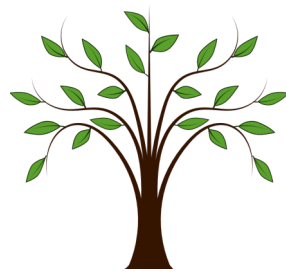


The Birches

Community Matters Newsletter

Kingsthorpe, Much Birch, Little Birch,
Aconbury & Wormelw February 2025



My 80th Birthday

Well, I reached 80 last month! Celebrated with an excellent afternoon tea at the Pilgrim Hotel, joined by a few friends. In my speech I said that 23 years ago Jennifer and I moved down from Chesterfield to Little Birch. It has become a brilliant choice. We have a very good community, provided by many groups in 3 parishes and covered by the Birches newsletter. We count ourselves very lucky to be living here! **Mike Leigh**
Thanks to Mike for years of delivering the Birches Newsletter in the villages, Editor

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!

Bring your WiP or PhD in whatever Art or Craft you are working on. Or come and start something new.

£3 per session to include refreshments.

For more information contact Sally on
01981 540001 or 07803032928
email sally.nichol@btinternet.com



Little Birch Village Hall
Presents

Cinderella

NEW DATES

Friday 24th Jan 7pm

Saturday 1st Feb 2pm

Saturday 1st Feb 7pm

Saturday 1st Feb 7pm

All ticket sales for matinee performance on 1st Feb to go to St Michaels Hospice

~~SOLD OUT~~

~~SOLD OUT~~



Adult Tickets £10

16 & under £5

To book tickets call
Tonya 01981 540898
Margaret 01981 540374



Thursday 13 February - THE BOOKSHOP PG

England, 1959. Free-spirited widow Florence Green risks everything to open a bookshop in a conservative East Anglian coastal town. While bringing about a surprising cultural awakening through works by Ray Bradbury and Vladimir Nabokov, she earns the polite but ruthless opposition of a local grand dame and the support and affection of a reclusive book loving widower. As Florence's obstacles amass and bear suspicious signs of a local power struggle, she is forced to ask: is there a place for a bookshop in a town that may not want one? Based on Penelope Fitzgerald's acclaimed novel, *The Bookshop* is an elegant yet incisive rendering of personal resolve, tested in the battle for the soul of a community.

Tickets £5 (£4 under 16s)

Refreshments including hot dogs and ice cream available from 7pm

Coming up in March

Borderlines Film Festival screenings

Saturday 1 March - THE OUTRUN 15

Friday 7 March - SMALL THINGS LIKE THESE 12A

Borderlines tickets - £5.50 (£5 under 16s)



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

FLICKS IN THE STICKS

FLICKS IN THE STICKS

**Coffee Morning with Book Exchange
Little Birch Village Hall
Thursday 6th & Saturday
15th February 10-12 noon**

Enjoy a cup of tea or coffee, some cake or biscuits. Make new friends, catch up with old friends. Take a book, leave a book or both. Families & well behaved dogs welcome

Little Birch Village Hall

At Little Birch Village Hall Committee meeting we got a bit nostalgic, remembering many people who have been involved over the years— growing flowers and veg for the Garden Club's annual Show, running the Coffee and Books sessions, painting scenery for the panto, making soup for Lent lunch, helping neighbours and friends, or putting skills to work in doing repairs to the hall. There have always been willing and capable hands and fun to be had along the way. The Birches Newsletter keeps us informed of the many events and clubs so if you are new to the village do join in. We welcome all to the Village Hall meetings on 3rd Thursday at 7.30pm. We need someone to take minutes at the monthly meetings. If you may be interested contact Ben Roberts 07702760789

**King's Thorn & Little Birch Gardening Club
Dates for your Diary**

**January 29th: Nathalie Mignotte
Seasonal Colours in the Garden**

A look at colour through the seasons from the former college lecturer. Nathalie is currently employed at local independent garden centres so will be able to inform us on trends and new introductions.

February 26th: Julia Morton - The Value of Traditional Orchards and Best Pruning Practices

Herefordshire Wildlife Trust Nature Account Manager will enlighten us on the value of these increasing rare havens for wildlife.

Advanced Notice: March 26th: AGM and a practical workshop on tool maintenance and how to look after your soil.

Do come and join us for any or all of these talks - Members Free and visitors £5 per talk.

