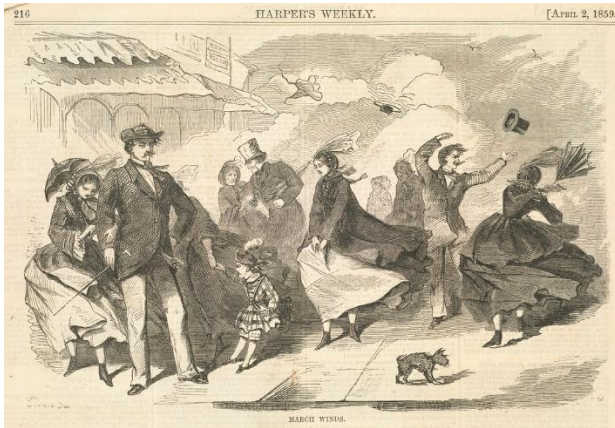


Looking to God, Looking to Care, Looking to Grow

# About Upper Stour

serving the villages of

**Bourton**  
**Kilmington**  
**Stourton**  
**Zeals**



*March winds?*

## March 2026

## **Parish Contacts**

### **Clergy**

**Revd Dr Graham Southgate, Rector**

01747 476 316 / Email: [rector@uswmb.co.uk](mailto:rector@uswmb.co.uk)

(day off Tuesday)

### **Lay Pastoral Assistant**

Caroline Worthington 07754 882454

(also Lay Worship Leader)

### **Enquiries regarding Baptisms/Christenings, Weddings and Funerals to the Rector, Graham Southgate**

01747 476 316 / Email [rector@uswmb.co.uk](mailto:rector@uswmb.co.uk)

Parish website [www.upperstour.co.uk](http://www.upperstour.co.uk)

Facebook Group Parish of Upper Stour

Parish Administrator, Sarah Pike (works part time)

Contact her by email: [parishoffice@upperstour.co.uk](mailto:parishoffice@upperstour.co.uk)

### **Contacts for Churchwardens**

**Bourton** Harry Allen 01747 840948 [harry.glenis@btinternet.com](mailto:harry.glenis@btinternet.com)

Margaret Martin 01747 840433 [bookworminbourton@gmail.com](mailto:bookworminbourton@gmail.com)

**Kilmington** Chris Reeves 01985 844894 [c.reeves110@btinternet.com](mailto:c.reeves110@btinternet.com)

Celia Cotton 01985 844613 [celiacotton1@outlook.com](mailto:celiacotton1@outlook.com)

**Stourton** Jane Parker 01985 844248 [jane.homefarm@gmail.com](mailto:jane.homefarm@gmail.com)

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### **All items for the April 2026 issue**

should be sent to the Editor

at Bay Tree Cottage, Kilmington, Wiltshire BA12 6RG

Tel 01985 844613 email [celiacotton1@outlook.com](mailto:celiacotton1@outlook.com)

by **Friday 20<sup>th</sup> March 2026** please

*From the Rectory*

## **Lengthening Daylight and Shorter Nights**

As I write this for our March magazine, there's a subtle but unmistakable change in the air. The days are stretching out, light lingers a little longer in the afternoon, and here and there the first brave shoots of green are pushing through the soil. Spring will soon begin again.

March often holds a curious tension. One day can feel almost warm and full of promise; the next can bring frost or rain; even a "Beast from the East". Yet despite its unpredictability, there is movement. The earth is stirring. Gardens that seemed lifeless only weeks ago are quietly preparing for colour and growth. In churchyards and hedges, buds are forming on branches that looked dry and brittle through the winter.

This turning of the seasons speaks deeply to my religious understanding. The Christian story is rooted in the conviction that God brings life out of what appears lifeless, hope out of despair, and light out of darkness. As we move through Lent towards Easter, we are invited to notice this pattern not only in nature, but in our own lives.

Lent (itself a shortened form of an Old English word *lencten*, meaning "spring") can sometimes feel more like winter for the soul: a time of self-examination, repentance, and waiting. Yet it is not bleak for its own sake for just as the soil is turned and prepared before seeds can flourish, so our hearts are gently tended by God. We are invited to let go of what is hardened or unhelpful, to make space for something new.

