

The Birches



Community Matters Newsletter – April Edition

Kingsthorne, Much Birch, Little Birch, Aconbury & Wormelow

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Pancake Night at Little Birch Village Hall

We had a very enjoyable evening with good company and delicious pancakes with a variety of fillings on the menu.

A big thank you to all involved!



Refurbishment of LB Village Hall: Step 1 completed!

Work has started on improvements to the Little Birch Village Hall.

Improving drainage to prevent damp was step 1. Step 2 is to replace the defective heating system. Then there will be more to follow!

This doesn't affect the hall usage or bookings and we'll keep you updated.

Read more on page 8



Happy Easter
from
The Birches Team!



Would you like to play a part in the running of Little Birch Village Hall? – See page 3 for more details!

The Birches Newsletter is also available online at www.birches.news

Jobs for the garden in April



The daffodils have flowered early this year and have delighted with a superb show. They were battered by strong winds in the middle of March but most managed to stay upright. Their early display may present a problem for Margaret, as she depends on daffodils to decorate her adopted window, at Easter, in Little Birch Church. Hopefully some will still be available. Various January and February seedlings have been potted on and are slowly growing away. At the time of writing the propagator is still full of pots and seed trays. The early seed potatoes are chitted and waiting to be planted, as are some broad beans which have been hardened off in the cold frame. This can be done when the soil has dried and warmed up a little more.

Here are a few ideas for April:

- Deadhead Daffodils flowers as they fade but don't cut the leaves off or tie them in knots.
- Now is a good time to move or plant evergreen trees or shrubs as long as the ground is not dry or waterlogged.
- Plant out Autumn and Winter sown sweet peas. Seed can be sown direct into the border now.
- Mulch as much of the borders as possible with manure, compost or woodchips to a depth of 5 – 10 cms.
- It is not too late to repot pot bound houseplants moving them on to a pot one size larger than the one they are leaving.
- Protect fruit blossom from frost with fleece if practical.
- Plant early seed potatoes at the beginning of the month and main crop at the end, or beginning of May. If they pop their heads up and a frost is forecast draw soil over the leaves or cover with fleece.
- In a prepared seed bed sow, beet, carrots, leeks, parsnips, spinach, salad crops including spring onions and peas.
- Plant onion sets and seed grown onions.
- Sow Brussels sprouts early in the month, and also small quantities of brassicas for successional crops through the Summer.
- Pot up tomato and pepper seedlings.
- Sow squashes, courgettes, cucumber and sweet corn on a bright window ledge or in the greenhouse.
- Keep listening/watching the weather forecast so that tender plants can be protected if a frost is imminent.
- If you have forced some rhubarb, harvest stems at 20-30 cms long. Afterwards mulch around the crowns with manure or compost and do not harvest again until 2028 because forcing weakens the plant.
- Nesting is now under way so keep feeding the birds and provide fresh water.
- Sow a small patch of wild flowers if you have a bit of space.
- Leave a little area of lawn uncut if practical.
- Divide any overgrown marginal or bog plants in your pond to prevent them becoming too congested. Anything to be discarded should be left on the side of the pond for a day or so to allow creatures to return to the pond.

Derek Scrivens

Gardening Club News



By the time of printing we will have held our AGM.

The next meeting will be on Wednesday April 29th at 7pm and is a Talk by Pamela Singer (of the former Forest of Dean and Valley Trust). "A tale of 2 Rivers – The Spectacular Severn and the Wistful Wye" – with a smattering of fun facts.

Gardening club is usually held on the last Wednesday of each month, 7.30pm (7pm for tea & coffee) at Little Birch Village Hall, with a few date changes for special events and trips. New members and visitors are always welcome.

Contact email: ktlbgardeningclub@gmail.com



FREE DEFIBRILLATOR TRAINING SESSION

Training session on the use of the defibrillator and its maintenance and resuscitation and care of the patient, given by trainers from Herefordshire Heartstart.



