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**STEEPLE ASHTON OPEN GARDENS 2019:
GINA'S LAST HURRAH!**

Sunday, 2 June 2019

After 20 years and eleven Steeple Ashton Open Gardens events, Gina Manning is getting ready for her last one in charge. A villager of over 35 years standing, she will be passing the baton on to a relative newcomer to Steeple Ashton, photographer and keen gardener herself, Kathryn Sewell.

The every-other-year event has been central to the fundraising campaign of the St Mary's Church Preservation Trust, raising some £40,000 since the Millennium for the preservation of the fabric of the church, an on-going programme that has included repairs to gargoyles and the North front of the church, as well as to the porch at its entrance on the South side. Built in the late perpendicular style at the end of the 15th century with money from the flourishing cloth trade, the church dominates the village and is always thirsty for funds

This year's Open Gardens spectacular will be held on Sunday, 2 June (1.30pm to 6pm). 14 gardens will be taking part, a mix of large and small, grand and more modest gardens. Included will be The Manor, a 17th century listed building along with Ashton House which boasts the village's largest garden

Steeple Ashton village is an attractive mix of architectural styles, including more than its fair share of listed properties, around a village green with a market cross and ancient overnight lock-up for prisoners on their way to the local assizes. It also has a community owned and operated village shop named the best in Wiltshire in 2011.

Tower draw and additional attractions

A draw to join a conducted climb to the top of the 93ft tower of St Mary's Church will be repeated this year. At the end of the day, three lucky winners and their partners will be rewarded with a glass of champagne and a spectacular view of the village and the surrounding countryside stretching out to the Salisbury plain.

The flower ladies of St Mary's will be selling an assortment of flower arrangements from £5 to £10 outside the church during Open Gardens. And there will also be well stocked plant stalls and cream teas on the village green, a children's competition and Open Gardens Pimms at the village pub, the Longs Arms.

Tickets will be on sale on the day at various points of the village and all children will, as usual, be free.

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