



THE Birches

Community Matters

**NEWSLETTER FOR KINGSTHORN, MUCH BIRCH
LITTLE BIRCH, ACONBURY & WORMELOW**

First published 1977 **February 2021**

A note from the Editorial Team.

What can we say?! The amount of contributions received for the Newsletter this month defies thanks! For anyone who was missed out, our apologies. Nothing has been lost but we ran out of space. Be assured ALL contributions will appear in later editions.

As always keep those contributions coming in. We have had so many thanks from the people in this Community about the newsletter items. They love to hear about local businesses, associations and residents who all have their own unique story to tell.

Given the current restrictions, please check with any of our lovely advertisers that they are running the programmes which they advertise. We believe many have made alternative methods of delivering their valuable services and products.

And again, anyone who is willing to help us save resources by looking up the newsletter online on either Much Birch or Little Birch Parish websites, and/or would be happy to receive your Newsletter in PDF format please let the editor know;

editorial@birchesnews.org.uk.

Also Mike Leigh so you can be removed from the paper distribution list. With your full address, please.

michael@seychelles91.plus.com>

Best wishes
Editor

Who would have thought, as we exchanged good wishes for the New Year at the beginning of 2020, what a disquieting year it would be?

All of us, to some degree, have been affected by this persistent pandemic, whether it is the traumatic loss of a family member or the curtailing of our freedom to go where we please.

Many of us have taken advantage of being at home by taking up a new hobby or pastime and, being lucky enough to have gardens, I have heard people say their garden has never looked so good. What a treat to be outside tending a garden or inside, planning planting for next year, without feeling guilty that we should be busy doing something else! Or walking the dog though our beautiful countryside. How fortunate we are to have all this on our doorstep.

Likewise, we hear of people taking up home baking for the first time. What is more satisfying than feeding your family? There is always something new to try.

With the dedication and expertise of scientists in formulating a new vaccine I, for one, am looking forward to 2021 as being the beginning of the 'new normal' when we can meet friends and family again and get back to living our lives to the full.

Kath Watts

Jobs in the garden for February from Derek Scrivens

Trim winter flowering Heather lightly after flowering.

Good time to prune most roses.

Hardy shrubs that flower on new wood in Summer can be pruned now.

Cut back old Autumn Raspberries to ground level.

If Summer fruiting Raspberries have grown taller than their support, cut stems back to about 10cm (4") above top wire.

Add a general fertilizer (Growmore or Blood, Fish & Bone) to all tree, bush and cane fruit, fork in lightly (roots are just below the surface) and mulch with farm yard manure or compost.

Sow Broad Beans in pots or root trainers and leave to germinate in the greenhouse, cold frame or a sheltered spot outside.

Complete hedge maintenance this month.

Put up nesting boxes.

Continue to feed birds.



Community Café @ Much Birch Community Hall

We had hoped that the Community Café might be up and running again by now, but here we are in another lockdown so we will have to wait!

In the meantime, if anyone is struggling with shielding or isolating and needs help collecting prescriptions or shopping, please ring Kay on 01981 540666 and she will ask one of us to help.

And if all you need is a chat on the phone, that's fine too!



A local group who want to bring people together, strengthen community links and provide relaxed and fun events for all ages.

Much Birch Surgery

Covid Vaccine

Much Birch Surgery were excited to start vaccinating patients on Saturday 19th December working with 5 other practices within the South West Herefordshire Primary Care Network (PCN) from the Larruperz Centre in Ross on Wye. Practices are working extremely hard to deliver the vaccine programme in the week and at weekends on top of the normal practice workload.

The main risk factor for severe Covid infection is age. We will be following the national guidelines set out by the Joint Committee of Vaccinations and calling in patients as per priority groups set out in these guidelines and then working our way down the priority list. The timing of vaccine delivery is out of our hands and we are not informed until a few days prior which vaccine (Pfizer or Oxford) we will receive, or how many doses, therefore appointments are often made at short notice. However, over two weekends and with some shorter in house sessions we have so far vaccinated 280 over 80 year old Much Birch patients and we aim to have completed this age group by the end of this week (w/c 18/01/21). We have also vaccinated the staff and residents of Charnwood Residential Home and the staff and residents of the Voyage Care homes in Wormelow. As a PCN we have now vaccinated over 2000 patients.

