

PITCOMBE

news

View online at hall.pitcombepc.org.uk



Dec 2020 & Jan 2021

In this issue:

Quick festive recipe pg 11

Our busy Parish Council pg 21

Christmas Message pg 25
and more...

MONTHLY MAGAZINE FOR THE PARISH OF PITCOMBE

What's on...

December Sunday 6th	9.30am Holy Communion
Friday 11th	Black bin collection
Sunday 13th	11am Morning Prayer
Tuesday 15th	7.30 pm Parish Council on Zoom
Sunday 20th	4pm Carol Service
Friday 25th	Christmas Day 10am Holy Communion
Monday 28th	Black bin collection
January	Happy New Year!
Sunday 3rd	9.30am Holy Communion
Monday 4th	Recycling Collection (moved from the 1st!)
Friday 9th	Black bin collection as normal
Sunday 10th	11am Holy Communion
Tuesday 12th	7.30 pm Parish Council Meeting on Zoom
Sunday 17th	11am Holy Communion
Friday 22nd	Black bin collection and possibly Christmas trees
Sunday 24th	6pm Evening Prayer



welcome

PITCOMBE NEWS

The run-up to Christmas appears to be accelerating, as we focus on the celebration that promises to bring us family fun and festive good cheer against a back-drop of confusion and uncertainty. Bring it on! This edition is peppered with Christmas stories, party games, poems and homilies to hasten the process.

Also highlighted is an important event in our parish history: In true farming tradition, Tom Spratling farmed in Hadsphen with his father and was in turn joined by his son, Gerald. Tom turns 100 on 28th December and we are pleased to publish a rich catalogue of tributes and photographs from his family, friends and neighbours. Many Happy Returns of the Day, Tom.

St Leonard's Church will be holding weekly services through December, culminating in the Carol Service on the 20th and Holy Communion on Christmas Day. There will be recorded music during the carol service, but the lessons will be 'live'. Mince pies will be on offer! Please contact Carole Wyatt (01963 350222) if you'd like to attend, so that numbers can be suitably managed.

In line with appreciating your contributions, we publish 'A Point of View' from 'the Hedge Witch', which articulates her personal experiences during this difficult period.

Here's wishing all our readers a very happy, content and fulfilled time over Christmas. We will be back with the February edition in the new Year.

contribute

Editors: Jane and Anthony Hodges

The next edition will be February 2021. Please send any articles or advertisements to the Editors by 15 January at the latest. Our contact details can be found in the Parish Directory in the centre of this magazine.

ST LEONARD'S

DECEMBER & JANUARY-

Regrettably, due to the increase in covid-19 cases, government restrictions prevented us from holding services in November, but St Leonard's was opened for private prayer on Saturdays and Sundays. Also, the Rev. Dan Richards held an on-line service every Sunday at one of the churches in the Bruton Benefice, the fourth Sunday in November being Pitcombe. These services can be found on the St Mary's Bruton website at: <https://www.stmarysbruton.org/church/welcome-st-mary-virgin-bruton>

Following the ending of the second lockdown, we are now able to resume services at St Leonard's with the planned services in December and January being

Holy Communion on 6th December at 9:30 -Rev. Dan Richards

Morning Prayer on 13th December at 11:00 - Preb. Mark Ellis
Carol Service on 20th December at 4:00pm - Preb. Mark Ellis

Holy Communion on 25th December at 10:00 -Rev. Trevor Cook
Holy Communion on 3rd January at 9:30

Morning Prayer on 10th January at 11:00

Holy Communion on 17rd January at 11:00

Evening Prayer on 24th January at 6:00pm

We will use recorded music from Kings College Cambridge during the carol service, but the readers will be 'live'! There will be mince pies 'to go' on the way out. If you would like to attend either the Carol Service or the Christmas Day service please contact either Carole Wyatt on 01963 350222 or carolewyatt@btinternet.com, or myself on 01749 813842 or philip.pidsley@btinternet.com to reserve your seat.

Philip Pidsley
Churchwarden

We are currently limiting the size of congregation in line with government advice, so we might put on a second carol service if there is sufficient demand.

We very much appreciate the support of our retired clergy as they continue to provide the cover during our vacancy. Their workload will be eased once our new priest Jonathon Evans arrives in the new year!

This Christmas will be far from normal, with celebrations being curtailed and many of us being unable to meet our family members. However, there are signs of hope with advances in science that offer the promise of reducing the spread of covid-19 and the easing of restrictions of our daily life. I do hope everyone stays safe and well, and I would like to take this opportunity to wish everyone a very Happy Christmas.

