

Kempsey Times



14th Feb

A free monthly newspaper for Kempsey, Norton, Severn Stoke and surrounding villages

Issue 22

February 2026

FREE



'Frost Along the Hedge' by Peter Hodge

Young at heart! This has to be the only way to be! I am always heartened to meet so many brilliant young people we have around us. We have, over the last few years, given opportunities to various young people, some when they were still at school! Each of them has become a first class team member.

We received an enquiry from a young lady this month wishing to write articles for us. She enjoyed reading our newspaper and wanted to write about her work and the area in which she lives. Her article arrived the next day! Excellent! We are publishing it this month! The opportunity was snapped up and

now the dream is coming true. We have outstanding contributors, they all combine well, and this gives a dynamic impact to our newspapers. The majority of youngsters are well-behaved, well-mannered people, all waiting for that opportunity! Much has changed since I was young. We had lots of good

youngsters, all wanting to grab that opportunity, but with blue and white collar workers, class prejudice etc., they were very difficult to find.

Free advertising

We are offering free advertising for new businesses. This is to help people get into business, become independent and to look after themselves. Enterprise takes guts but once you start, you will never look back. The take up on the advertising scheme has been very encouraging, and is growing every month. The world is full of opportunities!

Peter Hodge

We record with great sadness the passing of Peter Hodge. A friend and customer for over thirty years, a fine man and an incredibly talented artist. We were privileged to publish his book 'The Cotswolds & Beyond' and to print many of his beautiful landscape paintings. Our front page illustrations are highlights of his work. He will be greatly missed. We send our deepest sympathy to his wife and family at this very sad time.

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County and District Report

Councillor Martin Allen



It feels like this year is flying by; March is almost here before I've had a chance to catch my breath. With the promise of sunnier days ahead, I know many are planning or booking holidays and trips. This year, I've decided to also explore local as well. We're lucky to have a wealth of fascinating destinations and historic sites close by, such as the Tudor House Museum in Upton. The Common off Green Street

near Kempsey is definitely worth visiting; it offers wonderful views of the Malverns.

Beechwood Coffee Mornings



Did you know that Beechwood care home is situated in West Worcestershire within the village of Holly Green? It is a welcoming and supportive residential home that offers more than care; it also features a community room and extends a weekly invitation every Friday between 11am and 12pm for coffee and cake to both local and non-local visitors. Soup is available upon request, providing a warm option during colder months. There is no fee for participation, as the initiative is aimed at social inclusion and fostering meaningful connections within the community. As your local County Councillor, I felt I just had to stop by for tea – and try a few mince pies. Eve and her

team do an excellent job supporting residents and are clearly dedicated to going above and beyond. I really appreciate this wonderful initiative that opens the Care Home to people from Holly Green and Ryall. I met some fantastic residents as well as visitors who came in just to chat. It was obvious that several guests visit regularly – and I can understand why. I was delighted to learn that Beechwood is currently working with Royal Star and Garter towards having Veteran Friendly Care Home Status. *If you would like to find out more, please contact Eve Owen or a member of her staff by phoning 01684 595959 or by emailing eve.owen@sanctuary.co.uk*



Drivers Wanted



Upton Community Care provides valuable transport services for locals registered at the Upton Doctors Surgery who need assistance getting to medical appointments. Last year, I used my divisional fund to supply magnetic car signs, hoping to attract more volunteer drivers. There's still a need for volunteers – could you spare some time to help?

If you're interested, Upton Community Care is located above the Map Shop at 15 High Street, Upton. You can contact Wayne Boden by phone at 01684 593633 or by email at chairman@uptoncommunitycare.co.uk

Your support would be greatly appreciated.

Food, Glorious Food!



Following on from the Environment Act 2021, the UK Government is asking waste collection authorities, such as Malvern Hills District Council, to collect food waste from all households. To prepare for the introduction of the service, Malvern Hills District Council has purchased the additional vehicles required as well as additional depot capacity. If approved by Councillors on 26th February, the funding required to deliver the service,

estimated at c£1.2m per year, will be in place and the recruitment and training of new drivers and operatives can commence. It is likely that a phased introduction will begin towards the end of this year and I will of course keep you informed of any news I receive. Did you know MHDC have been collecting commercial food waste since April 2025, also a requirement of the Environment Act 2021?

And finally ...

As you read this, the dreaded Council Tax annual budget process may be still ongoing at the County Council, and this year, it is expected to be more challenging than usual. I do not believe it is fair to assign blame in this article; I will refrain from doing so, regardless of how tempted I am.

I will keep you all in mind when I come to vote. I will let you know more next month if the bigwigs stop their bickering at County Hall and there is an answer. In the meantime, the weeds have already started to grow, so its back to the veg plot I go! As always, I'm here if you need me.

Martin Allen

A few words from... Dame Harriett Baldwin MP



Broadening Your Horizons by Learning a New Language

Dame Harriett Baldwin MP has urged local people to start the new year with a pledge to learn a new language. She has offered her support to a campaign to improve the teaching of languages in schools and to encourage more people to learn a foreign language. And Dame Harriett has signed up for a Parliamentary challenge sponsored by Duolingo to learn Spanish this month in order to share any prize fund amongst local charities.

A report published this week shows that teaching of languages in schools continues to decline, and there is a national shortage

Welcoming extra trains pledge for Worcestershire Parkway Passengers

Dame Harriett Baldwin MP has welcomed news that more train seats will soon be available on busy commuter routes using the popular Worcestershire Parkway station. The MP has been campaigning for more routes and more train companies using the new station and train operator CrossCountry has confirmed it will be adding extra trains for its services through the county. Dame Harriett shared constituents' concerns about the lack of seat capacity and the train company chief executive, Shiona Rolfé, wrote to confirm that extra trains are in the pipeline and the company had taken delivery of 12 additional five-carriage trains, adding extra seats to its Bristol-Manchester and Plymouth-Edinburgh services which stop at Worcestershire Parkway. "Worcestershire Parkway Station has proven really popular with

of specialist language teachers. Dame Harriett said: "As someone who studied languages to degree level, I have always felt it helped me both in my career and in my leisure time, and I wholeheartedly support any initiative which helps more people to study a foreign language at school or university. It is worrying to hear that the number of people learning languages is in decline, and I feel that young people would be able to enhance their career opportunities with a second language. I'm not aware of specific challenges facing pupils who want to learn a language in West Worcestershire, but it is something that I will be checking on when I meet local head teachers."

commuters across the county, and operators have struggled to meet the demand for peak time train services," explained Dame Harriett. "I was delighted to hear that CrossCountry has taken this decision to take on additional trains and carriages, increasing the number of seats on routes used by my constituents. This is a positive step, and I encourage other operators to follow suit as Worcestershire Parkway continues to attract passengers beyond the original projections when it opened. People who regularly use our local rail network know that measures such as this will only make a small difference, and the rail industry needs the Government to support significantly better investment in rolling stock. It is also essential for Worcestershire County Council to re-visit the plans to add capacity to the station car park which is running at capacity and any extension really should be able to pay for itself."

What's On

Look out for Daffodowndilly Days on 21st and 22nd March in Kempsey.

Lovely Jubbly Hot and Cold Refreshments! Plants for sale!
Native Wild Flower Seeds for sale! 'Knit a Daffodil' event!

Supporting your community!

Questions? Send them to infokempseyrevels@gmail.com

Cornflower Club

We started back at the club in January with some lovely entertainment. We start in February on the 11th, then 25th going in to March 11th. We have a some great things happening through the months up until July. We meet on a Wednesday every fortnight at

2:30 until 4:30 in the Parish Hall. We would love to see more people join us. If you are a lady or gentleman over 60 years of age, you would be made most welcome.

Sally Linsey 01905 820476
Julia Grant 01905 820138

Teddies for Tragedies

We are still collecting lots of knitted items to send off to different parts of the world and also in this country. We need blankets, hats, gloves, scarves, cardigans and, of course, the

teddies. Crocheted large blankets are welcome. Thank you to all the knitters out there, keep your items coming. Drop your items off to me,

Julia Grant

Music Society

The Music Society meets fortnightly on Thursday afternoons in a comfortable lounge at The Firs on Old Road North from 2:00pm – 4:00pm. We listen to a variety of music, presented by members, or the occasional visiting presenter. We would welcome anyone new who would like to come and join us. Do come and give us a try. We would like to increase our numbers, so new faces are very welcome. We have a social break in the middle of the afternoon, for tea or coffee and biscuits. We are a friendly group and mostly very local to Kempsey.



Our meetings will take place at The Firs on Old Road North from 2:00pm – 4:00pm on:

Thursday 12th & 26th February, 12th March

For further details please contact Anne on 07931 636309

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From the Parish Council

Planning

Against officer recommendation, the proposal for up to ninety-nine dwellings off Bannut Hill (M/25/00323/OUT), was refused planning permission at MHDC's Northern Area Planning Committee early in December. This followed a site inspection by committee members and a lengthy debate at the meeting, both well attended by Kempsey residents who made their objections well known. Refusal reasons referred to the narrow Napleton Lane being unsuitable for construction traffic, to further pressure on village facilities, particularly primary school places, and intrusion into the open countryside. At the time of writing, an appeal has not been made against the decision. In the meantime, a consultation is taking place on the Main Modifications (MMs) proposed by the Inspectors dealing with the South Worcestershire Development Plan Review. This started on 6th January 2026 and runs until 17th February 2026, so it may have closed by the time you read this. The consultation is limited to the

MMs and is not an opportunity to put forward other changes or further land for development, but no doubt some will try. There is a lot to deal with (83 MMs!), and we have yet to consider what, if any, comments we need to make. Some modifications were made known in advance. For instance, the proposed new settlement at Throckmorton is no longer included but is on the 'back burner' for future reconsideration. Even so, the Inspectors support the overall Development Strategy of concentrating development in new and expanded settlements, including the already committed South Worcestershire Urban Extension. Although no new housing sites are allocated in the parish, and there are no major changes to the village development boundary, Kempsey remains a Category 1 settlement. On paper, that means it has services and facilities capable of accommodating more development as part of the strategy!

On a better note, the principle of Strategic Gaps has been accepted, albeit with a new policy to differentiate them from Green

Belts. The gap between the village and the extended Worcester City is still included. The gaps are intended to remain open and free of other than minor development, mainly to prevent settlements merging. That makes the continued inclusion of the 2ha employment site at Open Barn Farm, slap-bang in the middle of our Strategic Gap, even more difficult to understand!

The County Council's Streetscape Design Guide 2025, an updated version of the 2022 guide, was adopted in December. It sets out "... design aspirations and principles to deliver high-quality streets and public spaces that are safe, accessible, functional, and attractive for all users" and the "... current requirements and specifications for planning and delivering highway infrastructure".

These include, for instance, standards and specifications for roads and footways, as well as other basics such as car parking requirements. As such, it will be used to assess all new planning applications. Its aspirations are welcomed, but it remains to be seen if the quality of new housing and other developments improves as a result.

