

The Birches



Community Matters Newsletter - November 2025

Kingsthorpe, Much Birch, Little Birch, Aconbury & Wormelw



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Bonfire and Fireworks Safety



Tips from RoSPA to help you enjoy your celebrations

- Plan your firework display to make it safe & enjoyable.
- Keep fireworks in a closed box and use one at a time.
- Read and follow the instructions on each firework
- Use a torch if necessary.
- Light the firework at arm's length with a taper and stand well back.
- Keep naked flames and cigarettes away from fireworks.
- Never return to a firework once lit.
- Don't put fireworks in pockets and never throw them.

CHRISTMAS PRIZE BINGO



**LITTLE BIRCH VILLAGE HALL
FRIDAY 28TH
NOVEMBER
EYES DOWN AT 7:30PM**

**Fun for the whole family
Refreshments available**

**Wear your Christmas Jumper
Prize for the best one!**

Much Birch School News

We had a busy start to term with a visit from BBC Gladiator Steel (aka Zack George) - who talked to our children about confidence, motivation and healthy lifestyles. We have also just worn yellow to school on World Mental Health Day and talked to the children about 'big feelings' and how we can deal with them.



Upcoming School Events:

Prospective parents 26/27 school tour -
9.30am or 11am on Wednesday 5th November
Please ring school to book on 01981 540 254.
Saturday 29th November is our PTFA Christmas Fayre - all are welcome.

Anna Ricketts – Deputy Head Teacher

The Birches Newsletter is also available online
www.birchesnews or www.muchbirchparish.org.uk

Jobs for the garden in November

It is time for the autumn clear-up. Hedges have been cut and all the decaying vegetation cut off, collected and put on the compost heap. A week or so ago we had a couple of slight frosts and that has resulted in the leaves rapidly changing colour and dropping off the trees. Misty mornings are with us (or hop pickers mornings as I remember them being called years ago).

I hope you have all been able to cope with the huge crops of fruit, particularly apples. I have a feeling there are going to be a lot of apple pies and crumbles with custard eaten over the next few months – ahh what bliss!

Now for November jobs :

- Plant Tulip bulbs.
- Rake up leaves or use your mower. Either compost them or if you have a large quantity compress into empty compost bag(s), tie up the top and puncture the bag. Set aside for a year or so and you will have some good leafmould.
- Raise containers off the ground to prevent water logging – use bricks, wooden batons or commercially manufactured 'feet'.
- Take care not to over water plants outside, in the greenhouse and indoors. Look over house plants and move to a lighter position.
- Check greenhouse heaters, if used. An electric fan heater has the advantage of keeping the air moving which can help to reduce fungal disease. *Bubble wrap the interior of the greenhouse at the end of this month to insulate. If you do not have a heater, invest in some horticultural fleece to wrap around tender plants.
- Empty fuel from mowers and other power tools (if you aren't using them again until spring). *Plant bare root roses, winter bedding & new turf.
- Cut some small branches of holly (with berries), for the festive season, and put in a bucket of water in a shed or greenhouse. The redwings and fieldfares will soon be arriving and will clear the berries off trees in no time!
- Check bonfires for wildlife before lighting them. *Prune grapevine after leaf fall but in any case by the end of December.
- Earth up carrots, parsnips and beet (mini version of potatoes) if overwintering in the garden.
- Prune grapevine after leaf fall/by end December
- Earth up carrots, parsnips and beet.
- Plant new rhubarb crowns and divisions.
- Net sprouts, kale, cabbage, cauliflower to keep pigeons off them.
- Check stored fruit throwing out rotting items on the ground outside for the birds. Likewise, check for and discard rotting potatoes.
- Clean out nest boxes and rehang. Put a bit of straw or hay in the bottom of the box.

- Plant bare-root raspberries now until March. Dig a wide trench, add plenty of compost or manure and include some slow release fertilizer. Spread the roots out horizontally when planting canes, cover, tread in lightly and water. Cut canes to within a few cms. of the soil surface. *If you still have a few tomatoes on their vines, pick them, no matter what colour and ripen them indoors or make chutney with the green ones.

We are being encouraged not to be too tidy in our gardens these days so leave a pile of sticks, stones or other debris here and there – it does not have to be a 'mountain' – for small creatures to hibernate. Clean bird baths and feeders and replenish.