Church Porch Library



Guidance needed

We have no way of knowing how much the open-access library in the church porch is used because we don't keep records – and don't intend to start. We had a book for comments, but few were left and, after a little more than a year of its existence, some feed-back would be very helpful.

We do receive many paperback thrillers, but we need variety. The library is weeded from time to time and new books are added but a bit more turnover would be good. You are welcome to borrow books and return them, equally welcome to take them away and keep them. We want to keep the stock moving.

If you have thoughts, comments, criticisms, please let us know. The simplest method would be by email to c.brook@ucl.ac.uk but, if you prefer to be anonymous, the notebook and a pen are still there.

Tom Spratling 100 years old!

Happy Birthday Tom!

Tom Leslie James Spratling was born in Hadsphen on 28 December 1920 and is the youngest of four siblings; John who went to farm in Holton, Lily who was the first secretary of Hadsphen Village Hall, and Ethel who lived at Rockville, Pitcombe.

Tom farmed with his father at Nettlecombe Farm in Hadsphen which was then part of the Hadsphen House Estate. This was a dairy farm with breeding sows and poultry.

During WW2 Tom was part of the Home Guard and saw many changes to the quiet lanes above the valley as they were used for storage of equipment by the military.

In 1947 Tom married Margaret, a local girl who had lived in the bungalow at Manor Farm as a young girl before moving to Quaperlake St in Bruton. The couple married at St Leonard's, Pitcombe and carried on living at Nettlecombe with Tom's father Jack.

Along came children; first Shirley then Gerald who carries on the family tradition of farming to this day.

Tom was aware that when his father died he would no longer hold the tenancy to Nettlecombe, and so he purchased Manor Farm in the early fifties securing the Spratling family's future in farming. This increase called for new equipment and a portable milking bail was purchased along with a new tractor so now Tom could milk the cows out in the fields with Margaret as his

willing assistant.

From a young boy Gerald had helped his parents on the farm, often feeding the pigs before cycling to school. At 15 he left school and joined Tom and Margaret in full time farming.



However, Tom was at his happiest in his fields ploughing, cultivating and sowing the seed for the following year's haymaking and harvest with his trusty four-legged friend along for the ride!

Tom's other love is his gardening. He spends many hours tending a very sizeable plot enjoying his many successes which often find their way into friends' and neighbours' hands or to supply numbers of Harvest Festivals.

Tom is a man of many talents from the traditional craft of hedging, making spars for thatching and cutting hazel to make his bean and pea sticks.

Happy Birthday Tom and many congratulations, keep on tractor'ing, fencing and bailing!!
Our very best from Richard, Jackie and Tom, have a fantastic day.

Happy Birthday Ol' Tom! Congratulations on such an amazing landmark. Thank you for all the veg, fruit and farming knowledge you shared with me as I grew up. It has never been forgotten! Best wishes, Tom O'Leary

Congratulations to Tom on a remarkable milestone. Fifty years in Hadspen and fifty years in Cole! I remember his generosity when I called on him to ask for donations of produce for the Harvest Festival. He always had a productive vegetable garden and every year I was rewarded with a large box (sometimes more than one), of fruit and vegetables which helped to decorate the Church for this important rural festival. I also recall writing a piece for the magazine on what I think was his 90th birthday. I sat down with him and marvelled on his remarkable memory. He could recall details of more or less every person and events in the parish since before the Second World War. He had strong views about certain matters and people. I was pleased to be able to give him a photo copy of his certificate of baptism which occurred in St. Leonard's in January 1921, which he seemed pleased to receive. It must be a rarity, these days, to celebrate a life of 100 years spent in the same parish. Best wishes Tom.
Ken and Jenny Elliott

A very happy birthday to a true Valley man. Without your wonderful memories of the parish past, we would be all the poorer in our knowledge of the changing - and not so changing - life here. I've so much enjoyed our conversations over the years, and look forward to more! With best wishes,
Caroline Donald

Sending our congratulations for turning a whole century old. Wishing you a great celebration on your special day and hopefully a 'new' vintage tractor to add to your collection.
Annette & Edward

Congratulations on your centenary. You are a role model for the rest of us to keep going !
Jean & Willie Constantine
Old Station Lane



The sound of your tractor passing by is comfortingly familiar to our generation who have not grown up with vast hi-tech vehicles. You are always a courteous driver aware of cars behind you and pulling in to let them overtake. Thanks to you and your family the fields around us provide ideal forage for our bees.