For more information regarding the activities of the Parish Council, please refer to our website www.kempseyhub.co.uk

For all enquiries, please contact Sharon Dunn, Parish Council Clerk and Financial Officer on 01905 828183 or by email at kempseyparishcouncil@gmail.com





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The Cotswold Connections of Jane Austen's Family



Jane Austen (1775 - 1817)

On 16th December 1775, Jane Austen was born. In 1783, when Jane was aged eight, she and her sister Cassandra, and her cousin Jane Cooper were sent to a boarding school in Oxford. The school was run by Mrs Crawley, who was the widow of the Principal of Brasenose College, Oxford. It was not a happy experience, and Jane complained of having been *“dragged through numerous dismal chapels, dusty libraries and greasy halls. It gave me the vapours for two days afterwards. I never was but once in Oxford in my life, and I am sure I never wish to go there again.”* At that time, Jane and her sister Cassandra lived with their parents and her brothers at Steventon in the peaceful Hampshire countryside. Her father, the Revd. George Austen, had been appointed the Rector of Steventon and Deane.

On the maternal side, Jane was related to Revd. Thomas Leigh, who had held the living of Adelstrop near Stow-on-the-Wold for fifty-one years. In 1794, 1799 and 1806, Jane visited her Adelstrop cousins and worshipped at the Church of St Mary Magdalene, which lay close to The Rectory and Adelstrop House. In the Church are memorials, hatchments and a commemorative plaque to Caroline Leigh. When visiting, the Austens would stay at The Rectory, and while they were there, the Revd. Thomas Leigh received the news that the Hon Mary Leigh, who owned Stoneleigh Abbey in Warwickshire had died, and that Thomas had inherited the Stoneleigh Abbey Estate.

Jane wrote an account of their visit to Stoneleigh Abbey to her brother James Austen's second wife, Mary Lloyd.

“The house is larger than I could

ever have supposed. We can find our way about it ... I expected to find everything about the place very fine and all that, but I had no idea of its being so beautiful. I had figured to myself long Avenues, dark Rookeries and dismal Yew Trees, but here there are no such melancholy things.” Between Stow-on-the-Wold and Adelstrop is the hamlet of Maugersbury, and at the Manor House lived the Chamberlayne family, who were good friends of Jane's mother. At times, the family would visit Bath, and Jane wrote about meeting Mrs Chamberlayne there.

“The Chamberlaynes are still here. I begin to think better of Mrs C -, and upon recollection, believe she has rather a long chin than otherwise, as she remembers us in Gloucestershire when we were very charming young women.” In 2014, the author of this article published 'A Spencer Love Affair' with its foreword by the late Duke of Marlborough. Included in this publication are Jane Austen's family connections to The Cotswolds, including Blenheim Palace, Woodstock, near Oxford.

In 1787, James' brother Henry was an undergraduate at Oxford University. At his parents' home at Steventon Rectory, Henry and the rest of the Austen family would create and perform their own private theatricals. In 1801, the Revd. Austen retired from being the Rector of Steventon and the Austen family then moved to Bath. In Bath, George Austen was treated by a Doctor William Fellowes, who is an ancestor of the screenwriter, Julian Fellowes. Dr Fellowes lived behind the Pump Room in Bath, which today is a hotel. Dr Fellowes was also Physician Extraordinaire to the Prince Regents. In 1799, Dr Fellowes treated Jane's brother, Edward, and recommended that he drink Bath's therapeutic waters, which helped his gout, as was reported in The Bath Chronicle. As a boy, Edward had been adopted by the wealthy Knight family of Godmersham Park, Kent. On 19th June 1799, Jane wrote in a letter from 18 Queen Square, Bath, where she was staying with her mother.

“I cannot help asking that had Edward not been tied down to Dr Fellowes, for she had become disengaged, we should all have recommended Dr Mapleton.” Dr Fellowes also treated the Revd. George Austen until



James Leigh Perrot (1735 - 1817)

George's death in Bath in 1805. Jane's father had married Cassandra Leigh at St Swithin's Church, Bath, in 1764, and in 1805, Revd. George Austen was buried at St Swithins. Whilst in Bath, the Austen family moved many times. In 1797, they lived at No. 1 The Paragon, and in 1801, they moved to 4 Sydney Place. Prior to their move to Sydney Place, Jane stayed for one month with the Leigh-Perrot family at their house in The Paragon. The Leigh-Perrot's family estate was at Northleigh near Witney, Oxfordshire. It was Jane's uncle (her mother's only brother) who inherited the Northleigh Estate from his great uncle, the Revd. Thomas Leigh of Adelstrop, who had married into the Perrot family. After the Revd. George Austen's death in March 1805, the Austen family moved to 25 Gay Street, Bath. In March 1817, James Leigh-Perrot died, and it is said that Jane was upset by her uncle's will, as he had left all his property to his widow for her life. Apparently, the Austen family had hoped to receive legacies from the Stoneleigh Abbey Estate, and it is feasible that due to this, Jane suffered a relapse of the illness that led to her death (aged forty-one) on the 24th July 1817. It now appears that Jane may have died of Addison's disease and that James Leigh-Perrot's death may have exacerbated the Austen family misfortunes, which also impacted the physical and emotional well-being of Jane Austen, prior to her death at Winchester, Hampshire. The year 2025 is a good year not only to celebrate the 250th anniversary of Jane Austen's birth, but also the Austen family's Cotswold connections.

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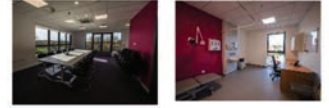
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Place Names

Tim Hickson



Pershore - 'persc' (Old English, meaning a twig, specifically an osier) + ōra (Old English, meaning a shore or bank)



Worcestershire - 'Weogora' + 'ceaster' (Old English, meaning a city or fortress) + 'shire' (Old English suffix, meaning 'county')

Not surprisingly, very few place names survive from before the beginning of the Celtic invasions in the 4th century BC.

The Iron-Age Celts spoke various dialects, mainly Gaelic (of which there became Irish, Scots and Manx versions) and British (which became Welsh and Cornish). Then we have the Roman invasion in the first four centuries AD, but Latin, being the official written language rather than the spoken one, left little impact on place names. After that, beginning in the 5th century AD, the Anglo-Saxons arrived. These were Angles, Saxons, and Jutes, Germanic tribes whose language was Anglo-Saxon, now usually called Old English. This is the language that dominates place names today.

So, where do we look? Here, Dr Mike Jenkins' *The History of Place Names in England and Worcestershire* is very detailed. However, useful enough to be carried in one's car is the Oxford Dictionary of English Place Names. Quite a few names are, of course, based on those of the people who once occupied that site. Powick, for example, means 'the dwelling or farm associated with a man called Poha'; Whittington means 'an estate associated with a man called Hwita'. Others give the occupier's name and also tell us about the site, which can be intriguing.

Examples are Kempsey, which means 'Island or dry ground in a marsh of a man called Cymi', Kinnersley, 'woodland clearing of a man called Cyneheard', Tewkesbury, 'fortified place of a man called Teodec', Evesham, 'land in a river bend belonging to a man called Eof', Birlingham, 'land in a river bend of a family of a man called Byria'. Clearly, river bends were significant. Worcester in the Domesday Book is the 'Roman town of the Weogora tribe'. But how about Fladbury, which means 'stronghold or manor of a woman called Flaede'. (Flaede meant 'purity, glory or beauty'!) Some just tell us about the place. Throckmorton is 'farmstead by a pool with a beam bridge'. I wonder what the significance was of the beam? Croome is 'a crooked or winding stream' which is straightforward, but Besford, 'the ford near Betti's house', makes me wonder who Betti was. Male or female, but clearly well-known! When I pass through Defford, I do not need to do much research before realising that its name means 'deep ford'. However, I do wonder who gave the settlement that name. Then I find that it is derived from the Old English 'deop' + 'ford', all pretty straightforward. Broadway comes from Old English 'brad' + 'weg', meaning

(guess what?) yes, 'Broadway'. Malvern goes back to the Celtic, moil and brinn and means 'bare hill'. Pirton means 'pear orchard', Upton means 'higher farmstead or village', and Pershore means 'slope or bank where the osiers grow'. But what about Wadborough? Here, the name has a less obvious derivation. I found it comes, again, from Old English, but now 'wad' + 'beorg', which means 'woad' + 'hill'. So the name means 'the hill where woad grows'. In the past, woad was important in making a blue dye. This was mainly for cloth, but was also said to be used as a body dye. I seem to remember, from my schooldays, learning that the invading Romans encountered fearsome blue British warriors. (Modern scholars may, however, argue that there was another source of blue.) Like other natural

dyes, the use of the woad leaves was fiddly. They had to be fermented, a hundredweight of leaves being needed for ten pounds of dye, and the stench of the fermentation was so appalling that Queen Elizabeth I ordered woad production to be stopped in any town through which she was passing. Incidentally, Richard Mabey's *Plants with a Purpose* tells us that woad was last used in Britain in the dyeing of policemen's uniforms. After that excursion into a side road, I leave you with one local name which may be unique in the English-speaking world. Bricklehampton is the longest one-word place name that does not repeat any of its letters. Good for a pub quiz? By the way, it means 'Estate associated with a man called Beorhthelm'.



Woad leaves



Woad dye

Farming

Mike Page

We are into a New Year, and much of the preparation for next year's harvest is in hand, with many crops planted, emerged and looking good. But much drier than usual ground conditions deeper down and water levels in many lakes, reservoirs, and the like, lower than 'usual' are indicating that to bring water/moisture levels back to what might be considered 'normal' for all purposes, from domestic drinking water out of the kitchen tap to high enough soil moisture levels to support unimpeded crop growth and a good harvest in 2026, means we need to welcome a much wetter than usual winter. That is not something we can dictate (no matter which Party might be in government!) and conditions that much of the population would not like to see. All we can do is live in hope. There are now only relatively few cattle left out in the fields. Most have been retired to life in a cattle yard, where life for them is comfortable and easy. I can remember when we had cattle here on the farm, some years ago, having one yard with a gate that opened directly into an adjoining field. Towards the end of winter on occasion the field-gate was opened and they were let out into the field, to graze such grass as was there and to generally enjoy freedom. The new sense of 'freedom' was something they obviously enjoyed but if it should rain or come evening time – dark and much colder – they would

all file back inside through the yard gate to enjoy the comforts of a roof over their heads and dry, warm straw as a bed. But there is the problem this winter of many farmers going into it with unusually low stocks of fodder (silage/haylage/hay) arising from poor grass crops as a result of the drought last summer. Some of that can be made up by feeding straw (more usually barley straw) which is easily digestible and although its feeding value is not great, it does help by not just filling their bellies but by providing long fibre which is such an important part of the ruminant digestive process. As farmers, we are being encouraged to have hay/haylage/silage analysed professionally to gauge accurately its feed value and that will allow us to mix in straw as may be appropriate to make feed stocks last and still be nutritionally adequate. In my much younger days as a farmer, there were seasons when we would get through to the end of the winter feeding season with a useful stock of hay left in reserve and I would try to get my father to sell some of this off the Farm, putting money in the bank for other purposes. He would invariably refuse, giving as his reason the fact that as the future was unknown, better to be holding on to a reserve of a relatively low-cost home-produced important input; with hindsight (and the wisdom of experience), I think he may have been right. But there will be some cattle




farmers in parts of the Country particularly affected by the drought, (and drought conditions were pretty severe in much of this area) who will be hard pressed to make it through this winter without buying in feed to make up the shortfall, bringing serious pressure on their budgets. Not quite so problematic in such a situation as we have presently, are sheep, as they can graze open pasture until it is very short indeed and their need for long fibre fodder, as might be provided by the farmer as haylage/hay, is much less. Only a few fields to be seen presently (early January) with cattle still roaming free, but plenty of ewes still out and about, although many of those will spend a relatively short time indoors soon as the lambing season approaches. The very cold spell seen over Christmas and the New Year seems to be giving way to milder conditions, which should encourage some grass growth, probably not much, but at least

some. Looking on the brighter side, the Government has announced some alterations in the Inheritance Tax Rules on Farm assets, which will aid the passing on of Farms from one generation to the next, which is still the way most of us have become farmers, without starting off that career saddled with a mountain of debt. The Government has also announced a renewal of the various SFI environmental enhancement schemes that were abruptly cancelled shortly after the start of 2024. Those schemes are designed to enhance the environment, but often at the expense of downgrading agricultural output, so compensation to cover at least some of the likely loss to farmers is welcome. 2026 starts off with a mixture of potentially good and possibly bad news; which will win out? My money is on the former, after all, with two bad years in a row, surely we are not going to have a third?

