

THE SPEEN & NORTH DEAN *News*



Spring 2026

Issue 95



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Welcome!

to the Spring Edition

As we go to print, the clocks will have sprung forward, and the days will be longer and hopefully drier. This will encourage more of us to get out more.

There are lots of local events happening in the upcoming months, details of which are listed on the What's On page. Do not forget, you can also keep up to date by using the What's App group chats and if you do not use What's App, you can also find information on the Speenbucks.org.uk website.

Best Wishes

Jill Roberts

*Front Cover Photo
Blossoms in North Dean
in Hamish and Catherine McPherson's garden*

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SPEEN & NORTH DEAN NEWS COMMITTEE

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

Next Edition

Copy for the next edition is due by 24th July 2026 with a planned publication date of early August. 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.

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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.

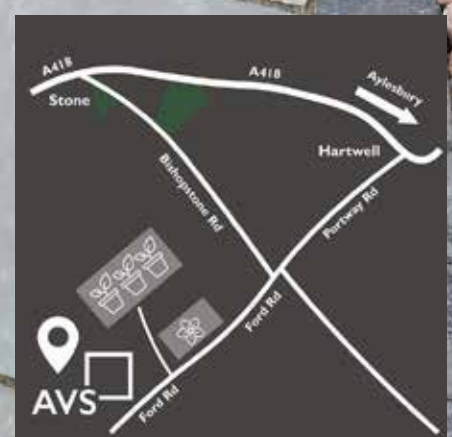
Village News

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	

APRIL

Fri 24th April	SHH Pub Night	Speen Village Hall	Amanda Dobbs 07876222695
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MAY

Wed 6th	SHH Spring Lunch	Horses Trust	SOLD OUT
Thurs 7th	Speen WI The Galapagos Islands Richard Stevenson	Speen Village Hall	Jenny Pearce 07035188093
Thurs 14th	Memory Café	Speen Chapel 10:00-12:00pm	trudi@ashridgehomecare.co.uk 07035188093
Thurs 14th	SHH Beep, Dig, Discover	Speen Village Hall 7.30 for 8pm	Tickets from SHH Box Office
Sat 16th	SEAG Nature and our Neighbourhood	Speen Village Hall 2pm-4pm Speen Village Hall	Jane - seag@btinternet.com Free event sign up on Eventbrite
Wed 20th/Fri 22nd	Speen Heritage Group An Illustrated talk on the complete history of Speen	Speen Village Hall	Peter Symonds 07747 015 848 or psymonds590@gmail.com

JUNE

Thurs 4th	Speen WI Man on the Spot. Reflections on 50 years as a journalist	Speen Village Hall 7:30pm	Jenny Pearce 07035188093
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JULY

Sun 5th	SHH 25th Anniversary Celebration Afternoon Tea		Details to follow
Sat 11th	Speen Fete	Speen Playing Fields	Lucy Johnston 07770868029
Sat 25th	St John's Church Lacey Green Summer Garden party 3-5pm	Vicarage Garden	Tickets Adults £10 Child £5 stjohnschurchlaceygreen@gmail.com or on the day

AUGUST

Sat 1st/Sun 2nd tbc	North Dean Event		Details to follow
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CONGRATULATIONS PAUL ROGERSON



Paul Rogerson was conferred with the title of Honorary Alderman on 26th November 2025 "in appreciation and recognition of having rendered eminent services to the former Buckinghamshire County Council and Wycombe District Council".

This was between 1999 and 2013, he also served on Buckinghamshire Fire Authority.

SPEEN SCHOOL & LITTLE APPLES PRESCHOOL

Lisa Davies



Spring has been a busy and exciting time at school, with lots of engaging learning taking place both in and beyond the classroom.

One of the highlights was World Book Day, when the school was filled with an amazing array of costumes as children and staff dressed up as their favourite book characters. From classic storybook heroes to modern favourites, the creativity on display was fantastic. Throughout the day, children enjoyed sharing stories, talking about their favourite books and celebrating their love of reading together.

Reception and Key Stage 1 pupils were also thrilled to welcome a fire engine to the school. The visit gave children the chance to meet firefighters and learn about the important work they do to help keep our community safe. The most exciting part, of course, was the opportunity for every child to climb aboard the fire engine and explore the equipment up close.

Key Stage 1 pupils also took part in a fascinating Zoo Animal Workshop, which supported their



science learning about how animals are classified. The children had the opportunity to see – and in some cases carefully handle – a variety of unusual creatures including a snake, cockroach, millipede, giant snail and tree frog. The workshop helped pupils understand the differences between animal groups and sparked lots of curious questions.

Meanwhile, Reception children have been busy caring for some very special visitors. The children watched in amazement as chicks hatched from their eggs, and they have been learning how to look after them carefully as they grow. It has been a wonderful hands-on way to explore life cycles and responsibility.

Outdoors, our Forest School sessions have been full of seasonal discovery. The children have been searching for signs of spring, spotting new buds, early flowers and listening for birdsong as nature begins to wake up again.

The children were also proud to take part in a litter pick on Speen Playing Fields, helping

to keep our local area clean and tidy. It was a great opportunity for them to care for their environment and contribute positively to the community.



SPEEN SCHOOL PTA

by Dishan Popat Chair Speen School PTA

Speen School PTA Continues to Raise Funds and Celebrates a Busy Spring Term

Following the Speen School PTA having a successful first term, raising an impressive £2,597 through a series of community events that brought families together while supporting the school, the Spring has continued in the right direction.

The winter term funds were raised through a range of popular events including the Parents' Quiz Night, Spooky Glow Party, Break the Rules Day, Speen Bonfire Night, and the Christmas Fair. These events not only generated valuable funds but also created memorable moments for children and families. The PTA would like to thank everyone who attended, volunteered, or supported the events in any way.

Spring continues to deliver and the money raised has already helped support several projects that benefit the children directly. One of the most exciting developments from the Winter, is the new outdoor classroom, which has now been built and is due to officially open after the half-term break. This new space will provide children with valuable opportunities for outdoor learning and creative activities in a safe environment where they can explore and discover.

The PTA has also funded new sports equipment, including parachutes, balls and beanbags, replacing older equipment and helping to support active play. Additional funding has gone towards First Aid for Children training as well as interoception equipment, which helps children better understand and regulate their emotions. The most successful events in the spring included the Valentine's School Disco, the Smarties Challenge, and World Book Day celebrations with a Cake Bake Sale.