The hope that sustains me comes from the promise of Easter. The resurrection of Jesus is not simply a comforting story; it is the declaration that death and decay do not have the final word. The first witnesses to the risen Christ encountered him in a garden, in the freshness of early morning — a scene rich with the imagery of new creation.

Spring also reminds us of our calling to care for the world God has entrusted to us. As blossoms appear and birds build nests, we are prompted to give thanks for the beauty and fragility of creation. Even small acts — tending a garden, reducing waste, supporting local initiatives — can become expressions of gratitude and stewardship.

Perhaps this March we might take a few moments simply to pause and notice. Notice the longer light at the end of the day. Notice the crocuses or daffodils brightening an otherwise dull corner. Notice, too, the quiet stirrings of hope within ourselves and our communities.

God's work is often gentle and gradual, like the coming of spring, yet it is persistent and faithful. Perhaps this season can encourage us to trust that even after a long and wet winter, new life is on its way

***Graham Southgate, Rector (01747 476316)***

## **St George's 100 Club**

**February winners:**

**1<sup>st</sup> Prize - Joanna Larcombe**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Prize - Inge Royall**

**3<sup>rd</sup> Prize - Pat Ross-Hurst**

The next draw will be held on  
Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> March at the  
Bourton Village Lunch.

Contact Philip Newton for  
details (07947 054534)

## **St Martin's Millenium Club**

**Winners in February 2026**

**P Banbury**

**V Rowe**

**D Shean**

Next draw: week of 1<sup>st</sup> March

This lottery raises funds in support  
of St Martin's church, Zeals;  
register for inclusion at any time in  
year. For inclusion in monthly  
draws or with questions contact

Ashley Kemp:

[treasurer@agkemp.co.uk](mailto:treasurer@agkemp.co.uk)

01747 840272

## **Mobile Library : March 2026**

March 5, 19	<b>Zeals</b>	School, Chapel Lane	10.00-10.40 am
		Zeals Rise	10.45-11.00 am
March 5, 19	<b>Kilmington</b>	Home Guard Club	11.20-11.35 am

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*Now read on.....*

**Thin Air by Michelle Paver** published by Orion 2016 ~ and ~  
**Rainforest by Michelle Paver** published by Orion 2025

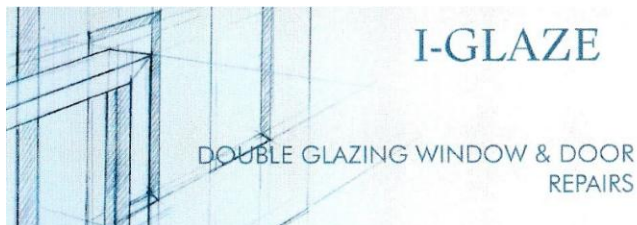
To lift your spirits in these endless wet days of winter I am offering readers a real treat to read two novels by Michelle Paver which are totally gripping and will make you feel glad to be in your home safe and sound. They are both ghost stories but they are very different in their setting and narrative. What they share is tension, shock and drama which will lift you out of winter hibernation!

'Thin Air' by Michelle Paver is set in the Himalayas as a climbing team of men set out on an expedition to climb Kangchenjunga which is one of the most feared mountains for climbers reaping a 20% fatality rate. Stephen joins the expedition as a medic at the last minute to help his brother Kit who is the leader of the expedition. From the start Stephen feels all is not well as he senses the anxieties of the local sherpas who fear the mountain for spiritual reasons. The rational Stephen has no sympathy for this but he finds he is becoming increasingly anxious and begins to see and sense events which are inexplicable but very unsettling for him. He is preoccupied with the death of a climber on a previous climb and begins to fear the mountain may be haunted. The team face cold, fog, ice, snow and altitude sickness, all to be expected but underpinning these conditions is the sibling rivalry between Stephen and his brother Kit. In the stress of the expedition their unresolved hostilities are enhanced but cannot be dealt with in this harsh environment when both men are at the extremity of their resilience. I will not spoil the story but you will find it gripping.

