

Spratton



Parish Newsletter
Spring 2026

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CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

SPRING 2025

Cllr Jane Marshall



Change is all around. As Shelley wrote, 'When Winter comes can Spring be far behind?' Snowdrops are in flower and the daffodils in the churchyard are taller every day.

West Northamptonshire Local Plan

Change in the wider world is coming as well. The West Northamptonshire Local Plan which has been published and is open for public consultation sets out a framework for the future of our area up until 2043. There is much to absorb in the 300 or so page document, but particularly relevant is the significant change which has been made since the last consultation in proposals for growth and housing in our villages. Each village has been allocated a minimum number of houses, depending on their classification, which taken together will result in a significant population increase in rural West Northamptonshire. Bigger villages will be expected to accommodate most housing. Brixworth, for example, has a minimum housing figure of 242. Spratton falls into a middle category with a minimum housing allocation of 54. Views will differ on the proposals, and each village will have its own issues - but a common concern is likely to be the impact on essential services and how they are to be expanded to meet increased demand.

The Parish Council will be discussing the draft Plan in its next meeting and will then make a formal response to the consultation. But do take the time to read the relevant parts of the Plan and keep an eye out for the presentations which are to be held across our area in April and May. West Northamptonshire wants to hear your views. It is your village and your future.

Spratton Pocket Park

Closer to home, further change is in store for the Pocket Park at Brixworth Road cemetery. Dave Cooke, who has managed the Park for 20 years or so on a voluntary basis is due to retire. Many of you will have read Dave's pieces in our newsletter, tracking seasonal changes and wildflowers in the Park, and enjoyed the displays that appeared. The village owes him a lot. Thank you, Dave.

Pocket parks were a concept pioneered by Northamptonshire County Council in the early 1980s and supported by other local councils and the Countryside Commission. They were designed to preserve small local areas valued by the local community for wildlife and public enjoyment and can be found across



Spratton Pocket Park on the Brixworth Road

the county from Brixworth to Yelvertoft. Thanks to Dave's efforts, Spratton's Pocket Park has received many awards over the years.

Although Dave is stepping back, he has kindly offered to help anyone who might like to take over when he leaves, with the annual cycle of managing the Park. **Could anyone interested in taking on the task please give Dave a call on 01604 845559 or email david.cooke2@btinternet.com to ask any questions they might have.** The Parish Council will continue to oversee on the overall maintenance of the Pocket Park.

Other matters

The Council has continued to deal with practical matters. The grounds maintenance contract has been successfully re-tendered. Insurance arrangements have been confirmed. Quotations are awaited for work on rabbit control measures at the East View cemetery. Gravestones have undergone a safety inspection at all three burial grounds for which the Council is responsible - East View, Brixworth Road and St Andrew's. Work is beginning on a communication strategy, so that residents are better informed in a timely manner about the Council's activities.

Cllr Jane Marshall jane.marshall@sprattonpc.org.uk

Date of next Parish Council meeting: Tuesday 17 March

Spratton Parish Councillors

Cllr Jane Marshall (Chair)	jane.marshall@sprattonpc.org.uk
Cllr Ruaraidh McDonald-Walker	ruaraidh.mcdonald-walker@sprattonpc.org.uk
Cllr Gary Ashton	gary.ashton@sprattonpc.org.uk
Cllr Tom Beynon	tom.beynon@sprattonpc.org.uk
Cllr Julian Gaywood	julian.gaywood@sprattonpc.org.uk
Cllr George Matts	george.matts@sprattonpc.org.uk
Cllr Paul Vellum	paul.vellum@sprattonpc.org.uk
Cllr Fiona Young	fiona.young@sprattonpc.org.uk

Alan Youel (Parish Clerk)	clerk@sprattonpc.org.uk
07715 651904	PO Box 821, Banbury OX16 6UB
	www.sprattonpc.org.uk

News from
Cllr CHRISTINE WARE
Ward Councillor for Naseby



Hello everyone

It's great to see the spring flowers starting to come up and hopefully you are starting to see a little more daylight as we head to the next season. Not long till the clocks change!

Budget

A new year brings changes at West Northants Council and the focus now is on the budget. By the time you read this we will have the full picture. However, as I type, I can tell you that the 2026/2027 budget has been out for public consultation and will be presented to full Council at the meeting on 26 February. The initial draft has been revised and we are expecting to see council tax increases of 4.95% and an increase in green bin charges of 15%. It has been proposed that the market towns of Daventry and Towcester start to charge for parking, with Brackley charges proposed for later in the year. This has been met with significant protest. As always, the devil is in the detail and we are working through alternative ideas and amendments which we will put to Council for consideration. West Northants Council website will have confirmation of the budget's final position after the meeting on 26 February.

Planning

Another big change that is coming is the new Local Plan. This is the blueprint for how our area develops and is shaped. We use it when considering planning applications for our area. Planning is a complex thing and planning applications don't take into account public opinion or whether someone 'likes' a design or scheme. Planning decisions are based on identified and adapted plans and policies that have often been in development for many years before they are finally adopted. There is a hierarchy to the plans. At a national level, there is an overarching policy called the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Then in our area we have a Local Plan and then many areas also have a Neighbourhood Development Plan which also informs planning decisions. Neighbourhood Development Plans have to be put out to consultation and are adopted through a local referendum.

At the moment Planning Teams and Committees are working with Local Plans for each of the legacy councils - Daventry, South Northants and Northampton, using whichever is relevant for the area the planning application falls into. The new Local Plan will cover all areas throughout West Northants - one version for

all. The Local Plan was published for public consultation at the end of January for a period of eight weeks. **You can find it online through the West Northants Council website and if you wish to see a printed copy, you will find one in our libraries including Brixworth Library.**

Making new policy is not a quick process and there are more hoops to go through before the plan is adopted. Now is the time though to make sure you submit your comments. Once the plan becomes 'made' (the term for it being agreed and going live) it will be in place until 2043!