February

January days have passed, now February's here
With new green shoots and snowdrops
To show that Spring is near.
Still days are short and night times long
But now we wake to more bird song.

 The stormy winds which often blow
Bring heavy rain and sometimes snow.
While frosty mornings, sparkling white
Bring rosy dawns and sunshine bright.
This year the month has one more day
And Valentines may come your way.

While Cupid waits with arrows poised
To pierce the hearts of those who dare,
With beating hearts, their love declare.
Happy Valentine's Day!

by Susan Catford



What do beekeepers do in Winter?

Martyn Cracknell



The active beekeeping season will not start until we have some spring warmth in mid-March, but we can periodically check that the colonies are not damaged by severe weather or woodpeckers, and lift one edge of each hive (i.e. hefting) to feel if there is enough weight of food stores to keep the bees fed until Spring. Plenty of bees will be out for 'cleaning flights' in sunny spells, and any washing on the line may

be marked with streaks of yellow or brown bee poo. I always feel that this is an excellent indicator that the colonies are overwintering well, but other members of the family, especially she who pegs out the washing, do not share my enthusiasm.

Meanwhile, I have been perusing the beekeeping catalogues to see what new gadgets and gimmicks I 'must have' for next year to improve my efficiency. I cannot



see any stand-out innovations, but there are several devices to combat the Asian (yellow-legged) hornet if it becomes established in Britain. The cost of getting into beekeeping has risen too, with beginner's starter kits quoted at anything between £320 to £625 (self-assembly), and that does not include any bees! A UK-bred starter colony could set you back a further £360. It is said that you can make a small fortune from beekeeping, but you would need to have started with a large fortune! The mild autumn with occasional hard frosts does not seem to have suited honey bees

this year, with many reports of colonies crammed full of honey from late flowering ivy but with few or even no bees. I suffered this a few years ago, and was able to repopulate my hives through the generosity of fellow beekeepers and a programme of queen rearing. If you have just one colony, you are very vulnerable to a complete loss, which is why we recommend beginners to work towards a pair of hives, and to join their local association.

Worcestershire Beekeepers Association has seven local branches across the County.

Village Life

John Driscoll

Christmas and New Year have come and gone as they always do – we have plenty of warning of their arrival, but still they seem to appear from nowhere – is that just me or is it a male thing? In the last edition, I mentioned the welcome array of Christmas lights in our village, and I am delighted to report that many households made a fantastic effort to cut through the dark evenings with truly magical displays. Very sad when twelfth night arrives and the lights have to be turned off to avoid unknown consequences. Boy, do we need something to lift the gloom on some of the wintry days that are inevitable in January and until spring arrives – but be assured, we are on the way out with welcome extra minutes of light every day. So, what has been happening in our village since December? Not a lot seems to be the answer, though this may just be because many of us are in hibernation and not seeing much of our neighbours. I'm acutely aware of the need to catch up on

winter jobs in the garden, but am struggling as ever with motivating myself to get out and face the cold, windy, damp conditions. Still, there's always the incentive of filling the garden recycling bin – I'm paying for it, so it just has to be used! There's also the attraction of rounding off a day in the garden in front of a roaring log fire in the knowledge that this year's supply of wood keeping us warm grew here in the village and we're enjoying the fruits of a bit of collective labour. See, this winter stuff isn't all bad! There's also the very welcome sight of early daffodils and other spring bulbs making their first brave appearance and heralding the usual beautiful displays, including the patches we have planted as a community effort over the years. These provide a special welcome to our village, and I'm particularly fond of the communal activity they represent, which has helped bring neighbours together in a joint venture from which we all



benefit. Maybe a mental note to suggest further planting later in the year – there can never be too many blooms. Hopefully, we'll also have a few new residents in the village soon.

Last year, our village association gave bird boxes to a few lucky villagers, and I know some were successful in attracting new feathered friends. Just before Christmas, further bird boxes and insect habitats were given to lucky-dip winners, so refuge will hopefully be found in the village by another intake, plus some friendly bugs. Other fundraising during the year has included a mix of very deserving charities, including support for homeless people who need so much help during these winter

months. Other recipients have included Alzheimer's Society and Macmillan, both of which resonate with many in our community. Lots to look forward to then over the next few months, and every reason to venture out despite the weather and days that are frankly still too short! Walks with or without dogs, hot chocolate breaks, toasted crumpets and the prospect of a log fire to dry out and dispel the cold. Essential that we celebrate the clear, dry, cold days with amazing blue skies and winter sunshine that will be sent to cheer our souls. As for the dreary, wet, miserable days – well, what are hatches for if not for battenning down! Stay dry and warm, everyone.

New features at RHS Malvern Spring Festival 2026



RHS Malvern Spring Festival has announced it will debut two brand-new features at the Three Counties Showground this May: Blooming Borders and Floral Tablescaping.

RHS Malvern Spring Festival is set to kick off the RHS Floral programme for 2026 when it returns to Three Counties Showground in Malvern from 7th – 10th May 2026.

The 2026 festival offers an exciting programme carefully curated to celebrate its 2026 theme: 'Roots of the Future - Honour the past, grow the future'.

The 2026 festival looks to celebrate both the rich traditions of gardening and horticulture, passed on over hundreds of years, whilst encouraging and inspiring the next generation into horticulture and welcoming essential innovations, such as climate-resilient design, biodiversity and soil health. The RHS Malvern Spring Festival School Garden Challenge, which returns in 2026, encourages young people from the surrounding counties to engage in horticulture by designing and creating their very own gardens at the show, and is one of many ways that the festival aims to inspire younger

generations into horticulture. This year's School Garden theme is Myths & Legends and will see primary and secondary aged children from across the surrounding counties creatively incorporating mythology, folklore and mythical creatures into their imaginative gardens. In addition to hosting the very first RHS-judged show gardens and indoor plant gardens of 2026, this year's festival will showcase a new feature garden, designed by Cheltenham-based Martyn Wilson, highlighting the (perhaps somewhat unknown or surprising) benefits of clay – the 'super soil'. Clay soil is thought to account for around 25% of all British soils, especially across the south and east of England. While clay soils may be heavy, they are a powerhouse when it comes to holding nutrients, and many plant species thrive in them. Martyn's feature will shine a light on some of the best performers for clay-rich soil types. With improvement, such as digging in generous amounts of bulky organic matter like composted bark, clay soils can support an even wider range of plants. These additions help loosen the structure, improve drainage, and turn dense clay into



a richly productive growing medium. Martyn's garden will be both visually inspiring in its design and usability, as well as offering practical inspiration and advice about using clay soil as an advantage.

A brand-new category, Blooming Borders, will make its debut at RHS Malvern Spring Festival in 2026, offering experienced and emerging garden designers the chance to express their creativity and skill in a new way. Each garden border will be designed with a unique theme and offers visitors inspiration for their own outdoor spaces. Every border will be in the running for a prestigious RHS medal.

Another brand-new feature is Floral Tablescaping. It celebrates the simple pleasure of flowers at a table and offers visitors exciting new ideas to inspire their own home. Five garden sheds will be individually styled by talented floral designers to transform the most ordinary and familiar of spaces into something unique and extraordinary. Each shed will feature a stunning tablescapes, using both fresh and dried flowers, foliage, plants and botanicals that tell a story or evoke certain feelings and emotions. The Festival of Houseplants will return in 2026, offering the opportunity for visitors to immerse themselves in a treasure trove

of indoor plants and discover how easily accessible, affordable, enjoyable, sustainable and beneficial they can be.

Additionally, RHS Malvern Spring Festival will host over seventy of the UK's top nurseries (more than in previous years) in its vast Floral Marquee, as well as an outstanding line-up of expert horticulturalists, TV gardening personalities and special guest speakers (details announced soon), and a whole host of shopping opportunities, food and drink, and family friendly activities to enjoy.

For further information and full line-up details, see <https://www.rhsmalvern.co.uk/> Tickets for the RHS Malvern Spring Festival 2026 start from just £16 for a taster ticket (under 16s free of charge) and can be bought now from <https://www.rhsmalvern.co.uk/>



'When February sun shines cold,
There comes a day when in the air,
The wings of winter slow unfold,
And show the golden summer there.'

*Philip Henry Savage
(1868–1899)*

The best flower seeds to sow for summer colour

February is a hopeful month in the gardening calendar. The days are slowly stretching, and although the soil is still cold, gardeners everywhere feel that familiar itch to get started. It's the perfect moment to sow the first seeds for summer - a small act of faith that brings colour, joy and life to the months ahead. Starting certain flowers early gives them a head start, producing stronger plants, earlier blooms and a garden that feels full and vibrant by the time summer arrives.

Whether you're working with a large border, a courtyard, or a few pots on a patio, sowing now can transform your outdoor space.

Here are my top three perennials to sow early:

Erigeron karvinskianus
(Mexican Fleabane)

One of my favourite fillers as it's a tumbling perennial that produces masses of tiny daisies



fading from white to pink. It's evergreen and self-seeds, so it's great value for money.

I found the seeds are tiny but germinate easily. They're perfect plants for softening edges and creating a naturalistic, romantic feel.
Height: 20–30cm
Soil: Well-drained, poor to moderately fertile
Where to plant: Sunny spots, gravel gardens, walls, steps, pots
Flowering: May to October

Cephalaria gigantea
(Giant Scabious)

Tall, airy and elegant, this perennial adds height without heaviness. Makes a lovely cut flower too, with its creamy-lemon flowers.

Height: 1.8–2.2m
Soil: Moist but well-drained; neutral to alkaline
Where to plant: Back of borders, wildlife gardens, prairie planting
Flowering: June to September



Penstemon barbatus
(Twizzle Coral)

A vibrant, coral-pink penstemon with upright spires that bring structure and warmth. A brilliant choice for long-lasting colour which is loved by pollinators.

Height: 60–80cm
Soil: Fertile, well-drained
Where to plant: Sunny borders
Flowering: June to September
Other seeds you could sow now are Sweet Peas, Cornflowers, Verbena bonariensis and Calendula.

How to Get the Best Results When Sowing Early

1. Use good-quality seed compost - It's lighter and finer than multipurpose compost, helping seeds germinate evenly. Remove any lumps.
2. Provide plenty of light - A bright windowsill or unheated greenhouse is ideal. Leggy seedlings are a sign that they need more light.