'Rainforest' by Michelle Paver is another captivating read this time set in a tropical rainforest in Mexico. Simon, an etymologist, has joined an established expedition hoping to make research discoveries which will re-establish his academic career. He has been thrown off course by an obsession with Penelope, a casual acquaintance whom Simon had stalked thinking she was the love of his life. This ended in tragedy and Simon is now guilt ridden and depressed. He brings a great deal of excess emotional baggage to the expedition. Simon, like Stephen is rather sneering about the wisdom of the local people and foolishly ignores their advice and the advice of his European colleagues. The descriptions of the jungle are powerful and vivid but underpinned with a suggestion of alien hostility. Simon undertakes some risky ventures and eventually he is lost in the dense tropical jungle but the horrific experience is also cathartic for him. Again, I am avoiding a spoiler!

Both books are 'ghost stories' in the sense that both men are haunted by their past and facing extreme conditions their vulnerabilities are exposed. Michelle Paver describes these experiences convincingly and raises issues for the reader to consider perhaps some of their own vulnerabilities. Do enjoy two really good reads.

**Margaret Martin** [bookworminbourton@gmail.com](mailto:bookworminbourton@gmail.com)



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## LADY KEEGAN'S COOKERY CORNER

### **Crab and chickpea fritters**

**Ingredients** for 4: 2 eggs, separated,  $\frac{1}{4}$  teasp. cream of tartar, 400 can chickpeas, drained and roughly mashed, 2 tablesp brown crab meat, 3 tablesp white crab meat, zest of  $\frac{1}{2}$  a lemon, grating of nutmeg,  $\frac{1}{4}$  teasp. cayenne pepper, 1 teaspoon baking powder, 3 tablesp fresh breadcrumbs, oil for shallow frying.

**Method:** Whisk egg whites with a tiny pinch of salt until foamy. Add cream of tartar and continue to whisk until the foam forms firm peaks. Mix all other ingredients thoroughly together in another bowl, and season with salt. Fold in egg whites. Heat a thin layer of oil in a large frying pan. Spoon, a heaped tablesp. at a time, into the pan and fry gently until bubbles appear. Flip over to the other side and cook until the fritters feel springy to the touch. Serve immediately with a dollop of plain yogurt and a slice of lemon



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## News from Stourhead

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The welcome sight of spring is emerging across the garden at Stourhead. Carpets of daffodils welcome you on your arrival and pops of colour from the rhododendrons and pelargoniums are a joy to see.

Stourhead house reopens on Saturday 7 March, and this year we're inviting you to take a closer look at some of its most intriguing paintings. The new exhibition, *Secret Lives of Paintings*, reveals the hidden stories that emerge when you look beneath the surface. From impossible bouquets to portraits that reinvent the truth, discover how artworks can surprise, deceive and delight.

Included in the exhibition is the recently conserved *Stourhead in its Infancy*, returning home with a few secrets of its own to reveal.

Important conservation work to the dam has been underway since January. All the sheet piling has now been installed to repair the leaks, and throughout March we expect earthworks to take place to repair the rear embankment of the dam and the path network.

Guided *walks and talks* and *wider estate walks* resume in March, where visitors can accompany one of Stourhead's knowledgeable volunteers for a walk through the garden or wider estate. For those looking for a new challenge, join us on 22 March for the first of our Trust10 10k trail runs that take place on Stourhead's wider estate.

Stourhead's Easter trail will be running from 21 March – 19 April, where families can hop on an adventure around the garden and collect a chocolate egg at the end.

For more information on our events, please visit the Stourhead website.

Lucy Fenna, Communications & Marketing Officer  
[lucy.fenna1@nationaltrust.org.uk](mailto:lucy.fenna1@nationaltrust.org.uk) or 01747 842032