If you have views, please do get involved. Make your voice heard in whichever way suits you best; through the West Northants Council online survey, through the Parish Council or planning committee meetings at West Northants Council, or by writing or emailing your views to West Northants Council.

Please do get in touch if you have issues to raise on this or anything else.

With kind regards
Christine Ware
Ward Councillor for Naseby
christine.ware@westnorthants.gov.uk
07836 368888

SPRATTON TOWN AND CHARITY LAND

Charity Number 204331

Vacant allotment plots

We currently have full and half plots available.

If you are interested and would like to know more about renting and cultivating a plot, one of our Trustees, Frances Roseblade, would be happy to show you around and explain the advantages of growing your own vegetable, fruit, flowers etc.

Now is a great time to take on an allotment and get it ready for the growing period.

Currently the rents are £40 p.a. for a full plot and £20.00 p.a. for a half plot. A plot taken now would be at half these prices until the rent renewals in September.

Please contact the Clerk if you are interested in talking to Frances.

Grants

The Trustees were pleased to receive letters of thanks from village organisations and students who received grants in December 2025. The amounts received were much appreciated.

Pat Parish – Clerk, 1 Gorse Road
01604 847734, parishpat79@gmail.com

Hedge-laying at the Top of the Rec

Work to improve the overgrown hedge at the top of the Rec took place in early February. The hedgerow had become very overgrown and patchy, and the stock fencing had collapsed some time ago. So the Rec Charity and the Parish Council jointly funded a project to lay the hedge. It's the first time the village grounds maintenance contractors have undertaken work of this nature. They worked with the National Hedge-laying Society to ensure that their work would be sustainable long term.

Hedge-laying is a traditional, sustainable UK countryside craft (also known as plashing or pleaching) that rejuvenates overgrown hedges by partially cutting through stems, bending them to an angle, and securing them with stakes. This winter activity (November–March) encourages dense, bushy growth from the base, creating a living, stockproof barrier and improving biodiversity. The hedge should return to full growth within two years, and provide a natural barrier that can be maintained long-term.

Cllr Gary Ashton



Newly laid hedge at the top of the Rec. The work was undertaken by the village grounds maintenance contractors and the National Hedge-laying Society.

SPRATTON DEFIBRILLATORS

**We have two defibrillators in Spratton:
one on the pub wall next to the car park and
the other on the Club wall next to the Recreation Field car park.**

Both are in yellow metal cabinets.

You can find out more about defibrillators and how to use them by visiting the St John Ambulance website. St John Ambulance also provide training on their use, and they visited a well attended session at Spratton WI in late 2025.

If your village group would like to know more about the defibrillators, and borrow one of the decommissioned units to have a look at, please contact the Parish Council Clerk.

Defibrillator Update

Following on from the WI's focus on "Bystanders can be Lifesavers", the Parish Council has undertaken work to refresh our defibrillator provision in the village. Two new units have been purchased to replace the old defibrillators, which had reached the end of their 10-year guarantee period. We opted for the same make and model for consistency in terms of maintenance and upkeep. At the same time we cleaned the outside of the defibrillator boxes and fitted new reflective stickers to improve their visibility. The units continue to be checked monthly to ensure they are ready to use in an emergency.

Cllr Gary Ashton

Thanks to the Christmas Hamper Team

A tremendous "Thank You" must go to The Hamper Team, both adults and children, for all the hard work which went into encouraging donations, assembling and then delivering the wonderful Christmas hampers around the village in time for Christmas. I know they brought joy to many people. As a very senior citizen and inhabitant of Spratton for the last sixty years or more I only wish I could be more active and able to help the team.

Again thank you all and may you know that your hard work is very much appreciated. You are all very kind people, considerate of others at a most busy time of year.

Sender has asked to remain anonymous

Draft Active Travel Strategy, Mobility Hub and Rail Action Plans West Northants Council

West Northamptonshire Council is consulting on three big transport strategies: Rail, Active Travel (walking and cycling) and Mobility Hubs. These plans aim to improve sustainable transport across the county.

However, Spratton Parish Council has raised concerns that, as written, the plans mainly benefit towns and larger settlements. Villages like ours—without a rail station, with limited buses, and with narrow rural roads—risk being left behind. *Specifically we have highlighted the poor public transport provision in Spratton, difficulty accessing Brampton Valley Way (to walk or cycle) or reaching the regular bus services in Brixworth and rail services in Long Buckby.* These strategies appear to make no provision for addressing these problems.

We are asking the Council to create a clear **Rural Mobility Plan** that includes:

- better links from villages to towns and railway stations;
- improved bus or demand-responsive services;
- a “mini” mobility hub for rural villages (secure cycle parking, EV charging, shared-car access, good lighting and information);
- safer walking and cycling routes where rural roads allow;
- fair funding for rural areas, not just urban ones;
- support for older residents, young people and non-drivers who depend on community transport.

Spratton Parish Council has responded formally to the consultation, and will engage with further consultations on behalf of our community.

We have also responded to a service consultation by Kier, who manage the process of filling pot holes and addressing other roads maintenance issues in the village. We hope to arrange a village walk about with Kier in the coming weeks to highlight roadway problems across Spratton.

Cllr Gary Ashton

Summer Newsletter 2026

The deadline for receiving articles for the Summer 2026 edition
of the Parish Newsletter is

Saturday 16 May 2026

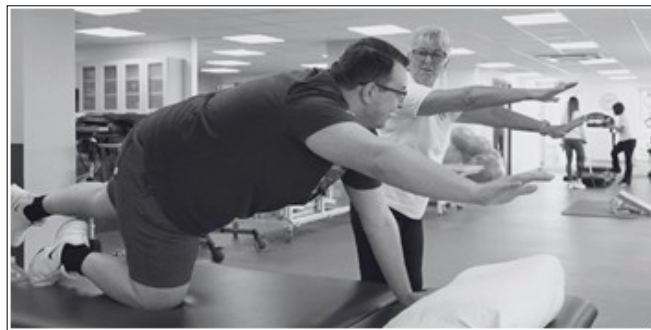
Please send articles to the Editor as Word documents
and images as jpgs (Do not send pdfs)

Editor-Enid Jarvis jarvis.enid@btinternet.com

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SPRATTON VILLAGE HALL

Progress is moving forward with the Village Hall. We heard just before Christmas that our **planning application to replace the roof has been approved**. We now have to apply for grants to cover the costs of this major project. This will take time. Hopefully we will be successful and have the work completed in the not-too-distant future.