We are continuing to roll out the vaccination programme and will be working our way through the priority groups as vaccine is made available. Please be patient and await contact from the surgery, we ask that you do not contact us, this in itself will enable those who need medical attention to get through on the telephone when they need to.

In order for us to continue the vaccination roll out we will need your support to allow us to focus our efforts on getting the job done. We hope, therefore, that we can ask you to think twice before contacting the surgery for minor ailments whilst we manage our biggest vaccination programme ever. You can look at www.111.nhs.uk, or the Practice website www.muchbirchsurgery.co.uk using 'Online Consult' to consider what self-care measures you could take, it will really help to take the pressure off our practice staff and GPs. For more worrying complaints we will be there for you as we have been throughout this pandemic. Many of you will have long term conditions and some of your routine annual blood tests and checks may be delayed for a while without significant risk to you. We ask that you trust your doctor to decide what, if any monitoring is necessary over these next few months.

Website: <https://www.muchbirchsurgery.co.uk/website/M81024/files/newsletter.pdf>

Facebook: [Much Birch Surgery Patient Information Page](#)

**at Much Birch
Community Hall**

Flicks in the Sticks Update

Unfortunately Flicks will not be returning just yet - we plan to return in the new year - watch this space for updates.

If you have suggestions of films you would like us to screen in the future you can email them to muchbirchflicks@hotmail.com

Much Birch Flicks Team

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Hereford Computer Help



A big thank you to Liz Hall and the team for inviting me to contribute to your newsletter.

I would like to provide monthly briefings on how to stay safe and secure online during 2021 and beyond, by suggesting **ONE simple task in each newsletter** that will greatly enhance your safety and security online.

Tip 1 - February 2021 – Change your Email password NOW!

Your main email account is often the gateway to **everything** you do online. Think of the various accounts, subscriptions, memberships that are linked to your email. You may be surprised at how many online accounts you have. I've built-up over a hundred!

Just suppose: a hacker gains access to your email account; what could they do?

They could:

- Reset your password, making it difficult for you to regain access
- Reset your **other** passwords, by making requests for "forgotten password" at other sites
- Access details about you and your contacts from your emails



Your email password should be strong, long, and different from **all** your other passwords. This will make it harder to crack or guess.

Strength in Length

Using 3 random words is a great start to creating a **unique password** that you can remember.

The actual method for resetting your email password will vary according to your email provider (for example: gmail.com, hotmail.com, outlook.com, btinternet.com) but the procedure will usually go something like this:

Visit your email account via your **internet browser** (Edge, Firefox, Chrome, Safari, etc)

Go to Settings, then look for Security / Passwords section

Change your password:

Make it something long (16 characters, yes, seriously, or more)

Make it unique – **DO NOT** use the same password anywhere else

Make it unguessable (avoid names of pets, family names, things that people can guess, or know about you)

A good way is to use three unrelated random words, and then add some numbers, symbols etc, the requirements will be shown – the important thing is LENGTH

Once you have changed it, then update or re-enter the new password on all the devices where you access your email



Changing your email password will go a long way to protecting your identity and improving your online safety.

Next time:

I will expand on passwords; how to increase your security with Two-Factor Authentication (2FA) and, even better, Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA).

Find out more about the many ways I can help by visiting my website:

<https://herefordcomputerhelp.co.uk>

Call 01432 268883 for a friendly chat about how I can provide computer help, technical support and training.

Mark Giles

Owner, Hereford Computer Help

Email: mark@herefordcomputerhelp.com

I'm also on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/hereford.computer.help>



Joy of the Jab

Many vaccines have been given at the Llaruperz Centre in Ross on Wye and we have included a few of the people who have kindly shared their experiences.

JOY OH JOY I'VE HAD THE JAB

I received my Covid 19 Pfizer Vaccination on Saturday 9th January at the Larruperz Community Centre in Ross.

We were met at the carpark entrance and were shown where to park by Ross Lions and other volunteers. They gave everybody a piece of paper with their appointment time to place inside their windscreen. We were asked to stay in our cars until they told us to go for our Jab. In my case it was spot on my time at 8.10 am. I was directed to a door to the back of the Community Centre where I stood for a short time at a suitable distance until the lady outside the door was ready to take my temperature and ask if I was in good health.