"Your kindness, generosity and support continue to make such a meaningful difference to our school and our children. Whether you volunteered your time, attended events or helped with fundraising, every contribution helps create opportunities and experiences for our children."

The PTA would also like to thank the school's teachers and staff for their continued support, along with the dedicated PTA committee and class representatives whose enthusiasm and hard work make these events possible.

NORTH DEAN NEWS

by Christine Ryman

Good-bye to Judith and Bob Broadley from 'The Cottage'

Yes, we have sadly had to say good-bye to the lovely Judith & Bob Broadley from The Cottage in January of this year. It all happened rather suddenly, but after many years of living in North Dean, the time had come for them to relocate to Cheltenham, to be nearer other members of their family.

They have lived in the same cottage in North Dean since 2008 when they moved here, and over time, have renovated the cottage and barn considerably. They very quickly made many friends here & embraced village life with great passion & enthusiasm. Their contribution to liven up the village at various events throughout the years, has been tremendously appreciated, even getting their family members involved too!

Both Judith and Bob have been committee members



of the North Dean Village Hall, in varied responsibilities, for a good 10 years, on and off, thus giving up a lot of their time, energy & creativity to bring our community together. Thankyou! Being supportive neighbours & friends is something they have loved to do and they have also donated generously to the North Dean Village Hall.

Judith & Bob, it is hard to believe that after so many years of living in North Dean, being such helpful & fun neighbours, we are having to say good-bye to you! You will be greatly missed of course, but no doubt Cheltenham will be more the merrier now!

We ALL wish you well in your new ventures in the future and are excited for the new chapter ahead of you, as you continue to play your roles of spreading kindness & warmth to those around you.

And, Welcome to North Dean

Well what do you know folks, since the last edition of SNDN, we are pleased to report that, yet again, we have new neighbours to welcome to our little village! In the Autumn we welcomed North Dean newbies Victoria & Philip Mitchell.

Well now we are delighted to welcome open-heartedly Marilyn & Bob Morrison, together with Miss Millicent-Rain - their elderly cat!! So it's out with the old (sorry Judith & Bob!!) and in with the new,



who now live in "The Cottage".

Marilyn & Bob, we wish you both many wonderful years in this close-knit village & in Speen too, where we hope you will settle into community life and make new friends, attend various village events and contribute to the community's growth, which we all value & are privileged to live in. We look forward to meeting you over time.

PIGGOTSWOOD

by Jeremy Hamilton

From north to west, wrapping around $\frac{3}{4}$ of Piggotts Hill, Piggotts Wood is a designated ancient woodland. That means it is an area that has maintained continuous woodland cover since at least 1600 AD. In actual fact, historical records for Piggotts Wood go back slightly before then to 1559 in papers held at the Bucks Record Office, and on the south side of the wood there's archaeological evidence right back to iron age smelting, it being likely that the form was to bring small amounts of iron ore to large amounts of fuel.

To clear up one head scratcher, is it Piggotts with one "g" or two? Historically it was always two. When Eric Gill lived at Pigotts between 1928 and his death in 1940, quite possibly for sound type-face-related artistic reasons, he decided Pigotts looked better with one "g" and dropped the "farm" from the name of the place. The Wheeler Robinson family, who owned Pigotts between 1963 and 2025 kept that convention which continues. On maps, however, you will find Piggotts Wood with two "g"s.

Times Gone By

Like many of the Chiltern Beechwoods, Piggotts Wood was originally a source of firewood for the hearths of London. Without the benefits of modern machinery, trees were coppiced or allowed to grow only to a manageable 4–6-inch diameter or so. Wood cut down into manageable bundles - “chords” – was loaded on to wagons and taken down to the Thames for onward carriage by barge into London.

By the 1800s demand for firewood dropped as coal took over and the rise of the chair industry encouraged woodland management practices to change in favour of larger, taller trees with the Beech wood used for furniture. At that time, the “bodgers” moved into many of the Chiltern Woodlands around High Wycombe, including Piggotts Wood, living in the wood in makeshift huts, turning chair legs on Pole Lathes – a practice that continued into the early 20th Century.

The “really valuable timber” was Oak, Elm, Chestnut, and Ash – all usable for building and tool making. In felling a large tree – again with no chainsaws to hand – saw pits were dug and the tree rolled over it, enabling the wood to be processed onsite into planks with twohanded saws, the likely etymology for “Top Dog” and “Under Dog.” There are around twenty-five saw pits in the wood.

Next time you are walking in the wood also to look out for are the historic boundary banks and ditches indicating how, once, the wood was subdivided into smaller lots. Records indicate that in the early 19th century part of the wood belonged to the “Wycombe Poor” or the “Wycombe Poor Law Union” which provided furniture making work for local families fallen on hard times.

If you look carefully, you can also see old charcoal hearths and evidence of post holes for what would have been the charcoal burners’ hut close by; charcoal burns needed careful tending 24 hours a day. More obvious are the seven or so quarries and their associated cart tracks. Various flint, chalk and quite possibly Denner Hill stone were quarried in the wood – Denner Hill being the other side of the Bryants Bottom Road.



Recent Developments

Following Nick Wheeler Robinson’s death in 2022, around $\frac{3}{4}$ of the wood he owned passed to the family. In October 2025 it was bought by the newly established Piggotts Wood Trust as part of the transfer of Piggotts itself from the Wheeler Robinson family to the charity Music Camp Trust. The other $\frac{1}{4}$ of the wood is noted at the Land Registry as being owned by a local solicitor on behalf of a client.

The Piggotts Wood Trust ensures the part of the wood it owns and is responsible for managing the woodland. “Management” is a loose term given that the main objective is to leave the woodland to take care of itself with minimal disturbance. But the trees are actively checked for safety, and brambles and holly kept at bay along the paths as best as possible. Where there are hung trees and similar in the thick of the wood, you will see that nature is left to take its course. However, if there’s potential for trees to

fall across or drop branches onto the path or the road, they are taken down safely. We do extract some fallen timber to turn into logs which you will see drying up at Piggotts for future use in the Music Camp wood burners, but deliberately some dead wood is left standing or lying as it provides excellent habitat for everything from fungi to stag beetles. When trees are cleared piles of branches are

deliberately left as that allows regrowth to come through; inaccessible (for a while at least) to the deer who love tasty young saplings! Major work happens outside of the summer months to minimise impact on the fauna and flora. Being undisturbed for so long, the wood is host to a number of rarer woodland plants including Green Hellebore, Coral

Root Bittercress, Yellow Birdsnest and Violet Helebores; and that is quite apart from the bluebells, which like many Chilterns Woodlands are breathtaking in late April.

