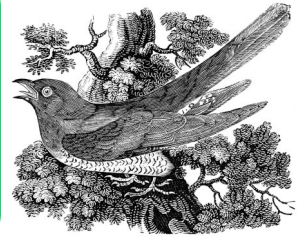


# The Birches

## Community Matters Newsletter

Kingsthorpe, Much Birch, Little Birch,  
Aconbury & Wormelow May 2025



Birches Newsletter online: [www.birches.news](http://www.birches.news) & [www.muchbirchparish.org.uk](http://www.muchbirchparish.org.uk)



Dawn Chorus Walk



FLICKS  
IN THE  
STICKS

at Much Birch  
Community Hall

Thursday 15 May - CONCLAVE 12A

The pope is dead. The throne is vacant. Ralph Fiennes, Stanley Tucci, John Lithgow and Isabella Rossellini star in Oscar-winning director Edward Berger's sensational Conclave, adapted from Robert Harris's bestselling novel about one of the world's most mysterious and ancient events – the selection of a new pope.

Tickets £5 (£4 under 16s)

Refreshments including hot dogs and ice cream  
available from 7pm

This is the last film of the current season -  
we will return in September with more screenings.

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](mailto:muchbirchflicks@hotmail.com) or call 01981 540097

For further information about films and screenings visit  
[www.artsalive.co.uk](http://www.artsalive.co.uk)

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**Join us at the**  
**Community Café**  
**@ Much Birch Community Hall**

**Saturday 10 May 2025**  
**10:00 - 12:30**

and every 2nd Saturday of the month

**14 June**

**12 July**

**13 September**

For more information or if you are in need of transport contact Lydia on 01981 540323 or [socialfabric@hotmail.com](mailto:socialfabric@hotmail.com)



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

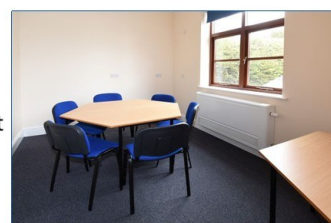
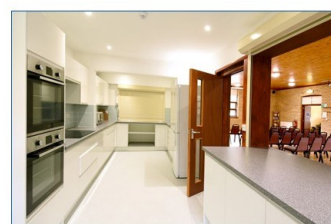


## Much Birch Community Hall

Much Birch Community Hall is available for hire to groups meeting regularly and for one-off individual events.

We can offer:

- A well appointed community hall in pleasant surroundings
- Superb kitchen facilities
- New cloakroom facilities Including accessible toilet
- Several smaller meeting rooms
- Disabled access to the front and rear of the building
- Car parking
- Grassed area to the rear of the building
- Fees include heating when required and use of the kitchen



For further information please contact the **Secretary Sylvia Jones** on **01981 540980** or email : [mbchsec@gmail.com](mailto:mbchsec@gmail.com) or visit the website: [www.muchbirchcommunityhall.org](http://www.muchbirchcommunityhall.org)

### Coffee Morning with Book Exchange

**Little Birch Village Hall**  
**Thursday 1st & Saturday 17th May**  
**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

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### 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! 2-4.30pm. Bring your WiP or PhD in whatever Art or Craft you are working on. Or start something new. £3 per session includes refreshments. For more information contact Sally 01981 540001 or 07803032928 or email [sally.nichol@btinternet.co.uk](mailto:sally.nichol@btinternet.co.uk) All welcome

### Table Tennis 7-9pm

**1st Tuesday of the month**  
**Little Birch Village Hall All welcome**  
**7-9pm £3, includes refreshments**  
**For more information contact Sally**  
**01981 540001 or 07803032928 or email**  
**[sally.nichol@btinternet.co.uk](mailto:sally.nichol@btinternet.co.uk)**

### Photography Group

Friendly local group Please contact Sally Nichol.tel. 07803 032928 or 01981 540001 [sally.nichol@btinternet.com](mailto:sally.nichol@btinternet.com)

The Birches Newsletter is also available online

[www.birches.news](http://www.birches.news)

[www.muchbirchparish.org.uk](http://www.muchbirchparish.org.uk)

## Folk Religion and Something to Think About!

How many of you cross your fingers? It seems an old tradition, something that perhaps your parents might do or have done. It, of course, represents a sign of the cross and was often used as a talisman, a sign of good luck or protection. We human beings are quite superstitious when it comes to life.

