking after the place. During August two 9-day camps involve a complete orchestra



and choir in residence throughout and across the year when not playing or singing, Music Campers volunteer their time to look after the buildings, fields and woodland.

When it became clear, in March 2024, that the Wheeler Robinson family wanted to move on, the Music Camp community

faced a significant mountain to climb in terms of the funds needed to purchase the site and surrounding woodland. There followed a period of head scratching and examination of various options including moving Music Camp somewhere completely different. The conclusion was that just about enough money could be raised, and then to everyone's delight and amazement, shortly after confirming that direction of travel in September 2024, out of the blue, anonymous benefactors stepped forward offering to fund the majority of the purchase costs. The past 12 months has been about organising and managing the transfer of ownership to the trust, during which time the Music Camp community has come together to raise most of the funds needed (in addition to the purchase itself) in order to refurbish and preserve the grade 2 listed 18th century buildings under the watchful eye of the Bucks heritage and conservation service.

A small community is based permanently at Pigotts living in the four houses around the historic courtyard, whilst Jeremy and Alice Hamilton, who now run Pigotts and Music camp, live at Hillswood, just across the lane. With the future firmly settled, plans are afoot to bring back the previously popular 5.48 evenings – an hour of music, once a month, on early winter Sunday evenings enjoyed by a local audience



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as an opportunity to raise funds for the charity of the performers' choice followed by chat and a glass of wine.

The charity trustees led by chair and Speen resident Sam Laughton are busy feeling their way into new responsibilities whilst looking for opportunities to make the facilities of Pigotts available in support of local and other musical and charitable activities alongside the Music Camp programme. During next summer an open afternoon is planned and "Feel Good Fridays" will continue. These provide an opportunity for Music



Camp and local volunteers to spend a day helping in the fresh air, meeting new people and enjoying a communal lunch provided by way of a thank you.

Next time you're walking past and hear classical music drifting on the breeze, feel free to stop by and find out more – or reach out to Jeremy and Alice Hamilton who live at Hillswood and jeremy.hamilton@musiccamptrust.org.uk 07834 224589.



LACEY GREEN
PARISH COUNCIL

Philip Suter and Graham Peart – Councillors

As noted in the summer Speen and North Dean News, I have been co-opted to the Lacey Green Parish Council to fill a vacancy to represent Speen alongside long serving Philip Suter. Kirsi Pyy has also been co-opted to represent Lacey Green. This is not an unusual way to join the PC as it is estimated that sadly around 70% of Parish Councillors have not been elected.

Parish Councils are a historic and important element as the first of the three tiers of government, attending to important local matters on behalf of the residents of the parish. In Buckinghamshire there are 137 parish councils and 5 town councils. In England there are around 10,480 parish councils with some 100,000 councillors.

The process of parish organisation appears to have been completed during the fifty-year reign of Edward III (1312–1377). Formation and activities of Town and parish councils were formalised by Act of Parliament in 1894 to 'reinvigorate local communities and give them a voice'.

The Parish council is primarily funded through an annual precept, which is an amount of money requested from the Buckinghamshire Council that is collected from local taxpayers as a line item on the council tax bill. Funding also comes from

other sources, such as grants, and a portion of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) from new developments in their area.

Meetings are monthly (except August) and are held in Lacey Green and Speen and it is the right of local residents to attend these meetings. As one of your local Buckinghamshire Councillors is usually in attendance, it is a very good place to raise local issues and to request assistance when needed. The website gives details of agendas and minutes of meetings and all the financial information.

Over the past year grants and payments have been made to organisations in Speen – Speen Playing Fields, Studridge Lane Pond for maintenance, Speen Festival 2025, Speen Village Hall and Speen Church

During the October meeting, apart from routine administrative matters, issues discussed included the children's playground at Lacey Green, traffic calming and the three MVA speed monitoring units, Garden of Remembrance enhancements and a number of important planning issues.