Inside the door were several reception desks and I was asked which Surgery I attended (patients from 5 surgeries were invited) and my name and paperwork were quickly taken from the Surgery File and given to me. I then passed along to a Vaccination Table where I was asked several health related questions and what drugs I was taking, before receiving the almost painless Jab!

As a precaution everyone then had to sit on a socially distanced chair for 15 minutes until told that they could leave.

The whole process was extremely well organised and refinements had been made since my wife, Gillian, was there three weeks previously. Our sincere thanks and gratitude to the NHS Staff and Volunteers for a job really well done and greatly appreciated.

Dick Brimacombe



VJ Day*

The great day arrived. My wife and I set out in the gloom, slipping away on our icy *untreated* roads, heading for the Larruperz Centre at Ross. Arriving early to avoid the alleged shortage of parking spaces, we were greeted by a charming gentleman who directed us to a specific space amongst a great number of vacant spaces. He gave us a card to display in our car with "our" time of **9.00** clearly marked.

Eventually we were advised to proceed to the rear of the centre to join a queue of 'non-descript' geriatrics waiting to "enter". At this point, temperatures were taken and questions asked about medical conditions etc. Once inside, more questions, and forms filled in before we were passed to a lady who promptly jabbed us, then sent us to a seating area to wait 15min. before we were allowed to 'escape'.

All-in-all it was an interesting experience. The medical, clerical and organising staff were cheerful, helpful and friendly - **as yet there have been no side effects!**

* **VJ : Vaccine Jab**

Joy of the Jab cont



Sylvia's Covid Vaccination

On Thursday, January 7th my dear wife Sylvia received a phone call which appeared to get her very excited, but, as she now has Dementia, and doesn't retain things too well, she quickly passed the phone to me and said "Can you talk to this lady please, its about a Vaccination appointment!" The lady soon explained that Sylvia was being offered her first Covid vaccination on the coming Sunday at 10:10am, if she wanted it. We accepted this straight away, and were told to be at the Larruperz Centre in Ross at that time, with masks, and for Sylvia to wear something under her coat with short sleeves, and wait in the car until called.

We arrived 10 minutes early, and upon entry to the car park, were given a piece of paper with 10:10 on it, and asked to display it in the windscreen while we waited. We were soon approached and asked to proceed to the entrance at the rear of the building. Once inside Sylvia was checked in, and we were directed to one of the vaccination desks. After a few questions about Sylvia's health, and an explanation about the vaccination, the deed was done!

We were then directed to a large hall, where we had to sit and wait for 15 minutes while they monitored everyone for any reaction to the jab, all socially distanced of course! After the said wait we were finally told we could leave via an exit door at the front of the building, and back to our car.

The whole procedure took no more than 25 minutes, and went very smoothly due to the dedication and assistance of the many volunteers and medical staff, without whom this vital service would not be possible, and to all of them we are both very grateful!

Owen & Sylvia.

Much Birch Church ††††††††††††††††

We would like to say a big thank you to all those people who kindly donated items to our collection for the Food Bank before Christmas. We are very grateful for the response. We are also grateful to Eileen and Dave Jones who kindly transported the sizeable amount of goodies to the Food Bank in Ross-on-Wye, who were extremely grateful for the donated items.

We have recently acquired a black bin for dry rubbish removed from the graves and a green bin for recycling items. Both bins were sited by the water butt but unfortunately the green bin is now missing, so a replacement will have to be sought. The metal 'cage' therefore, is no longer in use and has been removed. Please note however that such items as wreaths with wire frames should be taken away and not placed in either of the bins. We would be grateful for your co-operation.

Sylvia Jones
PCC Secretary



Covid-19 Vaccination

It started with a call from Much Birch surgery to arrange for the vaccination on Saturday 9th January. It included instructions on the time to attend at the Larruperz Centre in Ross-on-Wye also to wear a mask and a short sleeved top. Car parking at the centre was well organised by volunteers who directed entry at the appointed time. After a temperature check and confirmation of personal details vaccination (Pfizer) was performed at one of four or five stations, in my case by the excellent Dr Downing from Much Birch surgery

After vaccination there was a timed fifteen minute wait to check for possible adverse reactions and leaflets were provided on what to expect afterwards and how to report any side effects. A second vaccination is expected in 12 weeks time.