Stories abound of football players always putting their left sock on before the right because the last time they did that, they played really well. Or people having a favourite fan shirt, which, when they wear it, means the team will never lose!

We are not the first people to do this; recorded back in ancient myths and stories are people wearing amulets of good luck or protection, images to ward off the evil eye, or deflect a curse. Indeed, some of the offerings to the gods in temples include small scraps of lead on which are written curses or hexes or prayers of protection.

These point to a spiritual side of humanity. We are not simply driven by logic but by feelings and intuitions, trusting our gut. We sometimes have the sensation that the holy is very near; these numinous places sometimes become places of worship too.

By making time to tune ourselves into these feelings and places, we can find ourselves part of something greater. It is like the atmosphere at a football match. Everyone united in support, singing the same songs, but it is also something we take into our wider lives as well. Our spirituality is not something we can turn on a 3.00 p.m. on a Saturday when our team runs out onto the football field, but part of our everyday; we just need to take time to notice it. **Revd Mark**

## Commemorating Eighty Years Since VE Day

Walking through Hightown on 8th May 1945, V E Day, Rosemary Rigby saw people going into church to say thank you. She also passed a US soldier who called "Good morning Ma'am, sure is a pretty day!"

Recently Rosemary Rigby heard a knock at her door. What a surprise she had when she opened it! "So remarkable that a gentleman came to my door with a tree!" she exclaimed.

He had heard of Rosemary's plan to commemorate the end of World War II and brought the peace tree from Newent to plant on the Millenium Green. On Sunday 11th May It will be unveiled by the Mayor of Hereford, Kevin Tillett, to mark the beginning of peace 80 years ago. "This event is for all the people in our area," said Rosemary. Revd Mark will say a few words. The Violette Szabo Museum will be open and Trevor from the Pilgrim Hotel will kindly serve tea and coffee on the Millenium Green. From 2.30-4.30pm, Sunday 11th May. Everyone welcome.



**Little Birch Village Hall**

**available for hire for private events. Well appointed kitchen and bar facilities, plenty of tables, chairs, crockery, glasses and beautiful wooden floor. Parking.**

**[www.birches.news/lbvh](http://www.birches.news/lbvh)**

## Services for May

**Sunday May 4th** (3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Easter) 9.15 a.m. at St David, Much Dewchurch – Holy Communion  
11.00 a.m. at St Mary, Little Birch – Holy Communion

**Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> May** (4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter) 9.15 a.m. at St. Mary and St Thomas a Becket, Much Birch – Holy Communion  
11.00 a.m. at St Mary, Little Birch – Morning Worship, Baptism

**Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> May** (5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter) 9.15 a.m. at St Mary and St Thomas a Becket, Much Birch – Morning Worship  
11.00 a.m. at St. Mary, Little Birch – Holy Communion with Baptism

**Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> May** 9.15 a.m. at St. Junabius, Llandinabo – Holy Communion





## Tai Chi Movements for Wellbeing

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# WE ARE FARMING MINDS



**We are Farming Minds** registered charity has been set up by farmers for farmers to tackle mental health in the farming community within Herefordshire.

#### How can we help?

##### 24 Hour Support Line:

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:

**07786 203 130**

General enquiries: [wearefarmingminds@gmail.com](mailto:wearefarmingminds@gmail.com)

[www.wearefarmingminds.co.uk](http://www.wearefarmingminds.co.uk)

"Taking the bull by the horns" to tackle Mental Health in the farming community

Registered charity number: 1191461



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## King's Thorn & Little Birch Gardening Club

Last month saw the AGM of the Gardening Club, along with a really informative session about keeping garden tools sharp led by Steve Coles. Who knew that if you just give them a wipe to start with to get all the sap and muck off, they start working so much better?