Maybe your interest has been roused and we will see you at the next meeting, details will be on the website? www.laceygreen-pc.org.uk

Graham Peart Councillor

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SPEEN ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION GROUP

Nature Walk, Speen Festival September 2025

To inspire us all to love and appreciate our natural neighbourhood more, SEAG hosted a guided morning stroll around the village fringes to encounter wildlife in a range of habitats including woodland, meadow and semi-urban. While, of course, walking in a group is not the ideal format for seeing birds and animals in the wild, our expert guide Guy Andrews talked knowledgeably



about what to look out for in different environments and during different seasons. Good conversation covered a range of topics including how climate change is impacting bird and animal habitat, changing types of food sources to put out at different times of year, and indicators for ancient woodland. Huge thanks for Guy for his enthusiasm and knowledge so generously shared.

Speen's Soundtrack:

What Continuous Birdsong Monitoring Is Revealing About Our Wildlife

By Ben Wilde

Earlier this year, we set up a birdsong monitoring gadget in our garden on Chapel Hill - essentially, a version of the popular Merlin app that operates continuously. Using freely available BirdNET software, it captures and identifies birdsong, and publishes statistics on birdweather.com, offering a live window into the birdlife around Speen.

Across the spring and summer, we logged 95 species; far more than I expected. The data shows our familiar residents dominating the soundscape - blackbirds, robins, wrens, finches, jackdaws and woodpigeons - but it also highlights the variety supported by our mixed habitats. Strong and frequent detections of nuthatches, great spotted woodpeckers, and red kites suggest particularly healthy woodland and edge habitat, along the hill.

Among the more interesting arrivals were redstart, a late-summer crossbill, and a parakeet, demonstrating the great diversity of our corner of the Chilterns. One of the real highlights has been the regular presence of a barn owl, calling most nights from the crossroads

at 1 am, alongside the familiar tawny owl activity.

Of course, BirdNET occasionally overreaches - our "osprey," on review, turned out to be nothing more than a muffled tweet from our ostentatious blackbird - but these oddities add charm, without diminishing the value of the dataset. We're still searching for the puffin, meanwhile.

This year, we also set up a second device in Ridgley's Field, as part of the rewilding effort. Though temporary, it's an important chance to gather a baseline biodiversity dataset to help measure how the site changes, as the field progresses.

One of Speen's quiet strengths is the number of residents with genuine expertise in wildlife and ecology, and their advice has been extremely helpful in interpreting the detections and separating genuine records from enthusiastic false positives.

Anyone can follow or contribute to "Speen," live, on birdweather.com or join our SpeenWatch WhatsApp group for general nature sightings and discussion.

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Ridgley's Field Wildflower Meadow

In November 2024, I wrote here of our plan to increase the flower species diversity at Ridgley's Field. A year on and our plan has been put into action. Since then, a group of villagers, an off shoot of SEAG, The Speen Meadow Group, have been growing plug plants from seed, nurturing and watering through the summer and the last were planted out this month. We have chosen to reintroduce four native species, Bird's Foot Trefoil, Lady's Bedstraw, Great Burnet and we are most looking forward to the possibility of Cowslips in our field this spring. Fingers crossed.



It took around 6,000 years to create the species-rich grassland, for which the UK is globally famous. Yet in less than a century we have lost 97%. It's now rare, covering less than 1% of UK land, but we have a little piece in Speen. Come and appreciate our native wildflowers, bugs and butterflies.

If you are interested in helping to care for this area and develop the wildflowers, please contact Jane or Jo at seag@btinternet.com and we can arrange for you to join the WhatsApp Group.

SPEEN CHURCH

Wishing You a Very Merry Christmas and a Peaceful New Year

Tim Deller

As the festive lights begin to twinkle across our village and the scent of burning logs fills the air, we at Speen Baptist Church want to extend our warmest greetings to every one of you.