Future Plans

Between January and April this year you may see some orange and yellow dots on trees in the lower part of the wood near Bryants Bottom and see and hear felling taking place. 150 have been marked for sale to a local contractor for firewood - mainly ash affected by ash dieback. Taking them out will let in light which encourages natural regeneration.

Whilst walking in the wood, if you spot any trees that look like they need attention, please feel able to let



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Contractors Pete Leybourne and team thinning out ash die-back

me know. I walk round the wood and check about once a month and periodically I am joined by John Morris who is a local Chilterns woodland expert who helps me mark trees to come out.

Last year as a complement to musical activities up at Pigotts, Music Camp Trust put a toe in the water with woodland volunteer days on the last Friday of each month called "Feel Good Fridays"; a chance for Music Campers and local friends to enjoy a day in the fresh air in the woods, to meet new people and share lunch together which we provide. We are continuing those this year and if anyone would like to join in, you would be most welcome - just let me know by email – hamiltons@pigotts.org.uk. You do not need

to come wielding a chain saw: usually we are doing something like collecting discs of wood in the dumper truck to take up for later, chopping, cutting back brambles or holly along the paths with secateurs and loppers, or, in selected areas of the wood, pulling up small holly saplings. which, if left to mature, take over and crowd out natural regrowth of the native trees.



Ancient Woodland plant Yellow Archangel growing amongst the bluebells



Pigotts Wood Volunteer Sarah Nicholson bringing up firewood

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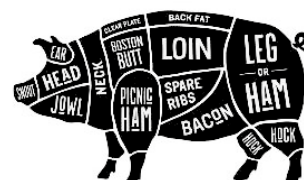
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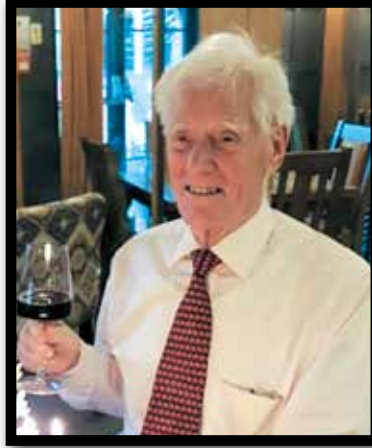
IN REMEMBRANCE

DAVID BLACK

by Alison Exton

David was born in 1933. He married June in 1960, and they went on to have three children. He was a devoted family man, kind, generous, hard-working, determined and with a great sense of humour.

The family moved to Speen in 1976, and this is where they settled. David quickly became involved with village life and embraced it. He joined the Playing Field Association, where he had the job of going door to door to collect money for the regular draw. For many years, he was on the committee organising the summer



fete and was responsible for the raffle each year with John Holmes.

Saturday mornings involved walking to collect eggs from Speen Farm, then to Speen Bakery for fresh bread, dropping money into the honesty boxes. He loved sport, and a match at Speen tennis courts, followed by The King William pub, made for a perfect summer evening. He enjoyed taking part in the

Speen/North Dean golf competitions.

June and David loved village life and made many lifetime friends.



LACEY GREEN
PARISH COUNCIL

Philip Suter and Graham Peart – Councillors

In December Cathryn Davies who had been the Chair for 18 years resigned from her post and is remaining as a Parish Councillor representing Lacey Green and Loosley Row. Graham Peart has been elected Chair.

The start of 2026 has also been a change for the location of the Parish Council meetings. They will now alternate between Lacey Green and Loosley Row Village Hall and Speen Church Hall. These are held on the first Monday of the month except when there is a Bank Holiday and then it is the following Monday. There is no meeting in August. A full list of meeting dates and locations is displayed at the Parish Council noticeboard on the corner of Water Lane and the website www.laceygreen-pc.org.uk

The Council is currently working on an illustrated village maps scheme for Speen and Lacey Green / Loosley Row. In Speen this will be an illustrated

map that will be mounted on an outdoors lectern display board to be located in the centre.

As soon as this map project has been completed, we are looking at having an outdoors lectern display board by the Studridge Lane pond depicting the wildlife in the pond.

Finally, as spring has now arrived a reminder for residents. If there is street sign that is on the boundary of your property and the hedge on the boundary is starting to make it difficult to be seen by drivers, can you please cut this back. As you know since 2020 there are now so many delivery vehicles in the area dropping off parcels and supermarket produce and even with an efficient sat-nav system drivers usually need clear street signs to make sure they are in the correct road.

Philip Suter, Councillor



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

SHH (Speen Helping Hospices) celebrates its 25th anniversary this year. The group was established in 2001 by Susie Rose and during this time has raised over £200,000 for local hospices. Committee members have changed over the years, and all have energetically contributed to the success of the group. This year we welcomed two new members on to the committee Jill Roberts and Chris Nicolaou. Good to get some younger blood on the team!

Since 2001, many individuals have raised funds for SHH – running the London Marathon, cycling across Cambodia & Vietnam, a painting donated by local artist Joanna Brownridge was raffled, a group of local ladies organised a Santa Fun Run a few years running, a group of young people in Speen set up a stall to sell refreshments, a local group organised by Kate Vale set up the “Studridge Social” – selling soup, sourdough & sweet treats, a Pub quiz at The Hampden Arms, John Radford abseiled down Spinnaker Tower in Portsmouth and Clive Nicolaou did the Blenheim Palace Triathlon, Speen Pilates organised a jewellery cleaning service.

A huge thank you to all the wonderful people who have supported the many events we have run, bought raffle tickets frequented the bar, helped tidy up at the end of an evening, bought their Christmas presents at the Christmas Market, offered their services to help us run an event like Martin Hart’s Jazz event, Elliot Wengler’s Comedy night, Al Bowyer and Jill Rogerson’s quiz evenings.