Val Ballentyne brought what seemed like the entire contents of her garden shed to be sharpened - and then went home and found some more to which she could give the "Steve" treatment !! Moral of the story ..... always wipe and oil your garden tools after each use. It will make it so much easier than doing it once a year!!

At the AGM the following were appointed to the Committee:

**Janet Gwinnett, Chair : 07713 770944**

**Lesley Chapman, Secretary & Show Secretary : 07834 771838**

**John Ellis-Braithwaite, Treasurer**

**Jackie Yates & Cathy Ellis- Braithwaite, Program Secretaries, Celina Coles, Val Ballentyne, Jo Williams**

Please contact either Janet or me (Lesley) for any information about the Garden Club.

We meet on the last Wednesday of the month at LBVH from 7pm to 9pm. Refreshments are available from 7pm. The talks are free to members with a small fee of £5 for visitors.

The programme for 2025-26 is really exciting, with visiting speakers, local trips and afternoon tea, serving scones, jam & cream in July in one of the committee member's gardens. All events will be posted in this newsletter. If you would like a copy of the programme please contact me ( Lesley) and I will email one to you.

The next meeting is on Wednesday 30th April when Mick Poultny, "The Compost King" will talk about composting!

On May 30th, **Friday**, the Club is having a visit and tour of Allensmore Nursery. More details will follow but this is an afternoon visit which is free to all members, with a donation of £5 for non- members. If you would like to join us contact me ( Lesley ) and book your space.

Just for information : May 31st & June 1st is Ross on Wye open gardens. You can find information at:

**Open gardens - the friends of St. Mary's, Ross-on -Wye.**

**Advance Notice- Annual Plant Sale in LBVH from 10 to 12am on Saturday 6th September.** Please bring donations of plants from 9 to 9.45am. Refreshments will be available. All funds raised go towards our guest speakers and the Annual Garden Show.

**New members are always welcome Do come and join us.**

Happy Gardening. Lesley 07834 771838

[Lesleychapman55@sky.com](mailto:Lesleychapman55@sky.com)



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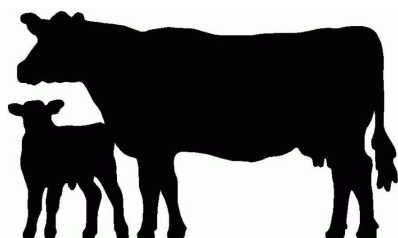
**Send items for June newsletter to  
[editorial@birchesnews.org.uk](mailto:editorial@birchesnews.org.uk) by 8th May**

The Birches Newsletter is also available online  
[www.birches.news](http://www.birches.news)  
[www.muchbirchparish.org.uk](http://www.muchbirchparish.org.uk)

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**Send items for Birches Newsletter to  
[editorial@birchesnews.org.uk](mailto:editorial@birchesnews.org.uk) by 8th May**



## Much Birch Facebook Page

**It is not just about lost and found cats and dogs, missing deliveries etc. You'll find a wealth of information here so Join Today!**

### Much Birch Parish Council Meeting

At the Much Birch Parish Council Meeting held in Much Birch Community Hall on the 3rd April 2025 from 7.30 pm the parish council discussed matters relating to the Much Birch memorial clock, mounted at the Much Birch Church building, with the Reverend Mark, who was present at the meeting. The clock was in need of some restoration and the timbers supporting it were also going to be checked. It was hoped that funds could be raised to support the project and the clock would be restored to chiming the time and would also have an automatic hour change incorporated for the daylight saving hour changes in the Spring and Autumn. There were no new planning matters for discussion at the meeting.

