

ELKSTONE NEWSLETTER



Hello dear friends and neighbours!

Tonight, the wind gnaws
with teeth of glass,
the jackdaw shivers
in caged branches of iron,
the stars have talons.

Christmas Landscape - Laurie Lee

Yes, December can be cold, and it may feel as though nature is hibernating. We may feel like doing that too, certainly sitting in front of a fire with a good book sounds tempting. But, if health permits, a walk in a bright morning with the sunshine on frosted trees and grass is uplifting and an evening spectacle of swooping starlings is breath-taking.

And December can be a time of reflection, a time to look back, but also to plan and look forward, to feel thankful for what we have and to have hope for the coming year.

Thank you all for being here and being together in this community.

Barbara and Kevin

email: editor@elkstonevillage.com

Deadline for the next newsletter - 20 December 2024

Regular Village Hall Activities		
Indoor Bowls	Every Tuesday, 7.30pm	Ronnie Bury – 870493 or Martyn Wylie – 870441
Art Club	Every Thursday, 9am - 1pm	Penny Casewell – 03330 119663
Yoga	Every Monday, 9.30 – 10.30am	Emma Lowther – 07967 215569

Other dates for your diary		
Waste & Recycling	Recycling boxes, recycling bags, refuse and garden waste	Friday 13 December Monday 30 December (No garden waste collection on this date)
	Food Caddy	Friday 6, 13, 20th December Monday 30 December

Elkstone Parish Church December Services



Sunday 1 December	11.00am	Morning Worship
Everyone welcome with refreshments after the service		
Sunday 15 December	3.00pm	CAROL SERVICE
Everyone welcome with mince pies after the service		
Christmas Eve		
Tuesday 24 December	11.15pm	MIDNIGHT SERVICE

The Village Hall AGM is on 9th December at 7.00pm. Drinks and nibbles provided by the Committee. Please do come along.



Carol Singing on Thursday 19th December. Meet in the Village Hall at 6.30pm to tour the village. Everyone welcome - although we do hope that some of you will be at home to listen! But do come along afterwards to the Village Hall with a supper contribution and drink if you would like to meet up with friends.

Breakfast with Santa at Slimbridge Wetlands Centre. Book online. Time slots up to 2.15pm. (A late breakfast).

The Beetle Drive has been re-arranged for January when it won't clash with Christmas events.

Can you support education in Ghana when you buy your Xmas presents?

Evie Macfarlane is travelling to Ghana in July 2025 to teach and help with building school facilities. She is raising money to support her time there. If you buy anything online, please consider signing up to easyfundraising. This will automatically donate to Evie's cause, at no additional cost to you, when you make an online purchase with most retailers. Most purchases, such as a weekly Tesco shop give £1 or so - but this all adds up. Please email evelyn.macfarlane@icloud.com for a direct link to sign up [which gives £1 as a starter] or go to easyfundraising.org.uk and search for Ghana trip 2025 Evie Macfarlane. She plans to do a talk about the project in the village after Xmas. Thank you!

Christmas Dinner

Every year there seems to be a plethora of advice on how to cook Christmas dinner and how to stay calm when doing it. But our menus are nothing compared to the past, so if you are panicking, think on this.

Plum porridge, as an appetiser to line the stomach, made with a broth of beef or mutton and boiled with plums, dried fruits, wine, breadcrumbs and spices. (Remove the broth and you have our Christmas Pudding – almost).

Then brawn, a fatty cut of boar meat or pork. Preceded, if you were monied, by a boar's head, stuffed, covered in mustard with fruit and herbs and a roasted apple in its mouth. This ceremony has been associated too with Queen's College, Oxford since 1341, in commemoration of a medieval student who fought off a wild boar with a volume of Aristotle. (I've always had my doubts about Aristotle).

After the brawn - other rich meats and — wait for it — Brussel sprouts first serving was recorded in 1587! (I bet some of you are delighted about that).

Then a dessert called frumenty. Also, a suet pudding. And a Christmas Pie.

Then dancing.

I rest my case.

Gloucester County Council News

The A435 Cycleway

The A435 Cycleway, when finished, will link Cheltenham to Bishop's Cleeve, providing a fantastic new and improved walking and cycling route. The A435 Cycleway will form part of the cycle spine, linking Stroud, Gloucester, Cheltenham and Bishop's Cleeve, greatly improving walking and cycling options to homes, employment, education and transport hubs. It will support a greener Gloucestershire and help the county council's aims of becoming carbon net zero by 2045.

Section one of the A435 Cycleway, from the Honeybourne Line to Cheltenham Racecourse Roundabout, is currently under construction and is due to be completed by the end of 2024.

