

North Moreton News

Volume 151

December 2025

A joyful celebration of a national treasure



The East window of the Stapleton Chantry Chapel in All Saints Church has been designated a national treasure by the stained glass experts. That is because it dates from the very early 14th century, is of extremely high quality, and because so much of it has survived for over 700 years.

On 17 November the Bishop of Dorchester led a Blessing service to celebrate the window's reinstallation after meticulous conservation by York Glaziers Trust and restoration of the stone tracery by Wells Cathedral Stonemasons. After the Blessing Susanna Wyse Jackson from York gave an inspiring talk on the significance of the window and the skills that the conservators had brought to their work.

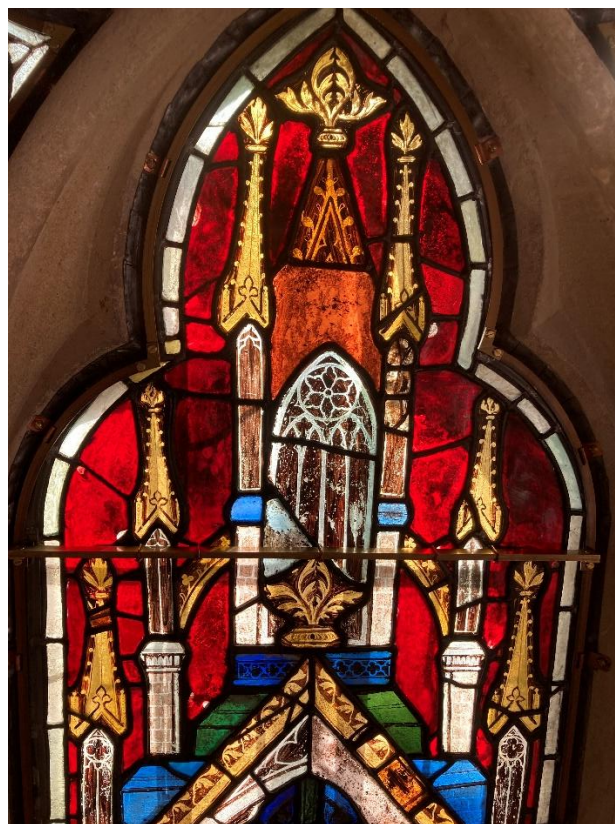
The window was originally put in place by Sir Miles de Stapleton, the Lord of the Manor of North Moreton and a senior figure in the royal courts of Edward I and Edward II. We were delighted that his descendant 21 generations on, Lord Gerald Fitzalan Howard, was able to be with us. He and his family live at Carlton in Yorkshire, the seat of the Stapletons for many centuries.

Huge thanks are due to all of those who contributed in different ways: the teams at York and Wells, Susanna for her splendid talk, our Churchwarden Rob Nickless for many things, and not least the fundraising group led by Chris Macdonald which magnificently brought together total funding of some £250,000, in large part because of much hard work by Steve Vinnicombe. Donations came from many sources, in the village and beyond. Heartfelt thanks are due to every donor. Father Jason led not just one round of hearty applause for the fundraising, but then a second equally hearty round to follow.

Compared with the window's earlier condition, the colours are now much richer because of the cleaning in York; many details that were obscured have been opened up to view; and it now has external protection from wind and rain which should ensure its survival for centuries to come.

Do go and marvel at it.

Nick Sanders



Thanks to Nick Sanders, also, for providing these magnificent images from the restored window

A solution to a North Moreton mystery?

In the South aisle of All Saints Church is the village memorial to those who fell in World War 1. It is beautifully designed. It used to be attributed to Eric Gill, but we now know that it was designed and made by his younger brother Macdonald (known as Max) Gill. We know that it was Max because the original design, signed by Max and dated January 1921, has survived and is available on the internet. Max was a talented illustrator and a maker of intriguing maps. He also designed the lettering still in use for British war graves. He spent some time in at least 1912 living at North End in North Moreton and worshipping at All Saints.



The longstanding mystery is that the design has six names on it, but the memorial has seven – and the addition is Lieutenant William Britt, who was an Australian and up until now has had no known link to North Moreton. We have been in touch with his descendants in Australia and Tony Britt, a great-nephew of William, has recently visited us to see the memorial. He gave us valuable information.

William Britt (1893-1918) is honoured in Australia. He was one of the very first men to volunteer for the Australian Imperial Force in 1914. In April 1915 he was one of the very first wave of Australian soldiers to storm the beach at Anzac Cove at the beginning of the ill-fated operation at Gallipoli. He was wounded there, and a remarkable letter survives, written to his mother from hospital in Alexandria. It is a graphic account of the horrors of war, and can be read at <https://share.google/RnkHeHxGpoP7SzEBV>.