We have recently donated £5,375 to each of the four hospice charities from 2025 fundraising events. We kicked off 2026 with a Quiz Night and raised a very tidy sum of £1,950.

Expanding the fundraising activities: This is where you might be able to help or know of someone

who can support us.

If you are planning or considering taking part in a sporting event or other event, would you help others by fundraising for SHH in the Chiltern Villages. Maybe you are involved with a local cricket or football team or play tennis and could be interested in organising a match this year.

We, at SHH will support you on your fundraising journey, we would promote your participation locally and via social media and our website to attract sponsorship.

If you are up for this challenge, now is the time to plan it.

Please contact me at events@shh-shop.org

Dates for your Diary:

Friday 24th April

Pub Night at Speen Village Hall

Wednesday 6th May

Ladies Spring Lunch at The Horse Trust

Saturday 11th July

Flower Stall at Speen Fete 2026

Sunday 5th July

SHH 25th Anniversary Celebration – Afternoon Tea

Saturday 26th September

Comedy Night at Lacey Green Village Hall

Wednesday 7th October

Ladies Autumn Lunch at The Horse Trust

Wednesday 14th October

Bridge Afternoon at North Dean Village Hall

Saturday 21st November

Annual SHH Christmas Market at Speen Church



Beep, Dig, Discover: Unearthing Speen's Hidden Past

Thursday 14th May 2026

@ Speen Village Hall

Studridge Lane, Speen, HP27 0SA

7.30pm for 8.00pm start

Come along for a most enjoyable and informative evening and meet:

Two local metal detectorists Martin Radvan and Paul Trendall have been detecting since they were teenagers, but only got more serious when they retired. They are not part of any society or rallies etc, it's just the two of them and Martin's Border Terrier 'Poppy.' They only ever detect with the landowners permission and via Amanda De Thier have made contact with many people in Speen.

They have been detecting once a week and have been covering Farms and Houses in Speen for well over a year now. Each week they provide the owner with a report, there are around 30 produced so far for Speen. They also submit anything of historical significance to Aylesbury Museum for the Portable Antiquity Database.

Over the year they have investigated: Flowers Bottom Farm, Flowers Bottom Cottage, Darvills Hill Farm, Darvills Cottage, HighView House, The White House & Willots Farm and they are still working through them. As part of our reporting we've looked into local connections and have discovered various interesting areas including; a lace making site, a Military volunteers camp, the probable original route of the lane as well as countless domestic items of historical interest.

Ticket Price £7.50 per person

SPEEN TENNIS CLUB

Play in your community

As is customary at this time of year, we like to remind everyone about our village tennis club and its excellent amenity situated in the middle of Speen Playing Fields.

The club is managed by a committee of villagers to ensure that we maintain the court in good condition for the benefit of local families for years to come.

Use of the court is strictly reserved for members of Speen Tennis Club and we charge a modest annual membership fee. This ensures that we can cover the yearly maintenance costs and build up a reserve for periodic cleaning, painting and resurfacing of the court.

We are open to all, whatever your level of playing ability. Once members, you have unlimited use of the court. There is generally good availability

of the court and we operate an online booking system should you want to reserve a playing time in advance.

As an affiliated club, membership of Speen Tennis Club also entitles you to LTA membership and entry to the dedicated LTA ballot for Wimbledon tickets each year.

In addition, for the last few years we have offered members free coaching sessions. These run during the summer with an LTA registered coach and include classes across all age groups and abilities. They have been extremely popular with juniors and adults alike.

If you would like more information, or a membership form with details of our membership rates, please email Philippa Lane at membershipspeen@gmail.com.



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SPEENFETE 26

Kicking Around the World

by Lucy Johnston



The Speen Fete is back for 2026, and this year we're celebrating the incredible countries taking part in the Football World Cup! Alongside our usual line-up of fun, expect an exciting mix of international themes and a touch of football spirit throughout the day.

Join in the Great Global Dress-Up Opening Ceremony — come dressed to represent your favourite country, with prizes for the best outfits! Or, be part of our very own Speen Cheer- We'll be running two workshops in the lead-up to the fete, culminating in a special performance on the day (free to take part, for children aged 7+).

Our Charity of the Year is Speen Village Hall. We're delighted to support this much-loved community space, which is in need of urgent fundraising for essential upkeep and repairs. We will also be continuing to support our other core village charities.

SPEENCHURCH

Where Community Meets

Tim Deller

Having been at Speen Church for six years I am often asked what Speen Church is like?

It is friendly and welcoming. There you always encounter a smile, a friendly chat with tea, coffee and cakes.

It is a place where people from many walks of life and different backgrounds journey together in faith. Last year as we celebrated this diversity - we came from not only villages and towns around Speen but from 11 countries.

We aim to grow in understanding of the Christian faith, in encountering Jesus, in living together in love and in serving God in the local community and in the wider world. And to that end we strive to participate in activities that bless the local

community. From preparing the annual BBQ to hosting Memory Cafes, from Christmas Markets to caring for toddlers we find many opportunities to serve.

Our services are modern with songs, prayers, readings and are centred on the word of God. We attempt to in worship relate to daily life whilst there is space to dig a little deeper into the Bible in smaller intimate groups.

Be you a new or an older resident of Speen and surrounding villages we would love to welcome you. Do visit. Do come see and experience church, the church at and with a heart for Speen.

Blessings,

Tim Deller



SPEENWI

Chris Nicolaou

Now that the days are getting longer and brighter, it seems hard to recall the dark winter evenings when we sallied forth to WI meetings through wind and rain; December's **Quiz Night** and January's **66th Birthday Celebration Supper** did much to dispel the gloom and raise our spirits.



tips on how to grow healthy plants while protecting the ecosystem. We also learned how to extend the life of cut flowers from our own gardens and plan to visit later in the year for a tour and demonstration of hand-tied bouquets. Other plans include an outing to Hartwell Nurseries.