Incident

As you may have seen and heard there was an incident at the Village Hall earlier in the month. This was an electrical issue with the input from the mains outside. Luckily the hall building was not affected - it could have been so much worse! National Grid installed new electrical boxes outside and then in the main electrical cupboard. We had to have all of the electrical points checked by a qualified electrician. This has been done and the hall is back in use; we have work that has been recommended to update which will be completed asap.

Garden

The garden area at the back of the hall has a few planted troughs with spring bulbs that are growing well. We also have a few old tyres left for us to paint and plant with other plants. We are **planning a 'working weekend' early in March – possibly 7/8 March**. We would welcome help to clear the back garden area of the hall and tidy up the area at the front of the building. *If anyone is willing to spare an hour or two, please get in touch. (We'll supply tea and coffee).*

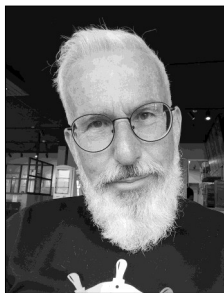
Village Hall Centenary

We are keeping everything crossed that we will be able to celebrate the 100th anniversary of this village building in 2027. Look out for further details later in the year, in the meantime if anyone has past photographs taken in or around the hall, we would love to see them to put on show during the celebrations next year. We are happy to take copies of these special photographs. Please contact the village hall committee – sprattonvillagehall@gmail.com

Thank you for supporting Spratton Village Hall.

Contact Linda – 07808 734124 (bookings)

or sprattonvillagehall@gmail.com



Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal

‘Parting is such sweet sorrow’

As indeed it is, for after 32 happy years living in this pleasant community, my wife and I have decided to migrate to Yorkshire.

So sadly this will be the last piece I write for Spratton News on behalf of the Royal British Legion, as it goes without saying that I must also let go of my voluntary role of Poppy Appeal Organiser.

We’ve done well over the past 6 years, you, my little band of volunteers and I! I received the following note from the British Legion, which I dedicate to all the residents of Spratton, Creaton and Cottesbrooke for their unfailing support each November:

We would like to sincerely thank you for the time you have served as Poppy Appeal Organiser. Without your valued support over this time, we would not have been able to have a presence locally in your area. Whilst you have been the PAO you will have made an incredible difference to a great many lives. You have raised an amazing £14,633.66 in your 6 years as PAO. Thank you.

The money raised each year from the Poppy Appeal helps us to provide vital, life-long help and assistance to the Armed Forces community. This includes providing crisis grants in times of need, providing specialist dementia care, and sport-based recovery programs for wounded, injured and sick Service and ex-Service personnel. You have enabled us to be there when our community face life-changing events. You have inspired donors ensuring we can provide safety and security for the Armed Forces community when they need us.

So, what’s the plan for future Poppy Appeals?

As you may know, there is a very active Branch of the Royal British Legion in Brixworth (of which I am a member). Chairman ‘Eddie’ Edmunds, a passionate (I don’t use this term lightly) stalwart, has agreed to take responsibility for the 2026 Appeal. I would nevertheless be thrilled to think that we could find someone from Spratton to step up to the role of Poppy Appeal Organiser as I did 6 years ago. Should you be at all interested in considering this, please get in

with me and I will be pleased to explain how it all works.

Finally, and most importantly, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the Quiet Ones - that little group of door to door collectors who have worked hard on cold November days over years and in some cases several decades in support of the annual Poppy Appeal.

Thanks also to the two schools and various local businesses who host poppy trays and collecting points each year.

So once again, thank you for all your continuing support for the Poppy Appeal and for your interest in the work of the Royal British Legion.

Chris Prior-Jones

Spratton Poppy Appeal Organiser

chpriorjones@gmail.com

07970 762032



Congratulations to Graham Smith!

Graham has served 60 years
with the local Scout movement.
At the Christingle Service on 15 January
he was presented with
a scouting long-service award
by Alistair Rolt, Daventry District
Lead Volunteer.



**A message
from
The Reverend Caroline**

It's time I revealed one of my big secrets. Yes, I'm writing at the turn of the year and feel that this one I've kept too long. Here goes: I really want to go to Bingo.

It started, probably, with the community lunches in Cold Ashby run by the wonderful, late Christine Sellers with delicious meals cooked by Sally from Creaton. The meal would be followed by a quick game of Bingo and I was surprised by how exciting I found it. Luckily I'm not burdened by an addictive personality so a gambling addiction isn't a worry for me, but I did find the game fun and even a little bit thrilling. I'd love to be able to go along to a Bingo hall with a group of friends and enjoy a few games and share some drinks and snacks. So, I looked at the website for a local venue – my goodness it's complicated! There are so many options and prices, and that's before you even get there. And then how does it work when you actually start to play? Inevitably I keep putting off going and live in hope of someone who already goes asking me along with them.

When I saw all the lovely people gathered in our churches over Christmas, it got me wondering, would anyone really like to come to church at other times? If so, is there a 'Bingo factor' stopping them? Church can seem very complicated with all the different kinds of services, times of day, standing up and sitting down and shaking hands – pretty terrifying when you don't know where to start.

I'd just like to say that if anyone reading this WOULD like to give church-going a go, please get in touch with me or another one of the vicars or talk to someone you know who goes to church. We can find someone who's more used to it to give you a hand over the first few hurdles so that you can find out whether you'd like to make it a part of your life. All our congregations have people who are police checked and trained in safeguarding (a necessary requirement for lots of people who have responsibilities in the church) so there'd be no need to worry on that score.