Well done to all those involved in the organisation! Hopefully the rate of vaccination will now accelerate, beyond old and vulnerable people, to include everyone so that we can soon return to being able to socialise and visit shops again.

Mike Morley



BEING VACCINATED

Tuesday, The Surgery telephoned to give me a slot at The Larruperz Centre for a Covid injection on the following Saturday.

I arrived at the Larruperz Centre at 8.20 (slightly worried about traffic at that time of day so gave myself plenty of time). The car park was pretty full.

Masked and wearing a yellow jacket the "Parking Attendant" showed me to a space and put a card in the car with my appointment time on it.

At 8.50 I was called forward to stand in a queue (*properly distanced*) behind two other patients.

At 9.05 I entered Reception, gave my name and was called forward to sit in a sanitised seat. The person giving the injection was suitably attired, wearing fresh gloves and using a fresh syringe. I was asked a couple of questions regarding medication and as there were no problems, I was injected with the antivirus vaccine and asked to wait in the adjoining waiting room, where the chairs were well spaced apart, for 15 -20 minutes to check that there were no adverse reactions to the injection. There were none so at 9.45 I went home.

The injection site was a bit sore by the evening but fine on the following day. The whole procedure was faultlessly organised. Well done to all those who were involved.

S Mathews



If you have a story to tell about YOUR job experience please contact the Editor for inclusion in next month's Newsletter



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Birdwatching for Cats

When my younger daughter moved to London last year her cat, Sheba, came to live with me. She had always been a good hunter and I feared she would prey on the many small birds in the garden so I put away all the bird feeders. It was summer and when winter came I knew the birds would be well fed next door.

I told Sheba that birds were forbidden, though I did not really expect such an independent creature to take much notice. She frequently brought in and ate mice but not a single bird. So far so good.

Autumn arrived and I watched the blackbirds tumbling in the hanging strands of briony berries. As winter came on I missed the daily activity of small birds outside my window but it was only when the weather turned really cold and I saw them huddled in the hedge that I relented.

I filled the feeders and within minutes there was a frenzy of birds, presided over by one large robin whose efforts to be in charge were largely ignored. It was a joy to see all the regulars back - long tailed and marsh tits, blue tits tapping on the window, great tits and coal tits, an occasional tree creeper. a single wren and a pair of nuthatches -very adept at hanging upside down underneath the wire basket of fat balls.

I watched nervously out of the window but there was no sign of the cat. Was she hiding in the undergrowth, waiting to pounce? No, she was asleep on the bed!

A couple of days went by and the feathered visitors were more numerous. A single wren on the window sill, a male chaffinch and a greenfinch joined the tits and dunnocks, then a goldfinch appeared. Last winter's regular male spotted woodpecker became a regular once again and above them all fieldfares chomped on briony.

I was not the only one enjoying all the bird activity. One morning I found Sheba sitting on the table with her front paws on the windowsill, her body tense with concentration as she watched the birds outside. A long tailed tit flew up to the window and pecked at the glass and for a moment or two bird and cat were only two inches - and a pane of glass - apart. The cat watched intently but did not move. Did she realise the futility of pouncing against the glass or has she just discovered a new hobby - birdwatching?



Elisabeth Taylor

Life at Aconbury Court Farm during Covid, with thanks to Mike Leigh for inviting me to share these thoughts :

This time last year, Alan and I were looking forward to a winter break. The thought of pina colodas, hot sun and warm sea, completely overshadowed the rumblings in Wuhan. This strange virus causing flu like symptoms seemed like one more, over-blown news story.

"It's another SARS- and nothing came of that!" How wrong were we...

Now, a year on, we are still very much in the grip of this silent enemy, and my heart goes out to those who have suffered as a result of illness, job loss and mental health issues.

Here in Aconbury however, I am forever grateful to be able to say that life carries on -pretty much as normal.

One of the biggest problems we had was playing catch up with the wheat planting. The appallingly wet 2019 Autumn and winter had left us woefully behind. Thankfully, the rain stopped, and by Mid-March the fields were planted albeit with spring instead of winter crops. From then on our farming life carried on as usual.