Christmas is a time for celebration, but it is also an opportunity to pause, reflect, and appreciate the blessings we share as a community. We are truly blessed to live in such a caring and supportive village, and we thank you for the ways you have contributed to our community throughout the year, whether through simple acts of kindness or larger gestures. As a community we have been used for so much good in society so celebrate the part you played.

Amidst the hustle and bustle of the season, the timeless story of Christmas reminds us of a simple Christian message:

God's love is for everyone, bringing good news of great joy to all people.

This year, as we celebrate the birth of Jesus, the Prince of Peace, our wish for our beloved village community is that you experience:

- **Hope** in the promise of new beginnings and a brighter future.
- **Peace** in your hearts and homes, a calm amidst the busy world.

- **Joy** in shared moments with family, friends, and neighbours.
- **Love** that inspires kindness, compassion, and generosity towards one another.

We would be delighted for you to join us at any of our special Christmas services as we celebrate this wonderful season.

Christmas Eve Carol Service 6pm

Celebrate Christmas with traditional carols, a warm welcome and refreshments.

Christmas Day 10.30am

Celebration – a short family service celebrating the birth of Jesus.

You can find our full schedule of events and service times on our Church website: www.speenchurch.org

Whether you join us in person, or simply enjoy the season in your own way, please know you are in our thoughts and prayers.

May your Christmas be filled with cherished memories, warmth, and the true spirit of the season.

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Speen Fellowship



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WILDLIFEWATCH

Peter Symonds



The Chilterns are currently surrounded by woodlands which are bathed in their glorious Autumnal colours. Our woodlands also feature interesting fungi at this time of year. One of the more common woodland mushrooms is Sulphur Tuft which can grow prolifically in large poisonous clumps on stumps and rotting trunks of broadleaved trees. Mixed in with

the Autumn colours Anne Foster photographed Primroses in flower in October.

Another species associated with Beechwoods is the Magpie Inkcap which is also poisonous. The photograph was taken by Naomi.

Another species which is active in the Autumn period is the Glis glis (or Edible Dormice). They build up their weight before their winter hibernation. They are closely associated with beechwoods feeding extensively on beechmast but also on nuts, apples and blackberries, all of which we have in profusion in the local area. The numbers of these animals in the Chilterns is huge with estimates of 500,000. Almost every hole in any of our woodland trees will hold Glis glis in the late summer. They must be displacing bats and birds from some of these locations. Apparently, they



are rarely seen but noises in the loft are very likely to be from Glis glis. Many try to breed in nest boxes from early July time in gardens or local woods. For some years I have been trying to design nest boxes that are used by birds but are unattractive to Glis glis. They are reputed to have extreme climbing skills and agility so it is highly likely that they could access most boxes. The aim was to design one that they found too challenging to bother using on a regular basis. Most nest boxes are upright and attached to vertical trunks so I experimented with horizontal boxes hung below branches away from the trunk. Unfortunately, they soon acquired a taste for these boxes so I suspended them on two wires four or five feet below horizontal branches. This has not proved to stop them. Using metal entrance plates with the smallest diameter entry holes (28mm) has seen some success but these boxes only suit Blue Tits. Anything with a 32mm hole used for Great Tits has failed to exclude the Glis glis. In some cases however where a metal plate or ring has been in position the animals just seem to have gnawed an alternative access through the sides of the box. I have resigned myself to the view that it is impossible to exclude them by design.

Anthony Palmer reported some interesting behaviour by an adult



have now spread down into outer London with a significant population in Ealing apparently. The Autumn period will see many relocate into our lofts and outbuildings seeking warm, dry refuge for the winter. Their nocturnal habits mean that they

Muntjac deer in North Dean which attacked and killed an adolescent Muntjac with its short antlers, presumably in a territorial dispute. The victim was gradually disposed of by the local Red Kites. In Speen Alastair Blundell reported a Raven coming right down into his garden which is unusual for this wary species whilst a Buzzard was photographed on top of the Speen bonfire on 8th November. Meanwhile Crossbills have remained present in Great Hampden albeit not in the same numbers reported in the last edition.