He returned to service and was wounded on the Somme, recovered, and was killed in action on 10 June 1918 during the third battle of Moriancourt. He is buried in a military cemetery in France.

So what is his link to the village? His grandparents lived in this part of the world – there is a Britt family grave at Blewbury – and were early pioneers, emigrating to Western Australia in 1842. They eventually settled North East of Perth at a holding they named Blewbury Farm. William was born there. It turns out that he had a second cousin named Thomas Huggins who lived in North Moreton. The indefatigable family history researchers in Australia have found records that William wrote at least two letters to Thomas Huggins and that William's brother Charles (also a soldier) later visited Thomas Huggins and brought the news of William's death. So we deduce that it was very probably the Huggins family who asked for the addition of William's name to the memorial. If you know anything more, please let Mike Howat or me know.

Nick Samders

2026 Safari Supper



The theme will be 'Pub Names', so come wearing a Crown or looking like a Bear. Move further afield and pair up to represent The Eagle and Child or The Lamb and Flag or into fiction as The Bull, The Rovers Return, or The Leaky Cauldron. There are endless possibilities for enthusiastic costume creators as well as those with more modest or subtle design ideas.

Following a glass of a complimentary of fizz at The Bear participants will receive an itinerary for their safari around the village. You will eat a starter, a main course, and a dessert - each at a different house - before ending the evening back at our real-life pub where medals will be awarded for the best costumes and exciting prizes given when the raffle is drawn. It's a great way to meet people and always good fun.

Application forms will be sent out in the New Year.

This event does rely on enough people kindly offering to host a course but it's primarily a fun evening and not a cooking competition so don't be afraid to get stuck in! Come alone or with a partner – but don't miss out.

Cheers!

The Safari Supper Committee

North Moreton Parish Council

We are pleased to welcome new villagers to North Moreton and it is gratifying to hear that our reputation for tolerance and hospitality that was so in evidence with our Ukrainian guests is still flourishing. The Parish Council is always willing to listen and offer support within their remit, so please do get in touch with us if you have any concerns. Just recently, you will have noticed that new mud flats have been laid to further provide safe parking areas for users of the recreation ground and the village hall, and particular thanks must be given to the Nickless family for their help in coordinating and laying them as well as all the other 'behind the scenes' areas of the village in which they play such a valuable part.

Veronica Gibbs

Village Hall

Thank you to everyone who supported our Christmas Market. There was a lovely festive atmosphere in the hall and a great selection of local traders and some locally-supported charities to solve all your Christmas shopping conundrums. The event is growing year-on-year and this year raised over £400 for hall funds. However, we like to keep it fresh so if you have any feedback on the event, or suggestions for other events in the hall, please do get in touch.

Another regular fundraiser for us is the clothing bank at the side of the hall. While the recycling trade has fallen since it was installed it does bring in a regular income and is *such* a handy provision in the village. They are happy to collect bagged clothes (in any condition), shoes in pairs, bed linen, towels, accessories such as belts, hats, gloves, scarves, handbags and soft toys (but not duvets, cushions, off-cuts or curtains) so please do consider it when you are having that over-due spring clean of your wardrobe.

The last quarter has provided the usual mix of regular hires and private parties and, as part of our community engagement plans, we've been delighted to support South Moreton Pre-School with complimentary use of the hall for their wreath-making fundraiser. We hope it goes well for them and provides some much-needed funds. If you are thinking of holding an event, training, or a family gathering in 2026 and would like to consider the hall as a venue, please do get in touch. I'd be more than happy to show you round.

Huge thanks should go to the Parish Council for leading on the extension of the car park matting on the recreation ground. The hall has been pleased to support this project both in terms of some funding but also practical support from the committee. The car parking area is such an asset to the hall and we are very grateful for their efforts to improve it.

And finally, a plea for help! As a committee, we are looking at ways to make our document and file storing / sharing both easier and more accessible. If you have the knowhow and can offer us a little expertise, I'd be hugely grateful. But whether IT is your thing or you have other skills, if you have a little spare time and would like to get involved in your village hall please do get in touch. We are always on the lookout for extra helpers.

Jo Nickless (jo.nickless@outlook.com) Chair, Village Hall Committee

North and South Moreton W.I.

Our small and friendly WI group meets on the second Wednesday of the month in the village Hall at 7.30pm and we'd be delighted to welcome any new members. We have a program of outings, meals and talks that vary throughout the year: in October we enjoyed a convivial bring and share supper and in November we were educated in crime scene investigation by an ex Metropolitan police Inspector. In December, we will be learning about the stories associated with Christmas and in January we'll be socialising again with a dinner in the pub. Do call Veronica on 07788752628 if you require further information

Stitch n Sewcial

Meetings are held in the village hall on the 4th Wednesday of the month from 7.30pm to 9.30pm.