Remove fallen leaves from ponds and thin oxygenating plants. It may be advantageous to remove pump if there is one, overhaul it and store in the shed.

Derek Scrivens



Gardening Club News



Living With Nature

Will be held on Wednesday 26th November
in Little Birch Village Hall

Jim Stevenson has worked all his life with nature. He was the Ranger at Paxton Pits in St. Neots for many years, amongst other things! He is a very keen photographer and his talk called "Living with Nature" will encompass his very interesting life working with nature, illustrated by his wonderful photos.

The meeting starts at 7.30pm with refreshments being served from 7.00pm. Free to members ; £5 for visitors.

January Quiz Night

On Wednesday 28th January the Garden Club will be running a quiz night – an evening of fun to brighten the winter blues!

Little Birch Village Hall 7.00 – 9.00pm.

Charge for a team of 4, £10 to incl. light refreshments. If you don't have a full team, let us know and we will sort one for you. People are asked to bring their own wine & drinks. Tea and coffee on arrival. It is open to all the community, so book your table now on lesleychapman55@sky.com

October Riddle - answer

- Q. The more you take the more you leave behind
A. You take footsteps and leave footprints



**FLICKS
IN THE
STICKS**

at Much Birch
Community Hall

Thursday 13 November - FOUR LETTERS OF LOVE 12A

Nicholas and Isabel are made for each other, but as destiny pulls them together, family, passion and faith drives them apart. As they embark on journeys of heartache and misplaced love, fate soon contrives to pull the threads of their lives together.

Starring Pierce Brosnan, Helena Bonham Carter and Gabriel Byrne

Tickets £5 (£4 under 16s)

Refreshments including hot dogs and ice cream available from 7pm

Coming soon:

Thursday 11 December - **MR BURTON** 12A
 Thursday 22 January - **A REAL PAIN** 15

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

Little Birch Drama Group

**Coming up in Jan:
Puss in Boots**



Annual Pantomime

August Show

In August, the Little Birch Drama Group put on their inaugural Summer Kids Show of Matilda. 10 young actors aged 6-16 spent the week acting, dancing, crafting and team-building. Lead by Poppy Scrivens, who has been part of the Drama Group for over ten years, the group made all the props, set and scenery themselves in just one week. On the afternoons that the hall was booked for other groups, rehearsals headed into the woods! On Saturday 23rd August the group put on their show - the audience laughed, cried and cheered! It was such a raving success that they plan to run it again next year.

Parish Walk 

The next walk will be on: 

Sunday 30th November 2pm from Much Birch Community Hall.

Afterwards there will be refreshments at the Community Hall. The walk will be 4 miles approx. Well behaved dogs are welcome.

Further details from David Irwin
 Email : david.irwin13@btinternet.com
 07766135068

The Village Hall Committee would like to thank **Elisabeth Taylor** for her valuable contribution to The Birches Newsletter as Editor. Elisabeth has now stepped down from the role which she has carried out for the past 5 years.

THANK
YOU

Interested in Local History?

In 2006 Little Birch and King's Thorn History Group published a book titled "**Little Birch on Aconbury Hill, A History of the Parish and its People.**"

"The peaceful landscape of scattered cottages, small fields and leafy hedgerows scarcely hints at the two and a half thousand years of often tumultuous history that have shaped it. Little Birch on Aconbury Hill tells the story of the village and the people and the people who have lived and owned property in it. It examines the growth of settlement from pre-historic beginnings in the Iron Age hill fort on the summit of Aconbury Hill and how this evolved during the Roman period and the dark ages. Separate sections consider Aconbury Priory and its property in Little Birch, and the impact of the civil war."

Copies of the book are still available from Jennifer Jones on 01981 540698 or Alison Clarke on 01981 540791.

Coffee & Books at Little Birch Village Hall Thursday and Saturday

The Book NOT to read!