We did decide, because of Covid, to shelve our small pheasant shoot last year. A difficult decision as the social side of a shoot is so very important in the farming community. The guns and their guests would always come in for a meal, and we have missed our friends' company and the banter that goes with these gatherings. Luckily, we had still planted many acres of bird cover, so at least the wild life has benefited from these important areas.

The livery yard has been able to continue as normal. Owners can legally travel to care for and exercise their horses, which brings a much-needed sense of normality to our lives. Never before has the therapy value of equines been greater felt!! Aconbury Pods, our fledgling glamping business, has been a stop start affair. However, when we could open again in July, we were incredibly busy. I guess it's an ill wind...

Obviously, the pods are closed again now. All we can do is wait for the Government to give us the green light.

The hardest thing for me personally is the lack of contact with my extended family. Zoom has been a revelation, but can't replace a hug, and Christmas was a very low-key affair compared to the happy madness of normal Christmases.

However, I will be eternally grateful for being married to a farmer (how often would you hear that!!!) and living in such glorious surroundings. My two sons Jack and Charlie are both working at home, so our immediate family life has not been disrupted by this pandemic-unlike so many others.

I will be raising a glass (dry January went out of the window!) to the health workers, teachers, shop workers and all those who have kept going during these difficult times-including farmers! Let's pray the end is in sight, in the meantime keep safe.

Best wishes, Ginny Lilwall.

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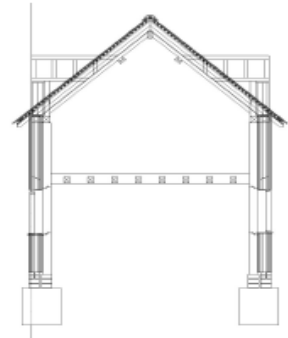
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*For updates and notifications of future meetings
please check out the website –*

www.littlebirchparishcouncil.org.

lbpcclerk@gmail.com

Please send copy for the March 2021 Newsletter to
editorial@birchesnews.org.uk or written
contributions to Liz Hall at Walmere, Wrigglebrook,
Kingsthorpe HR2 8AW.
—by 18th February please.

Little Birch Parish Facebook Group



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Lockdown hasn't changed our lives 'much'

We arrived at Kings Pitts Farm 5 years ago on a Duchy of Cornwall Farm Business Tenancy. Previously we had farmed in Somerset, renting land in several different places and running around like headless chickens daily to check stock! When the opportunity of farming in one place came up, we knew we had to apply and we were lucky enough to be chosen by The Duchy to take on the farm.

It has been a hard slog to get the farm up and running, from fencing to our resident moles, and it's an ongoing project, but we are heading in the right direction. We started off with 400 sheep and then introduced the pigs, but after trying to make it work for 2 years we decided that pigs were not the way forward for us! We have increased our flock of sheep and have also been rearing calves so that we can have our own suckler herd. Farming has become more and more financially unstable over the years and we realised that we had to diversify to enable us to make a success of the farm.



We purchased 2 shepherd's huts and got planning permission to use them as holiday lets which has been hugely successful. Unfortunately, due to Covid, we have not been able to rent these out and despite getting a Government Grant it has been a struggle without the extra income, but Sam has been HGV driving to bring in some extra pennies. We are looking forward to them opening back up again and have lots of bookings for the coming months!

In addition to this, we also run a livery yard from Kings Pitts consisting of both Full and DIY liveries, which also keeps us very busy! Again, this diversification has helped us tremendously and despite Sam, the typical grumpy farmer not ever wanting horses on the land, he realises that he has a very happy wife who loves looking after the Full liveries!!

Since the beginning of the first Lockdown, we have been busy with the Sheep. We have been lambing, then worming and treating for prevention of fly strike, then shearing and weaning of the lambs. The rams have been out with the ewes and we have just had a very successful scanning, showing lots of lambs are on the way. The cycle will start all over again as we begin lambing in March. It's been a busy Year! Taking stock to market has been very different during COVID, it has been a case of dropping off and going, no social interaction or bacon butties! We were also lucky to get an early crop of hay due to the glorious weather.

