



# THE *Birches*

## Community Matters

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

First published 1977 **January 2021**

### A note from the Editorial Team.

Congratulations to the people of Herefordshire for now being in Tier 1!

We are, once again, most grateful to the local community for their contributions to this Newsletter. Without their input there would BE no Newsletter!

And to the distributors who put on their winter jackets and cosy hats to make sure you have our local news delivered to your doorstep.

**A special thanks to Geoff and Sally Nicoll. Geoff who rushes round at a moment's notice to sort out the printer when it will not work and Sally for offering to "babysit" the thing when I have to do other work. We all owe you a lot**

As mentioned in the last Newsletter, 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](mailto: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](mailto:michael@seychelles91.plus.com)>

Best wishes  
Editor

### **Vaccine Talk**

At 10.30am on Thursday, 14th January, 2021 Herefordshire Federation of WI's will host an informative talk given by Dr Kevin Ilsley on all aspects of the Covid-19 vaccine followed by a Q & A session.

This event is open to WI members and to non-members so do try to attend.

To register your interest please email [margaret.norbrook@gmail.com](mailto:margaret.norbrook@gmail.com). The link will be sent out closer to the date.

Margaret Simcock

Chair HFWI



**When Covid 19 hit** Terry & I had to stop volunteering at the National Trust's Weir Gardens, just outside Hereford, as they closed all their properties. We helped with admin and social media but our main role was to be 'parking attendants' at busy times. The usual car park held around 30-35 cars but at Easter this could increase tenfold and visitors stayed longer so it was like getting a quart into a pint point. The main memory of Easter 2019 was four days of high temperatures and easily exceeding the recommended 10,000 steps a day but happy visitors and some interesting conversations when time allowed.

We are also called on when Santa pops in for the day but as The Weir hasn't been able to reopen yet he won't be there this year and the only positive out of that is we don't get cold.

I was always surprised when talking with visitors how far some had travelled just for the day and also those who said they lived just up the road and were visiting for the first time. The latter reminded me that we didn't visit until we retired despite driving past so many times. If you have never been please try and do so next year as it is well worth a visit.

The new year will hopefully see The Weir reopening in time for the stunning display of snowdrops in January/February. Let's hope these first flowers are the precursor to a return to some form of normality, whatever that might be, and I can dig out my hi viz yellow jacket and start directing traffic again!

Alison and Terry Cook

*White bird featherless  
Flew from Paradise,  
Perched upon the castle wall;  
Up came John landless,  
Took it up handless,  
And rode away horseless to the King's white hall*



What is it?

# Much Birch Surgery

## Seasonal Flu Vaccinations

Over the last 3 months we have held 7 flu clinics over week-days and weekends and have vaccinated a total of 2071 people aged 50+ and patients under 50 with an existing medical condition. We received many positive comments about the smooth running of the clinics. Our staff worked incredibly hard, on top of normal working hours and we are very grateful to them. If you are over 50 and have not had your vaccination please call the surgery as we have some limited stock remaining.

## Covid-19 Vaccinations

We have now begun the first phase of the NHS Covid-19 vaccination programme.

Our Practice are starting vaccinations from 19th December.

When it is the right time patients will receive a phone call or letter. This will be either from the Practice or NHS England. The letter will include all the information you will need to book appointments, including your NHS number.

The main risk factor for severe Covid infection is age, so we will be starting with our most elderly patients, and then working our way down the priority list.

Vaccinations are not taking place at the practice. The Practice is working with a group of other local practices (The Primary Care Network, PCN) to administer the vaccine from a central location in Ross on Wye. You will be given the details with your appointment.

## **Please do not contact the practice to get an appointment.**

Information on the vaccine is available on the [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) vaccine - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk) website.

The surgery are doing this in addition to our normal work, so we appreciate your understanding that we may not be able to offer our usual number of appointments while our staff are also delivering the vaccine.

## Dispensary

Since the beginning of the pandemic the dispensary has done everything it can to enable patients to continue to order and receive prescriptions safely and efficiently, including those high risk shielded patients getting a delivery from our wonderful volunteers and staff (thank you once again for your continued hard work).

Many of you may have noticed the new collection unit in the car park where patient medication is ready to be collected. I'm very pleased to say this is going well and has reduced queuing and waiting times but I've not quite managed to control the weather just yet, I'll keep working on that one!

In recent weeks we have encountered more and more patients registering for online pharmacies and medication services such as Pharmacy2U (P2U). The services they offer seem very appealing. However, if you choose to sign up for those services you then become a non-dispensing patient meaning all prescriptions have to be sent to this service and could result in a delay of your treatment.

My appeal to you is to consider your surgery dispensary when you sign up to these services. Every prescription they gain, is lost from us which could cause financial loss to the dispensary and could potentially affect the viability of the surgery as a whole.