February's meeting allowed us to learn more from Janine Kilroe, a fine art photographer, about **British Piers, Their History and Their Future**. Her illustrated talk was deeply personal and amusing, using a mixture of archive photos, gloriously colourful British Railways advertising posters and Janine's own atmospheric photos and drone film. She explained that, with the development of the railways, coastal towns competed to build the longest and most ornate piers to attract tourists seeking cleaner air and entertainment. Did you know that between 1860 - 1877, 77 new piers were built, putting modern-day construction schedules to shame. Blackpool had 3 piers, bringing wealth to the town serviced by a railway station with 14 platforms, at one time the busiest in the world! One last statistic: to date, 61 piers survive, and 42 have been lost. Although their popularity waned with the explosion of cheap package holidays in the 1960s, we were left feeling inspired to revisit these magnificent structures, a symbol of a gentler pace of life and simple pleasures.



Tying in nicely with March's theme of ethical growing, my **fun fact** from WI history is that their focus on protecting the environment dates back to 1954 with a resolution which led to the Keep Britain Tidy campaign, and in 2009, they formed a nationwide network of 'bee ambassadors', joining forces with Friends of the Earth, which led to the National Pollination Strategy in 2014.

Membership also gives access to a huge range of **free courses and lectures**, either live or recorded. As the website says: 'Research consistently shows that continued learning can improve focus, lift mood and strengthen a sense of purpose, especially when it's chosen freely.' Some recent topics include Digital Art: Pet Portraits; Mary Shelley; Exploring Canaletto's London, as well as sessions on mental health and the menopause.

So, if you'd like to make new friends, hear interesting talks, learn new skills and campaign on a wide range of issues, give us a try! We meet at **Speen Village Hall at 7.30 pm on the first Thursday of each month**. Join us for a glass of wine before listening to

We also held a **Social Afternoon** with tea and cakes, Scrabble, jigsaw puzzles, and crocheting and knitting poppies. These were requested by the charity '**Standing with Giants**' to adorn the plinths of 1475 silhouette soldiers at the British Normandy Memorial. The installation is due to be displayed at Waddesdon Manor in the autumn. Our group created 140 poppies!



In March, Rosie Insley from Wild Rose Flower Company talked about **The Importance of Locally Grown Flowers**. Through a fascinating range of photos, Rosie explained her passion in establishing herself as a cut flower grower in the walled garden of her family arable and beef farm near Winslow. Her approach is simple: no chemicals, no digging and no vast distances from grower to customer. She gave us

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 spenwi@gmail.com

Future Meetings

Thursday, May 7th

The Galapagos Islands

Thursday June 4th

Man on the Spot

reflections on 50 years as a journalist

MEET YOUR NEIGHBOUR

Trudi Scrivener – Caring for Others in Speen

by Abbi Langan

Trudi and her husband, Mikkel, moved to Speen about ten years ago from nearby Butlers Cross. Although they still jokingly consider themselves “newcomers,” they’ve grown very fond of village life and the friendly community around them. Their two daughters are now grown up — Edie is studying at Durham University and currently spending a year abroad in Mexico, while Aida is living and working in Melbourne. With both girls scattered across the globe, travel stories are often a big part of family catch-ups!

Trudi has spent most of her working life in social care and has always been drawn to helping others. She’s involved with a few local organisations — as a trustee of the Princes Centre and the Wendover Dementia Group, and a board member of the King-Cullimore Charitable Trust, which supports a wide range of charities each year. She’s also part of the Princes Risborough Rotary Club and volunteers as an Ambassador for the Alzheimer’s Society, giving talks to help families understand and support loved ones living with dementia.

Closer to home, Trudi helped to set up the Speen Memory Café at Speen Church, which takes place on the third Thursday of each month. Run by a small



but wonderful team of volunteers (who received a Proud of Bucks Award for their efforts), the café offers a friendly space for people with memory problems and their carers to relax and connect. Similar cafés have since been started in Beaconsfield and Halton with the same community spirit at their heart.

In 2016, Trudi and Mikkel founded Ashridge Home Care. Their hope was to create a company that truly looked after its carers, believing that happy, well-supported carers can offer the best care to clients. Based in Amersham, the company provides hourly and live-in care across the region, supported by a team of over 150 carers. Next year marks Ashridge’s 10th anniversary — something Trudi finds hard to believe. “It’s been a journey full of learning and gratitude,” she says. “I feel very lucky to work alongside such dedicated people.”



Outside of work, Trudi enjoys her garden — especially when it produces enough apples for her annual batch of home-pressed juice. This year, her friends, clients, and carers will each get a bottle — a small way to share the season’s abundance and a thank-you for being part of the community she loves so much.

Coming Soon

A new, illustrated talk on

THE HISTORY OF SPEEN

The evolution of a village, high in the Chiltern Hills, from Medieval to Modern Times

by Peter Symonds, 2026 Chairman of Speen Heritage Group

Historic records, photographs and items of village interest

Speen Heritage Group maintains an archive of historic documents and photographs largely assembled by Bob Johnson prior to writing *The Leaves of Time*.

If you have any such records or photographs of village events that you no longer require please let us know as it may be helpful to add these to the archive.

Peter Symonds 07747 015 848 or psymonds590@gmail.com



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SPEENPLAYING FIELDS

Matt Davies - Acting Interim, temporary Chair

Hello again Dear Reader,

Is it just me or are the seasons and S&NDN articles coming around ever more rapidly?!

Since the last Speen Playing Fields Association update of November there has been a lot going on, despite nominally being the quieter phase of the SPFA calendar.

The ash settled after the November Fireworks display and bonfire, leaving the familiar patch of toasted grass in need of attention. However, due to the early onset and then prolonged duration of Buckinghamshire monsoon season, the usual speedy remediation & reinstatement has taken somewhat longer, hence the lingering presence of the orange fencing. We have been awaiting some actual dry weather (remember that, could there be some coming?) to allow for the collection and recycling of any residual metal before the scarification and reseeded. As I regularly remind, Speen Bonfire Night remains one of our main events and primary fund raisers for the Fields and thankfully the modest surplus generated covers the cost of grass seed and, this time, has allowed us to make a small contribution to a local agroforestry project, helping towards some hedgerow enhancement and wildlife habitat creation.

You may have noticed the Leaves of Time Oak Tree located in one of the more sheltered corners of the main field, while made safe, has yet to morph into something new. Deliberations are ongoing as to a suitable successor to the original tree, whether a carving, a bench, a replacement tree, a combination of all three or something new entirely.