The second section of the A435 Cycleway, from Gloucestershire and Warwickshire Steam Railway (GWSR) bridge to Bishop's Cleeve Roundabout. There will also be a section between Wellington Road to Central Cross Drive near Pittville Park in Cheltenham, which will tie in with the works currently underway on section one, further extending the improved pedestrian and cycle access. Work is due to start on Monday 6 January 2025, and is expected to be finished by the end of autumn 2025.

'Talking Rubbish'

The campaign, called 'Talking Rubbish', has been set up by Gloucestershire Recycles, which is a partnership of Gloucestershire County Council and the six districts. It aims to answer questions about recycling and clarify some of the myths and misinformation.

According to figures from December 2023, the amount of household waste in Gloucestershire sent for reuse, recycling and composting was 52.4 per cent – and more than 60 per cent of what is put in the average waste bin in Gloucestershire could have been recycled.

Households are also contaminating their recycling through well-intended 'wishcycling'. Wishcycling is putting something in the recycling bin and hoping it will be recycled when it cannot or is unlikely to be recycled.

Glass is the number one contaminate, with many households mistakenly adding old or broken drinking glasses to their recycling. Contamination creates problems along the recycling process and can ultimately mean that the recycling cannot be made into new materials.

Plastics are a very important topic for lots of people. The campaign is aimed at equipping residents with the knowledge of which plastics can and can't be recycled easily in Gloucestershire, along with other materials. The campaign will encourage residents to ask questions, with the aim of raising awareness of recycling and increasing recycling rates across the county.

Gloucestershire residents can submit their questions about recycling online and find out more information about the campaign at <https://www.gloucestershirerecycles.com/talkingrubbish>

They can also use the Waste Wizard to find out what to do with items they aren't sure about, including whether it can be recycled kerbside or where the nearest recycling point is for that item. You can use the Waste Wizard at: <https://gloucestershirerecycles.com/wizard>

Residents can also find where their recycling goes on the 'end destination' pages at <https://gloucestershirerecycles.com/enddestinations>

My children love Christmas and they're already picking extra treats off the shelf when we go shopping and telling me what presents they want. I really want to make it a special time for them, but times are tough, and I can't help worrying about overspending and getting into debt. What can I do to manage my finances during the holiday season, and where can I turn if I find myself struggling?

The festive season can be a financially challenging time, and often borrowing money or using a credit card to fund Christmas can seem like your only option. But there are steps you can take to keep your spending under control and avoid falling into debt.

The first thing to do is make a budget and stick to it.

Consider who you're buying gifts for, what other seasonal expenses you have, and how much you can realistically afford to spend. Always keep receipts, or ask for gift receipts, in case you overspend and need to return something. And remember that household bills may be higher during this period due to colder weather and spending more time indoors.

If you've built up debt, please don't ignore bills or letters. Speak to the organisation you owe money to, as they may let you pay smaller amounts.

Pay 'priority debts' first, like rent, mortgage arrears, council tax, and energy bills. For other types of debt like credit cards or loans, gather all the information on what you owe, create a budget, and contact your creditors to set up an affordable repayment plan. This might seem scary, but it's an important first step.

If your budget just doesn't add up and you need help to afford essentials like bills and food, see what cost of living support is available on the Citizens Advice website.

It's especially important to check if you're eligible for the Winter Fuel Payment, which will now only be paid to those who receive Pension Credit or other means-tested benefits. If you make a claim for Pension Credit by 21 December, you might still receive the Winter Fuel Payment.

If you do find yourself struggling financially during or after the holidays, don't panic. Support is out there, and Citizens Advice can help you understand what's available. We're here to help you find a way forward. Please look at the public website first if possible (www.citizensadvice.org.uk). If that isn't possible or you need further help, please call us on 0808 800 0510 or 0808 800 0511 (Monday and Tuesday 10am to 4pm; Wednesday and Thursday 10am to 12.30pm). You can also access our local website (www.citizensadvice-stroudandcotswold.org.uk) to complete our email form.

We will be closed from 1pm on 24th December until 10am on Thursday 2nd January but we will have information about how to get urgent help on our local website.

Nature Notes

From Jessie.

The magic of Christmas is so special! It starts from when we are small children taking part in nativity plays and the excitement of presents and the whole special atmosphere. In the country the night-time carol singing and the jollity of going from house to house is particularly special too.

The holly berries seem to get eaten earlier by the birds, but some berries are perhaps not so tasty and get left, so they can be used for decorations along with ivy. Christmas trees have that lovely scent and look wonderful decorated with lights - each year similar, but different. The surprise this year were two snowdrops out early in spite of the cold weather. Let us continue to be surprised by joy.