Saturday 18 April 2026

MUCH BIRCH COMMUNITY HALL

10:30 am - 12:30 pm

Free session – open to all of the community
Please register with Sylvia Jones 01981 540980
email mbchsec@gmail.com by 17th March

Garden Maintenance & pruning
Planting Schemes
Weed/Moss Control
Garden Waste Removal**

Kyle - 07850921889
thejollygardener2502@gmail.com

arts alive **FLICKS IN THE STICKS** at Much Birch Community Hall

Thursday 23 April - IS THIS THING ON? 15

As their marriage quietly unravels, Alex faces middle age and an impending divorce, seeking new purpose in the New York comedy scene while Tess confronts the sacrifices she made for their family - forcing them to navigate co-parenting, identity, and whether love can take a new form.

'Is this thing on?' is a comedy-drama directed by Bradley Cooper, co-written with Will Arnett and Mark Chappell, and loosely inspired by the life of English comedian John Bishop.

Tickets £5 (£4 under 16s)

Refreshments including hot dogs and ice cream available from 7pm

Tickets available in advance or on the door (cash or card payments accepted) - for further info or to book tickets please email muchbirchflicks@hotmail.com or call 01981 540097

For further information about films and screenings visit www.artsalive.co.uk

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Or email lucymason@hotmail.com
Merrivale Farm Little Birch
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Bookings & Hall Manager required for Little Birch Village Hall



Due to our current manager retiring from the role after over 8 years of loyal service to LBVH, we require a new manager with effect from the AGM in June, when Linda Maden leaves the post. The role involves:

- Taking bookings and dealing with the bookings from initial contact to completion of the booking.
- Invoicing for hall rental and liaising with the Treasurer on financial matters and other hall expenses.
- Liaise with the cleaner before and after the booking
- Maintain the online calendar of events and bookings
- Other duties include liaising with the cleaner for coordination of general cleaning

The holder of the role will also be a member of the LBVH Management Committee.

There is a job description which can be obtained from Lesley Chapman (Chair of LBVH). Tel. 07834 771838.

I'm sure Linda will be only too willing to discuss the role with anyone who is interested. It is a vital role for the Hall and for the community, so I do hope there will be someone who will be able to help to run the Village Hall, with the very strong committee that we have.

Lesley Chapman, Chair of Little Birch Village Hall



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- * Counselling
- * Awareness Training
- * Social Events
- * Befriending
- * See our website for details

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www.wearefarmingminds.co.uk

Email:

wearefarmingminds@gmail.com

Call our Support Line:

0808 802 0070

Or text:

07786 203 130

Local Information

Little Birch Parish Councillors

- Cllr Steve Coles
- Cllr Tom Palfrey
- Cllr Chris Atkinson
- Cllr Nick Deacon
- Cllr Kate Dillon

Polly Smith (Parish Council Clerk)

✉ lbpcclerk@gmail.com

🌐 www.littlebirchparishcouncil.org

Footpath Officers



For any queries about footpaths contact:

Little Birch & Aconbury

Chris Fowler

☎ 07931 292998

Email ✉ chrisfowler1@hotmail.co.uk

Much Birch and Kingsthorpe:

David Irwin

☎ 07766 135068

Email ✉ david.irwin13@btinternet.com

Photography Group



We're a friendly local group with a common interest in photography.

Come and join us:

Contact Sally Nichol for more information

07803 032928

sally.nichol@btinternet.com

Table Tennis



Come and join us to play
on the 1st Tuesday of the month!
Little Birch Village Hall 7pm to 9pm
Only £3 which includes refreshments!

Contact Sally Nichol

07803 032928

sally.nichol@btinternet.com

Little Birch Village Hall Committee

- Lesley Chapman (Chair)
- John Ellis-Braithwaite (Treasurer)
- Cathy Ellis-Braithwaite (Secretary)
- Linda Maden (Hall bookings)
- Kate Dillon (Parish Council Rep)
- Geoff Nichol (Maintenance)
- Iris Lloyd (Gardening Club)
- Jane Bolam (Drama group)
- Sam Davies (Committee member)
- Tonya Barnett (Drama Group)

The Birches Newsletter Editor:

John Ellis-Braithwaite

Email ✉ editorial@birchesnews.org.uk

Local Social Media Groups

Find out more in these groups:



Facebook

Much Birch Parish Group

Little Birch Parish Group

King's Thorn & Little Birch Gardening Club



Instagram

King's Thorn Little Birch Gardening Club

Art and Craft Space



Have an art and craft afternoon away from the hustle
and bustle of life every Thursday
at Little Birch Village Hall!