**The dates for the forthcoming meetings, in the year 2025, are advised as follows:** Friday May 9th, June 5th, July 3rd, no meeting in August, September 4th, October 2nd, November 6th, December 4th.

The next Parish Council Meeting (the Annual Parish and Annual Statutory) of the Much Birch Parish Council will be held, consecutively, on Friday 9th May 2025 from 7.30pm at Much Birch Community Hall. All are welcome to attend.

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

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 X (formerly known as Twitter) at <https://twitter.com/MuchBirchPC> and Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Much.Birch.Parish>

## Little Birch Parish Facebook Group

**Find news, events & business listings.  
Promote your business, advertise a local event or post news and information of interest to the village and local area.**

### Your Much Birch Parish Councillors are:-

**Cllr Alison Cook (Chair)** Jasmine Cottage, Wrigglebrook Lane, Kingsthorpe, Hereford, HR2 8AW,

email: [thecooks@wyenet.co.uk](mailto:thecooks@wyenet.co.uk) Tel. 01981 540703

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

**Cllr Chris Pickering-Grey** 4 Court Farm Barns, Much Birch HR2 8HT [chris@pickering-grey.uk](mailto:chris@pickering-grey.uk) Tel. 07712 813218

**Cllr Michael Agyeman** Little Willow, Wrigglebrook, Kingsthorpe, Hereford, HR2 8AU email: [magyeman92@gmail.com](mailto:magyeman92@gmail.com) Tel. 01981 540840

**Cllr David Irwin** [David.Irwin13@btinternet.com](mailto: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](mailto:turnersofcrossways@btinternet.com)

Dates for the forthcoming meetings are advised as follows: April 3<sup>rd</sup>, May 8<sup>th</sup>, June 5<sup>th</sup>, July 3<sup>rd</sup>, no meeting in August, September 4<sup>th</sup>, October 2<sup>nd</sup>, November 6<sup>th</sup>, Dec 4<sup>th</sup>.

**Clerk: Mrs Alison Wright:** [muchbirchclerk@gmail.com](mailto:muchbirchclerk@gmail.com)

**Much Birch Footpath Officer:** David Irwin on [MBfootpaths@btinternet.com](mailto:MBfootpaths@btinternet.com) Tel. 07766 135068

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).

### Footpath Officers

If you have any queries about footpaths contact:

#### Little Birch and Aconbury

**Chris Fowler** [chrisfowler1@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:chrisfowler1@hotmail.co.uk)  
07931 292998

#### Much Birch including Kingsthorpe:

**David Irwin** [david.irwin13@btinternet.com](mailto:david.irwin13@btinternet.com)  
07766 135068

### Little Birch Parish Councillors

Cllr Steve Coles Cllr Tom Palfrey

Cllr Chris Atkinson Cllr Nick Deacon

Neil Barrington, clerk [lbpcclerk@gmail.com](mailto:lbpcclerk@gmail.com)

**Website** [www.littlebirchparishcouncil.org](http://www.littlebirchparishcouncil.org)



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## Jobs for the garden in May

Writing this in mid April, the daffodils are fading and tulips are taking pride of place while trees and hedges have their new fresh green leaves in abundance. In our wild areas numerous bluebells, cowslips and primroses are providing plenty of colour. The early rhubarb is doing well while there are good quantities of carrots, swedes, cauliflower and red cabbage in the veg. patch, plus a few onions and potatoes in store. Hopefully this will keep the 'hungry season' to a minimum. I was a little later than I would have liked, putting our refreshed nest boxes up on our trees and hedges this year. With the beautiful weather we had in March and the first week or so in April I've yet to see whether the birds were prepared to wait for me before starting to build their nests.