A good friend of Sam's from Yorkshire was hospitalised with Covid during his lambing time, leaving his wife to lamb alone. We felt it was only right to organise a lorry to collect the sheep from Yorkshire and deliver them to Kings Pitts for us to lamb. Sam was nominated for the Farmers Guardian Hero of the Year for his actions and won! A very proud moment in the year!

We have realised more than ever during Lockdown how lucky we are to live in such a beautiful place especially for our 2 children who can run around freely in the fresh air (we call this P.E for home schooling reasons!) Juggling the farm, paperwork, liveries, children and attempting to home school has been interesting! The phrase "I'm not taking you to A & E today" has been used almost daily!!

Lockdown has however made us realise that there is a greater need now than ever for more mental health support in the farming and rural communities. We have just registered our Charity "We are Farming Minds" to enable us to fund Mental Health First Aid Training to Vets, Feed Reps and Agricultural Suppliers within Herefordshire and to be able to Organise Social events to combat the social isolation often felt and be able to signpost people to professionals who can help.

We had a fundraising event last year and have had a generous donation from HRH Prince Charles to enable us to get the charity started as soon as possible. In Farming everything is so out of your control, the lamb/milk prices, the weather, deaths of animals and sometimes it's really hard to cope with after working an 80-hour week with no one else to talk to. It's really important that we can openly talk about our mental health and not be ashamed. Sam also filmed an episode of Countryfile with Adam Henson to talk about his own experience and the importance of breaking the stigma which surrounds Mental Health. We had our first Mental Health First Aid training sessions which were a huge success and will be organising more as soon as things are back to some sort of "normality".

Sam and Emily Stables

*The Axe &
Cleaver
Much Birch*

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Hi Everyone,

There are few more depressing monikers for months than February fill dykes! February has a bit of a reputation of being one of the worst months, with rain and sleet and snow that lingers before the warmth starts to return in March and we can really start to enjoy Spring. Of course, many of us remember Flanders and Swan and their song about the months of the year "A song of the Weather" - just the thing to cheer you up!

Of course, we have a fairly mild climate, rarely really hot (1976 or 2003) or freezing cold (2010 or 1963) and most of the time, quite amenable for us to live in - though we have to be grateful if we have central heating these days. So we need to have some perspective with the weather, we rarely have hurricanes or major tornados, the rain falls fairly frequently so we don't have droughts and flash floods. There is much to be thankful for. And, who doesn't like being out in the weather, whether it is the sun on your back or the wind whistling around your ears. Enjoy it, it's free!

Revd Mark

Thanks

Mark



Revd Mark Johnson

Rector - Wormelw Hundred Benefice

&

Rural Dean - Ross and Archenfield Deanery
Diocese of Hereford

&

Prebend de Bullinghope

Much Birch Parish Council
Parish Clerk Mrs Alison Wright
Longfield House, Gooses Foot, Kingstone,
Herefordshire HR2 9NE
Tel. 01981 250860
Email: muchbirchclerk@gmail.com

7th January 2021

PARISH MEETING - at the Parish Council Meeting held on the Zoom Platform, during the Covid 19 Virus pandemic, on the 7th January 2021 from 7.30 pm.

The Parish Council heard further updates from the Ward Councillor.

The Parish Council also consulted on a planning application (204377) for a natural burial site on land at Ashe Farm, Tump Lane and heard representation about the application from the public present at the meeting.

There was a discussion about the importance of land owners keeping the ditches by their properties clear of debris (hedge clippings etc.) This was in order to maximise drainage via the ditches and to help keep the roadways clear of water and also potentially ice. Everyone's co-operation in helping to keep the ditches clear will be greatly appreciated.

The next ordinary meeting of the Parish Council will be held on **Thursday 4th February 2021 from 7.30pm** - on the Zoom Platform. All are welcome to attend.

Dates for 2021 Parish Council Meetings are as follows:- February 4, March 4, April 8, May 6, June 3, July 8, September 2, October 7, November 4 and December 2.

Please see notice boards and website for agendas. As always the public and press are more than welcome to attend on Zoom and will have the opportunity to speak directly to their representatives.