A mantle of golden dandelions in spring and blackberry blossom later in the year are particular favourites. Our annual exchange of a pot of honey for one of your pumpkins seems such a small gesture, but means a lot.

Thank you for your contribution to this beautiful corner of Somerset.

With our very best wishes for your 100 th Birthday.

Alex and Tina

Congratulations on a long innings!
With our very best wishes
Peter & Carole

Congratulations,
Mr Spratling. Have a lovely
day.
Colin and Terry Poffley

Having known Tom and his family for over 50 years, I congratulate him on reaching this milestone of his life. I first met him and his family back in the 60's as a boy when on holiday with my family from Essex. I can remember spending long summer days with Gerald, his son, learning about farming and getting hands on experience of what farm work was like before the amount of mechanisation that we see today. Neighbours in Hadspen would often lend Tom a hand to unload hay bales at the end of the day. A time to catch up with the local news and help at the same time. In return, if you needed a load of manure for your garden or were running low on firewood, Tom would arrive with his tractor and trailer, a familiar sight to many.

Tom, throughout his working life has spent most of his time outside in the fresh air doing what most of us would consider quite hard physical work. He has reached the great age of 100 years and is a fine example to us all. Happy 100th birthday, Tom.

Ian Bright. (Former Hadspen Resident)



circa. 1966, outside what is now Pacets.

Featuring left to right, Margaret Spratling (Tom's wife), Tom Spratling, Keith Bright, Ian Bright, Gerald Spratling.

© Jason Ingram

URQUHART&HUNT

LANDSCAPE DESIGN STUDIO

01373 888 720

www.urquhart&hunt.com

Advertisement

THE HAPPY COOKER



Amaretto Ice Cream

A wonderfully easy and very festive ice cream which will be a delicious accompaniment to all your Christmassy puds!

INGREDIENTS

500gms mascarpone cheese

5oz icing sugar

4 egg yolks

METHOD

Couldn't be simpler!

Blend all the ingredients together - and freeze!

The egg whites will make wonderful meringues, of course, and store safely in an airtight container for months!

Thank you to Suki Posnett



Matters various

Bruton and District Horticultural Society

We have cancelled the autumn and spring talks and hope that the summer visits can go ahead, starting in May. The show should be held on 21 August.

We will keep everyone informed in the Pitcombe News and on www.brutonhorticultural.org.uk, and of course members will be contacted directly.

In the meantime, carry on hoeing, pruning, weeding, tidying, mowing, cutting down, planting, sowing, tying up, and browsing catalogues.

Alison Bleasdale

Digital Safety Tips

Getting online can make life easier in many ways, but also comes with the risk of scams and fraud. Online scams are becoming increasingly common, but you can protect yourself by knowing what to look out for, and what to do if you suspect a scam.

If you see a suspicious email, don't reply with your details or open any links or documents. Delete the email straight away.

If the email claims to be from an organisation, phone them directly using the phone number found on their official website and ask them. Find out more about using email and avoiding scams visit the excellent advice pages on ageuk.org





CAULFIELD CONSTRUCTION ENGINEERING

- Period Property
- Renovations
- Extensions
- Alterations
- Roofing
- Repairs
- Groundworks
- Underpinning



07541 326750



01963 359679



www.cce-construction.com



contact@cce-construction.com



Brue Computing Ltd
IT support and services
www.bruecomp.co.uk
info@bruecomp.co.uk
07789 050987

1st Class Service, including:
PC and Mac repairs
Virus and Spyware Removal
Hardware upgrades
Home installation and setup
Small Business IT support
Phone and tablet repairs

Parish Council

Chairman	Richard Waller	01749 812754 rjtwaller@hotmail.com
Parish Clerk	Zoe Godden	07742 930521 clerk@pitcombepc.org.uk

St Leonard's Church

The Rector

Benefice Office Secretary benefice@stmarysbruton.org

Bell-ringing Tina Harley 01749 813262
tina.harley@btinternet.com

Church Flowers roster Tina Harley 01749 813262
tina.harley@btinternet.com

Church Wardens Philip Pidsley 01749 813842
philip.pidsley@btinternet.com

PPC Secretary Carole Wyatt 01963 350222
carolewyatt@btinternet.com

Friends of St Leonards

Secretary Cathie Brook 01963 351492
catherinebrook@aol.com

Hadspen Village Hall

Chairman Robin Currie 01749 814899
arctheduke@gmail.com

Bookings Secretaries Penny Mounsey 01963 359488
penny.mounsey345@btinternet.com

Jan James 01963 350464
janet.james945@btinternet.com

Secretary Sheelagh Douglas 07733 102819.
sdmdouglas7@gmail.com

Neighbourhood Watch

Co-ordinating Officer Sue Chamberlain 01963 350616
sechamberlain@btinternet.com

S H D I R E C T O R Y

Pitcombe News

Co-editors	Jane Hodges	01963 351429 janepamelahodges@hotmail.com
	Anthony Hodges	anthony.hodges@hodgesassociates.org