# Country Calendar

## March 2026

In like lion out like a lamb: that is the long-term weather forecast for March. We have had so much rain and storms, we long for nice spring weather. Farmers are hoping for an early turnout, due to fodder shortages, after last summer's drought. Many have had to sell some of their livestock to reduce numbers, as their only option to survive the winter and stretch their winter fodder. Sadly, we have had fifteen straw bales stolen from a barn, no mean feat as these bales weigh nearly half a ton each! Straw is at a premium price and for us not an insignificant loss financially. We will not be the only ones; rural crime is at an all-time high. Farmers are facing unprecedented levels of stress due to a "perfect storm" of factors: extreme unpredictable weather, severe financial pressure from rising input costs, and isolation. Research has found that in some regions, over a third of farmers may be experiencing depression, with suicide rates significantly higher than the general population. I am not surprised that farming charities in the UK are currently facing immense pressure. Key organisations like the Farming Community Network (FCN), The Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution (RABI), and the Addington Fund are reporting increased call volumes related to financial hardship, mental health crises, and, in some cases, the threat of closure for small, volunteer-led farm charities due to rising costs. These reports are only touching the tip of the iceberg. There is a growing crisis in the agricultural sector, fuelled by soaring input costs (fuel, fertilizer, feed) and a significant power imbalance within the food supply chain. Farmers cannot continue producing food and selling it under the cost of production, I have copied key factors raised in one of many reports by various authorities, highlighting the state of the agricultural industry.

*Risk of Business Collapse Nearly half of farmers fear going out of business in the coming year, with three-quarters blaming supermarkets for failing to pay a fair price.*

*Reduced Food Security: As farmers struggle to cover costs, they are reducing production, which threatens long-term food security.*

*Industry Disinvestment: When margins are too low, farmers lack the capital to invest in sustainable farming, new equipment, or necessary environmental improvements.*

*The "Broken" System: Farmers often receive a "minuscule proportion" of the final retail price, with some receiving less than 1p in profit for certain products, while intermediaries and supermarkets capture the value.*

*Mental Health Impact: The financial pressure and threat of losing family farms are causing immense stress, with some farmers contemplating taking their own lives.*

*This unsustainable situation has led to, and will continue to cause, several critical issues:*

*If this trend continues, the industry risks losing a significant number of producers, leading to a higher reliance on imported food and a less resilient food supply system.*

UK farmers are experiencing payment delays, reductions primarily due to the phasing out of the EU-era Basic Payment Scheme (BPS), direct payments cut by up to 76%. This is compounded by the abrupt closure of new applications to the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) with continued delays on promised new schemes, alongside a £100m budget reduction in agriculture. Scottish and Welsh farmers under their devolved governments still get their Basic Payments and other schemes on top. UK farmers are at a huge disadvantage against our own neighbours. My Scottish farming friend said to me very recently how thankful they were that they do not farm in England, for they would be bankrupt! Three people in the farming industry die by suicide every week. This is official data from the Office for National Statistics. We need our farmers; you need our farmers; without them the future does not bear thinking about. Farmers are proud people. I never thought I would know several young farming families on benefits and having to go to food banks. Sadly, the majority of the population does not have any idea what is happening to our farmers. Perhaps reading these direct quotes and sentiments expressing their worries just might help them understand how serious the situation is.

*"I'm 20 years old and farming alone and I am constantly putting a brave hard face on ... yet deep down I'm pretty much breaking inside"*

*"Of course it's mentally straining. There are days that I just go: I don't know if I can do this anymore. You know, everything's getting harder."*

*"At some point, you just run out of road."*

There is no doubt that the present UK farming policy is full of broken promises and failed ambition, our farmers feel betrayed and abandoned: three suicides a week is three too many - those poor families! It is a national scandal.



On a slightly brighter note, we have been very busy on the farm, with lots of newborn calves arriving. We were thrilled at the arrival of twin bull calves. Tallulah the mother gave birth without any assistance: Barley and Buckwheat are doing very well indeed.

**Jane Parker**



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# Best Foote Forward



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## Upper Stour Parish Magazine Editor urgently required

Our editor is retiring after 19 years, and we're looking for someone to carry the magazine forward so it can continue being a community asset.

The magazine is a profitable, well established monthly publication usually of around 28 pages (sometimes more and sometimes a little less). It contains news and views of the communities in our four villages, reporting on events past and alerting the parish of upcoming events.

Do you enjoy words, local stories, and community life? This is an ideal role for anyone with a love of language, an interest in our community and its wellbeing, and a few hours a month to spare. It's also a wonderful way to get to know people across Bourton, Kilmington, Stourton, and Zeals and the contributions these villages make to our community life.