Any queries contact Lesley Chapman 07834 771838

**Table Tennis Tuesday 4th February
Little Birch Village Hall 7-9pm £3**

Join us at the

**Community Café
@ Much Birch Community Hall**

Saturday 8 February 2025

10:00 - 12:30

and every 2nd Saturday of the month

8 March

12 April

10 May

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



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Little Birch Parish Facebook Group

Find the latest news, events & business listings all in one place. You are welcome to promote your local business, advertise a local event or post news and information of interest to the village and local area.



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Other Saints in February

Although Valentine tends to get all the attention, there are a number of other saints whose feast days fall in February, alongside the official end of the Christmas and Epiphany season with the Feast of Candlemas (or The Presentation of Our Lord at the Temple).

The most important (i.e. a red letter day) is Matthias (24th). He was the disciple who followed Jesus from the beginning and was chosen to replace Judas. It is not known whether he died in Jerusalem or in Apsaros in Modern day Georgia. We then have a number of "minor" saints and martyrs. Anskar (3rd) – who was a missionary Bishop in the 9th Century and worked among the people of Denmark and Sweden, George Herbert (27th) known now as a hymn writer ("The God of love, my shepherd is" and "Teach me, My God and King" etc,) but was also the leader of the community at Little Gidding, which was trying to reclaim a more egalitarian church in the time of the middle ages.

Included this month is also Janani Luwum (17th) – the most recent martyr, killed in 1977. He was Archbishop of the Church in Uganda during the time of General Idi Amin, and so angered the dictator that he had him killed, along with two of his cabinet ministers.

Going back in history we also remember Cyril and Methodius, they were brothers and brought the gospel to the Slavic peoples in the 9th Century. St. Cyril also developed the Cyrillic script to help the spread of the Gospel in the native tongue of those around modern day Bulgaria, Serbia and such areas. Their feast day is 14th February so they often get forgotten when we celebrate Valentine.

It is a good thing to remember the saints of old, and the newer ones as well. Their faith and persistence are good examples for us to follow.

Reverend Mark

Services for February

Sunday 2nd February (Candlemas)	9.15 a.m. at Much Dewchurch – Holy Communion
	11.00 a.m. at Little Birch – Holy Communion
Sunday 9th February (4th Sunday before Lent)	9.15 a.m. at Much Birch – Holy Communion
	11am at Little Birch—Morning Worship
Sunday 16th February (3rd Sunday before Lent)	9.15 a.m. at Much Birch – Morning Worship
	11.00 a.m. at Little Birch – Holy Communion in Traditional Language
Sunday 23rd February	9.15 a.m. at Llandinabo – Matins

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TheJollyGardener2502@gmail.com

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**Send items for newsletter to
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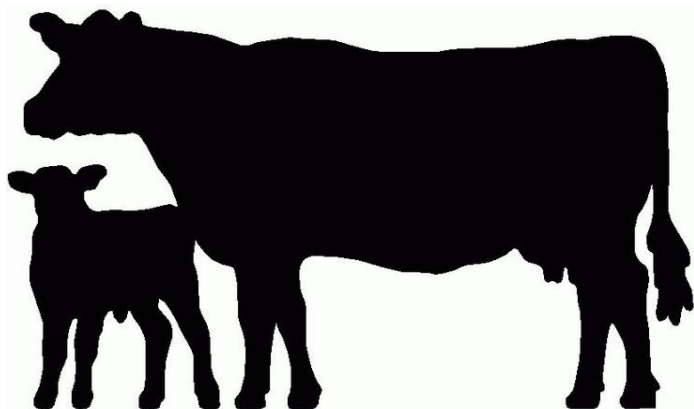
**The Birches Newsletter is also available online at
www.birches.news and www.muchbirchparish.org.uk**

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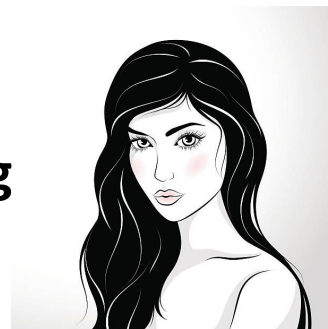
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Much Birch Parish Council

At the Much Birch Parish Council Meeting held in the Much Birch Community Hall on the 9th January a new councillor was co-opted, Steve Turner, who rejoins the parish council after a break of some years. Welcome to Steve.

There was discussion about three local planning consultations and comments were put forward: Planning Consultation 241292 - Glendene, Wrigglebrook Pitch, resolved as an objection and comments sent regarding watercourse issue.