I tell you what, if more than one person approaches us about this, I'll take it as my challenge to brave it and give Bingo a go.

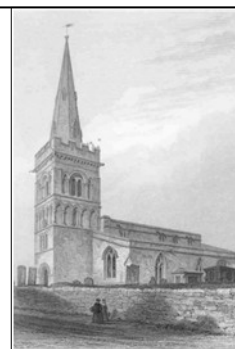
With my prayers and blessings,

Revd Caroline

01604 328629 caroline_burnett@btinternet.com

PS. Having been licensed to the Uplands Group of Churches on my birthday, 28 March, five years ago, it seems wonderfully neat that I shall be 66 years old this year and ready to retire. I have agreed with Revd Allison that my last Sunday in the benefice will be 12 April. The service in Guilsborough Church will be followed by special refreshments as I say my farewells. I would like to offer everyone my thanks for the warm welcome, friendship and support I've experienced throughout my time with you.

St Andrew's Heritage Society, Spratton **(formerly the Friends of St Andrew's Church, Spratton)**



The Heritage Society is relatively dormant at the moment, and still holds a designated small sum for church fabric repairs in contingency for when there may be an emergency which might need urgent funding.

We normally sponsor at least one concert or special activity each year. There is nothing in the calendar yet for this year, but this may well change soon. We are happy to receive suggestions for suitable events. Please contact the undersigned if you can help.

The PCC have completed maintenance issues within the church for the moment (restoring the flooring supports to the south aisle being the main event last year) so we think we should looking at fabric improvements later this year. For example, we think that given the increased footfall in our facilities and the ongoing success of Café Doris, there is a need to improve the Disabled WC to make it more comfortable and user friendly, particularly the unhelpfully small sink, tap and water heater arrangements. If the PCC agree we will help move this matter forward.

We would also like to see the Notice Board in the churchyard either given an upgrade or else completely renewed, and this might form a suitable project for sponsorship from within our collective resources. In respect of the churchyard we would like to express our appreciation to the Parish Council for undertaking much needed safety inspections of the gravestones.

Please contact Bill or David for more information.

Bill (07887 510520) & David (07962231798), Chair & Treasurer resp.

News from

Spratton CE Primary School

In school we have an Eco Team made up of one representative from each year group (2 in Y6). They are Frankie, Mabel, Paige, Hugo Jack A, Harry and Molly. They are led by Mrs Isherwood and Mrs McHugh. The team have been working on several priorities this year to make sure that we can achieve our Green Flag Award again in July. One of them is Biodiversity. We have been looking at the following actions:

- Identify areas in the school grounds for re-wilding to encourage biodiversity.
- Create, prepare and plant a 'grow zone'.
- Set up wildlife cameras to find out what wildlife visits us.

With the help of FOSS (our PTA) we have been able to purchase a wildlife camera and Mr Pykett set it up for us on the field. We were delighted to capture footage of the following visitors, all within the first week...



A fox roaming in the school grounds at night, caught on the wildlife camera set up by Mr Pykett

A small deer enjoying exploring in the school grounds by day



The children have been amazed to see these visitors and have wondered just quite how they have managed to get into our grounds!

Furthermore, we have been taking part in the RSPB Big Birdwatch to find out which species of birds visit us regularly. As part of this, our Hedgehogs class made some birdfeeders to take home to their own gardens. We are sending our data off to the RSPB to add to all the other data they have been collecting. As well as the usual sparrows and pigeons you would expect to see, we also captured:

Great Tits; Blue Tits, Robins, Seagulls, Blackbirds, Crows and Red Kites

Our Eco Team are supported by Maria Gaywood, one of our School Forum members (like a Governor). If you think you can help us in any of our aims, please let her (or us) know. office@spratton.pdet.org.uk We always appreciate donations of any bulbs, seeds or young plants that we can grow on. We would like to know what else the Eco Team can do to support the local community, so let us know what you think. We will be doing another village litter pick soon, to make sure the village is looking spick and span!

Mrs Liz Crofts, Headteacher



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To all Spratton W I members
and village ladies

We had an interesting talk in November about the Air Ambulance and the work they do, and in December, Belinda Brown from a local vineyard, Stonyfield Wine, gave a popular talk and wine tasting.

We were made very welcome by the new owners of The King's Head for our Annual Dinner in January. We had a lovely meal and great service. Many thanks to Nick, Ren and staff.

In February, we had a visit from Jonathan Pittam, who is a Life Coach. His talk was lively and quite inspiring and encouraged us to change to good habits in small steps.

Future W I Events

**Tuesday 10 March ~ AGM and Fish
and Chip Supper ~**

**Tuesday 14 April ~ Line Dancing ~
Gill Bradley**

*Meetings are held every second Tuesday
of the month in the Village Hall at
7.30pm. New members are very welcome
to come along for a couple of free visits.
Join our friendly village ladies and have
an enjoyable night out.*

If you have any queries, please phone:

Marianne Oakes

Spratton WI President~ 07762 883156



Wendy Yvonne

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Spratton Garden Club

Spratton Garden Club

By the time you read this, sunset will be after 5.30 in the evening and sunrise will be at around 6.50 in the morning. The days will be significantly longer than at the start of February and, come March, there will be more to do in the garden in preparation for the growing season. If preparation is key to a successful spring and summer in the garden, then the same can be said for our members in preparing to enjoy the forthcoming seasons with Spratton Garden Club. Let me tell you a little about what we have planned to assist your preparations.

Speaker evenings

On Wednesday evenings, three times a year, we have our speaker events at Spratton Community Club. These evenings are well attended, costing only £2 for members and £3 for non members (Annual membership continues to be just £5). The bar is open and available for drinks and there is a raffle.