Short Mat Bowls Club

Secretary	Carole Wyatt	01963 350222 carolewyatt@btinternet.com
-----------	--------------	--

U3A

Bridge	Kate Mair	01963 351544 kateandbillmair@hotmail.com
--------	-----------	--

Patchwork	Jan Wilcox	01747 840335 mail@janwilcox.plus.com
-----------	------------	--

History	Bruce Bower	01747 840335 bowersxb@btinternet.com
---------	-------------	--

<u>Pilates</u>	Shirley Rutter	07733 085 077
-----------------------	----------------	---------------

-

Avon and Somerset Police

Emergencies	999
-------------	-----

Non Emergencies	101
-----------------	-----

Healthcare

Bruton Surgery	01749 812 310
----------------	---------------

Wincanton Health Centre	01963 435700
-------------------------	--------------

Shepton Mallet Treatment Centre	01749 333600
---------------------------------	--------------

Local Government

District Councillor,	Robin Bastable	01749 812335 robin.bastable@southsomerset.gov.uk
----------------------	----------------	--

County Councillor	Anna Groskop.	01749 812520 amgroskop@somerset.gov.uk
-------------------	---------------	--

Roads and Transport	roadsandtransportSD@somerset.gov.uk
---------------------	--



The Flower Shop

Beautiful fresh flowers
Bespoke country style bouquets
Range of jugs, pots, gifts and vases
Weddings, funerals, events
Family run business
Local delivery

8 High Street
Bruton, Somerset. BA10 0AA
Telephone: 01749 812465
Email: jo@theflowershopbruton.co.uk
www.theflowershopbruton.co.uk



DORSET
GARAGE DOORS
QUALITY★RELIABILITY★SECURITY

- ♦ Sectional Doors
- ♦ Roller Doors
- ♦ Up and Over
- ♦ Side Hinged
- ♦ Personnel Doors
- ♦ Spares & Accessories
- ♦ Installation

- ♦ Repairs
- ♦ Servicing
- ♦ Automation
- ♦ 2 into 1 Conversions
- ♦ Automated Gate Systems

Contact us today for your free
no-obligation quote

Call 01963 363782 or 01258 472830
www.dorsetgaragedoors.co.uk

HADSPEN VILLAGE HALL

Registered Charity No: 265121 TRUSTEE REPORT FOR THE YEAR 2019/20

Obviously, this last year the use of the hall has been severely affected by the Covid-19 pandemic and particularly the nationwide lockdown. Up until well into the lead-up to lockdown, the Hall continued to accommodate a wide range of users, both regular and occasional, and was heading for a bumper year. Once lockdown was imposed, the Hall had to be closed but, following government guidance, after heroic efforts to produce new procedures and install new measures to keep people safe, we were able to reopen to users on 1st September. It was pleasing to see that a large number of our regulars immediately returned, and this has confirmed how important the Hall is to the well-being of the local community.

Only two events organised by the HVH Committee took place this year - the Christmas party and a Quiz Night, both of which were well attended. Because of the lockdown we were very sad not to be able to commemorate VE Day as we had been planning to do and due to social distancing requirements, we are not planning any further community events at this time. We will continue to be hopeful, however, that 2021 will bring better news with regard to the pandemic and that we will be able to get back to normal operation.

Despite all of the disruption, maintenance of the hall and of the car park have continued to be undertaken as well as routine maintenance of the boiler, fire extinguishers and smoke detectors. The 5-year annual electrical check was carried out in October and we have continued to maintain our commitments to Health & Safety.

In consideration of the Covid-19 pandemic we applied for and received a national grant of £10,000 which was available to community buildings, including village halls, to assist with the expenses of coping with the pandemic and to replace lost income. So far this has helped us meet the expenses of hand sanitiser, cleaning materials, PPE, signage, etc. (c. £500) and to replace lost income on lettings and fundraising (c. £3,000). It will also go towards other expenses as we move forward and compensate for reduced income through this critical time.