If you would like to know more, please contact [georgebullivant@gmail.com](mailto:georgebullivant@gmail.com) 07939 045917 or [celiacotton1@outlook.com](mailto:celiacotton1@outlook.com)/01985 844613

## Parish Magazine Distribution

We are looking for a volunteer to take over a small round (only 22 magazines once a month) in the Stourhead House vicinity. We will show you the round whilst delivering the April magazines. Thank you so much to the current volunteer who is now unable to continue helping the parish with this important task. We are most grateful to him for his years doing these deliveries.

If you are able to take this on or know anyone else who would be able to help, please contact [Diana.Tadd@gmail.com](mailto:Diana.Tadd@gmail.com) or 01747 840663. We much look forward to hearing from you.

***Diana Tadd***

## Kilmington & Stourton Women's Institute

It is with great sadness I have to announce that the Kilmington & Stourton WI will close on 31st March, 2026. Despite pleas being made we have been unable to find anyone to take over as secretary which is one of the required roles of the WI. This has meant it is impossible for our WI to continue to operate. Our WI has been running for nearly 30 years, during which time our members have enjoyed many interesting meetings, parties and outings. We have to thank all our members for their continued support throughout the years and to say that we have two meetings left: 24th February and 24th March 2026 when it is hoped that we will go out with a bang!

***Vanessa Meeker, President***

# SERVICES IN UPPER STOUR WITH MAIDEN BRADLEY

## MARCH 2026

- Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> Second Sunday of Lent**  
10.00 Parish Communion at St Peter's Stourton
- Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> Third Sunday of Lent**  
10.00 Parish Communion at St Mary's Kilmington  
10.00 Parish Communion at All Saints Maiden Bradley
- Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> Fourth Sunday of Lent ~ Mothering Sunday**  
10.00 Morning Worship at St George's Bourton  
10.00 Morning Worship at All Saints Maiden Bradley
- Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> Fifth Sunday of Lent**  
10.00 Parish Communion at St Martin's Zeals
- Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> Palm Sunday**  
10.00 Procession and Benefice Parish Communion  
at St Martin's Zeals

## APRIL 2026

- Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> Maundy Thursday**  
19.00 Parish Communion with Foot Washing at  
St Mary's Kilmington
- Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> Good Friday**  
14.00 Last Hour Service at St Martin's Zeals
- Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> Easter Day**  
06.30 Sunrise Service at Search Farm, Stourton  
10.00 Parish Communion at St Mary's Kilmington  
10.00 Parish Communion at All Saints Maiden Bradley

### Weekday Services

- Mondays:** 09.00 Morning prayer at St George's Bourton  
**Wednesdays:** 16.00 Midweek Communion at St Martin's Zeals  
**Thursdays:** 09.00 Morning Prayer at St Mary's Kilmington

## **Parables of Jesus – A Four-Week Lent Course**

**A Lent Course for the parishes of Upper Stour & Maiden Bradley to be led by the Rector Graham Southgate (01747 476316) on Thursday evenings in Zeals Parish Room at Saint Martin's Church, beginning at 7 pm**

(26<sup>th</sup> February ~ Pearls and Prodigals: How to hear a parable.)

5<sup>th</sup> March ~ Samaritans, Priests, and Levites: How history impacts interpretation.

12<sup>th</sup> March ~ Labourers and Management in the Vineyard: How to assess Kingdom economics.

19<sup>th</sup> March ~ The Persevering Widow and the Unjust Judge: How parables promote and demote.

***Everyone is welcome to attend and participate, but it would be good if you booked a place by letting Graham know***

## **All Age Posy Making Workshop 10am Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> March for**

### **Mothering Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> March at St George's Bourton**

Donations of flowers & small garden foliage needed. Buckets etc will be left in the St George's Church porch from Friday afternoon (13<sup>th</sup> March)

Please bring along scissors and other materials including small greenery & any spring flowers/blossom.

Refreshments will be provided.

### **Easter Saturday (4<sup>th</sup> April)**

Help us to make an Easter Garden at St Mary's Kilmington at 2 pm .

Bring with you any stones, flowers sticks etc .

Adults and children to be involved.