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3. Water from underneath - Use bottom-water trays to avoid disturbing tiny seeds.

4. Harden off before planting out - Gradually introduce seedlings to outdoor conditions over 7–10 days.

5. Protect from late frosts - After all your effort, the last thing you want to happen is to lose your seedlings to a late frost, so keep an eye on the weather.

A Final Thought

Sowing seeds in February and March is more than a gardening task - it's a hopeful ritual. Each tiny seed holds the promise of warm days and borders brimming with colour. Whether you choose the romance of *Erigeron* or the elegance of *Penstemon*, starting early gives your summer garden the best possible beginning.

February gardening tips

Early February

Continue planting trees, shrubs and perennial plants if conditions are suitable. Plant Jerusalem artichoke tubers. Plant shallot sets (in colder areas, start them off in pots of compost in a cold frame). If you do not have a cold frame, just buy a large clear plastic storage box, drill some holes in the bottom put in a layer of grit, pop on the lid and there is a cold frame.

Look after garden birds by providing food and water - try to tailor the food to the birds you have around. In heated greenhouses, sow Antirrhinums, Begonia semperflorens, Verbenas and Pansies for summer bedding. Otherwise, buy seedlings or baby bedding plants later to grow on.

Sow sweet pea seeds, growing them on in a cold greenhouse

or frame. Buy seed potatoes and stand them on end in trays or egg boxes to chit (begin to shoot)

Potatoes are easy to grow in pots above 30cm (12in) in diameter. To this end, store some first early seed potatoes in the fridge, bringing some out to chit every 10 days. The previously chitted ones are then planted in pots and kept in a frost-free place to grow. You will then have a succession of new potatoes to harvest every 14 days or so.

Mid-February

Complete the pruning of apples, pears and soft fruits. Prune Clematis that have their main flowering period from July onwards back hard to about 30cm (1ft) above the soil. Cut back dead stems of herbaceous perennials to ground level.

Reg Moule BBC Hereford & Worcester

Stock up on pots, labels, twine and other quickly consumed sundries before the season gets into full swing.

Prune back old, woody Mahonia stems to keep the plants bushy. Buy Begonia and Dahlia tubers as well as other summer-flowering bulbs such as Gladioli.

Cover some strawberry plants with cloches for an earlier crop.

Prune Buddlejias and the Spiraeas with colourful foliage, like Spiraea Goldflame, back hard.

Late February

Dig up and divide herbaceous perennials. Check wall-trained plants to see if they require watering, as it can get very dry at the base of a wall.



In heated greenhouses, sow Dianthus, Lobelia, Ageratum, and multi-bloom Geraniums for summer bedding. Dig up, divide and re-plant overcrowded clumps of snowdrops.

Prune winter jasmine, Jasminum nudiflorum, by trimming back by two-thirds shoots that have flowered. Sow summer cauliflower in trays under glass.

Ailsa's Kitchen

Ailsa Craddock

February, always a cold month, an in-between month twixt Christmas/New Year festivities and the hope of Spring. All I want to do is cuddle down with a good book, a seed catalogue, a woolly jumper, whilst I make lists of what to do this year and will get through this time with the glimpse of snowdrops and crocuses, and some warm, sustaining comfort food. Follow these recipes and you will do, too – and the best thing is they are all one-pot wonders, so you don't even have to do too much washing up!

Normandy Chicken

8 chicken thigh cutlets, skin on
170g rindless bacon rashers, coarsely chopped
1 leek, thinly sliced
2 apples, peeled, cored, cut into wedges
125ml apple cider or apple juice
125ml chicken stock
6 large fresh thyme sprigs
200ml crème fraîche
2 tsp Dijon mustard; parsley leaves, to serve (optional)

Preheat the oven to 200C/180C fan. Season the chicken. Place a large non-stick ovenproof frying pan over high heat. Cook half the chicken, skin-side down, for 4 minutes or until the chicken skin is golden. Turn and cook for 3 minutes. Transfer to a plate. Repeat with the remaining chicken. Drain and discard the fat from the pan. Return the pan to the heat. Add the bacon and leek. Cook, stirring occasionally, for 4 minutes or

until the bacon is crisp. Add the apple and stir to coat. Add the cider or juice and simmer for 3 minutes or until reduced. Add the stock and thyme. Bring to a simmer. Return the chicken, skin-side up, to the pan. Place in the oven and cook for 40 minutes or until the chicken is tender. Transfer the chicken to a plate. Add the crème fraîche and mustard to the pan and whisk to combine. Place the pan over medium heat, then return the chicken to the pan. Simmer for 5-10 minutes or until the sauce has thickened slightly. Sprinkle with parsley, if using.

Chicken Piccata

60g plain flour, seasoned
4 small chicken breast fillets
2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
40g butter
2 shallots, thinly sliced
1 garlic clove, crushed
1 tsp fresh lemon thyme leaves, plus extra to serve
250mls chicken stock



Normandy Chicken

60mls lemon juice
300ml double cream
1 small lemon, thinly sliced
2 tbsp drained capers, rinsed
1 tbsp chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley leaves
Mashed potato, to serve
200g steamed green beans, to serve

Toss the chicken in flour. Heat 1/2 the oil and 1/2 the butter in a large frying pan over medium-high heat. Add chicken to pan, shaking off excess flour. Cook for 4 to 5 minutes each side or until browned. Transfer to a plate. Add remaining oil and

remaining butter to frying pan. Add eschalot, garlic and thyme. Cook, stirring, for 2 to 3 minutes or until eschalot has softened. Add chicken stock, lemon juice and cream to pan. Season with salt and pepper. Stir to combine. Bring to a simmer. Return chicken to pan. Reduce heat to low. Simmer, uncovered, for 10 to 12 minutes or until chicken is cooked through and sauce has slightly thickened. Add lemon slices to pan. Remove from heat. Sprinkle with capers, parsley and extra thyme. Serve with mashed potato and steamed green beans.



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Paws in Cold Weather - Hints and Tips.



These days winter seems to arrive later each year but still in our coldest months temperatures do sometimes plummet. These can be times for us all to enjoy, especially if it snows but we must also remember to keep ourselves and our furry friends safe.

Dogs love playing in the snow and if they are running around a lot may even be pleased that they are staying cool. But, be wary of where they walk. Frozen ground can be slippery and snow can hide deep holes. Rivers may be tempting for dogs to go in but can be freezing cold and difficult to get out of. Do not allow dogs to walk on frozen ponds, the ice may not hold their weight. If pets do fall into ponds or rivers don't go in after them, call the emergency services and try to encourage them to swim to the bank near you.

Think about paws after cold walks. Wipe them off as salt grit from the roads can be irritating. Every time the weather gets really icy I get calls from owners concerned about their dogs unusual behaviour after walks or going outside - being restless and suddenly kicking their feet out as if they are experiencing electric shocks. The behaviour can be quite concerning and is more common in young dogs with softer foot pads. The cause is coming in from the very cold to the lovely warm house. As the feet warm up and the blood flow returns it causes a 'pins and needles' sensation, tingling and sometimes pain. I remember experiencing similar myself as a child after building a snowman without any gloves then coming back in to the warm. Even the water from the cold tap felt warm to my frozen hands and the tingling sensation in my hands was so strong!

In pets, like with me, the problem usually goes away after an hour or so. If your dog does develop this problem after a very cold walk try to warm their paws up more slowly, massage the feet and stand the pet in a cool water bath to relieve the immediate irritation. Do not panic, the problem does go away after a few hours and without any need for veterinary intervention.

Best wishes James and Izzy x

Self-Love in Action

Emily Papirnik

Letting Your Choices Be Guided by Care

At Intention Therapy, self-love is understood not as a luxury or an idea, but as a lived, embodied practice. It is something we return to again and again through our choices, our awareness and the way we meet ourselves in everyday life.

Self-love shows itself most clearly through action - in the quiet moments where we decide how to care for our energy, our body and our emotional world. When you love yourself, you take care of yourself. You take responsibility for your health, your behaviour and your actions, not from a place of pressure, but from self-respect. This is about listening inwardly and responding with intention. It may look like resting when your body asks for it, creating space when life feels too full, or choosing nourishment that supports you physically, emotionally and energetically. Self-love in action invites a simple, grounding question: What would support me right now?

Sometimes the answer is practical: water, movement, rest or warmth. Sometimes it is emotional - reassurance, compassion or permission to slow down. At other times, it is behavioural - setting a boundary, choosing a different response, or allowing yourself to pause rather than push. When you feel overwhelmed, loving yourself means soothing your nervous system rather than criticising yourself for how you feel. A moment of stillness, a conscious breath, or gentle attention to the body can help bring you back towards balance.

From this steadier place, it



becomes easier to see another perspective and to choose how you respond, rather than reacting from habit or overwhelm. Nature is often a powerful ally in this process. Shifting your focus to something natural - the steadiness of a tree, the rhythm of the breath, the feeling of the ground beneath you - can help regulate your system and reconnect you with a sense of safety and support. Listening to music you love or placing yourself in a space that feels comforting can further support this return to equilibrium. As these small acts of self-care and self-responsibility become more familiar, a natural kindness towards yourself begins to grow. From this place, supporting others becomes easier and more sustainable.

When your own energy is tended to with intention, you are able to encourage, hold and show up for others without depletion. Self-love is not selfish - it is the foundation that allows you to give with presence, balance and integrity.

Citizens advice - Should I get a heat pump?

The government wants people to replace boilers, perhaps when they break down, with renewable heating like heat pumps. But you don't have to. You can still repair your boiler or replace it with a new one if it breaks.

A heat pump works by using electricity to move warmth from outside your home to inside your home. There's enough warmth outside to heat your home even when it's very cold. It's better for the environment because it doesn't use fossil fuels like gas or oil. It's also more efficient because it uses less fuel to produce the same amount of heat. A heat pump usually works best when it heats your home to a consistent temperature all day. Having lots of insulation in your home will help keep the heat in for longer. The heat pump unit is usually quiet - about the same noise level as a fridge. A heat pump can work in most homes. You might need to make changes to your home to make sure the heat pump

works well and is cost-effective. Heat pumps can be expensive to install but you can usually get some financial help. You don't usually need planning permission for a heat pump. But there are rules about things like the size of the heat pump and where it can be installed. If your installer can't follow these rules, you might need planning permission. Speak to your installer about this. Also, you don't need building regulations approval if you use an installer registered with a 'competent person scheme'. You should look for an installer certified by MCS. This is a quality scheme recognised by the government. All members of MCS are registered with a competent person scheme. If your installer isn't part of a competent person scheme, you'll need building regulations approval.