Our major expenditure of the year was in respect of the final conveyance costs of the car park extension lease and the provision of safety and security lighting totalling £1,737. We now have a car park which will much better accommodate the parking needs of both large and small events and will enable us to plan for the future.

The year end result which reflects all the above was to generate receipts of £14,717 and payments of £7,094. The balance of funds at the end of the financial year stood at c. £26,185. The Trustees will continue to respond to Covid-19 and the related guidance from the Government. Although this may restrict what we can do, the continuing aim will be to provide facilities for the community whenever and however we can.

Hadspen Village Hall Committee

I AM A LOCAL TREE SURGEON
RELIABLE, EXPERIENCED AND ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE
FOR A PERSONAL APPROACH TO ALL YOUR
TREE AND GARDEN NEEDS
PLEASE CALL FOR A FREE QUOTE

*Quality work at
sensible prices*

*Any job
Big or small*

FELLING & DISMANTLING

PROFESSIONAL PRUNING

FRUIT TREES

HEDGE CUTTING

STUMP GRINDING

SITE CLEARANCE

*Public liability insurance certificate
provided on request*

**NOEL RADFORD
TREE SURGEON
N.C.HORT (ARB)**

9, BURROWFIELD SQUARE, BRUTON, SOMERSET BA10 0HR

01749 812151

Christmas Party Games

Candy Canes

You'll need a deck of cards and 3+ people circled around a pile of candy canes, one less than the number of players. Everyone takes turns pulling cards with the goal to be the first to get four of a kind (ex. four Kings). Once you do, take a candy cane as stealthily as possible. Once that happens, everyone else races to grab on of the remaining candy canes. The person who doesn't get a candy cane is eliminated. Do this until one winner remains.

Stocking Guessing Game

First, you need a host to put random items in a stocking. Once it's stuffed, tie a ribbon or string around the top of the stocking so that no one can peek. Sit in a circle and pass it around to let everyone feel what's inside. Give them note cards so that they can write down their guesses. The person who guesses the most correct items wins.

Blindfold Christmas Drawing

First, grab some paper plates and markers. Players are blindfolded and hold their paper plate on top of their head. One person gives drawing instructions while everyone else tries to draw the Christmas scene they describe onto the plate. The most accurate drawing wins!.

If you could change one thing about your health – what would it be?

Your Gut Microbiome is THE key to your health



What is your Microbiome?

Recent scientific studies have uncovered a fascinating ecosystem within each of us called the Microbiome. This is a complex network of bacteria, fungi & microflora, which impacts the health of virtually every system in the human body. The Microbiome accounts for 90% of the cells that create YOU. These cells can work for you or against you.

Please contact Sarah Crossman if you would like to know how to improve your health with a unique 21 day Microbiome Reset Programme.

Tel: 07531 831 553 or email sarah@lifereflexology.co.uk



A natural, beautiful gift

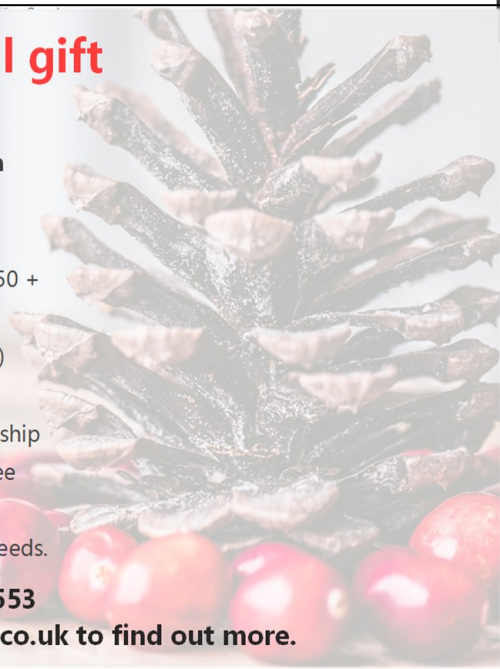
Buy your loved one the gift of
Essential Oils and start them on an
amazing journey.

Introductory kit of lemon, lavender, &
peppermint oil (5ml) plus wild orange £50 +
p+p

Family Essential kit of top ten oils (5ml)
£100 + p+p

Each kit comes with 12 months membership
giving 25% off, 121 consultation and free
access to online ongoing education and
support. Other kits available to suit all needs.

Call Sarah Crossman 07531831553
or email sarah@lifereflexology.co.uk to find out more.