I understand some patients have chosen to do this as they don't wish to put any more pressure on the surgery, this is incredibly kind natured and understandable but we are prepared for this and will happily continue to provide medication to you. For those patients that require a delivery service due to being clinically high risk we can arrange to help you as best we can.

Thank you. Tiffany Buchanan, Dispensary Manager

**For more information and news from Much Birch Surgery, please see our most recent newsletter on our website or facebook page, or pick up a copy from the dispensary unit in the car park:**

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

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*'Twas 3 weeks before Christmas, and all through the town,  
People wore masks, that covered their frown.  
The frown had begun way back in the Spring,  
When a global pandemic changed everything.  
But outside my window  
The snow gently falls,  
And I think to myself,  
Let's deck the halls!  
So, I gather the ribbon, the garland and bows,  
As I play those old carols, my happiness grows.  
Christmas **not** cancelled  
And neither is hope.  
If we lean on each other,  
I know we can cope.*

### Jobs to do in the garden for January from Derek Scrivens



Prune young deciduous trees while leafless to improve the structure and with mature trees, thin the branches, and if desired, raise the canopy.

Destroy spotted/blotched leaves of Pansy/Viola as this is probably a fungal disease.

If lawn is not frozen or very wet the edges can be cut with an edging iron or spade. Push soil back from the edge leaving a drop of 10 cms.

Pinch out tips of Autumn sown sweet peas. Provide protection if adverse weather occurs.

If you intend to show large onions (over 9 oz) sow seeds at the beginning of the month in a seed tray or cell tray. Place on a warm window sill if you do not have a heated propagator. When germinated and the seedlings have reached the 'crook' stage prick out and plant into individual pots, providing as much light as you can.

Begin forcing rhubarb by placing a large inverted receptacle over the crowns.

Do the monthly check of stored apples, pears, potatoes and onions, removing any rotten fruits.

Keep bird feeders stocked with fresh food, birdbaths clean and with fresh water, and clean out and rehang nesting boxes.

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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](mailto:muchbirchflicks@hotmail.com)

**Much Birch Flicks Team**



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### Well, what can I say?

In the words of our Queen in 1992, “*this year has been an annus horribilis*” for all of us.

However, we are grateful at Rural Concierge that we were able to restart our day trips and holidays from August until our last day before lockdown on the delightful Dean Forest railway. Little did we know that would be our last trip for this year.

A highlight for this year was our holiday to the English Riviera.

The Redcliffe hotel staff were really friendly, food was lovely, and the weather was kind. On our last day we visited the Great Fulford Estate as a last-minute change to the itinerary. Frances Fulford (from the TV programme ‘Life is Toff’) provided an entertaining tour with many giggles along the way - Especially when a farmer (with a very strong Devon accent) stopped us down the lane and asked Keith our driver “*What are you doing down here in a big thing like that?*”



We are feeling hopeful for next year, especially now the Pfizer vaccine has been rolled out, which should allow us more freedom soon.

Our next trip is not until 17th February visiting Snowdrops in Herefordshire, so we can ease into being more adventurous as the year progresses.

We have received so many supportive messages and positive thoughts throughout; it has really kept us going.

We wish you all a restful Christmas and promising New Year  
Liz & Tony Rural Concierge

For further information please contact:

t: 01432 370514 / 07966 378170 [info@rural-concierge.co.uk](mailto:info@rural-concierge.co.uk) . [www.rural-concierge.co.uk](http://www.rural-concierge.co.uk)

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*Thank you to the editors for* asking me for our take on this Covid year, and how it has affected our business lives. I am very aware that we all have stories to tell and this virus has affected us all in many ways. As we end 2020 and look forward to 2021, I am sure like most people, for all sorts of reasons, we are hoping it will be a far better year.

Our farming though, was hardly affected by Covid, the weather in fact has been far more of a problem, as has the threat of T.B. locally. The very wet winter was followed at the beginning of the lock down by one of the hottest springs on record. Our grass just didn't grow, even our light dressing of fertilizer at the beginning of May did little to encourage any real growth. The hay crop was 30% down on our usual yield.

We have been looking to increase our Hereford cattle slowly, saying goodbye to our continentals, as we are both far too old to be chasing these seriously nutty animals around the neighbourhood!! Unfortunately, the local increase in T.B. meant that our plan of buying 3 or 4 Hereford heifers in the summer to go in with our pedigree Hereford bull was dashed as the vendors herd 'went down' just before we hoped to buy them, we will holding our breath in January when ours will be tested for this horrible disease. Because of lack of hay and worry about T.B. we made the hard decision to reduce our numbers of some of our older ladies. We always find this unbelievably difficult, the group that went included one at 17, a couple more in their teenage years, and very sadly a younger cow who turned out to be extremely dangerous and aggressive at calving time. We now hope the food supply will just see us through until the Spring, and, of course there are now a few less chances of T.B. reactors within the herd.