2pm to 4pm

Bring your WIP or PhD in whatever art and craft you
are working on – or start something new!

Only £3 which includes refreshments!

Contact Sally Nichol

07803 032928

sally.nichol@btinternet.com

Church Services in April



Wednesday 1st – Wednesday in Holy Week

7.00 p.m. at Little Birch Church – Compline

Thursday 2nd - Maundy Thursday

7.30 p.m. at Much Dewchurch Church – Holy Communion with Tenebrae

Friday 3rd – Good Friday

10.30 a.m. at Much Birch Community Hall – Good Friday Reflection with music and images

Sunday 5th – Easter Day

9.15 a.m. at Much Dewchurch – Holy Communion with renewal of Baptismal promises

11.00 a.m. at Little Birch – Holy Communion with renewal of Baptismal Promises

Sunday 12th – 2nd Sunday of Easter

9.15 a.m. at Much Birch – Holy Communion

11.00 a.m. at Little Birch – Morning Worship

Sunday 19th - 3rd Sunday of Easter

9.15 a.m. at Much Birch – Morning Worship

11.00 a.m. at Little Birch – Holy Communion in Traditional Language

Sunday 26th - 4th Sunday of Easter

9.15 a.m. at Llandinabo – Holy Communion in Traditional Language

A message from Revd. Mark: The ripples of war

Hi Everyone

Back in 1938, when Germany was agitating to take over Czechoslovakia (as it was then), Neville Chamberlain, British PM at the time, said "A quarrel in a faraway country, between people of whom we know nothing". In the pre-global age, he could get away with saying something like this. Not many British people travelled abroad, not many had links with the Czech people, and we didn't really depend on the country for anything.

How things have changed! As I write, there is conflict in the Middle East, again, this time Israel and the US are attacking Iran, which is fighting back with drones and missiles. The impact of this war is already being felt in terms of heating oil and petrol prices. And the ripples of this war will continue to spread across our globalised world for years to come.

So, before WW2, wars could happen in far-off places, and there would be a bit in the paper and maybe on the radio news, but chances were, their impact on daily life in the UK would be limited. Now, however, with all of us dependent on oil and much more interconnected, the fallout will be greater and last longer. Everything from the price of flying to your holiday destination to the cost of fertiliser and the flour that makes the bread for your morning toast will be affected to a greater or lesser extent. Now it seems that the old way of doing politics – war, empire building, etc., leads only to the impoverishment of many, rather than building up a nation or a people and making them all more wealthy, it is time to look to a new way. It is what the UN was envisaged to do, but that too seems to have failed.

So, can we find a way in which nations can agree to settle disputes? I think we need it, but are we rational enough to find a way to build such institutions so that everyone respects them? I'm not so sure!

Revd Mark

St. Mary's Church Lent Lunch

Thank you to everybody who supported the Lent Lunch in aid of Sight Savers. We had a gathering of twenty six people who came along to enjoy a lunch of homemade soups, bread and cheese. It is always a lovely event and £210 was raised for the Sight Savers charity. Thank you for the donations of the bread and cheese. The soups were made by Pauline Rogers, her delicious spicy pumpkin, Emily Roberts who made her lentil Dahl, there was nothing left to take home, master chefs Peter and Christine Dowsett made carrot and coriander with a swirl of cream and topped with fresh coriander and Jenny Caton made her wholesome leek and potato. They were all superb and most people did their best to try them all. Thank you to everybody who was involved, we look forward to next year.

John Caton



**St Mary and
St Thomas a Becket
Church, Much Birch**

**Concert of Songs
for the Spring
with**

Gaudemus

**Friday 8th May at 7.00 p.m.
in aid of church funds.**

Donations welcome.