The traditional Festive Walk aka Bike-less Bike-ride aka Pub Crawl aka Endurance Event set off from the playing fields pavilion again this year. Me and a few other hardy souls set off in another permutation of the circumnavigation of Speen, stopping occasionally for rehydration and shelter along the way. As is traditional, we are joined on the circuit by some less foolhardy and more delicate participants and accumulate quite the crowd as we enjoy the hospitality of local public houses. The Black Horse, The Gate and Hampden Arms each were typically welcoming; as was a new venue, the Sheep and Orchard Pop Up Pub, conveniently manifesting itself close to Darvill's Farm. No injuries nor fatalities were reported, even as the stragglers walked, staggered, or even ran homewards.

In early January we carried out the now familiar Christmas Tree collection, which both allows the small group of volunteers to work off a mince pie or two alongside performing a valuable community function. It also raises a few more quid for SPFA coffers. Local forestry stalwart and S&NDN advertiser Nick Higgins provides crucial log-istical support to the endeavour, as do our associates at Kiwi Building and Kiwi Landscapes.

More recently the main field played host to the annual Speen School cross Country event. A very exciting and well-attended event, the hubbub could be heard in the air, floating around the village. Home Field familiarity cannot be discounted as a factor, as it's reported that our homegrown talent from Speen School performed very well and not only thoroughly enjoyed themselves, but also managed to secure a fair amount of the silverware! Well done to all involved and thanks to our SPFA trustee volunteers who helped support the event.

This season also saw the SPFA AGM. Hosted at our refurbished pavilion, invites are extended to the whole community to join, to see the magic happen and to give views and raise any topics or suggestions. The AGM was attended by a village representative who was able to see, first hand and in awe, the proceedings of the slick operation. Via the February AGM and Trustee meeting, we have decided to focus on the Under 5s area of the main field as the target of some investment this year. As one of the prime high use areas, we wanted to explore and deliver on some upgrades and improvements – suggestions are invited from the village (rest assured kids, a chimney height, mega-long, mega-fast zipwire remains on the candidate project long-list, but no promises).

2026 is set to be a so-called fallow year as far as village and community events go. Despite there being no ball nor festival, we are intending a few things to entertain on the field. In addition to the ever-popular work parties giving you a workout and the traditional fete, we have got plans for the Funday in June as well as appetite for some sunny pop-up socials, possibly even with some live music! Watch this space!

Thanks as ever for your support with events, contributions to the draw, participation in work parties and patience with my ramblings, musings, and self-indulgent attempts at being mildly humorous.

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Highwood Bottom – a glimpse into its history

by Peter Symonds

Highwood Bottom is a deep valley running broadly northwards from Flowers Bottom, which was probably carved into shape in the ice Age. The track was called Speen Bottom up to the 1960's (See map) but appears on maps as Highwood Bottom from around 1970. It eventually becomes Kiln Lane, Lacey Green beyond High



Wood and the footpath running east to Lily Bottom. By the 1600's and probably before, the track was a significant link between Hughenden Valley and Princes Risborough, via Speen. At this time, both sides of the valley would have been wooded.

The main history of Highwood Bottom revolves around John Cooper, the highwayman. Cooper was reputed to have preyed on travellers, ambushing them and burying his ill-gotten gains. Tales suggest that he was eventually caught, hanged, and is buried at the scene of his crimes. His grave is allegedly marked by two large Puddleston

stones by the side of the track just beyond the woodland close to the junction with the footpath to Lily Bottom. It was rumoured that locals encountered the ghost of Cooper roaming in the lane.

Historical clues to support these tales can be seen on plans held by the County Records Office, in Aylesbury, drawn in 1766 which name the track not as Highwood Bottom but as "Coopers Grave Bottom". Also court records from 1676 refer to John Darvill of "Darvals Hill" accused of failing to keep watch when ordered to do so by a constable. It is conceivable that this may have related to attempts to catch Cooper. An old farm map of 1872 made



reference to Coopers Pond in the vicinity. An alternative version of the story suggests that Cooper was an eccentric lady called Nannie Cooper who may have been connected to Stocken Farm in Lacey Green. She allegedly drowned in the pond, Coopers Pond, which was to the southeast of the farm.

By the time of the 1939 census records show just four properties in Highwood Bottom all to the east of the track, including Bottom Cottage, two further cottages with Valley Cottage at the northern end, which had parts dating back to the 1740's. The more recent history of Highwood Bottom relates to talented individuals who have lived there. Valley Cottage was the home of Edmund Rubbra composer from 1935 to the early 1960's. He composed some 11 symphonies, 5 masses and much chamber and choral music. He was awarded the CBE in 1960 being recognised as a

highly rated contemporary composer. His son Benedict continued to live in the cottage, and he was a renowned portrait painter who was commissioned to paint HRH, The Prince of Wales (for The Fishmongers Hall). His wife, Tessa Rubra, established Speen Pottery in 1982 with a distinctive bold decorative style. In more recent times further properties have been developed in Highwood Bottom and seven properties are now listed on the Council tax register.

(PS. Note: Ashley Cooper of Cherrytree Close, Speen denies any family connection with either John Cooper or Nannie Cooper)

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Saturday 16th May 2026

Speen Village Hall – 2.00pm- 4.00pm

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Join us for an afternoon of informal talks with 3 guest speakers exploring how to support wildlife in our local neighbourhood, and inspiration on sustainable living in a changing climate:



'the early birder'. Naturalist/photographer and former teacher, Jon Mason has spent decades enjoying wildlife in the Chilterns. He will share highlights of his nature encounters and tackle topical climate-related issues such as how to care for wild birds in our gardens.

Natural Progress: our neighbours, Pete and Ayesha will share their journey towards a sustainable life. Having taken the decision to move away from the corporate world in London, they are now fulfilling their ambitions to live more sustainably, transforming Cherry Dell into a working smallholding, and developing and sharing skills for living in a more uncertain world.

Restoring local nature: Julia Carey, Senior environmental records officer at Bucks & MK Environment Centre/Buckinghamshire Council, will highlight local measures outlined in the recently developed Local Nature Recovery Strategy, notably how we might support the critically endangered noble chafer beetle in our mature Speen fruit trees and orchards.