I thought I'd go a little crazy this month and recommend a book NOT to read. It is "Rob Roy" by Sir Walter Scott. Number one, the book isn't really about Rob Roy – he only appears for the first time in Chapter 18! Secondly, the book is written in about 50% Scottish dialect. Try reading that while you are tired! I ploughed on and finished it, mainly because I don't like to be defeated, but really life's too short. I'd be interested in hearing from anyone who enjoyed it and the reasons why! Jennifer

Local Information

Little Birch Parish Councilors

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

Neil Barrington (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. Next meeting on Feb 28
10am-12pm at Fayreview Kingsthorpe

Contact Sally Nichol

07803 032928 or 01981 540001

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 or 01981 540001
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)
- Rick Hampton (Committee member)
- Jane Bolam (Drama group)
- Elisabeth Taylor (Committee member)
- Sam Davies (Committee member)
- Tonya Barnett (Drama Group)

✉ lbpcclerk@gmail.com

🌐 www.littlebirchparishcouncil.org

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 or 01981 540001
Sally.nichol@btinternet.com

Much Birch Parish Council Meeting on Thursday 2nd October 2025

The parish council discussed planning application 252458 for a garage at 5, Pilgrim Park and resolved that there were no objections to the new garage. The parish council also set the precept request for 2026 – 2027. No increase was made.

Dates for forthcoming meetings in 2025 are November 6th and December 4th at Much Birch Community Hall. All are welcome. Please see notice boards and website for agendas. As always the public and press are more than welcome to attend and may to speak directly to their representatives.

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

Little Birch Harvest Festival

We had a lovely celebration of harvest at St. Mary's church. Despite the summer being hot and very dry the church was decorated with an abundance of flowers and garden produce. The service was lead by Revd. Mark and our guest preacher Revd. Sheila Anthony. Sheila has recently retired. We wish her a long, happy retirement. Thanks to Annie Harper who decorated the font, Iris Lloyd, Pauline Rogers, Lynette Roberts and Jenny Caton who decorated the windows. After the service we had a delicious tea provided by Peter and Christine Dowsett, thank you it was brilliant. Gifts of food brought to the church were taken to Ross food bank.

Short Mat Bowls at Little Dewchurch Village Hall

7pm to 9pm

Every Tuesday except week 3 when on a Thursday. First 3 weeks free trial, then £5 a session, includes tea and biscuits.
Friendly and fun activity for the winter months!

Contact John Caton: 01981 540415

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 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 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

Dates for the forthcoming meetings:

6th November and 4th December.

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

Much Birch Footpath Officer:
email: MBfootpaths@btinternet.com
Tel. 07766 135068

Full minutes of the meetings etc. can be found on the
Parish Council website following the link
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>

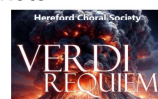
Verdi's Requiem Hereford Choral Society

7.30pm on 15 November 2025 at Hereford Cathedral

Tickets from only £10, up to 2 children under 16 free

Book: herefordchoralsociety.org/tickets

Box office: 01432 751 175



Remember, remember the 5th of November

Hi Everyone,



November sees two pivotal events remembered, both involve sacrifice and violence. First we have the plot to kill King James 1st in 1605 by blowing up the Houses of Parliament. Guy Fawkes and co-conspirators thought England was too Protestant and needed a revolt to restore the Catholic faith. The idea was to kill James 1st and bring back a Catholic monarch. It failed due to damp gunpowder and Guy was caught bringing gunpowder into the cellar. This wasn't the last assassination attempt on the Monarch, but was probably the last done for religious rather than political reasons.

Secondly, we have Remembrance Sunday, focussed, not on destruction, but on hope for the future. The Armistice at 11am on 11th November 1918 was a cessation of violence; it wasn't a peace. The peace treaty came later, and we all know where that led us! Remembrance, ironically, is about looking forward, about remembering all who gave their lives in conflicts, recent and not so recent. It is a call to build a better world and we do well to harken to that call.