Last year the cuckoo was first heard on 8th April, about a fortnight earlier than the norm, and look what a horrible summer we had. Hope he gets back to his later dates!! **Derek Scrivens**

### Here are a few ideas for May

- \*Keep weeding.
- \*Cuttings for deciduous shrubs – fuchsias, hydrangeas, lantana can be taken during this month.
- \*'Spring clean' house plants by wiping dust off smooth leaves with a damp cloth. Use a soft brush for hairy leaves.
- \*Tender plants and young plants raised under cover can be gradually hardened off.
- \*Aphids can be controlled with organic insecticide if infestation is severe or leave them to ladybirds, lacewings, ants, wasps and birds.
- \*Plant up hanging baskets and containers. If you have a greenhouse, and have room in it, keep them in for a few days to help establish. In any case keep them sheltered.
- \*Slug watch!
- \*Thin seedlings when they have their first true leaves.
- \*Earth up potatoes – water well in dry periods
- \*Sow runner beans, dwarf beans, cucumbers courgettes and squashes (not forgetting that heaviest marrow for the horticultural show).
- \*Sow little and often for succession, carrots, beet, spinach, salad crops, lettuce, salad leaves, radish, spring onions.
- \*Those of you with a greenhouse should do all you can to keep the temperature down as it can rise from a comfortable warmth to well over 100 degrees in a matter of minutes when the sun emerges from any clouds or shade. Open all vents and damp down, particularly if the greenhouse is small. It will benefit from shading material or paint.
- \*Keep bird baths clean and topped up with fresh water.
- \*Bird food should not include whole nuts or bulky items.
- \*Check ponds for tadpoles. Provide a shelf/ramp for them and of course other wildlife to escape.
- \*Plant scented flowers such as nicotiana, evening primroses and buddleia to attract moths, butterflies and bees. In fact any mauve/purple flowers will attract a range of insects.
- \*When buying plants, single flowers are better than double flowers, as food is more accessible for insects from singles.

**PILATES**  
with Alison Allan

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#### Join Alison Allan for Pilates

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**Steven Allan**



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## The Countryside Code

### **Respect people who live and work in the countryside.**

Show courtesy and consideration to all. Behave responsibly.

**Know where you are allowed to go.** Most land is private property and access is only available with the goodwill and tolerance of the owner. Whilst most landowners do not object to recreational users on their land, some do. Always respect landowner's wishes. **Keep to paths across farmland.** Help stop damage to crops by walking around the edge of a field unless there is an existing path across it. Avoid fields where there are animals, as your presence may cause them stress and endanger your own safety.

**Use gates and stiles to cross fences, hedges and walls.** When crossing fences, hedges and walls, use the nearest gate or stile. Damage to fencing can allow animals to stray. If you must climb a gate because it's difficult to open, do this at the hinged end.

**Leave gates as you find them.** If you find a gate closed, close it when you pass through to stop animals straying. Farmers sometimes leave gates open to allow animals to pass from one field to another to graze or drink. Help farmers by leaving gates as you find them. If in doubt, close a gate.

**Don't interfere with livestock, machinery and crops.** These are valuable commodities and should be left alone. Interference with animals and equipment may endanger you. Pay attention to warning signs as these are for your protection.

**Keep dogs under control.** Keep your dog on a lead when walking on roads or when close to farm animals. A dog can cause distress to animals and endanger you. Keep your dog under control always so as not to disturb wildlife or annoy or scare other visitors.

**Protect wildlife, plants and trees.** Leave all natural places as you find them. Never uproot plants as they will be lost forever. Keep your distance from wild birds and animals so as not to disturb and stress them - especially those that are with young and in winter when food may be scarce or weather harsh.

**Keep all water sources clean.** The public water supply is not available to everyone living in the countryside. Take care with your personal hygiene and do not pollute water. Don't interfere with water troughs which provide clean water for livestock.

**Take your litter home.** All litter is unsightly. Glass, tins and plastic bags can be dangerous to people, livestock and wildlife. Keep the countryside clean by taking home your own litter and any which you may find.

**Guard against all risk of fire.** The countryside is vulnerable to fire especially during dry weather. Accidental fires pose a great risk to farmers and foresters. Take care to extinguish all used matches & cigarettes. Use a stove for cooking rather than a fire.