Refreshments provided

### **Salisbury Cathedral**

If you are on our Church Electoral Roll you can apply for a card allowing you free access to Salisbury Cathedral. Forms are available at St Michael's Church in Mere.

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# News from Parish Councils

## Bourton

Bourton Parish Council met on 28th January, with all councillors and 11 members of the public present. Residents raised two key issues during the Public Open Forum: concerns about tree branches falling onto power lines on Factory Hill, and a statement regarding the potential location of a new village hall.

The Speed Watch team reported continued activity over winter, noting that 1,615 sessions across Dorset had recorded 16,981 incidents, resulting in 13,666 warning letters and 28 prosecution letters. Residents were reminded that speeding concerns can be reported directly to Dorset Road Safe.

Planning discussions focused on the Sandways development. Developer Aaron Pearce attended to outline next steps for the new village hall site, emphasising the importance of agreeing its layout before further progress. Councillors highlighted the need for community engagement and clarity on funding. Other sites, including Land East of Chaffeymoor and Doctors Orchard, had no new updates.

The council reviewed its finances, noting a balance of £41,067.56, including £12,000 earmarked for the new play area. Grants were awarded to Life Wessex (£155) and a nominal £200 towards the Shaftesbury Lido appeal. Following discussion, councillors voted to adopt Precept Option A, representing an increase of £1.51 per month for a Band D property. This increase will enable the PC to work towards providing a community space and play area soon.

An update was given on the play area (change of use process underway) and the Business Development Manager of Home Front Outdoor Play, which built the impressive children's play area near Castle Hill Lane, Mere is due to visit Bourton soon to provide us with a cost estimate for a similar play area on Jubilee Meadow. Updates were also provided on cemetery maintenance (work to address sinking graves), footpaths (six new volunteers and a March litter pick), and bus services (timetables refreshed at stops and online). **Eve Wynn, RFO & Clerk, Bourton Parish Council** [clerk@bourton-pc.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@bourton-pc.gov.uk)

## Kilmingtion

Our Chair, Cllr Graham Cotton, has been working closely with Wiltshire Council's Highways team to help prioritise problem areas, monitor gully performance, and ensure local reports are fed quickly into the system. This joint effort is helping to focus attention on the most vulnerable points in the parish during the current spell of high groundwater and persistent surface-water run-off.

Cllr Brooks has now formally raised concerns about mobile-phone reception across parts of Kilmingtion and Norton Ferris with our MP, Dr Andrew Murrison, pressing for improvements in coverage and support for households and businesses affected by unreliable signal. Following the launch of Digital Wiltshire, the Parish Council strongly encourages residents to complete the [Mobile Network Experience survey](#), which will help capture crucial real-world data for discussions with both government and network providers.

Following the resignation of a councillor earlier this year, the Returning Officer has confirmed that the vacancy may now be filled by co-option. Residents interested in contributing to parish life are warmly encouraged to come forward. Expressions of interest must be submitted to the Clerk by 5pm on Tuesday 3rd March. The co-option

will take place at the next Full Council Meeting on Monday 9th March at 7:30pm at the Stourton & Kilmington Home Guard Club.

Finally, the Parish Council will shortly be migrating to a new website and updated email system to meet Government accessibility, data-governance and security requirements. The current website and email addresses will remain in place throughout the transition, and further updates will be provided in due course.

**Steven Willis, Clerk** [parishclerk@kilmingtonwiltshire.org](mailto:parishclerk@kilmingtonwiltshire.org)

## **Stourton with Gasper**

The next Stourton with Gasper Parish Council meeting is on 4th March. The meeting is at 6pm in the Memorial Hall, Stourton. The draft minutes from the meeting on 3rd December are available on the website [www.stourton.org.uk](http://www.stourton.org.uk)

It has recently been announced there will be closures of 8 fire stations across the Dorset and Wiltshire area, including Mere. This is an important service and there has been public outcry at the impending closure of these stations. On 4th February there was a South West Wilts Area Board meeting in Mere, attended by members of the Stourton Parish Council and as of 10th February, the Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Authority (DWFRA) have announced a public consultation on the closures. The consultation runs from Friday 13th February until Friday 15th May 2026. All the details, including station-specific data, FAQs and a questionnaire, will be available at [www.dwfire.org.uk](http://www.dwfire.org.uk) from 13th February.