The first talk, "Water Features for Wellness and Wildlife" has already taken place when you read this. Joe Pemberton, co founder of Shade Landscapes, told us of his lifelong love of water landscaping. His company has had considerable success: a Gold Award at Chelsea Flower Show and being featured on Gardeners' World TV programme last summer. Joe's lush, tropical style garden in Delapré has already been seen by a few of us; all of whom say it's a beautiful oasis of calm set in a busy urban area. We look forward to seeing Joe's garden next summer on a Club outing.



Members enjoying a talk on water features

On 11 March, Laura Malpas will be speaking about restoring the lost gardens of Canons Ashby; "A Labour of Love".

On 7 October, Karen Gimson will demonstrate and talk about "Creating Beautiful Winter Containers".

Outings

In spring and early summer we have our Wednesday evening visits to local gardens in Bugbrooke (£10) and Priors Hardwick Southam (£12.50). These are self drive outings which include refreshments and donations to NGS. Visiting local gardens is always pleasurable and you can learn so much from them! Car sharing or community transport may be possible for those who don't drive (ask a Committee Member).

Two coach outings are planned this summer: the first, in June, to Houghton Hall in Norfolk and the second to RHS Wisely, Surrey, in September. The costs for each outing will be around £40 (due to the fluctuating costs of coach hire, it's not possible to give a final cost at the moment, sorry!) Members are more than welcome to invite friends along on these outings which are always held on Sundays. Personally, I find it such a treat to know that, after joining the coach in the village, the rest of the day is organised for you and all you have to do is sit back and enjoy yourself.

Committee

We welcome two new Committee Members to our team: Jane Marshall and Carl Waterfield. Many members and villagers will have had contact with both already. Their experience and talents will be a real asset to us and we are grateful for their service to our members and community.

As the days grow longer and we prepare our gardens for the forthcoming season's growth, we hope you agree that our Club has helped to prepare the ground for a pleasurable and varied summer programme. All of the above events will be advertised on both the village Facebook site and in the village shop.

So ... enjoy your gardens and preparations for sunnier days outdoors and please consider joining us for any of the events from our programme outlined here. Happy gardening!

Isobel Bromley

Here are some contact details if you would like further information.

Julie Robinson: 07870751573. Ann Davison: 07828169427

Elaine Pryor : 01604845071.

VILLAGE TIDY UP BY THE WOMBLES

A marathon effort to litter pick the Welford Rd has been completed by Spratton Wombles. 21 bags of rubbish and assorted strange objects were collected. Unfortunately this is an ongoing job to keep our village area clean and tidy.

We are hoping to have our annual clean up day in March (weather permitting) and this will include litter picking, street sign cleaning, clearing cut thro paths and generally improving the look of the village.

The date will be posted at beginning of March when hopefully the sun will be shining. So, do join us and make Spratton a village to be proud of.

Sharon Scanlan



A Welcome for the Swifts

I can't believe it is already time to start preparing for the arrival of our annual visit by those incredible masters of skies and flight, the Swifts ! By the time we have the next newsletter they will be here screaming around the skies and letting us all know the summer has begun. Right now they will be enjoying the insects of Southern Africa high in the sky and never landing till they get back here to breed with the same partners and the same boxes they occupied the previous years. It is a privilege to be able to host them and to watch their skills in the air and the way they bring up the two or three chicks which will seek out new habitats to breed in after 3 or 4 years from fledging. Swifts only come to land when they breed, otherwise stay on the wing.

It is becoming more difficult for them to find high up holes or gaps in the eaves of roofs owing to our continued efficiency in insulating houses and there has been a campaign to persuade the government to make it compulsory for all new -builds to install a nest box or simply put into a wall an 'S Brick' which looks like a normal brick but is hollow and big enough for pairs to breed in. (I have had 3 chicks and the 2 adults fitting into mine!)

Happily the public is more aware of the need to care for the natural environment and the government continues to provide opportunities for public comment. There are several opportunities currently available for us to help reverse the decline of the endangered Swifts (their numbers reduced by 66% between 1995 and 2022) - for example the draft Local Plan mentioned earlier in this newsletter, makes provision saying '*.... to incorporate biodiversity into the fabric of buildings, e.g. with green roofs or with swift, swallow or bat bricks or boxes.*'

In addition West Northants Council is currently consulting the public on local nature recovery. If we are looking to make a difference, in the case of Swift conservation, it is best to focus on one step which could change their fate and that is to make a small change to the planning law to make it compulsory for all new builds to have Swift boxes or S Bricks installed (and hopefully provisions for other species). In a Parliamentary debate the government said it 'expects' local authorities to make new-build planning applications condition that the boxes be installed. We need to lobby our councillors to turn 'expects' into 'must' if our Swifts are to be saved!

John Hunt



SPRATTON NGS GARDENS OPEN FOR CHARITY (supporting the Nursing Charities)

on

Sunday 14th June 2026 from 11.00 a.m. until 5.00 p.m

THANK YOU and PLEASE COME AGAIN! The efforts of everyone who opened their gardens in 2025 in aid of the National Garden Scheme (NGS) meant £3.8 million was made in donations. Each of Macmillan Cancer Support, Marie Curie, Carers Trust, Parkinson's UK and Hospice UK received £450,000. You can see all the donations by visiting www.ngs.org.uk.

Spring is coming, despite the recent wet and grey weather and you are able to find the gardens which are opening for NGS for Spring flowers, notably snowdrops and hellebores e.g. Sulgrave Manor on 2nd March 10.30-3.00; Woodcote Villa, Long Buckby Wharf, NN6 7EW on Sunday 22 March 1-5p.m. You can keep up-to-date with what is happening locally on Facebook @Northants Ngs and on Instagram @northantsngs.

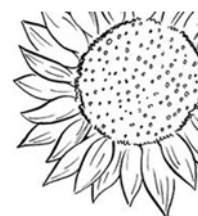
As well as these donations, NGS continues to invest in gardens as places of healing and wellbeing. In 2025 they funded 114 Community Garden projects, supported pioneering nurse-led initiatives through the NGS Elsie Wagg (innovation) Scholarships and continued long term partnerships with Horatio's Garden and Maggie's.