**Never** throw cigarettes from a car window.

**Make no unnecessary noise;** one of the attractions of the countryside is its peace and quiet. Do not disturb this with noise or disruptive behaviour which might annoy residents and visitors or frighten farm animals and wildlife.

**Respect other recreational users,** behave responsibly.



### Dawn Chorus Walk

It was chilly, dark and silent when sixteen of us gathered at Merrivale Farm for our Dawn Chorus Walk, led by our excellent local ornithological experts Bob Mason and, newly-recruited, Gervase Mangwana. But as the sky lightened, the birdsong chorus began - led by the wren, a tiny bird, with a disproportionately loud song!

Crossing the fields as the sun rose behind Athelstan's Wood, the birdsong increased and Bob and Gervase 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 blackcap - 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.

Altogether a fascinating, fact-filled, dawn chorus walk! Many thanks to Bob and Gervase, to Sue Mason for providing a delicious and welcome bacon butty farmhouse breakfast and to Chris Fowler for organising the event.

**Cathy Sadler**

**Donations at the walk amounted to £110. This has been given to St Michael's Hospice. Thanks to all contributors.**

Where possible, warn others of your approach and slow down or stop if necessary. Irresponsible behaviour could lead to you and your activity being banned from the area in the future.

**Take special care on country roads;** always drive carefully with reduced speed on country roads. Consider others when parking and avoid blocking entrances, gateways or other drivers' visibility. Walkers should take special care on narrow country roads and if uncertain should walk in single file.

## The Masons at Merrivale

Well here we are half way through April. Hasn't the weather of the last month been wonderful. It's enabled us to be right up to date with the spring field work. All the barley and peas for whole crop have been drilled and under sown with grass. All we need now is some rain. I can't believe I'm saying this after the awful year we have just gone through.

The only crop left to drill is the fodder beet. The ground is more or less prepared and the contractors should be able to come in this week to plant it. We will have a couple of quieter weeks then before the grass will be ready for the first silage cut.

The cows went out to graze during the day on March 25th and out day and night on the 29th. It took a few days for them to settle in to their new routine. We have a lot of heifers that have calved for their first time over the winter, so it takes them some time to work out the routes to the paddocks after being milked.

That's one of the nice parts of miking the cows with robots, they quietly take themselves through the robot and once milked, it lets them out to graze. So they take themselves out to pasture—they are not walked there by one of us. They've all got into the swing of it now though and have lots of lovely spring grass to eat, but again we could do with some rain to keep it growing. Our winter wheat drilled in November '24 seems to have survived the horrendously wet winter fairly well. It had a slurry top dressing in March for fertility and a harrowing to try and control any weeds.

Being organic, the gate is now shut and it is left to mature so, hopefully, do it's best until harvest time.

We passed our TB test in November last year and are due our next one in May as we have to test every 6 months. It's a huge worry for us as we have had such terrible results in the past. Having to test every 6 months is also extremely stressful. All of the cattle are ours now of course, so it involves a lot of work to bring them all in twice in one week. Cross your fingers for us. Bob & I are still busy growing vegetables for the milk hut. We have received our first broccoli, cabbage and cauliflower plants which will be going in next week. We should then be planting every month throughout the summer to hopefully produce a regular supply of veg.

Milk sales at the two vending machines are still going very well. We hope to install some refrigerated and frozen vending machines this year so we can make more beef & local produce available to purchase. Direct sales of local food is something we believe so greatly in, with the lack of support and clarity from our current government it seems to be more important than ever.

We had the pleasure of hosting breakfast on the farm last week after the dawn chorus walk. I just wanted to say thank you to everyone for their donations as I dropped £110 into St. Michaels Hospice last week. It's always satisfying to have people on the farm although this time it only involved eating next to a bunch of very pregnant cows. The cows quite enjoyed it too!

That's it for now, lets hope for a summer of wonderful weather. Sorry but this means rain for us and not just sunshine!