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Romy's Uni Life

Romy Kemp *Liverpool University*



Final Semester of University

My month has been hectic to say the least! I had two essays due on the same day, which meant that university work was pretty much all I was doing. My brain was frazzled afterwards, but I did really enjoy the work that I was doing. I was able to choose what I wanted to discover in both essays, so I had the freedom to write about what appealed to me. I am now

going into my final semester of university, and it is becoming increasingly stressful. Many people that I know still don't know what they want to do with their lives, and I am also in that category. It's nearly the time to start applying for jobs and what not, and by the time you read this essay, I will most likely have started applying for different careers. The idea of life after university is a scary thought, but I'm sure it isn't going to be as terrifying as it seems. I am hesitant about what

I should do after university but I am sure that many others will be in similar situations, or will have been in similar situations at some point in their lives, after having to make an important decision. I don't know where I will be after university, or what I will be doing, but I look forward to seeing where life takes me. All I have to do now is continue to crack on and get things done! It was lovely being at home for the Christmas holiday and it was lovely to go back to the countryside. I do miss it when I'm at university. Although I do live next to Sefton Park and Greenbank Park (I walk there a lot because there's a little lake with animals), it isn't the same as being in the real countryside. One of the best things about going home, besides seeing family and friends, is being in my own bed. Early nights and warm covers is how I love to spend most nights at home. I've also really loved cooking over Christmas, and have been trying to make healthier recipes. Now that I am back at



university, it is time to keep my energy levels up and stay productive. I do find it hard sometimes to stay productive and not just faff about until the early hours of the morning. My New Year's resolution, although I don't want to frame it like that because I actually want to keep to it, is to be more productive and stick to a routine in order to keep healthy and happy. My first semester was extremely chaotic at the house and, honestly, I've never known anything like it, but I want my final semester to be one that I can look back on and smile at how far I have come, just like my first and second years.

A Place to Meet

Chloe Pickstock



A glimpse into the community at The Orchard

Every morning at The Orchard, the scent of fresh coffee and friendly chatter fills the air. Park runners drift in for a post-run brew, office groups meet as the working day begins, and familiar faces arrive to catch up halfway through their routines. I say hello to the regular dog walkers who sit outside every morning cupping their steaming lattes, before greeting a local couple who visit weekly with their enormous Great Dane, who never misses her much anticipated 'pupaccino'. I know most people dread January, but it's one of my favourite times of year at the café. The Christmas rush has settled, and the surrounding countryside is dusted with white frost.

There is also a slower, gentler rhythm to the days that allows me to breathe a little more. It's during these quieter moments that the café truly feels more like a meeting place, rather than a quick stop for a drink.

Over the years, I've met people from all walks of life here. Recently, I served two friends who have used our café as their halfway meeting point for over sixty years of friendship.

I laugh along as they reminisce in telling me about their stories from their twenties, and it got me thinking just how valuable local cafés are within our communities.

They are places where friendships are maintained and where strangers briefly cross paths. There is something about "going for a coffee" - a modern rebirth of the 'third place', somewhere between work and home, that invites people to socialise and simply be. Working behind the counter can be busy and unpredictable, but also very rewarding. Cafés like ours hold countless stories, bringing communities together and turning strangers into familiar faces.



Gregory's World!

Out with a bang!

I dropped to the forest floor, breathing hard, crawling over pine needles and knotted roots. *Fwut! Fwut!* Shots zipped over our heads. I took cover behind a board of wood. *Thud!* I felt the impact through the board. The swift splatter-punch of a paintball.

Nothing says birthday celebration like being shot at in an icy wood for three hours. For my 22nd, I wanted to fulfil a long-time ambition and go paintballing. I called upon my brothers in arms (Natdog, Big Man Sam, and Bman) to join me in a battle that was guaranteed to be as epic as it would be sore.

I drove us to our battleground, in a forest on the outskirts of Kidderminster. First, we arrived at a lodge and signed away our rights to sue; then, as snow drifted between the trees, we suited up in camouflage. We strapped on hefty utility belts (loaded with tubes of paintballs) and donned our masks. Looking like scary Power Rangers, we were debriefed by our marshal. 'Don't remove your masks during the game'; 'No, don't bludgeon

your mates with the butt of the paintball gun'; lastly (chillingly): 'If someone throws a flash-bang grenade, take cover to avoid second-degree burns'. I exchanged a glance with the others.

"We probably should've taken the consent form more seriously," mumbled Natdog. Paintballs are small and squidgy, about the size of cherry tomatoes. Don't be fooled, though, fellow reader. When your mate fires them in your direction at a velocity of three hundred feet per second, they can give you a cracking headache.

Fwut! Fwut! My every breath fogged up my mask. I peered out from my cover. On a tree stump a few feet ahead, stood an old jerrycan. This was our 'bomb'. My team's mission was to drop the bomb behind enemy lines without getting shot. Across the battlefield, sniping at us from a stockade, were Natdog and Bman. Natdog hadn't been very lucky; his camo gear was a lighter, olive colour - and we were in a forest of dark browns and greens. In an earlier game, I think I shot him in the head - I was lucky it was my birthday. Yellow paint dribbled down his fringe and covered his visor,

Gregory Sidaway



impairing his vision. When our marshal tried to wipe it off, he just made a smearsy mess. Bman could still see, but he did also have a blob of yellow (and flecks of red!) on his forehead. *Fwut!* "Aargh!" A shot clipped my head. It was like being whacked over the skull with a metal ruler. I crouched, buried my head in the earth and closed my eyes as tight as I could. Then I twisted around and spotted Big Man Sam flanking the enemy on one side, drawing their fire. I remembered the beaten-up old jerrycan. I could do it. I could reach it.

Aching with adrenaline, I jumped and opened fire. *Fwut! Fwut!* My volley painted the stockade walls - but it was enough, enough to buy me precious seconds. I scrambled into the open, clawing over the frosted earth, towards the 'bomb'. I snatched the jerrycan and dragged it through the overgrowth. The stockade wall rose up in front of me. Come on! My calves were screaming. My body seized up. Not now! "Ten seconds left!" bellowed our marshal from behind the safety net - the area he called 'the dead zone'.

I did a double-take. One of our team members had brandished a dark cylinder from his pocket. I gulped. A flash-bang! He must've purchased it during the break. He tore out the pin and hurled it at the enemy. Second degree burns, I thought and ducked. A *crack!* thundered through the forest and a searing flash of light stunned the enemy. Now was my chance! I wriggled forward, worming right up to the foot of the stockade wall. With a last burst of something close to bravery, I sprang and tossed the bomb over the wall. I didn't hear a dull thump of plastic. I heard a terrific *boom!*, I heard the enemy being blasted to smithereens, I heard the trumpets of victory! And I looked forward to a warm, bubbly bath.

Evie's Teenage Focus

Dragging my suitcase (and at least five other bags) through the door at the start of the Christmas Holidays was a familiar and welcoming feeling. The smell of a home-cooked meal being lovingly prepared, a hug from my younger brother, and my untouched bedroom; everything was falling back into the usual and comforting rhythm that came with coming home.

The journey home was different from what I remembered from my first year. Perhaps it's because I wasn't dragging my multitude of bags up a massive hill to the bus stop anymore; perhaps it was because I had my friends to help me carry that same multitude of bags to

the train station. Perhaps it was because my head was full of unfinished thoughts and plans I wanted to make when I come back in the new semester. The second year has much more weight to it than the first year; higher expectations, clear ambitions and goals, and an overall daunting, spiralling awareness that university is no longer just an experience, but preparation for whatever comes next. At home, however, comfort arrived quickly. Home-cooked meals replaced rushed dinners, and familiar routines slipped back into place, allowing a reassuring sense of ease. Unlike university, where everything is constantly in motion, home offers me a place to slow down. My bedroom, unchanged since I left, reminded me that this is still my place. A constant I can always return to. Still ... before I could blink, Christmas was upon us, warm and grounding like always. Traditions stayed the same; my Grandfather reading "The Night Before Christmas" is still one

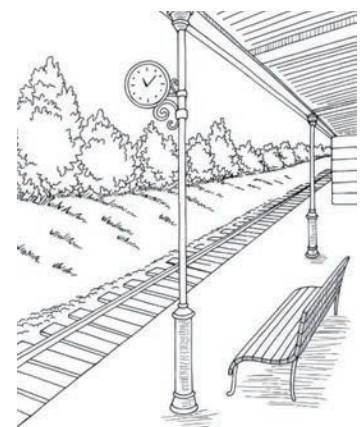
of my favourites, watching Christmas movies, laying out stockings. Conversations at Christmas dinner, however, now drifted towards university, careers, and plans for after my graduation. In my mind, Christmas was no longer just a time to rest, but also a time to take a step back from everything, breathe, and reflect. Rather than feeling caught between two worlds, this stage of life feels as if I carry my home with me. University hasn't replaced anything; it has only added to it. What I have gained in my second year is a greater sense of confidence and clarity; the ability to move between spaces without losing or changing myself. Home remains my foundation, whilst Oxford allows me to test my independence.

Yet everything must come to an end eventually. As the holidays draw to a close, I'm reminded of my impending migration back to Oxford. A large dose of excitement and calm anticipation, mixed in with the usual anxiety, sits comfortably

Evie Aubin Oxford Brookes University



and is welcomed beside me as I await my adventure in the new semester. Until next time, toodles!



Sir Winston Churchill's Knighthood - I was there!

Allan P. Ledger



Sir Winston in his robes as a Knight of the Garter at Windsor Castle on Garter Day 1954

As a boy chorister of St. George's Chapel, Windsor Castle, in 1954, I sang at my first Garter Service. The splendour and pageantry and the sense of history becoming alive, never ceases to thrill me.

This occasion was in the Queen's Free Chapel of St. George, Windsor Castle, on Monday 14th June 1954, 3pm, at The Installation Service of the Most Noble Order of the Garter of the Rt. Hon. Sir Winston Leonard Spencer-Churchill.

At 2:30pm, Sir Winston Churchill led in all sixteen non-royal Knights of the Garter. These included Earl Alexander of Tunis, the Duke of Wellington and Viscount Montgomery of Alamein, much to the delight of us choristers. They were followed by members of the Royal House of Windsor, including the late Queen Mother. After them, came the Dean of Windsor, Rt. Revd. Eric Hamilton, a venerable man much admired and respected by us choristers.

A choir fit for a queen



*A Choir fit for a Queen
Taken with our Coronation medals and Sir William Harry.
Allan P. Ledger is front row, far left*

He was followed by Our Sovereign and H.R.H. the Duke of Edinburgh. After them, came the Military Knights of Windsor, whose spurs jangled as they processed into the choir. They were followed by the Yeoman of the Guard, who beat their ceremonial rods on the ground as they processed into the Choir of the Chapel. Then came our cross bearer, followed by the choir. When we choristers were in our choir stalls, I found that Sir Winston Churchill was standing directly in front of me. Sir Winston was facing Her Late Majesty, who was in The Dean's Stall, opposite to us Cantoris Choristers.

When Queen Elizabeth II proclaimed Sir Winston Churchill as KG, he turned graciously towards his young Queen and bowed his head, a truly memorable moment for a young

chorister. Our choir master, Sir William Harry, who we choristers called Doc H, kept a beady eye on us with cleverly-angled mirrors in the organ loft. We boys were far more fearful of his wrath if we misbehaved. Though I could have quite easily placed a hand on Sir Winston's head. After I retired from teaching, I worked at Blenheim Palace as a guide. In 2014, 'A Spencer Love Affair' was published with its foreword by the late Duke of Marlborough. Blenheim Palace is where Sir Winston Churchill was born. After his death, my parents took me to Bladon, near Blenheim Palace, to pay our respects at the grave of one of our greatest Prime Ministers and wartime leaders. My father thoughtfully gave me a Havana cigar to lie on Sir Winston Churchill's grave.