Planning Consultation 243057 - The Old School, Much Birch, resolved no objections.

Planning Consultation 243018 - Land at Helenswood Farm, Kingsthorpe, resolved as an objection and comments submitted regarding multiple aspects.

The dates for the forthcoming meetings in 2025: February 6th, March 6th, April 3rd, May 8th, June 5th, July 3rd, no meeting in August, September 4th, October 2nd, November 6th, December 4th.

The next Ordinary Parish Council Meeting of the Much Birch Parish Council will be held on Thursday 6th February 2025 from 7.30pm at the Much Birch Community Hall. All are welcome to attend.

Much Birch Parish Councillors

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

Cllr Roisin Burge The Old Hall, Barrack Hill, Little Birch HR28AX email roisinburge@hotmail.com 01981 540840

Cllr David Irwin, 5 The Old Mushroom Farm, Much Birch, Hereford, HR2 8HY email David.Irwin13@btinternet.com Tel: 07766 135068

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

Cllr Michael Agyeman Little Willow, Wrigglebrook Lane, email magyeman92@gmail.com

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

Parish Clerk Mrs Alison Wright Longfield House, Gooses Foot, Kingstone HR2 9NE email muchbirchclerk@gmail.com 01981 250860

Minutes of meetings www.muchbirchparish.org.uk.

You can also find us on X (formerly known as Twitter) at <https://twitter.com/MuchBirchPC> and Facebook

Photography Group

We are a friendly local group who are keen and enjoy our imaging skills. We invite anyone who has an interest in taking photos to come and join us. You will be made very welcome. For more information please contact Sally Nichol. tel. 07803 032928 01981 540001 email sally.nichol@btinternet.com

Little Birch Parish Councillors

Cllr Steve Coles Cllr Tom Palfrey
Cllr Chris Atkinson Cllr Nick Deacon
Neil Barrington, clerk lbpcclerk@gmail.com

Website www.littlebirchparishcouncil.org

Footpath Officers

If you have any queries about footpaths contact:

Little Birch and Aconbury

Chris Fowler chrisfowler1@hotmail.co.uk
07931 292998

Much Birch including Kingsthorpe:

David Irwin david.irwin13@btinternet.com
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We run a **FREE 24 hour Support Line 7 days a week** for farmers and their families within Herefordshire who are feeling distressed and need someone to talk to anonymously.

Counselling:

We provide **fully funded counselling to anyone in the Herefordshire farming community** who may be in emotional distress.

Training:

We offer **FREE mental health awareness training** to anyone living or working in or with the farming community in Herefordshire.

Social Events:

We run a series of **FREE social events throughout the year** to break the isolation often felt by the farming community in Herefordshire.

Befriending:

Befriending volunteers offer companionship and support to people who are isolated and lonely – they may visit you at home and/or phone for a regular chat. A befriender can offer conversation and a listening ear to those that need it.

Call our Support Line:
0808 802 0070
Or text:
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General enquiries: wearefarmingminds@gmail.com
www.wearefarmingminds.co.uk



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Jobs in the Garden for February

Early January presented us with a few days of winter weather, snow and a couple of nights of hard frost. For a day or two it was impossible to get parsnips, carrots and leeks out of the ground. However sprouts, cabbage and winter cauliflower are plentiful this year, once I could remove snow and ice off the netting protecting them from pigeons!

I've sown mixed salad leaves, cauliflower, cabbage and calabrese in cell trays which have germinated in the heated propagator and a few tomato seeds in a pot – they are still keeping their heads down at the time of writing. Just looking forward to the first snowdrops appearing. Daffodil leaves are several centimetres tall, both in our tubs and in areas of the garden with some shelter. The new gardening year is getting under way.

Let's See What We Can Do

- *Trim winter flowering heather lightly after flowering.
- *Good time to prune most roses.
- *Prune hardy shrubs that flower on new wood in summer.
- *Sweet peas can be sown in pots, root trainers or the cardboard 'inners' of toilet rolls.
- *Keep amaryllis going by cutting faded flower stems to the base. Keep warm and watered but not saturated and feed according to the instructions on your chosen fertilizer.
- *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.
- *If you grow vegetables you can plant shallots.
- *Plant some early potatoes (Rocket or Swift are quick growers) in a tub, empty fertilizer or paint bucket, empty compost bag, all with plenty of drainage holes. Put 4 inches (10 cm) of compost in the bottom, put 2 or 3 potatoes on top of that with their 'eyes' looking upwards, then another 4 inches of compost on top of them. Keep moist and, importantly, frost free. As the potatoes grow keep adding compost with a little general fertilizer, still keeping the compost moist.
- *Put up nesting boxes.
- *Continue to feed birds.
- *The compost heap, bonfire and any piles of wood or rubble should be disturbed cautiously in case there are sleeping creatures within.