**All the best, Sue**

### More Tales from Kenya by Eric Joseph

#### Sunday 6th

Our first safari in Amboselli. Out at 6.30am. Our first animal was a hyena busily feeding on somebody's left overs. Next we see a herd of elephants with a few calves. There on the corner are three very big birds. They are bustards and, like everything else we see, they are not concerned that we are in their space.

Then we see lions, a big male and three females, 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 8.33am! There are massive wet, boggy areas here with lots of water birds. We even see a pelican amongst a herd of hippos. Two exciting hours then we headed back for breakfast. One of the famous things about this reserve are the columns of spiraling dust devils that we see quite regularly. As we approached the reserve we could see them rising high in the distance. Strange to see so many fires, but now I know they were dust devils, a peculiarity of this park.

Our next trip out took us to a Maasai village, a bit difficult to find initially because the whole village was surrounded by a man-made hedge of thorn bushes ( I think from the fever tree) and blended in with the surroundings. We were met by the village chief who spoke of how they lived. All the tribe marched out singing their welcome, then sang us a greeting and did their high jumping routine.

We were then invited into the village to see how they lived. In the centre was the corral, where the cattle are kept over night, safe from any lions. We entered a hut. It was like midnight in there and we could hardly see. They were all so friendly but I don't think we saw any women while in the village. Where did they go to?

As the cattle are kept in the corral every night, the dung pile grows higher and higher until it is so high they dismantle the whole village and move to a new site.

We head back for lunch and a few hours till we go out again. We all took this time to mix and mingle again. Just beyond the fence there is a lot going on—monkeys close by, lots of birds and lizards. Then a large herd of impala or Thomson's gazelle stampede across the open land. They stop and every one of them is looking to the rear. Something has chased them. Someone has mentioned Lion. We are all on the look out.

**Continued on p11**



## Tales from Kenya continued

Someone says they can see the lion in the grass but not I. One of the Maasai who wanders around the hotel said he could see it, so he and I walked down to the fence.

"There are his ears," he said, but even with the glasses I could not see it— but there was definitely something there. In the trees there were the nests of weaver birds, very busy feeding babies. Malibu storks were up in the tall trees and kingfishers were busy close by.

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 8.33am! We were out for two exciting hours and then headed back for breakfast.

On our late afternoon safari, within half a mile from camp we see a pair of lions, one of each, just lying close to each other, while across the road there are other lions watching. They eventually come out of the bush, all eleven of them, ten females and one big male. They walk across the road between the trucks towards the big male and the female. (Our driver reckons that the pair are on honeymoon). The females sidle close to the pair while the big male wanders off on his own.

Our driver thinks that the big male is letting the pair have the privacy to get on with it. It's rather nice that, apart from us four trucks, we hardly see other vehicles unless there is something special. There are lots of zebra and buffalo to be seen. The elephants are having a whale of a time deep in the bog. A small flock of flamingo are feeding. In the reeds there's a waterbuck and herons.

The sun is going down fast so we head for home with Kilimanjaro in all its glory clear again and in the foreground is the big elephant, apparently posing for the cameras!

### Monday 7th

We move on to Tsavo NP today, luggage packed and ready to load, breakfast and on the road by 9.10. It's a four hour drive. This morning the elephants are out in force to see us off, a massive herd of fifty plus hold us up as they take their time to cross in front of us.

The park road is reasonable, but, after we leave the Kimana gate, the road is rough and corrugated for quite a few miles. We eventually hit the tarred main highway and take a left up a wide dirt road. There is a lorry about 500 yards in front. There is so much dust it's impossible to see beyond.

Ah, there is something moving in the dust ahead, it's a motorbike, it's slow, the driver's feet are wide, just like balance wheels. How can he do that? some of the ruts and potholes would devour him.