All crafty projects, and all skill levels, welcomed. We take a break in December and meet again in the new year on Wed 28 Jan, Wed 25 Feb and Wed 25 March. The lighting in the hall is excellent for sewing (or other craft activities) and we'd love some new members so please do come along and join us. Jo Nickless

(jo.nickless@outlook.com)

Moreton Cricket Club

The September issue of the NMN left readers hanging in the air as we awaited results from other games to find out if the Mavericks had retained the Home Counties Premier League Title. I am pleased to say the right results occurred, so we won the competition for the second year in a row. It is a great achievement and I do not tire of repeating that we are competing against town clubs with much bigger resources than Moreton.

Sadly, the John Harrison memorial match was washed out on about the only wet Sunday we had all summer. We did have a very nice prolonged tea in the village hall and the memorial bench (which is by the pavilion) and the cup in John's name were unveiled. At the Club awards night Tom Macdonald (who is standing down as captain after five years) was the first winner of the John Harrison Cup for the player of the year. In addition Dave Powell won the Carpenter Cup and Anthony Barreiro the Lizzy Cross Shield.

We have been lucky to secure some grants from the Oxfordshire Cricket Board for ground improvements. Walkers on the recreation ground will have noted the 120 tons of top soil which have gone on to smooth off the hump by White's Field. The Club is grateful both to the White family and the Parish Council for their co-operation over this. We hope, too, to have a hybrid wicket and a set of role-on covers in place by next season.

One date for the diary...the Cricket Club quiz for the Brian Vass Shield will take place in The Bear on Saturday January 31st.

Mike Howat

Moreton Golf Society

The Autumn meeting of the Golf Society took place at West Berkshire Golf Club. North Moretonians will be aghast to hear that the individual winner was South Moreton's Richard Gordon. Mike Howat came second, Steve Vinnicombe won the longest drive and Dave Powell was part of the winning team to make sure North Moreton had some representation in the hand out of prizes. The Christmas meeting took place at The Springs GC on December 12th, followed by a Christmas meal in The Bear.

Eagerly awaited news on who has won the 2025 Club Knock-Outs will have to wait for the next newsletter since they still await completion. As ever, anyone wanting to join in with the Society should contact Jason Winterbourne'

NMGreenShoots

NMGreenShoots have village honey from the community allotment beehives and apple juice produced from several village apple trees including the community orchard, available to buy in The Bear.

NMGreenShoots Honey (soft set and runny) £6 a jar

North Moreton Village Apple Juice £3.50 a bottle

Alternatively email nmgreenshoots@gmail.com with your order.

If you would like to know more about the community allotment and NMGreenShoots please get in touch by email.

Clare Price

North Moreton Charity Plant & Produce Table

Thankyou everyone for all your donations and purchasing from our village Charity Table We have been able to support Macmillan and Didcot Food Bank in the last few months and we have now raised over £8000 in total. Well done everyone.

Please continue to donate your surplus plants, seedlings, garden equipment and tools for resale in aid of local charities. Also use the box at the table for recycling small and medium glass jars and the apple juice bottles and any of the following: corks, small wooden frames, candle wax remnants . Finally look out for more craft and plant sales next year.

If you have ideas for reusing and recycling please do get in touch

Clare Price (bob.clare_price@btinternet.com)

From the Footpath Warden...

'The Countryside Lies Sleeping'

...is a book I've kept since we lived in Harrow. Collated by the borough librarian it's a collection of sketches and maps that illustrate the transition of Harrow and surrounding villages from a rural area to an urban one. One striking feature is the survival of paths and tracks, long after large houses and simple cottages fell into decay. This is surely due to the necessity to get around on foot.

We have parallels in South Oxfordshire today. Much development is taking place and although paths are often protected at the planning stage, they don't always get to be fully reinstated. Vigilance is needed. In response to concerns South Oxfordshire Council has launched a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP). Much is on their website and they are currently inviting comments (closing 7th January).

I'll be planning a village walk next Spring. If anyone has any particular ideas for routes\ distances etc., please let me know.

Bob Price - Footpath Warden

Building Homes for Teachers in Zambia www.projectnewngoma.org

Do join us for A NIGHT AT THE THEATRE

We have taken over the Mill at Sonning for a night on 2 May at 5.30pm for a special evening of dinner and a romantic comedy 'Jack and Sarah' based on the film starring Richard E. Grant, Judi Dench and Ian McKellen.

We had so much support for Melhuish Farm Opera, we are hoping that you will want to join us for this special evening. Any profits will go to the David Shepherd Wildlife Foundation (DSWF) for a project we have established called Project New Ngoma.