Your Much Birch Parish Councillors are:-

Cllr Alison Cook (Chair) Jasmine Cottage, Wrigglebrook Lane, Kingsthorpe, Hereford, HR2 8AW, e mail thecooks@wyenet.co.uk Tel. 01981 540703

Cllr Steve Turner (Vice Chair) The Underhills, Hollybush Lane, Much Birch, Hereford, HR2 8HX, e mail turnersofcrossways@btinternet.com and Tel. 01981 540090

Cllr Andrew Crum Anfield House, Barrack Hill, Kingsthorpe, Hereford, HR2 8AX, e mail a.crum@btinternet.com
Tel. 01981 540002

Cllr Roisin Burge The Old Hall, Barrack Hill, Little Birch, Herefordshire, HR2 8AX roisinburge@hotmail.com Tel. 01981 540724

Cllr David Baldwin The Granary, Much Birch, Herefordshire, HR2 8HS baldwin79@btinternet.com Tel. 01981 541198

Cllr Veronica Thomas 4, Queens Close, Wormelow, Hereford, HR2 8FD Tel. 01981 540646 (no e mail)

Full minutes of the meetings and information etc. can be found on the Parish Council website following the link found in this summary. www.muchbirchparish.org.uk.

You can also find us on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/MuchBirchPC> and Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Much.Birch.Parish>

How can you add eight 2s
to equal 250?



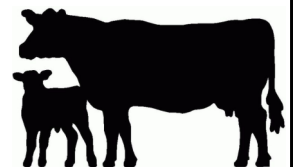
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Happy New Year everyone!

The year has certainly started not quite the way we would like.

Christmas was definitely a unique experience this time with the roller coaster of the county being in the lowest tier in the country before the quick change to tier 3 all in a week. Of course this didn't help anyone's Christmas plans.

This certainly created challenges at the shop with customers plans changing with the changes of tier status. We had some Christmas orders cancelled and amended the orders where we could. Our turkey suppliers were in a difficult situation this time with the uncertain trade and the size of bird customer would want so they pulled in their order dates to ensure they could produce enough of the smaller birds. This left us with the choice of what to do. Do we take a gamble and buy extra or stick to the orders we have. We went with the middle ground and bought a few extra birds, just in case. As you might image the lead up to Christmas is very busy in the butchery with the long days and short nights ensuring the meat and birds are prepared and put ready for collection.

At the end of Christmas Eve all our customers had their orders and we had little stock left. We got it right! Thank goodness. I slept well Christmas Eve!

We had a busy Christmas and it is heartening that our customers continue to have the faith to shop with us and feel safe with us to do so. A big thankyou to all our customers and to those who had to join a short queue outside in the rain on the Wednesday. Thank you! I had a quiet family Christmas with my wife and children. It was very enjoyable and relaxing. We stayed at home for the Christmas period and although missed visiting our families it was great just to have family time and no rushing around. Many people I have spoken to said similar and enjoyed the change from the usual routine of rushing round to enjoying time with the household. Saying that still hoping for normality this year.

We do feel for our catering customers, the pubs, hotels and restaurants. What difficult times they are having with the changes of tiers and the lockdown New Year Eve. It made it impossible to plan and some were left with perishable stock. Please support these businesses that are offering takeaways as an alternative—it is giving them a life line.

We are pleased to say we had a spot check from the Environmental Health Officer and Police checking we are operating to the Covid protocols and laws. We are meeting the requirements. This gives some confidence that they are enforcing the rules to keep us safe. The lockdown this time does look to be having more of an effect on peoples overall mental health with paranoia justifiably rising. It doesn't help with the lock down being during the darkest, coldest and wet part of the winter. Christmas was a saviour for us all. A chance to take our minds off the situation for the day. Having such a celebration post equinox the nights are starting to draw out and thus beginning to give us longer evenings. The Covid vaccine is being rolled out with Herefordshire being one of the quickest counties

in the country to get it out in use. There is light at the end of this tunnel!

We are open and operating Monday to Saturday with our delivery service been taken up by more and more customers. We are operating our click n collect service and still open to walk in customers.

Stay safe and lets look forward to spring and hope to get some normality back.