PARISH COUNCIL



Pitcombe Parish Council

The Parish Council meeting was held by zoom on Tuesday 10th November and we welcomed our new councillor, Michael Fysh, to his first meeting following the co-option process. Michael will be a welcome voice for the residents of Pitcombe on any matters of concern or opportunity.

There was little in the way of new business to consider although we reviewed some old matters: the embankment site is likely to be subject to a planning application in the near future.

District Councillor Bastable explained that the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) stated that, without the ability to demonstrate a five-year housing land supply, there was a presumption in favour of development, meaning that developers did not have to meet many of the other requirements of the NPPF. Following a review, SSDC was now able to show that adequate land had been identified to accommodate the predicted increase in population numbers for the coming five years.

The Chair reported that the recent accident on the A371 at Grove Farm entrance had been serious and resulted in a telegraph pole being knocked down. The Chair had raised this with County Highways but had not received a response. Subsequent to the meeting we have been advised by Highways that “as part of our budget allocation for the next financial year, we will install a bend warning sign from each approach. This will be accompanied by a SLOW marking in the road.” This suggests a modest victory for road safety and local opinion.

The council approved the annual grant to the Parish Church to support maintenance of the graveyard – from which we will all ultimately benefit.

If you have an interest in local government, please watch out for the briefings being published about the future arrangements for Somerset which will result in the creation of a unitary authority. There are 2 proposals on the table which will be decided upon within the next 6 months or so. The changes will not impact this Parish
(continued over the page)

Richard Waller
Chair

Parish council report contd from page 22

Council but will determine who has responsibility in future for planning matters, the provision of services and what happens to your bins.

Looking to the next meeting in December there are items of interest to some:

- To consider how to deal with the deteriorating condition of the river bridge in Pitcombe.
- To note receipt of a file from the previous Chair of the Floodwatch Group and consider any action to be taken.

Please come along to the meeting by zoom if you have any opinions or contributions to make on these or any other matters.

Full minutes of the meeting are published on the website for Pitcombe Parish Council.

Richard Waller, Chair

ovencor 
Domestic and Commercial Oven Cleaning

**Your local, independent
oven cleaning service.**



Domestic Ovens,
Ranges, AGAs,
Hobs & Extractors

Commercial Ovens,
Extractors, Floors &
much more ...



01963 240931

www.ovencor.co.uk

Email: contact@ovencor.co.uk

Neighbourhood Watch

With the increase in online scams and cyber crime it is a good time to review your passwords and on-line security.

Advice from the National Cyber Security Centre and the Police Digital Security Centre is **simple and easy**:

1. Use different passwords for your email and online accounts

2. Use 3 random words passwords

Examples: *owlpigfox*, (or better; *owl-pig-fox*), (or better still; *Owl-Pig-Fox*)

Why *3 random words*? Simple - these 'created' words are not in any dictionary

3. Use two-factor authentication (2FA)

This is a second level of security that's being used increasingly. It uses your mobile phone number to send you a text message with a 'one-time' code to enter.

See page 12 for another top tip regarding digital security

Sue Chamberlain



Somerset Wildlife Trust

An extract from the magazine's December 2020 edition

Westhay is the home to some incredibly special and rare birds like the bittern and the great white egret, attracts thousands of overwintering ducks and waders, is a safe haven for otters, and provides a welcome playground for European eels, whose incredible journey is like no other in the natural world. These species have chosen Westhay because it meets all their needs. **And they're spreading the word....**



There's one other very special bird that seems to have chosen Westhay as its forever home - and that's the **bearded reedling**. There are only around 700 breeding pairs of this charismatic bird in the UK - and **on Westhay this autumn we have seen upwards of 150 birds in just one day!**

However, the future of the bearded reedling and the other wildlife that call Westhay home is far from secure. We must raise ongoing funds to help us continue the habitat improvement programmes that make Westhay such a rich place for wildlife, and to ensure that everyone, regardless of age or ability, can enjoy a magical connection to nature at Westhay.

To this end, Somerset Wildlife is conducting a fund-raising Campaign called **#ChristmasChallenge20**, whereby every Pound raised will be matched by a group of third-party donors.

Go to www.somersetwildlife.org to find out more.



Christmas Message

For many, Christmas is all about traditions. The traditions we have as families: coming together, arguing over who makes the best gravy, children playing with the box and wrapping paper rather than the actual gift, Grandad falling asleep in the chair and someone cheating at the games.