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Good, occasionally poor

Angela Johns

The shipping forecast – like sentences that have been thrown up in the air and then land with the words out of order, with a few recognisable but far-flung places around the British Isles sprinkled in. It also sounds rather like my behaviour: good, occasionally poor; fair, improving; veering, cyclone building. It has a poetic feel to it with four or five words in a row, giving a meaning greater than the sum of its parts.

Emotions are also rather like the weather. Predictable, sometimes accurately, but also at times catching you out. Were these unforeseen circumstances, or were you just not paying attention to the signs? Like areas of pressure in the atmosphere, emotions come and go, playing out in recognisable patterns. And just as several different factors feed into the weather systems, so too do multiple factors feed into my behaviour. Some things are under my control, yet some things are not. We can dress to accommodate the weather, and we can act to honour our emotions. If I pause to honestly reflect on my behaviour, I see, of course, that it is not perfect. When it is less than good, it is usually something external that has touched a tender part of me. Another part of me steps in to react in a way that I always have, even if it doesn't bring about the best result. This part is only trying to save me from more pain/embarrassment/discomfort in the only way it knows how.

So, how to change that same old pattern, that same old argument? Well, I can't change certain situations, and I definitely can't change someone else (only they



can do that). So I can look to the things that are in my control – my everyday habits. To paraphrase the famous quote by Lao Tzu: watch your habits, they become your character. When change seems insurmountable, I can start with a small tweak here and there. I could learn to let off steam more regularly rather than save it up for a big one. I could learn how to speak up for myself before I build up resentment. I could practice pausing before speaking to check that my intention is not just to hurt. I am right to feel angry when the occasion is unjust. I am right to cry when I am upset. Just as I am right to smile when it feels comfy, and right to laugh when it is funny. I don't want to outsource these rights. I want to own all of my feelings and express the emotions that follow so that I am living fully. I also want to be anchored and ready when I know that a storm is coming. *Angela is a qualified Emotional Therapeutic Counsellor registered with the FETC and NCPS. Also a Reflexologist and Reiki Practitioner, she is passionate about her therapies and spends quality time with her clients to facilitate their wellbeing.*

You can find her at angelajohns.co.uk

Making Tax Digital

Carol Draper

The deadline for submitting Self-Assessment tax returns has just passed and, if you are one of those who leaves everything to the last minute, you may well be sitting back with a sigh of relief thinking Self-Assessment can go on the back burner until this time next year. While that may be the case for some, for many the system of reporting income and expenses to HMRC is changing as HMRC moves to the next phase of Making Tax Digital.

From 1st April 2026, HMRC are introducing a system of quarterly reporting for sole traders and landlords who achieved combined turnover of £50,000 or more in the year to 5th April 2025. If you are a sole trader or a landlord, you may already have received communication from HMRC advising you that the system is changing. Having submitted your Self-Assessment return for the year ended 5th April 2025, HMRC will now know whether you meet the required threshold. The new system requires records of income and expenditure to be kept digitally and reported online to HMRC. If you do not already maintain digital records, then now is the time to start. The reporting periods have been set by HMRC as the quarters ending 5th July, 5th October, 5th January and 5th April, with online returns having to be made by



the 7th of the following month. These reports are in addition to any VAT returns you may already make. Penalties will be issued if returns are submitted late. The quarterly returns will calculate estimated tax based on the income and expenditure reported, allowing those making submissions to have a better idea of their potential tax liability as the year progresses. There is currently no plan to charge tax quarterly or change the way tax is currently collected. In 2027, the combined turnover limit will decrease from £50,000 to £30,000 per annum and from 2028, it will decrease again to £20,000 per annum. If you are affected by this change and want to find out more, search 'Making Tax Digital for income Tax – Gov.UK' or, better still, speak to your accountant.

*Carol Draper FCCA
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'Life is like riding a bicycle. To keep your balance, you must keep moving.'

Albert Einstein

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Jazz News



Adrian Cox trio

A question came up recently as to why the clarinet is not represented in modern jazz. The clarinet was fine alongside the brass instruments in the earlier New Orleans bands but, as the transition to big band swing gained momentum, it was replaced by the more robust sounding saxophone. The clarinet did enjoy a final happy period of popularity in the swing era of the 1930s and 40s, as the bands of Benny Goodman, Artie Shaw and Woody Herman each featured their leader's dazzling technique on the instrument; but at the same time, small group, late-night jam sessions in Harlem's nightclubs spawned a completely different concept of jazz as a reaction to the dance-orientated swing bands.

Musicians like Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie and Thelonious Monk were developing the fast-paced, complex, brash style of jazz which became known as bebop, in which the "uncool" clarinet had no part. But all was not lost for the ebony instrument because many players in the mainstream of jazz continued to double on clarinet as well as saxophone and, as bebop branched into more abstract forms, innovations in avant-garde, modal, freeform jazz and such like often called for an etherealness well suited to the clarinet. So, the clarinet has survived the transition into modern jazz alongside, it seems, its big brother: the bass clarinet. With its warm, darker tone, the bass clarinet has found favour with a variety

of bands. Here in Britain, Courtney Pine and Tony Coe regularly integrate bass clarinet into their performances and Pershore favourite, Danny Blythe, uses it in sessions with Spats Langham's Hot Fingers. The New Orleans Revival in the 1940s found many of the half-forgotten old timers dusting off and oiling their clarinets (sometimes literally!) to perform and record, perhaps not quite believing that their music had come a full circle. In Britain, it was the 'trad boom' which brought some erstwhile Dixieland musicians back out of dance bands and prompted youngsters to learn clarinet and the other instruments of the jazz age. In the 1950s and 60s, trad was so popular that such clarinetists as Monty Sunshine and Acker Bilk often found themselves in the hit parade, further promoting

interest in clarinet. One young man, Adrian Cox, inspired by the New Orleans tradition, took to the clarinet and made it his lifetime mission to promote the music and the instrument. Adrian played clarinet from a very young age and, at 15 years old, was performing professionally. He has played alongside many of the biggest names in jazz and other fields, including an invitation from the great Wynton Marsalis to appear at the Lincoln Center in New York. Also writing and performing his own original music alongside the jazz classics, he is internationally renowned for his knowledge and passion for his adopted genre. Don't miss the chance to see this highly acclaimed and respected doyen of early New Orleans jazz with a contemporary slant.

Adrian Cox trio present...

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Music Matters

Another year has gone by, and we start to look forward to lots of exciting new music on the horizon.

However, before we move on, it's worth a quick glance over our shoulder at 2025. These are a few of the best albums from the past year.

Euro-Country
by *CMAT*

A truly unique album with varied topics such as the failure of the Celtic Tiger and the isolation of the modern world but with an upbeat heart beating through it. Mixing pop and country sounds, the album offers much to love and enjoy with a slightly sideways look at the world.

Standout track - 'Jamie Oliver petrol station'

Moisturizer
by *Wet Leg*

The big question for Wet Leg was could they follow up their

successful first album. They answered this with another quirky, unique album and an unforgettable set at Glastonbury. The Wet Leg DNA is still here, catchy hooks, deadpan humour and a punchy set of songs from a band having fun.

Standout track - 'Catch these fists'

Antidepressants
by *Suede*

Suede are back with an album brimming with indie attitude. At 58 years of age, Brett Anderson is still relevant, with plenty to say and is going to share it. Tracks are rock through themes of paranoia, death and disconnection with intensity and honesty.

Standout track - 'Antidepressants'

Honorable mentions

Dim probs
by *Gruff Rhys*
Sung entirely in Welsh, what's

Steve Ide

lost in translation is more than filled by the musicality and Gruff's soft, comforting voice.

Getting Killed
by *Geese*

Fourth album from the American indie rockers is chaotic and unpredictable, this album hooks you in from the start with its originality and wonderful experimentation.

This Could Be Texas
by *English Teacher*

An interesting, original and entertaining first album from the band, full of charm, it just gets better with every listen.

Pinball Wanderer
by *Andy Bell*

The 5th solo album from the Ride guitarist meanders through changing styles that somehow fit together.

Check out the haunting cover of 'I'm in love'.



Here's to an amazing 2026 in music. With new releases from Gorillaz, Charli XCX, and Arlo Parks to come, it promises to be a good one!

From the Boundary

Peter Jewell

The Australian tour was, to say the least, a shambles. Party if you want to, but not if you are losing. I just hope the 2026 home season will be better.

A sad moment when I heard about Norman Gifford, a stalwart of Worcestershire cricket. A slow left-arm bowler who played fifteen tests for England. He played for the county for twenty-two years, taking 1615 first-class wickets, and was captain in 1971. He took one hundred wickets in a season three times, and he took five wickets in an innings. He played in the 64/65 team, winning the championship twice. Giff joined at the same time as John Elliott, who was also a stalwart of the club, not so much as a player, as he did not get much opportunity, being the reserve keeper to Roy Booth. He became chairman after Duncan Fearnley, and I served under him as a member of the club's committee.

So, who is left from that era? John Standen, who played for Worcestershire and won the FA cup playing for West Ham, I think he now lives in California and must be ninety. Dougie Slade, Ron Headley, Alan Ormrod and

Bob Carter, all of whom must be in their late eighties now. Of course, the great and often forgotten Vanburn Holder. Politically, this country is in a mess. U-turn Starmer. For completeness, I set a few U turns over the last year. Digital ID Cards, pub business rates, Farmers inheritance tax (a partial U-turn), winter fuel payments. The two-child benefit cap, the grooming gangs inquiry, and the income tax thresholds - these are just a few. The Gorton bi-election will be interesting given that is a rock-solid Labour seat.

I am concerned with the Tory defections to Reform. My insider intelligence tells me that more are coming and that a number of Labour MPs are in discussions. I personally believe that if you want to change parties, then there should be a bi-election. After all, the voters of your constituency voted you in as a member of the party you stood for.



'A day without laughter is a day wasted.'

Charlie Chaplin

Thoughts from the Snug

What does it mean to be British?

Being British is about driving a German car to an Irish pub for a Belgian beer, then driving home, grabbing a curry or a Turkish kebab on the way, to then sit on Swedish furniture and watch American shows on a Japanese or Korean TV. And the most British thing of all? Suspicion of all things foreign! Only in Britain can a pizza get to your house faster than an ambulance. Only in Britain do supermarkets make sick people walk all the way to the back of the shop to get their prescriptions while healthy people can buy cigarettes at the front. Only in Britain do people order

double cheeseburgers, large fries and a diet coke. Only in Britain do banks leave both doors open, but chain the pens to the counters. Only in Britain do we leave cars worth thousands of pounds on the drive and lock our junk and cheap lawnmower in the garage. Only in Britain do we use answering machines to screen call and then have 'Call waiting' so we won't miss a call from someone we don't want to talk to in the first place. Only in Britain are there disabled parking places in front of the skating rink.