Last year, for my 80th birthday Mandy Shepherd (David Shepherd's daughter) took us to Zambia to see the work that the DSWF do to save orphan elephants. DSWF is active in many countries trying to do their bit to 'save the planet', BUT what came over loud and clear was that the most important way of doing this is EDUCATION!

We visited a school where there are 160 children with only 3 teachers. This is because the school is very isolated and there is nowhere for teachers to live. The headmaster who himself walks 5 miles to school and 5 miles back each day, mentioned the need for homes for teachers. What struck me most was the poverty. No electricity, no running water and no proper roads! Hence the birth of Project New Ngoma to build three teacher accommodation blocks. Do please look at the website and it would be wonderful if you could join us. Tickets are going fast so do apply early. It will be a lot of fun! All most welcome!

Polly and Peter Vacher

Village Novelist

Kathy Howat's standalone sequel to her humorous novel *A Cactus Called Ironside* was published in October.

A Feather Between the Lines by Kath Crew is set in South Oxfordshire and includes some locations with which you will be familiar. It follows what happens when the main character, Veronica (Roni) McNamara, now married with three grown up children, has to confront what happened forty years earlier. Any hope she had of keeping secrets from that time is now impossible. It's character based and whilst humorous, gives pause for thought for everyone who may have been economical with the truth in the past. You don't have to have read *A Cactus Called Ironside* (which encompasses a 60s and 70s childhood, university in the 1980s and a 40 year on reunion in the present day, and which has had over 50 5* reviews on Amazon, Goodreads and Waterstones) to enjoy the second book - but if you think you might read both, do so in the right order because there are spoilers!

Both books are available in paperback or as ebooks.

Buy your copies locally at The Bear, The Wallingford Bookshop, Root One, Brightwell Stores.

Or order from Amazon (Cactus) amzn.to/4dpmVxu (Feather) amzn.to/3JII6MR (paperback or ebook) or from Waterstones, Blackwells (online) or independent bookstores (Cactus) ISBN 978-1-0687637-3-1 (Feather) ISBN 978-1-068 4468-9-4

Excellent Christmas gift solutions - which you could get delivered straight to the lucky recipient's door, courtesy of Waterstones or through Mr Bezos (and even worldwide using his various overseas Amazon sites).

From the archive...

Twenty Years Ago.. The editor wrote '*It is a pleasure for the North Moreton News to welcome yet another new tenant at The Bear Inn. That Tim Haworth and his wife ,Alison, are well known to us all in North Moreton is an added bonus*'

Twenty Five Years Ago... Keith Hutchence wrote on behalf of the NMPC, '*SODC is looking at ways to prevent a repeat of the flooding which so badly affected the High Street and Wallingford Road during the recent storms. The Council Engineer is co-ordinating efforts to try to make sure that there is sufficient drainage to deal with surface water in the village*' (so it appears that not all problems are immediately resolved...). More recent residents may also be surprised to learn, from this edition, that reference was made to piped water only becoming available in North Moreton after 1949 (prior to that villagers were dependent upon about two dozen wells)

Contact numbers and Useful Information

Police Community Support Officers and Non Urgent Polices Calls ; 101

Crime Stoppers ; 0800 555 111

Police and Crime Commissioner to the Thames Valley matthew@matthewbarber.co.uk

NHS non-emergency number ; 101

Parish Clerk ; Clerk@north-moreton.com 07501 033 123

SODC Councillor ; Ben Manning 07946 476733

SODC Councillor ; Anne-Marie Simpson 07770 781 233

Church Benefice Office ; Blewbury ; 01235 850267

Parish Council Chairman Veronica Gibbs ; 07788 752628

Parish Council Transport Representative ; Kathy Howat 01235 813228

Recreation Ground Representative ; Ian Shipton 07801 704 508

Village Hall Bookings ; Marion Shipton NMVH@hotmail.co.uk

North Moreton Charitable Trust ; nmcharitabletrust@outlook.com

Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator ; Mike Tappan ; mike@tappanfs.com

Concessionary Travel ; 0845 310 1111 or www.oxfordshire.gov.uk

Wallingford Volunteer Centre ; 01491 836345

Didcot Volunteer Drivers ; 01235 816709

North Moreton Volunteer Drivers ; 07979 868256 or 07969 349831

Citizens Advice Line ; 08444 111 444

Waste collection information ; southoxon.gov.uk/wastecalendar (or call Biffa on 03000 610 610)

Postal Services ; The Village Stores Brightwell (01491 835551) . Mon-Fri 9.30-5.30 Sat 9.00-13.00
Aston Village Hall . Tuesday 9.30-12.30

Previous editions of North Moreton News can be read on-line at www.North-Moreton.com.

North Moreton News is published four times a year. The editor is Mike Howat. Contact can be made via northmoretonnews@gmail.com. Copy for the March 2026 issue should be submitted by Friday February 27th