Derek Scrivens

The Darkling Thrush

I leant upon a coppice gate
When Frost was spectre-gray
And Winter's dregs made desolate
The weakening eye of Day
At once a voice arose among
The bleak twigs overhead
In a full-hearted evensong
Of joy unlimited
Thomas Hardy



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The advertisement for BCS Birch cleaning Services features a blue bucket and a mop with a yellow head. The text is in a clean, sans-serif font. The company name 'BCS Birch cleaning Services' is prominently displayed. Below it, the contact information is provided: 'Domestic cleaning', 'birchcleaningservices@yahoo.com', and 'Annette Birch 07787134275'.

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Birch cleaning
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A Holiday with a Difference by Eric Joseph Part 2

In the distance we can see a huge gathering of trucks. Off we go to join them. Rumour has it there are cheetahs and there they are - five cheetahs - two adults and three teenagers, beautiful and seem to be oblivious of us.

Oops!! There's great excitement. One of the adults is off like a rocket, chasing a warthog, misses that and comes back with a rabbit. The cubs chase the mother to grab her kill. She plays with them and eventually gives her catch away. The kill is surrounded by trucks but the cheetahs ignore us.

Behind us is quite a large herd of impala (commonly called "fast food" because of the white M pattern on its rear implying McDonald's) or perhaps they are Thompson's gazelle. The cheetahs are looking alert. We are between them and the impala. The cheetahs are using the trucks as cover, moving between them, just feet away. The impala must be about three hundred yards away.

Suddenly the chase is on at phenomenal speed. The cheetah mother makes her kill and brings it back into the circle of trucks about thirty feet in front of us. The five of them set to enjoying their meal. How were we so lucky, on our second day, to experience so close, something so unusual that even Joseph our guide had never seen in twenty years?

After lunch we set out again. More hippo, lots of giraffe, gazelles everywhere, some ostriches, more cheetahs, a hyena slinking away and lots of birds.

We are still in Maasai country as we drive across the rift valley. I am surprised at the numbers of cattle, sheep and goats that are being herded across such poor ground. Most of the cattle look so fit and healthy. The biggest surprise is the amount of litter in the villages and towns. One area we travelled through was very cultivated and there were stalls along the road selling all sorts of fruit and vegetables.

At one place they were drying maize on huge sheets or tarpaulins, I did see a few small combine harvesters which seem to have come from the ark, but they were doing the job.

Another strange thing was one chap with a three seater settee across the back of his motorbike taking up half the road. Others carried the full family. Two or three sacks of grain was quite common. The towns were busy, with huts as shops for every thing, hotels, churches, chemists etc.

The biggest businesses seemed to be lorry repairs and tyre changes. Another oddity was to see so many men sleeping along the roads and in the villages, why aren't they working? Everywhere we see women carrying heavy loads or doing hard manual work!

Along the road there were occasional communal stores that sold crafts, mainly animals supposedly all hand crafted locally. Everyone was friendly, but pushy in a gentle sort of way. Doe (as she does) got chatting to one of the ladies, in no time they were laughing together and suddenly they were sisters - great fun!

It was a long climb out of the rift valley, hampered by so many crawling lorries and the occasional roadside vendors who were roasting corn on the cob and selling to moving lorries. We came out of the valley and pulled into a nice restaurant for a

lovely lunch before heading into Nairobi to the home of Karen Blixen, a Danish woman who bought a 6000 acre farm. Her story is told in the film, Out of Africa. We head off to a restaurant called the "Carnivore" that serves mainly meat, all sorts of bushmeat— crocodile and ostrich were mentioned. There are lots of people there, tourists like us, on safari. Out comes the chef with a leg of beef on a skewer about a yard long, sticks the point on your plate and carves until you say stop, and so it went on, this giant skewer kept coming with different meats.