None of this would be possible without the wonderful support of all those who work hard in their gardens to make them enjoyable places to visit. In Spratton the support continues and we are fortunate that yet again our kind gardeners have said they will open their gardens on behalf of the National Garden Scheme (NGS) **on Sunday 14 June 11.00 - 5.00**. Many of the gardens have opened numerous times and it is a special year for Waltham Cottage as it will be their 20th anniversary. Some of the other gardens have had developments repairing old stone walls, creating new paths and new tree planting. We look forward to welcoming as many of you as are able, to come and enjoy the huge variety of gardens and different approaches and planting schemes.

As always, if any of you would like to open your gardens to support the essential work of the nursing charities or would like to help in some other way to make the day go well, please get in touch.

Lucille Knapp

07951 612733



SPG photography year 2025 concluded in December with presentation of our competition trophies. The trophy for the overall winner in both “Open” and “Theme” category went to John O’Reilly. The Alan Roffey runner up trophies went to Sue O’reilly for “Open” and Michael White for” Theme”. Trophies were presented by Veronica Johnson-Roffey. Congratulations to our worthy winners.



Sue O’Reilly Veronica & John Michael White
O’Reilly

After the trophy presentations we were treated to a spectacular audio-visual photography presentation from Brian Pere, a long-standing member and supporter of the club. It was a treat to see some of his excellent images set to music.

Another exciting highlight to our year was hosting the Badby Challenge, an inter camera club challenge/battle between eleven local clubs. Seventy-seven excellent images were entered and a marathon judging job was done by our distinguished judge Naomi Saul (ARPS DPAGB APAGB EFIAP ASINWP) who after some expert critique awarded SPG enough points to give us the trophy by one point! Well done all the other clubs but we have bragging rights this year!

Club	Points	Club	Points
Spratton Photography Group	128	Northamptonshire Natural History Society	127
Abington Camera Club	126	Inspire Photography Club	125
Dunchurch Photo-Graphic Society	124	Daventry Photographic Society	123
Duston Camera Club	122	Northampton Camera Club	121
Banbury Camera Club	121	Towcester & District Photographic Society	117
Badby & District Photo Club	116	24	

Thanks to Spratton Hall school for allowing us to use their magnificent Hunter Hall to host this event.



SPG members with the Badby Challenge cup

Our first meet in 2026 was in January and the theme was “Action, Motion, Movement” and Malcolm Hupman from Corby Camera Club returned to share his wealth of photographic knowledge and judge the images in this and the open category. 1st place in theme went to Michael White and Sue O’Reilly in the Open.



Tread Carefully by Sue O’Reilly



Motorcross by Michael White

All the other images can be seen full size in colour on the SPG website, and a selection of our work is always on display in Café Doris.

Anyone interested in joining this friendly club, please contact us. You’ll be very welcome to come along to one of our meetings in Spratton Hall School.

You can contact us via my number 07721 623714 or **preferably** via our website: www.sprattonphotographygroup.wordpress.com

Veronica Johnson-Roffey, SPG Committee member



SPRATTON SCOUT GROUP

The annual Christingle happened in January this year. It was different but enjoyed by all. The good news is that our popular Christingle Marmalade is now back, and for sale in Café Doris at the Church!

I am happy to say that **Beaver** numbers have increased, and we look forward to a busy term. There is still room for more if you are interested.

The **Cubs** are attending a Fun Day at the John Lowther Centre in February and looking forward to their District Camp in June held at Blackwell, near Birmingham. The **Scouts** are participating in the London Monopoly Run on Saturday 7 March. They are also planning to go to Walesby near Nottingham in August for a Summer Camp.

The **Local Explorer Scouts** (Spratton, Brixworth and Pitsford Group) held a joint meeting with a Daventry Group on Monday. They were visited by "Off the Streets". This organization does talks and workshops to teach Young People safety awareness regarding accidents with knives, gangs and knife crime. It was a very interesting evening. We are hoping to be able to place a Public Accessible Bleed Kit on the street wall of the Scout Hut.

We are all looking forward to better weather so that we can enjoy more outdoor activities.

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**ALL SECTIONS (BOYS AND GIRLS) MEET ON
THURSDAYS IN TERM TIME**

**Beavers 6 – 8 years Cubs 8 – 10 ½ years
Scouts 10 ½ – 14 years
Explorers 14 – 18 years**

*Graham Smith, Group Scout Leader (M)
07740855011*



GIRLGUIDING SPRATTON

Girlguiding is a fantastic opportunity for girls age 7 – 18+ to take on exciting challenges, explore their creativity through fun projects and build lifelong friendships.

All of our units meet every Monday at Spratton Village Hall. Guides enjoy a wide variety of activities including walks, swimming, trips to the Panto and Ice Skating. Girls also get the opportunity to go on trips abroad or UK International camps. They can also go away for the day or overnight. We earn badges for achievements and grow in confidence while having loads of fun. Brownies, Guides and Rangers offer a welcoming space where the girls support each other, try new things and make memories that last.

All of our units are growing well. We would love to have new Leaders to come onboard to take Girlguiding Spratton into the future. Brownies currently have 15 girls in their unit with a short waiting list; Guides have 14 girls on register at the moment with potentially 6 Brownies moving up to Guides throughout the year. Rangers are a smaller unit, currently 5 with some older guides moving up soon.

We really need extra help to run our units, must be over 18, enthusiastic, enjoy having fun, eating cake, able to give one evening a week to join with us. If you would like to know more, see what we do and how much the girls enjoy their guiding experiences, please get in touch for new girls joining or adults to lead.

*Brownies 7 – 10 years Guides 10 – 14 years
Rangers 14 – 18+ years*

Contact details:

Brownies – Katherine
1stSprattonBrownies@gmail.com

Guides & Rangers - Linda
sprattonguidesandrangers@gmail.com

**Bookings for
the Village Hall**

**Please contact
Linda Fletcher
07808 734124
sprattonvillagehall@gmail.com**

Spratton's "Hidden Gem" Community Coffee Shop



Café Doris – February 2026

At this time of year we review our outcomes from last year and we should be holding our AGM shortly. It will be more significant this year as we have certain decisions to make – whether we continue to seek registration as a Charity or indeed become a Community Interest Company or just stay the same.