It is important to acknowledge this year will be different. As a family we have had conversations about how different it will be. Different is not inferior, different is simply different. If comments in the media are to be believed Christmas is in danger of being cancelled this year. From a Christian perspective, Christmas cannot be cancelled. The central message of Christianity is that Christ came as a baby at Christmas, representing that God is with us. He is Emmanuel. *'For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.'* (Isaiah 9:6). This is what we celebrate each year.

But before we arrive at the Joy of Christmas Day, we must move through the darkness and waiting of Advent. During this time, we seek the comfort of God's presence in the darkness. Many of us open a window in our Advent calendars to count down towards Christmas. The Church counts down in a

similar way lighting an Advent candle each Sunday in the run up to Christmas to remind us of the presence of God.

Each of the Advent candles has a different meaning. The first is for all of God's people and is the candle of hope. The second is for the Old Testament Prophets who foretold Jesus's birth and is the candle of peace. The third is for John the Baptist who asked us to prepare our hearts to welcome God, so it is the candle of love. The final candle is for Mary, the mother of Jesus, who joyfully carried the Saviour, and is the candle of joy.

Revd Hannah Moore
St James's Church Elstead Surrey

A Point of View

Well, I haven't written for P.N. for a long time! In part, because of helping support my youngest son through two years of A level studies, in Philosophy, Photography, and Law, all of which are relevant subjects concerning ***the times we are living through.***

Whilst bright, kind, and intelligent, the struggle for him was within the education system, which at state level, has, since my schooldays, diminished both its funding and support of the Arts, as if Maths and English were the only topics of value, worthy though they are.

Add to that, all things computer and tech, being increased and we have a formidable machine, grinding the young creative souls into a conformity, not entirely natural to the human being. But, this is part, of the long term dream of Klaus Shwab of the World Economic Forum, who has written a most alarming projection of how he believes lives world over should be lived, and it's called 'The Great Reset'. I wonder? Were we offered the chance to vote for his opinion, and why has he given himself the self-proclaimed right, to decide how we must all live our lives?

Then, at the start of serious revision work, beginning the Spring Term, schools all over the country, and indeed the world, were closed and exams cancelled. My son needed support on many levels, not least because all that he had been working towards was randomly taken away. I believe that his nature, his philosophy studies, friends, and family support kept him buoyant-thank God-and photography was also a comfort. We could walk together through the silence (no roar of traffic from the 303) and take photographs of the beautiful valley here.

We met SO many people! Tentatively walking for their hour's release from house arrest. Many I met across the fields who said, 'I've never been this way before; its lovely.' I have to say, my first thought was: 'Where were you when I was up to my knees in mud doing the daily field work through the winter?' The second was 'How lovely that folk are feeling the freedom, expanse and support of this green and peasant land, and what healing for their souls they will find.'

Another realisation was that they had no clue about *nature* or country living; one chap struggled to ride a road bike along the muddy track saying 'This isn't easy' I thought the clue would be in the finger post that says **Footpath!** Another person was complaining about nettles, and others saying the cows had chased them. Odd, as the cows in the valley don't usually bother people. One who had escaped from London, a film maker

and musician - came to be free in the valley and took the opportunity to carry on his craft and work to record a song whilst filming the track going into the field, and filming close conversations with my horses. He then published it, and many saw the video online, which was sweet and short. I should have asked for royalties. I am joking, of course, I know the family and they are kind country wise folk.

Their work is in music. My work is art, and few people have commissioned work this year, as their thoughts, understandably, have been turned to other urgencies. That doesn't lessen the need for art of all kinds. be it hedge craft, gathering skills to make medicines, playing guitars, harps, clarinets, pianos, or performing circus puppetry, dancing, or plays in theatre....many friends in all these fields have had their concerts postponed, and their tours cancelled. The joy of playing and earning an income, taken away.

It was to be only for two weeks to ***flatten the curve***, much more could be said about that, as many factual statistics are available from official sources that one can research for oneself, and in so doing, discover the voice of both common sense, and critical thinking plus, the wisdom and intelligence of the great.

Lord Jonathon Sumption QC spoke of this, in his Oxford Law School online lecture this week.

My son has now left home initially to take a degree course in Northampton - which was cancelled due to restrictions. I posted a copy of Jonathan's lecture to him, in which, he speaks of the intricacy of laws, legalities, rules and diktats in a most measured way. We can all learn from this lecture and I would urge you to find it and listen, as it will be something to consider, the way the valley here, is food for the soul.