**Refreshments afterwards in the
Community Hall.**

Much Birch Parish Council

Details of meeting held on 5/3/26

The parish council held their March ordinary Parish Council Meeting on Thursday 5th March 2026. The parish council discussed the Much Birch Neighbourhood Development Plan, which was undergoing a rolling review program in order to reflect changes in national and local planning policy.

The parish council heard about projects being planned to help improve local footpath access and work was ongoing with footpath publicity, parish walks and a dedicated website for footpath related topics. The Ward Councillor, Toni Fagan, was in attendance at the meeting and she updated those present about Herefordshire Council topics and also highlighted the need for improvements to public convenience provision in the light of considerable unsanitary local littering being experienced. The Ward Councillor had been instrumental in clearing up a lot of deposited littering in the parish.

The next ordinary Parish Council Meeting of the Much Birch Parish Council will be held on Thursday 2nd April 2026 from 7.30pm at the Much Birch Community Hall. All are welcome to attend.

Details of forthcoming meetings are in the column to the right.

Much Birch Parish Council

Councillors

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

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

Cllr Chris Pickering-Grey 4 Court Farm Barns, Much Birch HR2 8HT email: chris@pickering-grey.uk Tel. 07712 813218

Cllr Michael Agyeman Little Willow, Wrigglebrook, Kingsthorpe, Hereford, HR2 8AU email: magyeman92@gmail.com Tel. 01981 540840

Cllr David Irwin email: David.Irwin13@btinternet.com Tel. 07766 135068

Cllr Steve Turner The Underhills, Hollybush Lane, Much Birch, Hereford, HR2 8HX, Tel. 07768 206296 email: turnersofcrossways@btinternet.com

Parish Council Clerk: Mrs Alison Wright email: muchbirchclerk@gmail.com

Much Birch Footpath Officer:

email: MBfootpaths@btinternet.com Tel. 07766 135068

Dates for the forthcoming meetings:

02/04/26, 07/05/26, 04/06/26, 02/07/26, 03/09/26, 01/10/26, 05/11/26, 03/12/26

All are in Much Birch Community Hall from 7.30pm.

Full minutes of the meetings can be found on the Parish Council website: www.muchbirchparish.org.uk
You can also find us on X (formerly known as Twitter) at <https://twitter.com/MuchBirchPC> and Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Much.Birch.Parish>

Join us at the Community Café @ Much Birch Community Hall

Saturday 11 April 2026
10:00 - 12:30

and every 2nd Saturday of the month

9 May

13 June

11 July

For more information or if you are in need of transport contact Lydia on 01981 540323 or socialfabric@hotmail.com



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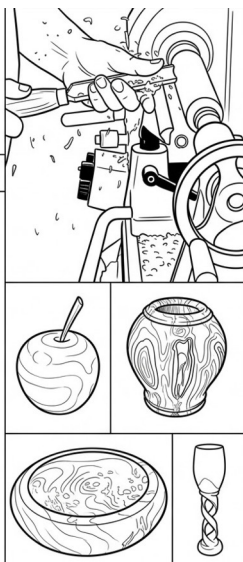
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You don't need a lathe, just a love of working with wood to come along and enjoy our evenings. See our website www.herefordshirewoodturners.uk for more information or contact me at secretary@herefordshirewoodturners.uk

Peter Dennis, Secretary of Herefordshire Woodturners

Rosemary Rigby's 90th Birthday Party



Rosemary Rigby would like to thank everybody that contributed to the collection for the Ross Action Committee Mini Bus in honour of her recent 90th Birthday. The total was £1,251 and that will be a tremendous help in keeping the bus wheels turning.

Thank You!

Little Birch Village Hall



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Contact Linda Maden
on 07849 637242
www.birches.news/lbvh