Saturday 5th

We all gather outside the hotel. Lennox is back with us. He went home last night because his daughter was ill but all is well this morning. Today we have an five hour drive to Amboselli National Park, 392.06 km²— one of the best places to see big herds. We stay at the "Amboseli Serena Lodge", (3675 feet). There is a lawned area outside our lodge with a family of mon-goose, also monkeys, brightly coloured lizards and elephants in the wet areas with water half way up their bodies.

At 16.30 we set off on our first safari, all excited because from here it's possible to see Kilimanjaro, the highest mountain in Africa,(5895m) which is actually in the next country, Tanzania.

As soon as we set off we see lots of gazelle and zebra. In a derelict hotel are elephants, just yards away. Cameras click. These are big ones, just grazing on the bushes and trees. They have come out of a bog. The water mark is plain to see half way up their bellies. Behind us we can see Kilimanjaro in the clouds. As we drive deeper into the park the cloud moves away and there, in all its glory, is Mount Kilimanjaro, showing the snow that is always on the top.

Not far along the road we see elephants, lots of them with water up to their shoulder, also water birds. In the really liquid muddy places there are occasional big fish just turning over, these I believe are lung fish. We saw a Heron catch a big one and then spend the next fifteen minutes trying to devour it. Can it's neck really stretch that much? Yes, it did.

As we return for the night we look out at the amazing sunset and there, with Kilimanjaro in the distance, is an elephant, posed in front of the mountain—the iconic photo that is famous from here. What a perfect end to a fantastic day. **To be continued**

Diary Dates February 2025

Saturday 1st Panto	p1
Table Tennis Tues 4th LBVH	p2
LBPC Wed 5th LBVH	p6
Coffee & Books Thurs 6th LBVH	p2
MBPC Thurs 6th MBCH	p6
Community Café Sat 8th MBCH	p2
Flicks 13th MBCH	p2
Coffee & Books Sat 15th LBVH	p2
Art & Craft LBVH Thursdays	p1
LB Garden Club 26th	p2
Church Services	p4

Advertising Rates

11 editions per year (no August newsletter)

1/16 page £4.20 per issue or £42 per year

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

¼ page £5.40 per issue or £54 per year

½ page £9.60 per issue or £96 per year

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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

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Kenya October 2024 (continued)

We stayed there with the top elevated, watching the impala being devoured. They were so close, so fast and so beautiful.

We were late back, so a quick lunch and out again. More hippo, lots of giraffe, gazelles are every where, some ostriches, more cheetahs and a hyena slinking away. Lots of birds, a hamerkop (like a stalk), lots of rollers(colourful), kingfishers (a few varieties), hornbills and a few eagles.

In the evening we were out again, but this time we go down the other side of the plateau. The terrain is different, a lot more trees and scrub. Now there elephants, lots of them. We stop in amazement as they just appear out of the tall trees, more and more, big tuskers and very young calves. They cross the road. We stop to let them pass, dozens of them and more Thompson gazelle and also some water buck.

There are so many different birds here, lots of kingfishers, herons and water birds, also a few giraffes. It's amazing how different this is. It seems more peaceful. We haven't seen any predators. Perhaps that's why. It's getting dark so we head back to base. Tonight the Maasai people are doing a dance for us.

lizards, and flowering shrubs.

We have already seen lots of Elephants in the wet areas with water half way up their bodies, At 16.30 we set off on our first safari. We are all very excited because from here it's possible to see Kilimanjaro, the highest mountain in Africa,(5895m). Which actually is in the next country Tanzania.

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It's getting dark so we head back to base. We seem to have had just meal times to chat and find out about our friends but tonight the Maasai people are doing a dance for us. Our three truck companions seem to be sticking together, we chat to Anne and Philip from Gloucester, they to have done a lot of travelling, but the stars of this trip must be the three nurses who trained together years ago and even thought they work in different parts of the country they meet regularly. This is their first Safari, and to see the joy and excitement on their faces at what they see

Is really great. Actually Anne and Philip, Doe and I were sort of first to meet Lennox at the airport. So we chatted.

The Dance, I suppose was typical of the warriors stomping and then doing their jumping thing.

We eventually got to bed about 23.00 after packing our cases ready for 08.00 start to our next resort

Sunday 6th

Our first Safari in Amboselli, Out at 0630 and our first animal was a Hyena busily feeding on somebody's left overs. There¹² are lots of animals and birds wherever we look but I must feature on the main ones. Next is a herd of Elephants with a

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Our first Safari in Amboselli, Out at 0630 and our first animal was a Hyena busily feeding on somebody's left overs. There are lots of animals and birds wherever we look but I must feature on the main ones. Next is a herd of Elephants with a few calves, and it's only 07.15 am.