Revd Mark

Church Services in November



Sun 2nd All Saints 11am Little Birch Church – Holy Communion 3pm Much Birch Church – All Souls, remembering those we've loved and lost

Friday 7th 10.30 a.m. at Wormelow War Memorial, Tump Lane – Annual wreath laying with Y6 of Much Birch C of E Primary School

Sunday 9th– Remembrance Sunday 9.15 a.m. at Much Birch Church – Remembrance with Communion 10.55 a.m. at Little Birch Church – Remembrance with Morning Worship

Sunday 16th, 2nd Sunday before Advent 9.15 a.m. at Much Birch Church – Morning Worship 11.00 a.m. at Little Birch Church – Holy Communion in Traditional Language

Sunday 23rd– Sunday next before Advent 9.15 a.m. at Llandinabo – Holy Communion in Traditional Language

Sunday 30th– Advent Sunday 10am 10.00 a.m. at Much Birch Community Hall – Coffee and Croissants 10.30 a.m. at Much Birch Community Hall – Advent Celebration with Holy Communion

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Remembrance Service



at Wormelow War Memorial
Friday 7th November at 10.30am with children from Much Birch School

The Hereford Gospels for Today



CALL OUT TO ARTISTS

Help Hereford Cathedral celebrate 1350 years of Hereford Diocese by contributing to the Hereford Gospels of Today!

Submit artwork to be pasted into or reproduced for this very special newly commissioned book which will respond to the Gospels today. This project is open to all ages, backgrounds and abilities. Closing date for submission is 31 December 2025.

Find out more here:

Herefordcathedral.org/news/gospels-for-today
Or contact Bishop David Thompson @:
HerefordGospels@skypilots.co.uk

The Masons of Merrivale



It's months since I've done an update on the farm but that's because the summer has caused trouble and I couldn't sound cheerful. You will all know from your lawns that it's changed now & we are green again. Spring started well, the weather was lovely and the cows went out to graze in late March. As far as I can tell from photos on my phone, it only rained substantially 4 times from then until early September. We took a grass silage cut in late May & early July, together with a cut of whole crop peas & barley. The whole crop yielded well, unlike the grass due to the dry weather. We under sow the whole crop with herbal leys (a mix of grasses, clovers, chicory & plantain) to take a late cut of silage in September. However, the under sown grass didn't survive the dry weather so we had to get contractors in to direct drill grass back into the leys in August. We panicked a bit after, waiting for some rain, it did come, along with a big sigh of relief as the grass grew. As we are short of grass silage, we have been buying in artic loads from Devon and hay from South Wales. It takes quite a bit of effort for us to source Organically Certified feed but fortunately we've made some good contacts and they've really helped us out this year. This is something not all Organic Farms have been able to do, which has led to them having to apply to the Government Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs for derogations allowing them to feed non Organic Forage. Alongside the silage crops, we also grow wheat and fodder beet to put in the cows winter diet. Not only do different food stuffs add nutritional value to the diet, they also spread the risk of what we grow. The 26 acres of winter wheat yielded really well, due I think to an application of cow slurry in April. Once harvested, the field had another application of slurry & was direct drilled with stubble turnips. They now look fantastic & the cows are going to have the first taste of them tomorrow. The cows will be housed for winter in a couple of weeks, at which point we will turn the youngstock onto them for the winter. We don't usually outwinter stock, but due to the lack of winter forage, this year it will have to happen. We have of course got lots of grass now and have just taken a final silage cut from 200+ acres. This, along with more deliveries from Devon should provide enough food until the spring. With all cattle outside it's still helping, with the shortage of both winter forage and straw bedding for this year. The vegetables suffered as well of course. The spring planted brassicas produced very little. Onions are 1/3 of our normal harvest. The last plantings in July have survived after two sessions of watering & then plenty of rain. The aphids are having a good go at them though and even the loveliness of ladybirds can't make an impression on them. There is always something!

I hope I've ended on a more optimistic note. I don't suppose I will write again before early spring so it just leave me to wish you all a Happy Christmas & peaceful New Year.
Sue

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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

www.wearefarmingminds.co.uk

'Taking the bull by the horns'
to tackle Mental Health in
the Farming Community

Registered charity number: 1170461

WeAreFarmingMinds

Join us at the
Community Café
@ Much Birch Community Hall

Saturday 8 November 2025
10:00 - 12:30

and every 2nd Saturday of the month

13 December

10 January

8 February

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



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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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- **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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Join Alison Allan for Pilates
Pilates sessions are taught as small group classes and as individual one to one 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.

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 December edition is
Thursday 20th November 2025.
You can contact the Editor at the following email address:
editorial@birchesnews.org.uk

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You can also find some local photographs at the back of the on-line edition.

On-line edition extra photo page – pictures from the area



On the farm at Merrivale



After ploughing
By Janet Gwinnet

Ponies on Garway
Hill