Coffee & Books at LB Village Hall Held in the morning of the first Thursday and third Saturday of the month



~~~~~ Book of the month for April

The book I would like to mention this month is: Discovering Timber-Framed Buildings by Richard Harris. It is a very small book but packed full of interest. When it came out, Architects Journal said "it was the best general book on (England's) timber-framed buildings."

It is full of fascinating detail, such as how, in the past, carpenters made beams out of tree trunks, what type of timber they used for each job and the tools that were available.

The book is extensively illustrated by the author with explanatory drawings and contains photographs which are, appropriately, black and white.

Because buildings were often pre-fabricated off-site and then carried or shipped to where they were put together, some way of identifying what pieces went where was needed. This is why carpenters' marks were invented. From these we can trace how the building was assembled. I'm sure that anybody who works with wood would find this book interesting, and those who love local history, as I do. It is particularly topical at the moment as the film Hamnet has just come out, which was shot mainly in Weobley, one of our Black and White Villages. In January, a Hamnet-inspired walking trail started in Weobley, taking visitors through areas where it was filmed.

Jennifer

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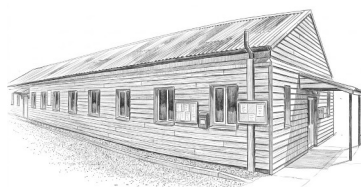
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Update on Little Birch Village Hall



In the next couple of weeks the Village Hall heating will be completely replaced. The heating has been gradually giving up over the last year, and sadly breathed its last breath about a month ago!! The work should be completed in the w/c 23rd March. Also, we are finally starting the process of refurbishment of the toilets and the Bar area. To this end, we had to get a survey in the Ladies to see where the damp is coming from. Thankfully, it is not a huge issue and can be easily remedied. So in the week commencing 16th March we contacted a ground worker to dig a drainage trench to the right of the main door, and then around the back of the Hall. The next step will be to have someone in to take off the plaster in the Ladies on the facing wall to make sure no damp is getting in from there. Once that is done(!) we can start the works on the refurbishment. We ask that you bear with us as these works progress, and we will keep everyone posted - either on Facebook, or in the Newsletter - as to each stage as we get to it. It's exciting times - I know that the refurbishment has been long awaited - but now it is actually going to happen!

Lesley, Chair of Little Birch Village Hall



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For further information please contact the **Secretary Sylvia Jones** on **01981 540980** or email : mbchsec@gmail.com or visit the website: www.muchbirchcommunityhall.org

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April Weather by numbers

While we often think of April as a month of non-stop showers, it is historically one of our drier months compared to the autumn deluges. Here is what the averages look like for Hereford:

Average Daytime High: 13°C

Average Overnight Low: 3°C

Rainy Days: Approx. 14 days

Daylight Gain: Sunrise moves from roughly 6:45 AM to 5:40 AM by May 1st.

The Wind on the Ridge

For those living in the more exposed parts of the Birches area, April can be particularly breezy. As the land warms up faster than the sea, we often experience shifting "spring gales." These winds are essential for drying out the ground after the winter soak, making it the perfect time for the local gardening club to get stuck back into the soil—provided the late frosts don't catch your tender seedlings!

Tip: "Cast not a clout till May is out." This old saying refers to the flowering of the May-tree (Hawthorn), not the end of the month. Since Hawthorn usually flowers in late April or early May, keep those winter coats handy for a few more weeks!

Did you know?

As of March 18, 2026, the Dogs (Protection of Livestock) (Amendment) Act 2025 is officially in force across England and Wales. This is the first major update to livestock worrying laws since 1953 and gives the police much stronger powers to handle irresponsible dog owners.

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Seniors Pilates is at Little Dewchurch Village Hall Mondays 11.15am to 12.15pm

Join Alison Allan for Pilates – sessions are taught as small group classes and as individual 1:1 sessions.

Pilates is a great way to keep your body feeling agile and energised. The movements focus on posture, alignment, core strength balance and flexibility.