Please sign up on the Eventbrite site. <https://nature-and-neighbourhood.eventbrite.co.uk>

Any queries contact; Jane at seag@btinternet.com



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SPEEN ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION GROUP

Veganuary Bring and Share Plant-based Supper

By Mandy and Jane

In January, the Veganuary campaign prompted us to arrange a Bring and Share Plant-based Supper evening so that we could share, taste and discover foods that we might not be so familiar with.

We had a friendly get-together whilst sharing a variety of plant-based dishes such as vegan spring rolls, Buddhist



vegetables and plant-based chilli. Altogether with snacks, salads and puddings it made a real feast.

Due to the success of the evening, there will be a similar invitation later this year so please do come next time. Look out for dates in the Summer.

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SPEENVILLAGE HALL

by Cat Cook

Speen Village Hall is for the benefit of the community. It is run as a charity. As a trustee of that charity, my role is to ensure that the Village Hall is 'fulfilling its purpose'. But what if the community isn't using the Village Hall? Well, it looks like I have some work to do!

The annual running costs for the hall are £3000-£5000 depending on the price of electricity, insurance, licences, compliance tests, inspections and routine maintenance; therefore income from regular and ad hoc users is vital to keep this village asset viable. However, we understand the hall has its limitations and we are in a competitive market with other halls in neighbouring villages.

Task 1. Make the hall more comfortable so more people want to use it (painting, heating, acoustics)

Task 2. Make sure the hall is competitively priced to encourage use and still cover costs.

Task 3. Run more events to make the village hall the heart of this fabulous community and villagers value the space.

We started with a fresh paint job, completed just in time for our first Christmas Wreath Making workshop. Speen Playing Fields committee hosted a pub night, and new art classes started on Thursday evenings. However, despite their best efforts, due to lack of numbers, the classes will

not be continuing. We've lost some long-term patrons like table tennis club, some yoga classes and depending on numbers, the Bridge Club. We hope that as the warmer weather returns, we will get a few more bookings for birthday parties and private events. What clubs do YOU want to have in the Village Hall? Routine clubs are a vital source of income for us.

On April 18th 2026 we look forward to welcoming the Speen Safari Supper to its new home in the Village Hall. We hope to see lots of happy diners at the Village Hall bar, sharing their stories from the evening's adventures. This will be a vital fundraiser for us.

This pattern of events is sporadic which brings with it heating and cooling problems in our poorly insulated building. We are starting an investigation into the best way to improve our heating systems, our insulation and our ventilation so that a more agreeable ambient temperature can be maintained in the hall. We would welcome any village expertise to join us on this project and help us to shape the future of this historic building in Speen.

If you would like to discuss any of the issues raised or have requests for clubs or events, please contact me, Cat Cook, Chair of Speen Village Hall and if you would like to make a booking Sue Taylor will happily get you in the diary. (See Village Who's Who for contact details)



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WILDLIFEWATCH

Peter Symonds

After two months that seemed to be very wet Spring is here. Large numbers of frogs have emerged from winter and assembled again in Studridge lane pond. Breeding activity was apparent from 21st February. Despite the volume of rainfall we have had the water level in the pond dropped quite quickly when the rain stopped and it has been necessary to push some of the spawn which was stranded on dry ground back into water. I would estimate that some 250 frogs are present in the pond with spawn also appearing in other garden ponds in the village. It is hoped that the Parish Council may be supporting a project to get an informative display board installed at the pond.

Brimstone butterflies are usually the first to be seen in the Spring and one was present in our garden in the sunshine on 23rd February with four seen together the following day. Local woods are currently full of birdsong. I heard my first Chiffchaff of the year on 3rd March and Sarah Hamilton reported



a Blackcap singing on the same day. To assist in identifying the birdsong I strongly recommend downloading the free Merlin App to your phone. It adds an extra dimension to a country walk and can often reveal the presence of birds that you have not spotted. Recent examples for me would be Crossbills and Firecrests in Coleheath Bottom.

Some birds are investigating and trying to secure potential nesting sites. A pair of Mallard have been present in our garden for a few weeks but others are now turning up and challenging for dominance. A moorhen returned to our pond at the end of January but unfortunately has now moved elsewhere. Meanwhile Great Spotted Woodpeckers can be heard drumming and Green Woodpeckers yaffling in College Plantation. New nesting boxes for tawny owls and kestrels have been constructed and installed in suitable habitat in Speen and North Dean respectively.

During the winter period flocks of winter birds including Fieldfare and Redwings have been present but the relatively mild conditions have

not forced them into gardens. Likewise, Siskins and Redpolls have not descended on gardens in their usual numbers. I noted 7 Redpolls in College Plantation on 10th January. I recorded 4 Skylarks on the hills above Spring Coppice Lane on 21st February whilst other observers reported 10 Crossbills at Great Hampden and 12 Goldcrest on 20th February and a Little Egret in Hughenden Park on 19 February. Alastair Blundell reported Magpies, a Raven, Kites and a Buzzard queuing up for scraps of meat on his front lawn in mid January with the Buzzard proving to be dominant. An unusual record from November was four Red legged Partridge feeding on Hampden Rd just outside Monkton Wood.

Please let me know of any interesting records - Peter Symonds
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Charlotte Downing

The slow fibre movement - turning fleece to fabric @darvills_hill_farm.

I have been on a mission for the past few years to work out what to do with our annual harvest of sheep fleece. It is widely accepted that fleece is not worth a great deal and selling it to British Wool (previously the British Wool Board) often doesn't cover the cost of shearing. Left to a choice between burning the annual clip or composting it, I have been using it as mulch for our fledgling fruit trees. Sheep fleece is a remarkable fibre in that it is biodegradable, insulating and moisture regulating, and it has helped the orchard to thrive despite the long, dry summers we have been experiencing. However, it was also these qualities that made me question whether we should be doing more to really value the fleece as a truly sustainable natural fibre. I had a 'light bulb moment' when I was fortunate to meet and be mentored by Wiltshire farmer @katiecotmarsh who turns her 280 strong flock's fleeces into her own line of knitwear, which has graced the runway of London Fashion Week in recent years.