One of the most disappointing things for me was the cancellation of the Church Fete, having very much been pressganged into taking this on (Mr Caton!!!) I was really sad that it was a casualty of the pandemic. It has spurred me into tidying up the garden though!! However, far more importantly it is a lovely local event where lots of people can meet up, such a shame that these events are now becoming all too rare in the village. So well done to Bob Cameron to for his 'pop up' bar opposite the Castle, and for the initiative he has taken. Hopefully the fete will go ahead this year, and as a bonus we can look to start planning for the Queens jubilee in 2022! Our holiday cottages have fortunately performed very well – when they were open – it appears Herefordshire's space and lower population density made it a popular destination this year, although I do have to admit after 20 years I really didn't miss all the cleaning when we were in lockdown!!

John has worked continuously through lockdown at Sunderlands, having to furlough staff and restructure the company to take in account of the difficulties of working through the problems the virus caused the business, and don't even mention Brexit, goodness knows how that will affect the livestock markets going forward.

At the start of lock-down I was not in school, but as things settled a little, I returned to go in to help in one of the 'bubbles' for essential workers. It is now so lovely to back working with a super Yr 5 class, it is so important we try and keep the schools running as 'normally' as possible, there is no doubt there will be a lot of catching up across the entire curriculum.

Our biggest disappointment was the cancellation of James, our sons' wedding in July, but like so many it has been re-scheduled for this year – just hope I can still get into my posh frock!!

Take care, - Kate Dillon.

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## Much Birch Community Café

It was back in Jan 2019 that a small group of us thought it would be good to create a space where young and old in the community could come together to talk and eat and enjoy each other's company, and the Much Birch Community Cafe was born.



It proved very popular, and lots of people came to the Community Hall to share coffee and cake, and to play board games, and to knit or read the newspaper, and most importantly to chat together. We knitted patchwork blankets to send to Syrian refugees, and made poppies for Remembrance Day, and made a patchwork hanging to which everyone contributed at least one square. We played dominoes and table football, we did jigsaws, and in the summer we spilled out onto the grass outside to play table tennis and boules.

But mostly we ate! Cakes and cookies and bacon rolls and waffles - delicious!

And then came Covid 19. And now the one thing we must not do is mix young and old, close together, inside. Just what the Community Cafe was trying to achieve!

So we had to cancel the March meeting and then April and May and June.....

But we will start again, just as soon as it is safe to do so, and we hope everyone will come back to celebrate together, and to remember 2020 and wonder how on earth we got through it!



### Thanks to our Editor

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our brilliant Editor – Liz Hall. Mixing all the contributions that are sent in to Liz in various ways with the advertising – and then to do it all over again next month, but differently. And to a deadline!

We now have colour – largely due to the effort of Liz - and this makes such a difference!

I like to think that the BIRCHES Newsletter helps to connect this community. It's a privilege to live in such a vibrant, beautiful, rural area. I'm hoping 'BIRCHES' will continue to improve and serve all our readers. *Happy New Year.*

**Mike Leigh**

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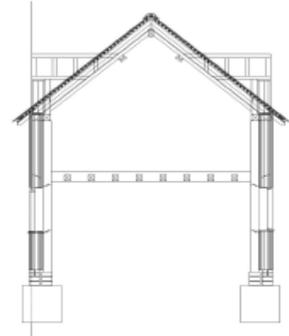
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# Little Birch Parish Council

Your Little Birch Parish Councillors are:

**Cllr Peter Rees** Chair  
**Cllr Janet Gwinnett** Vice Chair  
**Cllr Kate Dillon**  
**Cllr Michael Davies**  
**Cllr Kate Robbins**  
**Angela Middleton** Volunteer Footpath Officer  
**Sophie Glover** Clerk 01432 617306

For updates and notifications of future meetings  
please check out the website –  
[www.littlebirchparishcouncil.org](http://www.littlebirchparishcouncil.org)

lbpcclerk@gmail.com

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

## Little Birch Parish Facebook Group



Find the latest news, events and business listings all in one place.

You are welcome to promote your local business, advertise a local event or post news or information of interest to the village and surrounding area.

Search for *Little Birch Parish Group* on Facebook

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Mark Giles

Mark will be back in the New Year with advice on how to protect ourselves from cyber fraud.

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## PILATES

with Alison Allan

### Alison Allan is back!

I have been Zooming away in the summer but am now back at Little Dewchurch

Social distancing is a must and we can do this with 10 people per class – which means I can keep my eye on everyone!

Rollers, soft balls and circles makes for a varied and fun workout whatever our ability.

After our Lockdown Blues we all need to get moving with Pilates for our physical well-being and our mental health - and while we do this, we will improve our posture, balance, strength and general fitness.