This is just red dust, we occasionally see a hut where people seem to come to collect water from a communal tap. We are in a big volcanic area which is obvious by the massive flow of lava, called the Shetani lava flow. As we drive to our next stay, the bush is tall and thick, we see elephants, deer we have not seen before, ostrich, zebra, giraffe, buffalo and

birds. We have made a stop at a special place called "Mzima Springs". Here we pick up a guide/ guard who carries a rifle. Why? somebody asks. "It's to scare away nosey animals." When did you last use it? "Yesterday," he said. It's not so funny anymore, so we follow him along a path and down to a big lake of crystal clear water in which we can see lots of blue fish. This water comes underground from Kilimanjaro.

There is a little inlet. A debate is going on. Is that really a crocodile or is it a log? We were soon to discover that it was a big croc as it sidled backwards into the lake where he joined a couple of his mates.

There is a sign that lots of elephants have been here. Along the path we disturb quite a lot of monkeys that were enjoying sunbathing and grooming each other.

Our next lodge is the Kilugani Serena Lodge at 2750 feet above sea level. This is a bit special, because in front of the hotel our rooms look down onto a water hole about 1000 yards away. Just down there are elephants, giraffe and guinea fowl.

We freshen up and we have about one and a half hours till our next safari. By now we are all great friends and have buddied up with a couple from Gloucester and three nurses who are always so excited at what ever they see, as are we all, but they are just amazing.

We have just one game drive this evening, we toured around a very different landscape for a few hours and saw nothing really. It was interesting country, I would have enjoyed this more if we were driving ourselves because this was rough, hilly and rugged. Just the type of driving we have done in the past. The conclusion of that drive was that it would have been more exciting watching the animals back at the lodge. That evening we sat with the gang watching the arrivals at the pond till it became too dark.

### Tuesday 8th

When I woke this morning I discovered that Doe had already been out to watch the waterhole. We went back together. We don't leave the hotel until nine am, so plenty of time to view. There are water buffalo, two malibu storks, zebra and giraffes followed by more buffalo and masses of guinea fowl.

The animals seemed to have a pecking order. The buffalo came in single file out of the trees, between 50 & 60, straight into the water, had their drink and moved off. Within minutes another herd arrived and did the same, followed by another herd while all this time the guinea fowl were racing in lines going nowhere. A really amazing sight. We could have spent hours just observing, but time moves on and we have to leave to catch the train to Nairobi.

Our holiday is fast coming to an end. We all made it to the airport and boarded our plane at. Next stop Heathrow! There we were met by our transport from Titan Tours that took us and our friends from Gloucester home.



## Diary Dates May 2025

<b>Garden Club LBVH 30th April</b>	<b>p5</b>
<b>Coffee &amp; Books Thurs 1st LBVH</b>	<b>p2</b>
<b>Art &amp; Craft LBVH Thurs: 2-4.30</b>	<b>p2</b>
<b>Table Tennis LBVH Tues 6th</b>	<b>p2</b>
<b>Community Café 10th MBCH</b>	<b>p2</b>
<b>VE Day 11th</b>	<b>p3</b>
<b>Flicks Thurs 15th MBCH</b>	<b>p1</b>
<b>LBPC Wed 5th LBVH</b>	<b>p6</b>
<b>MBPC Fri 9th MBCH</b>	<b>p6</b>
<b>Church Services</b>	<b>p3</b>
<b>Coffee &amp; Books Sat 17th LBVH</b>	<b>p2</b>

## Parish Walk

The next Much Birch Parish walk will be on Sunday 29th June at 2pm from outside Much Birch Community Hall. It will be 5 miles with tea and cake afterwards in the Hall.

## Advertising Rates

11 editions per year (no August newsletter)

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

1/8<sup>th</sup> 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

Payment by BACS through Santander

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**Put your business name as reference**

## Defibrillator Locations

### IN A LIFE THREATENING EMERGENCY CALL 999

AEDs available to use locally for those experiencing 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



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Improve strength and flexibility & also benefit from the Relaxation

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**More Information:** Tel Arwen on 07503 199 972









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