During March and April, there will be public meetings in each affected community, together with online dial-in sessions for each location. Details of these can also be found on the DWFRA website from 13th February. The complete announcement can be found at [www.dwfire.org.uk/news/public-consultation-agreed-on-fire-station-closure-proposals](http://www.dwfire.org.uk/news/public-consultation-agreed-on-fire-station-closure-proposals). Please take the time to have a look at the information available and answer the questionnaire and if possible attend the public meetings. The Parish Council will publish any information about the public meetings on the website when it becomes available.

**Lisa Gilby**, Parish Clerk [clerk@stourton.org.uk](mailto:clerk@stourton.org.uk)

## **Zeals**

The next Parish Council meeting will be on 19th March at 7pm in Zeals Village Hall, with a Village Hall meeting preceding. The draft minutes from 15th January are now published on [www.zealspc.org.uk](http://www.zealspc.org.uk). The Parish Council holds bi-monthly meetings, and if there is anything you feel needs to be discussed, please remember to contact the clerk at least 7–10 days before the meeting, as the agenda must be published at least 3 working days before the meeting. Members of the public are always very welcome to attend.

There will be an organised litter pick on Saturday 14th March, meeting at Zeals Village Hall at 9.30am, with an invitation to join the coffee morning afterwards – pickers will get a complimentary coffee! Litter picks, hi-vis, gloves and bags will be provided. Please message Amelia on 07708 981267 if you wish to take part.

By the time you read this, the road works on Zeals Rise should have been completed (16th –20th February) The Parish Council gets a lot of correspondence on the state of the roads and the potholes – this is only increasing with the amount of rain we've experienced this year. The first port of call for these problems is the Wiltshire Council website, where you can report problems and make complaints. Smaller problems can be dealt with by our Parish Steward, with larger problems being dealt with by Highways. If you have any questions or concerns please contact me

**Lisa Gilby: Zeals Parish Clerk, clerk@zealspc.org.uk**

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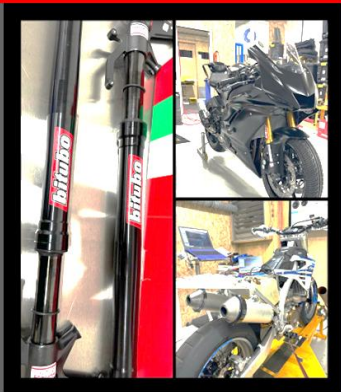


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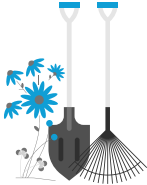
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# Green Fingers

## Notes from a Fairweather Gardener

### March



March, when according to Charles Dickens, 'the sun shines hot and the wind blows cold: when it is summer in the light, and winter in the shade'. In other words, a month of contrasts and the month when the gardener's year begins in earnest.

As the weather starts to get warmer, it is time to propagate all sorts of plants, either by starting seeds or taking cuttings. Dahlia tubers can be expensive, but if you have saved some of your favourite varieties from last year, you can grow new flowers from the old tubers. Start the dormant tubers off in peat free compost in pots. When the shoots are about an inch (2.5 centimetres) tall, lift the tuber carefully from the compost and divide it, making sure each piece has a root and a shoot. Pot each of these into a separate container and grow them on to be planted out in late May.

It is important to look after your soil so that it continues to produce vigorous and healthy plants. Towards the end of the month is a good time to mulch flower beds, preferably with good homemade compost if you have it. The mulch will help to keep weeds down and conserve moisture. As our summers get warmer and drier this is especially important.

It isn't just the ornamental garden that is waking up now, the vegetable plot is ready to start the season once the soil is warmer. You can sow all manner of vegetable seeds when the soil is warm and not waterlogged. You can help this by covering the soil with a cold frame before sowing. Broad beans, all sorts of brassicas, salad leaves and roots can be sown now for early crops. Perhaps consider sowing some of the more unusual vegetables that are expensive to buy. Kohl rabi and Swiss chard are rarely available in the shops but easy to grow.