We are a Not for Profit community organisation, and that will not be changing, whatever we decide.

Our 2025 accounts are being finalised as we speak, and fortunately our turnover continues to increase, nearly some £13,000 in all. This includes covering external events money through our systems, an STCL Grant, Good Loaf Sales and general Coffee Shop income. This will be a new record and deserving of some celebration, thanks largely to you, our loyal customers and supporters. You may have noticed, thanks to the STCL Grant, that we have new Point of Sales systems in place to help with keeping good records of various transactions. This will be very helpful going forward, hopefully.

So anyway, as Treasurer, I feel we are in need of some friendly Accountancy advice please, not with book-keeping necessarily but with getting our structure and Constitution aligned to best advantage. Perhaps we are victims of our own success, who knows ?

If there is anyone in the village who might wish to help our thinking it would be good to know ? Please contact the undersigned in the first instance.

We continue to support Ukraine. 10% of our Coffee Shop takings, excluding bread orders, goes this way, to The British Red Cross. Our total contributions to the respective Humanitarian causes are coming up to the £3,000 mark since we began. Thanks again.

An independent secular Charitable Society operating two mornings per week
(Tuesdays and Thursdays) in St Andrew's Church Spratton, NN6 8HR
For details please contact David Bennett, 4 High Street, Spratton. NN6 8HZ. Tel. 07962 231798
cafedorisccs@gmail.com

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USE OF MOBILE PHONES

John Hunt recently responded to a government consultation on the use of mobile phones—very much in the news at the moment. Here is part of his response:

I am sure most people, especially those with children, will have considered the current debate as to whether mobile phones are becoming too ubiquitous in terms of the numbers of hours during the day we use them, and especially the social, educational and health effects on children. West Northants Council closed its consultation on the subject on 31 January but the government consultation is still open. We often have little opportunity of letting the government know what we are thinking so I thought I would prepare a response to the current consultation and in case it is of interest, I am repeating some of it here:

Consultation Response: Improving Children’s Relationship with Mobile Phones and Social Media

1. Introduction

I am responding to this consultation as someone who has followed the Government’s own evidence on mobile phones for many years. What strikes me most is that the concerns raised in the early 2000s — especially in the Stewart Reports — were never properly acted on. Those reports were clear that children should limit their use of mobile phones, and that we simply didn’t know enough about the long – term effects.

Two decades later, children are using phones far more intensely and at much younger ages, yet the basic scientific uncertainties remain. That is why I feel strongly that this consultation is not only timely but necessary.

2. The Stewart Reports: The Government’s Own Warnings

When the first Stewart Report came out in 2000, it made a deep impression on me. It was the Government’s own expert group saying:

- *Mobile phones **do** produce biological effects in the body.*
- *At that time, there wasn’t enough evidence to say these effects caused harm — but equally, there was not enough evidence to say they didn’t.*
- *Because of this uncertainty, the “**precautionary principle**” should be applied.*
- *And crucially, children should **limit** their use of mobile phones.*

*The follow-up report in 2005 went even further. Sir William Stewart said the evidence of possible harm had actually strengthened, and he recommended that children under 10 should **not own** a mobile phone at all.*

These were not fringe opinions. They were the Government's own commissioned findings. And they have never been overturned.

3. Why the Precautionary Principle Still Matters

The precautionary principle is simple: when there is scientific uncertainty but the potential for harm, you take sensible steps to reduce risk. You don't wait for absolute proof.

That was the Government's position in 2000 and 2005. And if anything, the case for precaution is stronger today:

- *Children start using phones earlier.*
- *They use them for longer periods.*
- *They carry them constantly.*

Long-term studies on people who began using phones in childhood still don't exist.

We are now in the very situation the Stewart Reports warned about: long-term exposure without long-term evidence.

4. What I Believe the Government Should Do

I support a clear, national rule that phones should not be used during the school day. Schools need consistency, and children need boundaries.

I believe that

- *Children under 10 should not own a mobile phone.*
- *Older children should keep use to a minimum and avoid long calls.*
- *There should be strong age-verification and restrictions on social media features that are known to be harmful or addictive for young people.*

Parents need clear, practical advice—not vague reassurances

5. Updated scientific review

We need a new, independent review that looks at

- *Non-thermal biological effects*
- *Long term exposure*
- *Children's unique vulnerability*
- *Mental health and sleep impacts*

6. Conclusion

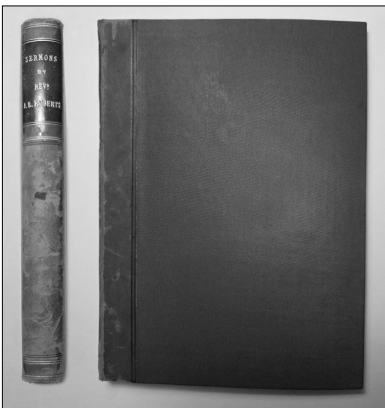
For more than twenty years, the Government has had evidence from its own expert group that children should limit their use of mobile phones and that scientific uncertainty requires precaution. Yet policy has never caught up with that evidence.

John Hunt



Spratton Local History Society

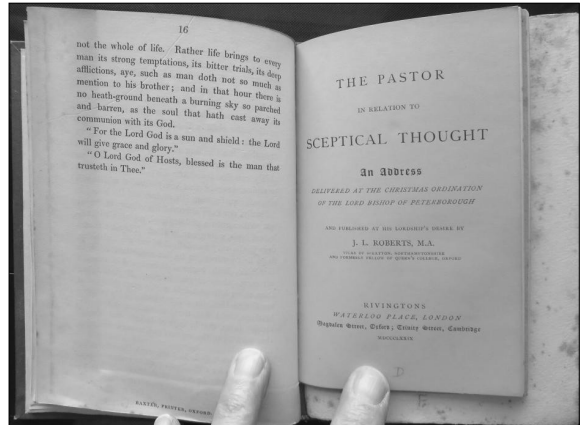
We continue to receive requests for help with information from people researching their family tree. We have just heard from an elderly member of the Manning family in Clitheroe who is writing her memories and wonders if we can help with information about her Spratton relatives.