My clients are aged between 18 and 95 so there is no excuse! Just give me a call!

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### New Year – New Beginning

If you have never experienced Pilates why not enjoy a **Free-taster session** to start the year off ... and feel better. This is my New Year offer to anyone in the Little Birches area – I am not far away, just down the road in Little Dewchurch where, for the last ten years, I have been running several different classes ... some for beginners and some for more experienced participants who want to keep moving - and keep fit.

I teach **STOTT PILATES** which is a plan focusing on strength and stability. Breathing properly helps oxygenation of the blood and focuses the mind on each task and helps avoid unnecessary tension, particularly in the neck, shoulders, and mid-back. Exhaling deeply can also help activate the deep support muscles in the body.

That's enough of the technical side ... the most important thing is to keep gentle movement going, keep supple and keep fit.

New Beginner Taster Session on Zoom Thursdays 9.30am - 10.30am

My other classes – Monday 10am and 11.20am

Tuesday 7pm on Zoom

Wednesday 6.45pm and 8pm

Contact Alison on 01432 840491 : 07947 011707 email: [alisonpilates2016@gmail.com](mailto:alisonpilates2016@gmail.com)

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

14<sup>th</sup> December 2020

**PARISH MEETING** - at the Parish Council Meeting held on the Zoom Platform, during the Covid 19 Virus pandemic, on the 3rd December 2020 from 7.30 pm.

The Parish Council heard further updates from the Ward Councillor regarding matters at Herefordshire Council and also local topics.

The next ordinary meeting of the Parish Council will be held on **Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> January 2020 from 7.30pm** - on the Zoom Platform. All are welcome to attend.

**Dates for 2021 Parish Council Meetings are as follows:-** January 7, 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.

A reminder that:-

**Your Much Birch Parish Councillors are:-**

Cllr Alison Cook (Chair) Jasmine Cottage, Wrigglebrook Lane, Kingsthorpe, Hereford, HR2 8AW, e mail [thecoops@wyenet.co.uk](mailto:thecoops@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](mailto:turnersofcrossways@btinternet.com) and Tel. 01981 540090

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Cllr David Baldwin The Granary, Much Birch, Herefordshire, HR2 8HS [baldwin79@btinternet.com](mailto: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](http://www.muchbirchparish.org.uk).

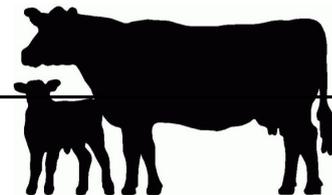
You can also find us on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/MuchBirchPC> and Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Much.Birch.Parish>



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It is organic grass fed Wagyu Cross beef which has been born and raised at **Merrivale Farm**.

The Wagyu breed is known for its beautiful marbling which gives a delicious flavour and texture to the meat.

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Contact Lucy for more information on 07974 053804 or [lucymason@hotmail.com](mailto:lucymason@hotmail.com)

## Lockdown through the lens

It's at this time of year - Christmas, that like many, I look back over the past 12 months. I'm sure everyone will agree that there has never been a year like 2020.

During the first Lockdown I realised how fortunate it was to have a garden. Spending more time in the garden led me to be inspired on a warm, bright day, to take this panoramic shot – from left hedge to the far right.

We have a somewhat narrow garden, but the picture captures the very essence of having your own space. I have never taken so many photos of the garden as this year, showing it changing through the seasons. I'm already looking forward to the Spring and I wish all our readers a HAPPY 2021.

Mike Leigh



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### Thoughts on 2021

*Looking back at 2020, we have a sense that maybe we have escaped the snare that we didn't even know was laid for us! The COVID-19 pandemic seemed to come out of nowhere and caught many of us by surprise. But as we look at 2021, we start to think about what the future will bring. Will there be more of these disasters? Almost certainly. Will we be prepared for them? Almost certainly not! And the reason for this is that we don't really learn the lessons of history. Oh, we will pay it some lip service and say that we must protect the NHS etc. but other things will sneak up on us and distract us once again. We are responsible for COVID-19 because we disturbed creation in our short-sighted quest for more. And life, once disrupted, cannot return to normal. So do we have the courage of our convictions to actually make the changes so that we live more in harmony with the world? Or will we choose to ignore the signs and plough, head-long, into the next disaster? We are supposed to be the most intelligent life form on earth. Can 2021 show that we have actually learned our lesson and make the change for the better? I hope but do not expect it will be the case.*

*Have a great 2021, perhaps that is too much to wish for, so have an OK 2021, it will be better than 2020!*

Thanks,

Revd Mark.

Revd Mark Johnson  
Rector - Wormelow Hundred Benefice  
&  
Rural Dean - Ross and Archenfield Deanery  
Diocese of Hereford  
&  
Prebend de Bullinghope