It is also a good time to sow tomato seeds. The small tomatoes that are often sold on the vine in supermarkets are quite easy to grow. They can be started now on a warm windowsill and then planted out to grow in pots in a sunny spot. They come in lots of shades of red, orange, yellow and even striped versions, so they are an attractive addition to a patio display.

*Daphne Knott*



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## Congratulations and Happy Birthday

All good wishes to Mrs Alice Wolynskj of Zeals who celebrates her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday on 5<sup>th</sup> March. She is a war veteran who worked at Bletchley Park and has lived in Zeals for about ten years. We all send her our congratulations and wish her a very Happy Birthday



## Craft & Chat

Our meetings continue on Tuesdays at Bourton Village Hall 2pm-4pm



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# **Bourton Village Hall**

## **March 2026**

### **Village Lunch**

Monday March 2nd (12.30-14.00)


Please note that the price will be going up from April 1<sup>st</sup> to £5.

### **Film Nights**

- March 4<sup>th</sup> – I Swear (15) based on the true-life story of John Davison, starring Robert Aramayo
- April 1<sup>st</sup> – The Choral (12A) - A choral society's male members enlist in World War I, leaving the demanding Dr. Guthrie to recruit new members.

*If you would like advance notice of films, send your email address to [hello@bourtonvh-dorset.org](mailto:hello@bourtonvh-dorset.org) and you will be added to the mailing list.*

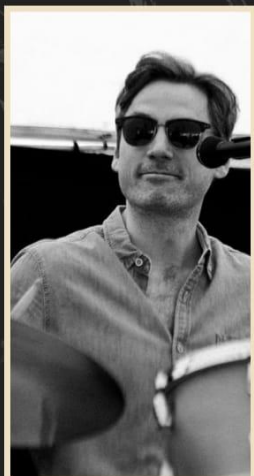
### **Spring Activities**

- Tom and the Clementynes – March 14<sup>th</sup> – Doors open 7:30  
– Tickets £10    *see details* 
- Music Bingo and Disco – April 11<sup>th</sup> – Doors open at 7:00  
(moved from Feb 14<sup>th</sup>)
- Murder Mystery with a light supper – May 8<sup>th</sup> – more details to follow.

# TOM & THE CLEMENTYNES

# 2026

## 14TH MARCH



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**DOORS 7.30PM - ENTRY £10**

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# Diary Dates March 2026



Monday 2 <sup>nd</sup>	Bourton Village Lunch 12.30 BVH	page 26
Weds 4 <sup>th</sup>	Bourton Film Night, BVH	page 26
Thursday 5 <sup>th</sup>	Lent Course at St Martin's Ch Zeals 7pm	page 15
Thursday 12 <sup>th</sup>	Lent Course at St Martin's, Zeals 7pm	page 15
Thursday 19 <sup>th</sup>	Lent Course at St Martin's Zeals 7pm	page 15
Saturday 14 <sup>th</sup>	Posy making for Mothering Sunday at 10 am at St George's Bourton	page 15
Saturday 14 <sup>th</sup>	Tom & The Clementynes, 7.30 pm BVH	page 26
Thursday 24 <sup>th</sup>	Women's Institute (details tbc)	



## Regular Weekly Events

Weekdays 08.45-09.15 **Preschool meeting** at the Preschool playing fields, West Bourton (*term time only*)

**The ZAC Zeals Afterschools Club** meets daily 3.15 – 6 on school days at the Playing Field, Wolverton Lane, drawing children from 5 local schools. Contact Sarah on 07908 664 676; [zealsafterschoolsclub@gmail.com](mailto:zealsafterschoolsclub@gmail.com)

Tuesdays **Toddlers sessions:** 9am-12pm (term time only) at Bourton Village Hall. Contact Caroline Worthington 07754 882454

**Craft & Chat** – every Tuesday in Bourton Village Hall at 2pm

Wednesday **Bellringing practice** at St Martin's church Zeals. Beginners and lapsed ringers welcome. Contact Georgina Muir 01985 844245

Fridays **Choir Practice:** most Fridays 5.30-6.15pm at St Martin's Zeals. New singers welcome. Contact Tom Wheare 01747 840622



**All items for the  
April 2026 issue by  
Friday 20<sup>th</sup> March 2026  
please**