As a footnote, this Saturday is Lunar Samhain, which, has little if anything to do with pumpkins, horror masks and sweeties! Traditionally, it was the time to remember the dead, loved ones passed; set a place for them at the feast table, light a candle and offer a prayer of peace for their departed souls. It is All Hallows Eve as I write.

Tradition had it that this was the time to make (or these days purchase) a new broom! Not so odd as it may sound, because, ***new brooms sweep clean***, and much of this year, needs a jolly good sweeping!

Blessings of the season to you.

The Hedge Witch.

Christmas Chimes

Sweetly through the night, comes the distant chime of bells, Hark,
and hear the story that their joyous pealing tells;

Like the song of angels, to us mortals given,

Comes the silver music, sounding through the star-crowned Heav'n.

List! The happy music makes all nature sound,

Hear the answering hill-tops in echo sweet resound;

'Tis of One they sing, One of lowly birth,

Who left a crown of glory, and came to sinful earth.

Now they tell the tale of shepherds from afar,

Watching through the dark night to see the glittering star; Now they
tell the story, of the wondrous love

Of Him, who lived and suffered, the Great King above.

Chime, ye bells of Heav'n, o'er the sleeping earth,

Let your tongues sing out the story of the heavenly birth;

Chime throughout the long night, nor cease your joyful lay,

Chime until the awaking
of the glorious day.

Julia M Swift

1871



The Shoemaker and the Elves

A shoemaker, through no fault of his own, had become so poor that he had only leather enough for a single pair of shoes. He cut them out one evening, then went to bed, intending to finish them the next morning. Having a clear conscience, he went to bed peacefully, commended himself to God, and fell asleep. The next morning, after saying his prayers, he was about to return to his work when he found the shoes on his workbench, completely finished. Amazed, he did not know what to say. He picked up the shoes in order to examine them more closely. They were so well made that not a single stitch was out of place, just as if they were intended as a masterpiece. A customer soon came by, and he liked the shoes so much that he paid more than the usual price for them.

The shoemaker now had enough money to buy leather for two pairs of shoes. That evening he cut them out, intending to continue his work the next morning with good cheer. But he did not need to do so, because when he got up they were already finished. Customers soon bought them, paying him enough that he now could buy leather for four pairs of shoes. Early the next morning he found the four pairs finished. And so it continued; whatever he cut out in the evening was always finished the following morning. He now had a respectable income and with time became a wealthy man.

One evening shortly before Christmas, just before going to bed, and having already cut out a number of shoes, he said to his wife, "Why don't we stay up tonight and see who is giving us this helping hand."

His wife agreed to this and lit a candle. Then they hid themselves behind some clothes that were hanging in a corner of the room. At midnight two cute little naked men appeared. Sitting down at the workbench, they picked up the cut-out pieces and worked so unbelievable quickly and nimbly that the amazed shoemaker could not take his eyes from them. They did not stop until they had finished everything. They placed the completed shoes on the workbench, then quickly ran away. The next morning the wife said, "The little men have made us wealthy. We must show them our thanks. They are running around with nothing on, freezing. Do you

Continued over the page

know what? I want to sew some shirts, jackets, undershirts, and trousers for them, and knit a pair of stockings for each of them, and you should make a pair of shoes for each of them.”

The husband said, “I agree,” and that evening, when everything was finished, they set the presents out instead of the unfinished work. Then they hid themselves in order to see what the little men would do. At midnight they came skipping up, intending to start work immediately. When they saw the little clothes instead of the cut-out leather, they at first seemed puzzled, but then delighted. They quickly put them on, then stroking the beautiful clothes on their bodies they sang:

Are we not boys, neat and fine?

No longer cobblers shall we be!

Then they hopped and danced about, jumping over chairs and benches. Finally they danced out of the house. They never returned, but the shoemaker prospered, succeeding in everything that he did.

The Brothers Grimm





Tom Spratling

Ages ago, when my children were small we would call on Tom and Margaret for our eggs. Margaret was usually in the kitchen cooking, always warm and welcoming; she had a grandchild at the same convent school in Wincanton as my daughter.

Tom was often in his garden growing vegetables and I studied his plot carefully. At the time I only grew runner beans, courgettes, spinach beet but once we moved I had to be much more ambitious and the points I learned from Tom came into practice. Don't start too early, when you can work in your shirt sleeves is about right. Turn the leaves over the cauliflower curds to keep them white; he was a fine vegetable grower. Many congratulations Tom on reaching 100 and thank you for the advice given many years ago.

Camilla Carter