Aware that my skill set wouldn't stretch to designing and knitting an award-winning range of clothing, I thought I might be able to turn our fleece into something simple, practical, useful, and more 'blanket' shaped than tree mulch. So, I took a few months looking into the ancient craft of turning raw fleece into the usable fibre that has been keeping human beings clothed and warm for millennia. I packed myself off to wool school in the Mendip Hills and learned a whole new language of kemp, crimp, and staple; scouring, carding, and spinning; warp, weft, and weaving. I also discovered a sizeable, and growing community



of British farmers, spinners, dyers, weavers, and designers who are quietly regenerating our 2000-year-old wool industry. Rather like the slow food movement the slow fibre movement is the antithesis of fast fashion. It acknowledges the importance of provenance and understanding how soil, plants, animals, and people interconnect and depend on each other.

So last summer, after shearing I sent the clip off for processing

into yar at our nearest mill, which is currently 200 miles away at The Natural Fibre Company in Cornwall. The yarn then travelled to Bristol for weaving by a small, talented bunch of artisan weavers at The Bristol Weaving Mill, who turned it into a natural-coloured light and dark herringbone cloth, which finally returned to the farm this winter as our first batch of blankets and cushions. Nine months of work by a community of talented, hugely knowledgeable individuals, passionate about their craft.

Our small flock of native breed sheep, through mindful grazing, is helping us improve the health of the soil on our farm and turning the byproduct of this practice into something practical, hard wearing (and pleasing to look at) has been

really satisfying. Local raw fleece processing is a pipedream, but I have discovered some talented, home-grown Chilterns based weavers and makers who are looking to craft something from this year's batch of fabulous fleece. The fruit trees are going to have to make do with wood chip to stave off any heat wave from now on, the fleece has other important work to do.



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THE CLOTHES BARN

by Chris Dunnington and the Clothes Barn Team

24th February 2026 marked the 4th anniversary of the invasion by Russia of Ukraine. Nothing has changed, with no hope in sight of a ceasefire and peace.

I wanted to take this opportunity to remind everyone about the Clothes Barn, the facility which was initiated and set up originally in someone's front room.

From May 2022, it moved to Culverton Farm in Princes Risborough – by kind permission of the Thomas-Davies family. It is there for any Ukrainian refugee visitors arriving into our local community, sometimes with no more than the few bags they could carry when forced to flee their country. The Clothes Barn is part of the Ukraine to Chilterns Charity.

The Clothes Barn is a hub, where clothing donations are received and sorted. The space was soon made to look and feel like a welcoming environment, where the local Ukrainian families could come, find much needed items at no cost and chat with others in the same situation.

With help of the same small team of dedicated volunteers, we have opened the Barn most Saturdays over that 4-year period.

The first Christmas, we managed to obtain a £1000 grant from Buckinghamshire Council, and we were able to provide a goody bag of gifts for each and every Ukrainian child, which Santa handed out at their Christmas party.

Support has been incredible from the outset, but after the Speen Sales and Wants WhatsApp Group was created, it soon became apparent to me that we could be offering a great deal more than just clothes.

Before long we were re-homing so much, from furniture, bikes, musical instruments, tv's to Christmas decorations, all gratefully received by so many in need, donated by numerous kind and generous residents of Speen and North Dean.

Perhaps you remember in March 2023, I asked for your help. An old ambulance was



being driven from the UK, back to Ukraine, where authorities would distribute both medical supplies and much needed warm clothing and bedding for soldiers. The photos I have of the sheer volume of donations received then still blows my mind. I continue to

ask for your support with random messages on the Group WhatsApp, and you continue to deliver – a heartfelt thank you.

Here are a few messages from some local Ukrainian families about what the Clothes Barn means to them.

“I clearly remember how people came together and shared essential items with us – clothes and shoes that were very much needed that first Spring. And now you still think about the Ukrainian people and their needs. The kindness, generosity and care shown mean a great deal to us and will always be remembered. Nataliia.”

“Thank you very much for the wonderful things you provided, I am very grateful to you for your support. Elana.”

“In addition to clothes, bedding and dishes, we received many necessary items for our granddaughter, such as playpen, car seat, bed and much, much more. Best wishes for all your incredible volunteers, and your necessary work. Tetyana and Leonid.”

“For four years, the Clothes Barn has welcomed Ukrainian families, offering clothes, household items and furniture with kindness and respect... A huge thank you to the team of amazing women volunteers who continue to give their time and energy. I am proud to be part of this community effort, and I truly believe the clothes barn makes a real, positive difference in many lives. Helen.”

There are still 79 Ukrainians living with sponsors, and allowing for those who have moved into their own accommodation the number we support is just over 200.

On behalf of our Ukrainian families, thank you so much for all your support and donations.



WHO'S WHO

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North Dean Village Hall - Bookings	Jeremy Mudie	07880 785 983
One Can Food Bank Trust - Trustee	Graham Peart	01494 488 327
Pigotts 5 '48' Musical Evenings	Jeremy Hamilton	07834 224 589
Speen Good Neighbours	Pat Richardson	01494 488 627
Speen & North Dean Golf Day	Dick Pooley	07785 996 511
Speen & North Dean Guides	Pauline Hall	01494 488 372
Speen & North Dean News - Chairman	Jill Rogerson	01494 488 315
Speen & North Dean News - Advertising	Tom Dent/Monica Dent	07511 733 199
Speen & North Dean Toddlers	Sandy Mitcheson	07747 635 974
Speen Baptist Church - Pastor	Rev. Tim Deller	01494 488 753
Speen Environmental Action Group (SEAG)	Jane Farley	07889 433 630
Speen Festival	Liz Patroe	07976 329 953
Speen Fete	Lucy Johnston	07770 868 029
SHH (Speen Helping Hospices) - Secretary	Maureen Laing	01494 488 397
Speen Heritage Group - Chairman	Peter Symonds	01494 488 016
Speen Marquee	Greg Cook	07917 775 116
Speen Playing Fields	Tony Bobroff/Matt Davies	07768 330 273
Speen C of E Infant School - Head	Lisa Davies	01494 488 321
Speen School PTA Chair	Dishan Popat	07870 552 549
Speen Stores and Post Office	Ranjan	07581 347 681
Speen Tennis Court - Secretary	Philippa Lane	01494 488 453
Speen Village Hall - Bookings	Sue Taylor	01494 488 500
Speen Village Hall - Chairman	Cat Cook	07917 775 115
Speen WI - Secretary	Jenny Pearce	07305 188 093
St John's Parish Church	Revd Tony Bundock	01844 347 741

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