Please let me know of any interesting records - Peter Symonds
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DARVILLS HILL FARM

Charlotte Downing

What's in an organic label @Darvills_hill_farm

At a film screening event last year at Oxmoor Farm (home of Wild Feast events and the Barn Restaurant in Great Hampden), local horticultural legend Lindsey Engers, who was one of a panel of speakers, received a spontaneous round of applause when he announced his Chiltern Heritage Orchard had achieved organic certification. This positive reaction to a food grower going that extra mile piqued my curiosity about what it might mean for our small farm to follow in Lindsey's footsteps.

At the time I felt I had a grasp of the benefit of organic farming for the environment and human health and we had focused regenerating our farm on this philosophy. On a personal level we had tried where possible to buy organic products (porridge oats was the main staple), but I was in the camp that believed organic products are generally more expensive, and together with our low input, low energy farming practices, eating seasonal, local food felt more important than an organic label.

So, I took a deep dive into the world of the organic movement and discovered organic farming was pioneered over 100 years ago by a botanist called Albert Howard, who demonstrated that the increasing use of chemical fertilisers in Western agriculture was damaging to a soil's ecosystem. He demonstrated how maintaining soil health through natural processes was the foundation for healthy soil, food and people. Organic farming pioneer Eve Balfour continued Howard's work, founding the Soil Association at the end of World War II in response to the paradoxically named Green Agricultural Revolution - think chemical inputs, mechanisation and crop monocultures, to increase food production. The negative environmental consequences of these post-war farming practices are widely acknowledged by international bodies such as the IPCC (Climate change and Land 2020).

I also learnt there are four core organic



principles including ecosystem health and integration; fairness in production systems; and care for current and future generations. I reckon most farmers, or people shopping for porridge oats like me, would agree that these seem reasonable and logical values worth working towards, but maybe hard to achieve? We looked at our farming practices in livestock husbandry, fledgling wool processing, fruit juicing and meadow hay production and figured we could probably meet the standards. So, we decided we should put our money where our mouths are and get certified.

There are several organic organisations in the UK, with the Soil Association being the

largest and most well-known and following a recent inspection we entered a two-year organic conversion period for certification with them. According to government statistics, and nearly eight decades since the inception of the Soil Association, just 3% of UK farmed land is certified organic, so our small farm will swell the UK total organic farmed area by a colossally miniscule 0.0003%. It's not going to change the world, but I believe certification is a small act of protest to the idea that farming has to be at the planet's expense. It's our way of contributing, one hay bale, bottle of apple juice and woolly blanket at a time!

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STUDRIDGE LANE POND

by Peter Symonds



The village pond, which is owned by the Parish Council, was in need of some annual clearance work by the end of October. A team of regular village volunteers was assembled and the work was undertaken on Sunday 26th October. The council pay for the cost of a 6 cubic yard skip which duly arrived on site on 24th.

Our main focus was on clearing dense rooted vegetation that has built up over recent years in the middle of the pond. Large lumps of dense roots were removed opening up a link between the deep water to the right of the pond with the shallow areas to the left. The hundreds of frogs that use the pond spawn in the fringes of the shallow end and the key aim is to ensure that tadpoles and other pond life can relocate from the shallows to the deeper water as the water level falls during the summer months. Last Spring saw a frenzy of some 250 frogs mating in the shallows representing an important local population for us to preserve.

Dead growth and excess vegetation was also removed from the shallows and trees sprouting along the roadside edge were cut back to ensure that the pond gets plenty of sunlight. The verge was mowed and two access channels where rainwater flows off the road were cleared. Hopefully the water level will now rise over the winter period.

Two of the volunteers wore waders to enable us to tackle the dense vegetation in the deeper water whilst others cut, raked and cleared waste from the shallower areas. The overall impact was welcomed by local residents. Thanks to all of those who took part and to Lesley Horne for the refreshments.



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