There on the corner there are three very big birds, they are " Bustards", and like everything else we see they are not concerned that we in their space.

Then we see Lion, a big male and three females, then another herd of elephants, Thompsons Gazelles, zebra, impala and on the limbs of a long dead tree there are ten vultures waiting for something to die or be killed.

And it's only 08.33am.

We were out for two exciting hours and then headed back for breakfast

There are massive wet, boggy areas here. There are lots of water birds, we even see a pelican amongst a herd of hippo's

One of the famous things about this reserve are the columns of spiralling dust devils that we see quite regularly. As we approached this reserve I could see these columns rising high in the distance. I thought how strange to see so many fires in the distance, now I know what they were, dust devils, dirt twisters or even whirlwinds a peculiarity to this park.

Our next trip out took us to a Maasai village, a bit difficult to find initially because the whole village had a man made hedge of thorn bushes (I think from the fever tree) and blends in with the surrounding area. We were met by the village chief who spoke of how they lived. Then all the tribe marched out singing their welcome, then formed up in front of us singing their greeting and doing their high jumping routine.

We were then invited into the village to see how they all lived. In the centre of the village was the coral, where the cattle were kept over night away from any lions.

We entered a hut to see how they lived, but actually it was like midnight in there. They were all so friendly. But actually I don't think we saw any women while in the village, where did they go to.

The cattle would be kept in the coral every night, consequently the dung pile would grow higher and higher. It was at that point they would dismantle the whole village and move to a new site

Before we left them we were encouraged to look around their market where each family, at least the women had all their touristy type goods on display. Actually it was cheaper and in better condition to buy at the hotel. I think most of us made a purchase.

Back for lunch and a few hours till we went out again. We all took this time to mix and mingle again. Just beyond the fence there is a lot going on, there are quite a lot of monkeys close by, lots of birds and lizards. Then a large herd of

Friday 4th October

Early start, bags must be outside our door by 07.30. But most are up and having breakfast and on the road at 08.00 back across the reserve, the Rift Valley and back to our first hotel

"The Tamarind Tree" at Nairobi. The weather is still in the 30's

It's amazing how soon we become used to the animals we see, no more oh's and Ahs, it's just, seen that, done that, that's another one, as we speed out of the reserve.

We had a long way to go. Doe and I had a bit of competition between our selves. " who could take the best picture of the lone acacia tree". Result is still pending, there were lots of them.

Arriving at the exit from the reserve we have the same crush of trinket sellers, we used the toilets at the gate, not impressed.

We are still in Maasai country as we drive across the rift valley, once again I am surprised at the numbers of cattle, sheep and goats that are being herded by Maasai people across such poor ground, most of the cattle look so fit and healthy. The biggest surprise was the amount of litter in the villages and towns we drive through, so much.

Interestingly they sell water from tankers here, I saw two tankers sucking water up from a dirty shallow river, I hope that was not sold as drinking water.

One area we travelled through was very cultivated and there were stalls along the road selling all sorts of fruit and vegetables.

At one place they were drying maize on huge sheets or tarpaulins, I did see a few small combine harvesters which seem to have come from the arc, but they were doing the job.

The other strange thing to see was what could be carried on motor bikes, this one chap actually had a three seater settee across the back of his bike taking up half the road, others carried the full family, two or three sacks of grain was quite common.

The towns were very busy, with huts as shops for every thing, hotels, churches, chemists etc.

Every where the biggest businesses seemed to be lorry repairs and tyre changes. But the litter was terrible at times just filling the gutters. And, yet, we had seen the occasional man with a sack on his back picking up what I thought was old plastic bottles.

In some areas that had been ploughed we could see about four or five men breaking freshly ploughed ground with mattocks, and yet it had been ploughed with a tractor? Why not use the tractor.

The other oddity was to see so many men sleeping along the roads and in the villages, why aren't they working, yet every where we see women carrying heavy loads or doing hard manual work!!!

Along the road there were occasional communal stores that sold mainly the craft of the area, mainly animals supposedly all hand crafted locally.

Every one was so friendly, but pushy in a gentle sort of way. 15

Doe (as she does) got chatting to one of the ladies, in no time they were laughing together and suddenly they were