James Hughes
Pengethley Farm Shop
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Mobile: 07735 338180
email: sale.pfs@btconnect.com
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ALL ASPECTS OF TREE WORK UNDERTAKEN



Ascension Island

The Falkland war of 1982 persuaded us all to get out our old school atlases and see where the Falklands were, then to try and find Ascension Island, on or nearly on the equator between Africa and South America. The volcanic island is 34 sq.miles and extremely hot. It is 700 miles from St Helena and comes under the jurisdiction of that island.

My sister and I visited St Helena in 2000, taking the plane to Cape Town and then RMS St Helena (a cargo ship) to St Helena for 5 days while the cargo is removed and new people embark (Many "Saints" work on Ascension because it has a radio station). In 1963 it had a population of 475, but the American "Wideawake" air base employs about 300 and there is an RAF contingent of about 200. Georgetown the capital is tiny and I was to discover, like England, or our Hereford village, everything shuts on a Wednesday.

Our ship docked at Georgetown after a 1 ½ day trip from St Helena. Like the Captain's team from "Treasure Island" the Doctor, Purser and myself set out to scale the Green Mountain – I felt we needed a few cutlass- carrying seamen to guard us in case Long John and the pirates attacked. However we made it to the top of the green mountain, where the ash fields give way to parslane, roses, ferns and mosses plus some bananas - I had seen a few in St Helena and never realised they grew "fingers up". We didn't pick them. On the way down we paused at an English stile where there was a large orange crab caught in the wire. He (or she) was freed by the doctor and scuttled off to the sea shore with its many friends. The sandy beaches are used by turtles, who come between January and May to lay their eggs. Other creatures one sees are a few wild goats, rabbits, some feral cats and a few partridges. The usual sea birds like sooty terns are also present.

The ship sailed without us as we were catching an RAF plane the next day (Freddie Laker plane I was told but it had an RAF crew). The little church was open and had a nice cool interior, but the post office was closed as it was Wednesday. I wanted to buy some stamps for my collection. The answer was the club. I was made welcome there, with my sister who avoided the walk, by an ex-Falkland teacher on his holiday. He told me how during the war he had taken 2 landrovers with 12 children to a remote farm -well stocked with tinned food- and carried on teaching the children with the lady from the farm for the duration of the war. The only interruption was from a Harrier which dropped a bomb on the playground (luckily it was not playtime and the bomb didn't explode) that was a great excitement for everyone.

The next day – after a night in a semi-air conditioned hut – we took off and landed in Gloucestershire – much more convenient than Heathrow, so I could get the 33 bus home almost to my doorstep.

John Kinross

N.B. For more about the island read "Ascension" by Duff Hart-Davis published in Ludlow by Merlin Unwin.

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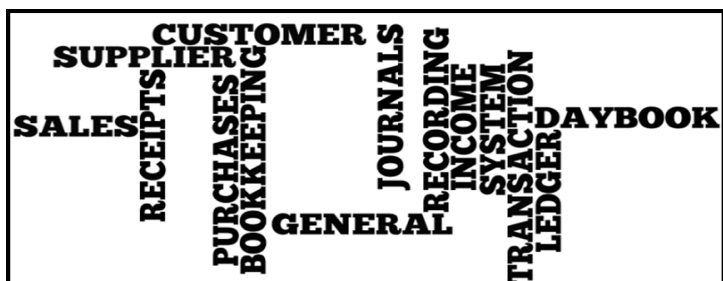
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The Photographic Group

....was formed, just before the first lockdown in 2020, by a group of women wanting to take photographs and improve their skills.



We have various projects such as "close-up", "favourite colour" and "movement". We share and compare our photos on Whatsapp. These photos are taken on the theme of "Autumn/ Winter" in the Birches.

When we can get out and about again we will do more outings like we did last Summer to "Hellens Manor" to get inspirations for our photography. We are starting a Zoom session soon to share photos, encourage each others work and to do some photographic tuition.

Any ladies interested in joining our group please contact Sally Nichol at sally.nichol@btinternet.com or ring 01981 540001



Hedgehog Rescue!

Geoff and Sally Nichol found a baby hedgehog wandering across their lawn. They took it indoors and fed it cat food (as advised and courtesy of the Editor's cat!) until such time as a lady from the Hedgehog Rescue Centre came round to collect it to be cared for until being released back into the wild later in the Spring. What a strange Country we live in—thank goodness!