Buddy Bach

The Pershore Antique Centre



The Antiques and Collectables world has changed drastically in recent years and what older generations might consider to be desirable, valuable and 'easy to sell', may no longer be so. Pieces of large, dark wood furniture have no place in modern homes. Smaller rooms and a shift in how families use their spaces mean items need to be smaller and functional rather than decorative. Collectables such as cigarette cards, tea cards, stamps and Lilliput Lane style ceramics tend to have little value, unless you have something rare or exceedingly pleasing to the eye. Vinyl records are a new trend in collectables and can be very valuable depending on desirability and condition. Age does not equal value in all cases. China, ceramics, glass and pottery pieces rarely sit displayed in cabinets, only used for 'best'. Being able to store and display large collections becomes more difficult. The ability to put dining ware in the dishwasher or use in a microwave also limits the practicality and suitability of older pieces for daily use. However, there is good news: younger generations are becoming more aware of the

need to reuse, recycle and repurpose. Retro items from the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s are sought after and are being used in people's homes. Jewellery and designer fashions of those eras are rising in popularity. The skilful craftsmanship often seen in woodwork, the beauty in ceramic and glass pieces, alongside a rise in interest in past historical eras, thanks to television series such as Downton Abbey and Bridgerton, has led to an upsurge in respect for what has been before. The popularity of shows such as the Antiques Roadshow, Bargain Hunt and Salvage Hunters demonstrates the public fascination with the history and values of antiques. Over the next few months, I will be delving deeper into the world of antiques with a closer look at particular areas. Come and see what we have in the Antique Centre, if you want to start your own special collection of treasures.

To contact the Antique Centre, ring Pete:
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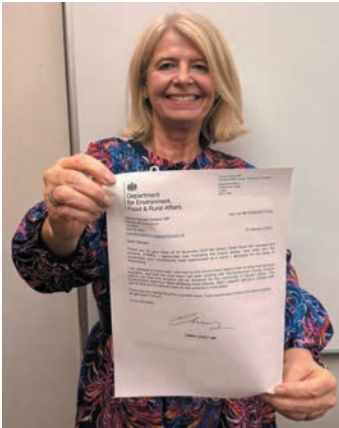
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Delight for fully-funded Severn Stoke flood scheme



In our November magazine, Richard Catford's article: 'Local Government: effective or what?' expressed concern about the incompetence of local council decision-making regarding flood defences, which threatened damaging repercussions for communities in areas such as Tenbury Wells and Severn Stoke. Concerning Severn Stoke, Catford wrote:

'... [T]he Seven Stoke Flood prevention scheme has rumbled on for nearly ten years. Five years ago, Harriet Baldwin wrestled the problem from the EV and placed the responsibility with the County Council. Dame Harriett

instigated a low-cost plan, using spoil from local civil engineering projects, to create the defences. Since then, Worcester County Council have done nothing, and the paralysis and indecision mean Severn Stoke faces yet another winter of flooding with half-built flood defences mocking their need.' It therefore came as an enormous relief when Dame Harriett Baldwin announced she had successfully secured full funding for the long-awaited flood defence scheme for Severn Stoke - only days after the project was threatened with a shut down. She thanked the Environment Agency and Worcestershire County Council and urged them to work together with urgency to get the contract agreed and get spades in the ground this Spring on a project which she has campaigned for since major flooding hit the community in 2012. News was communicated prior to Christmas that the scheme could be cancelled owing to a funding shortfall, but Dame Harriett immediately wrote to Flooding Minister Emma Hardy MP asking her to review the decision and issue a Ministerial

Direction. A letter from the Minister confirming that funding had been secured was delivered in mid-January, with the Environment Agency expected to liaise with the Worcestershire County Council highways team to ensure that the flood defences and the road raising project can start this Spring.

"I am delighted that the Environment Agency can now press on with the long-awaited flood defence scheme," said Dame Harriett. "I am particularly grateful for the intervention of Minister Emma Hardy, who has been following this matter closely and has offered me her constant support to get this scheme underway."

This project has been a long time on the drawing board but it has planning permission, archaeological studies have been carried out and some soil is already onsite. I plan to meet with Worcestershire County Council in the coming days to ensure that its contractors are able to work with the Environment Agency to get the work done quickly but I am pleased that common-sense has prevailed. This has been one of my longer campaigns but I look forward to standing on a new flood bund in Severn Stoke protecting homes, businesses, the historic church and the vital A38 link road."



Severe flooding in Severn Stoke in February 2020 - a thing of the past?

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Love is in the air!



The shops are full of large pink hearts, prosecco and chocolate as we get ready for Valentine's

Day. February is the time to think about love. Step outside and you'll notice we're far

from the only species swept up in the season of romance. As the days begin to lengthen, the natural world hums with its own early courtships as the shift towards spring triggers hormones, territorial behaviour and mate-finding. Birdsong becomes richer and more insistent as robins, blackbirds, and other early nesters begin pairing up. Great crested grebes take to the water for their elegant, balletic displays, herons, usually solitary and aloof, gather in treetop colonies where partners reconnect and rebuild their nests, while coots fight noisily for partners and space. Foxes call to one another, forming bonds that

Karen Rose

will carry them through the spring. Smooth newts wake from hibernation to begin elaborate underwater courtship rituals and adders surface briefly on sunny February days to warm themselves, ready forming. Romance in February, it turns out, isn't just a human invention. It's a seasonal rhythm shared across species - a reminder that connection, in all its forms, was woven into the fabric of life long before the first Valentine's card was opened.

Karen Rose is a wildlife and biodiversity officer for Wychavon District Council.

Economy or Premium



Around this time of year, when it's still grey and horrible outside, we start to plan wistfully for the nicer days to come. Given the pressures on our budgets this year, I thought that it might be useful to look at the costs, for an average family, of a camping holiday, or holidays. Let's start with the assumption that, ideally, we'd like a week's break at the Spring Bank Holiday, plus two weeks in the main school holidays and maybe three odd weekends on the way, what's the most cost-effective way of doing just that? If we start from scratch then there's a lot to buy: around £200 for a four person tent, the same again for sleeping mats, around £40 for a gas stove, another £40 for cooking sets, plus a wind up lantern at £33 and a first aid kit costing around £23 - call it a good £750 for the basic kit for a family of four. See www.mountainwarehouse.com for a suggested range. To that, we have to add site fees - what it costs per night to pitch our tent somewhere. Now that depends very much both on location and on time of year, if

we choose a farmer's field in Powys out of the main season then, maybe, just a tenner a night, but that quickly rises to around £50 a night for a seaside location in August. So let's take an average at around £25 a night, over our planned usage, that's another £700 or so. You can reduce that by quite a bit if you join a camping club, who have their own sites. The biggest, the Camping and Caravanning Club, costs around £53 a year but gives discounts of around 30% per site per night - so it will soon pay for itself. See www.campingandcaravanningclub.co.uk for details.

Adding that together, we get a total of just under £1500 for thirty nights of camping holiday a year - but remember, that's just for the first year. Once you've got the kit, then the cost is halved thereafter. The same strictures on site fees also operate abroad, as you might expect. So, for example, northern France or Belgium has cheaper campsites than the French Riviera, and a week anywhere in May is cheaper than a week in the same place in August. When you look at

campsites in Europe on the Web, you'll also see that it's possible to rent ready erected tents, which come pretty well equipped. Eurocamp, a big operator, offer 2/3 bedroom tents with beds, kitchen with fridge freezer and gas hob, electric lights and sockets, plus outdoor furniture, etc, from just £185 a week in May in Belgium. Remember, though, that the very same week will cost £225 in the Languedoc in the south of France, and that price rises to some £1200 a week in early August (and at that price you can almost hire a caravan). Browse www.eurocamp.co.uk for examples. Hopefully, that's given you food for thought...

For enjoyment much nearer home, booking will open soon for our nearby neighbours at the Longborough Festival Opera, whose season will run from late May to early August. This year's festival features a new production of Handel's "Orlando", a dazzling Baroque affair featuring chivalry madness and love. That's followed by a brand new production of

Brian Johnson-Thomas

Verdi's "Macbeth", which promises an evening of high drama and thrilling music. After that, another new production this year is Humperdinck's "Hansel and Gretel", the enduring fairy tale by the brothers Grimm. Finally, the season will end with a revival of Wagner's "Tristan und Isolde", a classic tale of doomed lovers.

See www.lfo.org.uk/whats-on for details.

Finally, don't forget that booking is now open for the RHS Malvern Spring Festival, which will again be at the Three Counties Showground from 7th to 10th May. It's the first RHS flower show of the season and will once again showcase the nation's best-known horticulturalists and highlight the newest trends (the shopping is quite neat, also...) Tickets start at only £16 for the Saturday afternoon special "Taster Ticket", and you also need to book ahead if you want to take your dog on the Sunday. See www.rhsmalvern.co.uk for details.



Ukraine: Four years on

This month marks four years since Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine on 24th February 2022. According to the BBC, Russia continues to steadily chip away at Ukraine's frontline, claiming an estimated 1800 square miles of land in 2025. Ukraine, meanwhile, continues to launch strikes on military infrastructure and bases deep in Russia to slow their progress. With trilateral peace talks between U.S., Ukrainian and Russian delegates taking place

for the first time since before the war, it remains to be seen whether or not 2026 will bring about an end to the conflict - or, perhaps more importantly, an end to the conflict which respects Ukrainian sovereignty. Since 2022, Worcestershire has welcomed over 1500 Ukrainian refugees through schemes such as 'Homes for Ukraine'. Should you wish to help provide food, water, shelter, healthcare and protection to families fleeing the conflict in Ukraine, Worcester City Council



recommends donating to the 'Disaster Emergency Committee's (DEC) Ukraine Humanitarian

Appeal' via their website: <https://www.dec.org.uk/appeal/ukraine-humanitarian-appeal>

Ukraine Freedom Company



Mothers and babies at Ukraine Refuge, happy recipients of donated baby milk and nappies

"Give peace a chance" is the title of three paintings by local artist Margret Hallmark, produced as a tribute to the bravery and ingenuity of the Ukrainian people in the face of unprovoked aggression instigated by Vladimir Putin's Russia.

With the war nearing its fourth anniversary, Margret conveys through her triptych how the Ukrainian people have shown enormous resilience and the ability to adapt to their tragic circumstances. With the theme of the three paintings conveying

close family ties through mother and child, and the desire for peace shown by the white dove, the viewer may notice that no men are shown and may draw their own conclusions. Margret has produced many works throughout her eventful life of travel across Asia and the Far East. Her subject matter varies from costumes and fashion to romantic themes, reflecting the variety of the world's peoples. An exhibition of Margret's work will be shown during the "Midsummer Malvern" event in June 2026. Margret hopes that her paintings may inspire people to support Ukraine by donating to "Ukraine Freedom Company (West Midlands)" (UFC), who, in partnership with Hereford Elgar Rotary and other local Rotary Clubs, have an exemplary record of organising and transporting aid on a regular basis to the beleaguered country. Staffed only by volunteers, the teams have sent over one hundred

lorryloads of assorted aid, eighty-six ambulances and over three hundred 4 x 4 vehicles. Two more articulated lorryloads will leave the area before Christmas. Aid consists of medical supplies for hospitals, dressing stations nearer the front line, trauma packs and comfort boxes for individual troops, both men and women. In addition, UFC have supported schools, orphanages and women's refuges, not forgetting domestic pets. The Ukrainian people have shown great resourcefulness in adapting and repairing equipment, but are in constant need of the support of organisations like UFC and Rotary. Margret hopes that her triptych will be produced as fundraising cards and posters raising funds for Ukraine.

To donate -
Ukraine Freedom Company,
West Midlands Metro Bank.
Sort code 23-05-80
Account No. 56781099
Please use ref. BWWR



Escape from Mariupol, Ukraine: Part Four

Denys Bielov



Warning: The following describes details you may find disturbing.