**Tai Chi Movements
for Wellbeing**

tmw is at Little Dewchurch Village Hall Thursdays 10.45am to 11.45pm

Join Alison Allan for Tai Chi movements for well being. A beautifully flowing and carefully selected sequence of movements designed to enhance and promote our physical and emotional wellbeing. The movements, which have origins in Tai Chi, Chi Kung and meditation are simplified and can be performed standing or seated making it accessible to everyone.

Book Now for Pilates or tmw:

☎ 07947 011707

🌐 www.perfectbalance.life

Email ✉ alison@perfectbalance.life



Email: richard@actonbuilding.co.uk

Mob: 07863134329

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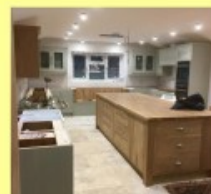


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DAWN CHORUS WALK

SUNDAY 5 APRIL

Meet: 5.30am at Merrivale Farm (HR2 8BA)

Walk starts: 5.45am

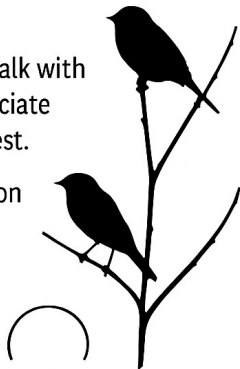
Distance: Around 3 miles

Dogs: Not permitted

Enjoy an early-morning walk with plenty of pauses to appreciate the birdsong at its very best.

When we return, the Mason family will be serving:

- Bacon butties
- Toast with marmalade
- Tea or coffee



Donations towards St Michael's Hospice are welcome

PLEASE LET ME KNOW IF YOU'D LIKE TO COME SO WE CAN PLAN NUMBERS:
CHRIS FOWLER – 07931 292998

(Text preferred)

I would like to encourage you to get up very early on 5th April and join us, for what is always a really memorable experience. Below part of the report that was printed in the Birches Newsletter after last year's walk.

Crossing the fields as the sun rose behind Athelstan's Wood, the birdsong increased Bob and Gervase (our birdsong experts) explained that Song Thrush numbers, which have worryingly plummeted in recent years, are on the rise again, due to a change in slug pellet chemicals.

As we tramped the woodland paths, we heard Blackbirds, Robins, Blue Tits and Great Tits, Chiffchaffs, Jays, Wood Pigeons and both Green and Greater-Spotted Woodpeckers. We also heard the Black Cap - the most tuneful of the woodland Warblers, whose song has been compared to that of the Nightingale.

We later spotted a Raven flying overhead and those with good hearing picked out the sound of a distant Goshawk. Gervase was particularly excited to spot several Gold Crests - the UK's smallest bird - at the very top of some pine trees, where they nest.

We will be walking approximately 3 miles with plenty of stops to listen to the birds, then finish Back at Merrivale Farm for Bacon Butty (or vegetarian alternative) tea or coffee. I hope you can join us.

Chris Fowler

Defibrillator Locations

IN A LIFE THREATENING EMERGENCY CALL 999

AEDs are available to use locally in case of sudden cardiac arrest. A defibrillator is an easy to use, medical device that analyses the heart's rhythm and if needed, delivers an electrical shock (defibrillation) to help the heart establish an effective rhythm.

- **Allensmore** Locks Garage
- **Backney** on the garage wall at Market Gardens Cottage
- **Bridstow** on the outside of the village hall
- **Garway** on the wall outside the Garway Moon pub Harewood End at Harewood End Inn on outside of the pub at the back in the beer garden.
- **Little Birch** on the outside of the village hall
- **Llanwarne** on the wall by steps leading up to the village hall
- **Much Birch** on the outside of the church hall
- **Much Birch Axe & Cleaver** on the side of the pub
- **Much Dewchurch** outside Steiner School, first building after the church
- **Peterstow** at the Yew Tree pub
- **Sellack** on the outside of the parish hall (key code needed)
- **St Weonards** old BT phone box off the A466 between the church and Forge Cottage
- **Wormelow** at the Cricket Club & Carrot & Wine shop Wilton on wall at the BP garage on the roundabout

Do you have something of interest to the community which you would like to appear in the next edition of The Birches?

The deadline for the April edition is
Friday 17 th April 2026

You can contact the Editor at the following email address:

editorial@birchesnews.org.uk

Would you like to advertise with us?

11 editions per year (No August newsletter)

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1/8 page £4.80 per issue or £48 per year

1/4 page £5.40 per issue or £54 per year

Email ☎: editorial@birchesnews.org.uk

Much Birch Old Charities

This charity was created over 100 years ago to be of benefit to those living in the parish of Much Birch. The objectives of the charity are to help children, young adults or the elderly with a one-off grant.

In order to request an application form please contact Rev Mark Johnson - email: revmark100@yahoo.co.uk