We also receive information about old Spratton. The Northampton Library contacted us to ask if we would like an old book of sermons by the Reverend J. L. Roberts who was vicar of Spratton 1862-1897. Both he and his wife Georgina were much loved in the village. The book is made up of a number of his sermons printed

at different times and on different sizes and colours of paper and then collected together and bound into a book.

If you have any photos you could contribute to the archive of old Spratton, do let us know. archives@sprattonhistory.org Don't forget events taking place today!



REMEMBER: TODAY IS TOMORROW'S HISTORY

Programme

- | | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Wednesday 18 March
7.30 pm | Agricultural Labourers in 19th century—an illustrated talk by Dr Mike Muncaster |
| Wednesday 20 May
7.30 pm | AGM—7 pm
The 1851 Exhibition—an illustrated talk by Steve Dimmer |

All talks in the Village Hall. Everyone welcome.

£2 members. £3 non-members

Enid Jarvis, Chairman SLHS, jarvis.enid@btinternet.com

The Table Tennis Club

Spratton Table Tennis Club received a very generous grant from the Town and Land Charity in November last year. We are extremely grateful to them for this as it has enabled us to purchase another indoor table to add to our collection—we now have three! This was needed as we are becoming ever more popular with a membership of 16 people.



We started two years ago with one table and have grown steadily since then. We now meet every week for an hour. As we are a large group we play doubles to maximise our playing time but we also stay for an extra hour to play singles and further challenge ourselves twice a month.

If you'd like to come along and have a go at playing, then you are welcome to turn up at the village hall on a Tuesday at 5.45; we have spare bats!

The tables are also there for anyone to use at other times, so if you want to hire the hall to play a game with friends then you can do this too- it's a great sport.

Jenny Tilley

The Northampton & Lamport Railway

The Northampton and Lamport Railway re-opens to the public on Sunday 15 March (Mother's Day), with train rides where Mums go FREE! Trains run every hour from 11am to 3pm.

Also, for that extra special Mother's Day treat, we're offering 'Cream Tea Specials' on the 11am, 1pm and 3pm services. Travel First Class and enjoy a delicious cream tea as you gently roll through the beautiful Northamptonshire countryside. Prior booking for the Cream Teas is essential and tickets must be purchased via our website before midnight on Sunday 8 March www.nlr.org.uk

Other up-coming special events for your diaries include:

- 5 & 6 April – Easter Egg Specials
- 3 & 4 May – Teddy Bear Weekend
- 10 May – Vintage Transport Day

Northampton & Lamport Railway www.nlr.org.uk



LOCAL AUTHORITIES

West Northamptonshire Council		0300 126 7000	www.westnorthants.gov.uk
Spratton Parish Council	Clerk Alan Youel	07715 651904	clerk@sprattonpc.org.uk
West Northants Cllr	Christine Ware	07836 368888	christine.ware@westnorthants.gov.uk

SCHOOLS

Spratton CE Primary School	Liz Crofts, Headteacher	01604 846530	head@spratton.pdet.org.uk
	School Office	01604 846530	office@spratton.pdet.org.uk
FOSS (Friends of Spratton School)	Rob Sabin		info@fosspta.co.uk
Spratton Hall School	Simon Clarke, Head	01604 847292	office@sprattonhall.com

ST ANDREW'S CHURCH

Rector, Upland Group of Churches	Rev'd Allison Twigg	01604 846099	revallisontwigg@gmail.com
Church Warden	Bill Blowfield	01604 847457	bill.blowfield@btinternet.com

VILLAGE FACILITIES

Village Hall Bookings	Linda Fletcher	07808 734124	sprattonvillagehall@gmail.com
Recreation Field Charity	Julian Gaywood	07973 405837	sprattonreccharity@gmail.com
Town & Charity Land	Pat Parish	01604 847734	parishpat79@gmail.com
Editor Parish Newsletter	Enid Jarvis	01604 821260	jarvis.enid@btinternet.com
Café Doris	David Bennett	07962 231798	cafedorisccs@gmail.com

CLUBS AND SOCIETIES

Football Club	Iain Wiseman	07791 844731	iainwiseman@btinternet.com
Garden Club			
Local History Society	Enid Jarvis	01604 821260	jarvis.enid@btinternet.com
Women's Institute	Marianne Oakes	07762 883156	ari@oakesonline.plus.com
Natural Spratton	John Hunt	01604 846705	jfhunt@talktalk.net
Photography Group	V Johnson-Roffey	07721 623714	veronica.johnson@btinternet.com
Community Centre			sprattoncommunityclub@gmail.com
Scout Group Leader	Graham Smith	07740 855011	grahamsmith8hh@btinternet.com
Cub Leader	Ruth Dand	07870 686607	sprattoncubs@gmail.com
Beaver Leader	Carol Constable	07581 029057	carol.constable@gmail.com
Girlguiding, Spratton Brownies	Linda Fletcher	07808 734124	sprattonguidesandrangers@gmail.com
	Katherine Rose		1stsprattonbrownies@gmail.com
Litter Pick Wombles	Sharon Scanlan	01604 820084	sharon.scanlan@icloud.com
Youth Club	Liam Bailey-Shaw	07427 073395	liam@cypn.org
Table Tennis Club	John Hunt	01604 846705	jfhunt@talktalk.net

Cover photograph: Hibernating 7-spot ladybirds. (Photo—John Hunt)



SPRING PLANT SALE

- **MOTHERS DAY PLANTERS**
- **SEASONAL BASKETS**
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- **SEASONAL BULBS**
- **COMPOST 40L**
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