The reality of war is terrible. Nothing eases the pain and suffering on both sides of any conflict. My eyewitness account of the consequences of the 2022 Russian invasion of my country, Ukraine, continues. The occupiers of Mariupol took their dead away immediately. Until the end of the fighting, in early May 2022, the bodies of the Azovs, our forces, lay in the streets, under fences or other trash. Perhaps the occupiers wanted to show their dominance by neglecting the Azov defenders in this way. The occupiers often wrote insulting phrases about Azov on the fences. The Azovstal factory continued to be bombed day and night until 20th May, when the Azovs (who were still there) and the civilians who helped them exhausted all their weapons and food supplies and surrendered.

When the street fighting ended, Russian corpsmen arrived and picked up everyone who was lying on the street. They organised something like a funeral yard for the process. I saw such a yard when I had to rebury my father. In the middle of this courtyard, bodies were stacked up: men, women, children ... Some bodies were torn to shreds, others burnt, some relatively intact, just killed by a bullet or a splinter. I didn't see the bodies of the soldiers. There must have been a separate site for them. There was an incredible number of peaceful Mariupol residents who were killed. I don't know what was done with so many of these bodies. There were a lot of hastily made wooden coffins. Maybe they were burnt in mobile crematoria, or buried in a mass grave. Armed young men in groups of seven to nine began to walk around the surviving houses. They called themselves 'liberators'. Some of them reeked of alcohol. Those owners



who were at home and opened the doors immediately were not harmed. Their documents, the houses and the cellars were checked. When there was no one at home, or they did not open their doors, the gates and doors were opened with explosives and searched. Valuables and whatever they liked were taken. It often happened that when a resident came back to the city, the house was intact, but inside, everything was upside down, trampled by dirty boots and some valuables were gone. Sometimes the Russians stole everything, even dishes and crockery. Cars were stolen. They twisted off the licence plates, painted the letter 'Z' on the body. Then these herds of orcs moved further towards Dnieper and Zaporozhye. When our neighbourhood was completely occupied and the fighting was approaching the harbour, I went to find out how my father was holding up. He lived five kilometres away from

us. His neighbourhood had been occupied two to three weeks earlier. On the way towards his house, I saw from far away that the roof was not damaged, so the house was not destroyed. And I was very happy.

I called out for him and Aunt Galya (his second wife) for about fifteen minutes, but nobody came out of the house. When I shouted, my father's neighbour came over. He told me that Dad had been buried two weeks ago. He died of a heart attack at night in the cellar where he and Galya slept. He was buried in the vegetable garden behind the house and Galya went to her Mum in another village.

That was the first big impact for me. Before that, I somehow kept positive all the time and believed that justice would prevail and sooner or later, everything would return to how it was. But now I felt as if a piece of me had been chopped off, and nothing would come back ... I almost collapsed from the shock.

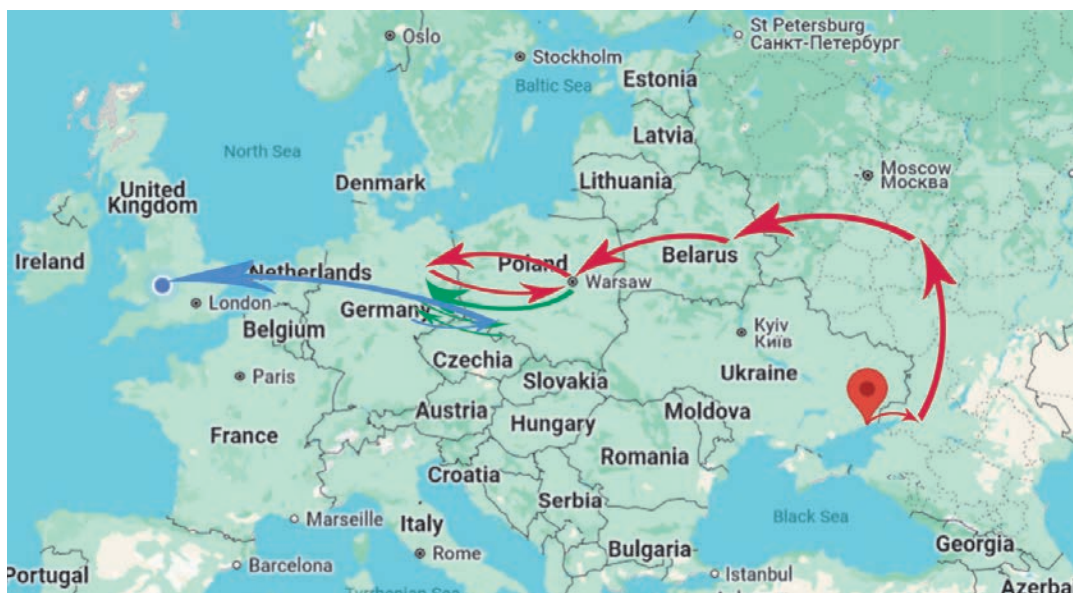
But still, I held myself together, because I realised that I was not the only one with such grief. Hundreds of thousands of Mariupol residents had lost someone or everyone ...

Then a neighbour brought a bicycle out of the yard and said that my father had kept it for me in the garage.

I don't know how to express what I felt then: gratitude, resentment, anger, despair in one impulse.

After that, I had a better understanding of why people go mad. But I knew I still had my mother, and I had to try my best to keep her safe. That bike helped me a lot.

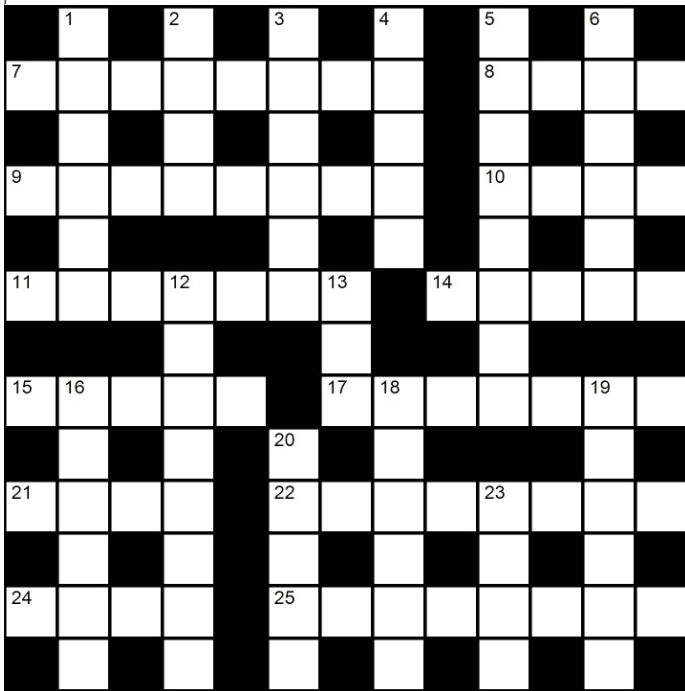
I thanked the neighbour, got on the bike and rode home on the most inconspicuous roads, so as not to get caught by the military.



Denys' journey from Mariupol. He travelled by train into Russia, through Belarus, to the Polish border. After several trips back and forth between Poland and Germany, he finally flew to the UK.

Coffee Break

Crossword



Across

- 7) Person who stays up late (5,3)
- 8) Nervously irritable (4)
- 9) Kernel protector (8)
- 10) Disfigure (4)
- 11) Coming (7)
- 14) Gem (5)
- 15) Rigid (5)
- 17) Follower of Christ (7)
- 21) Harmonize (4)
- 22) On an upper floor (8)
- 24) Ponder (4)
- 25) Flatten out (8)

Down

- 1) Strong drink (6)
- 2) Resistance units (4)
- 3) Capital of Kansas (6)
- 4) Cunningly (5)
- 5) Without a join (8)
- 6) Set on fire (6)
- 12) Septic (8)
- 13) Meadow (3)
- 16) Trial (3-3)
- 18) Priest (6)
- 19) Bigger (6)
- 20) Explode (5)
- 23) Performs (4)

Sudoku

Each row and column must contain the numbers from one to nine, without repetitions.

						1		
	9				7	3	5	
2		3		4				6
		7		9		6		
8	6			1		9	2	
	5			6		8		
6				7		1		8
4	8		3				5	
	2							

8				1	7	6		
3	1							
		4			9	7		
	4			5		9		
9				2				8
	8			4			3	
	5		1			9		
							6	5
		2	6	7				1

		7				9		8
		1			3		4	
5	9			8		3		
					5			9
	8							6
6			1					
		9		7			3	2
	3		2				6	
7		6					4	

Pizza Toppings Wordsearch

N	E	L	E	M	T	C	E	G	A	S	U	A	S
S	E	C	G	U	T	H	S	A	L	A	M	I	C
P	I	S	G	S	N	I	S	B	G	C	E	I	C
E	M	T	P	H	H	C	L	A	G	N	I	I	P
A	S	I	L	R	C	K	O	C	T	Z	L	S	E
N	E	E	A	O	A	E	A	O	E	A	N	M	P
U	B	H	N	O	N	N	T	N	N	O	K	I	P
T	U	E	T	M	I	U	E	T	I	A	L	N	E
S	P	A	E	S	P	P	R	N	H	T	O	I	R
D	B	A	A	F	S	O	O	G	U	T	B	H	O
O	D	A	C	O	V	A	N	A	S	O	S	C	N
P	R	O	S	C	U	I	T	T	O	C	T	C	I
A	A	A	H	L	L	C	C	U	R	I	E	U	S
C	H	O	R	I	Z	O	O	N	A	R	R	Z	L

- ONIONS
- AVOCADO
- MUSHROOMS
- SALAMI
- SAUSAGE
- PEPPERONI
- CILANTRO
- RICOTTA
- BACON
- SPINACH
- ZUCCHINI
- PEANUTS
- PROSCIUTTO
- BEEF
- EGGPLANT
- LOBSTER
- CHORIZO
- CHICKEN

Brainteaser

Are these long diagonal lines parallel?



Answer: Yes

Poets' Corner

A Shropshire Lad

LIII - The True Lover

The lad came to the door at night,
When lovers crown their vows,
And whistled soft and out of sight
In shadow of the boughs.

"I shall not vex you with my face
Henceforth, my love, for aye;
So take me in your arms a space
Before the east is grey."

"When I from hence away am past
I shall not find a bride,
And you shall be the first and last
I ever lay beside."

She heard and went and knew not why;
Her heart to his she laid;
Light was the air beneath the sky
But dark under the shade.

"Oh do you breathe, lad, that your breast
Seems not to rise and fall,
And here upon my bosom prest
There beats no heart at all?"

"Oh loud, my girl, it once would knock,
You should have felt it then;
But since for you I stopped the clock
It never goes again."

"Oh lad, what is it, lad, that drips
Wet from your neck on mine?
What is it falling on my lips,
My lad, that tastes of brine?"

"Oh like enough 'tis blood, my dear,
For when the knife has slit
The throat across from ear to ear
'Twill bleed because of it."

Under the stars the air was light
But dark below the boughs,
The still air of the speechless night,
When lovers crown their vows.

A. E. Housman 1859-1936

Quiz!

- 1) What would your star sign be if you were born in early February?
- 2) What is the flower for the month of February?
- 3) What is the traditional birthstone for February?
- 4) February gets its name from the word 'februa', which comes from which language?
- 5) On 16th February 1659, what was used for the first time in Britain when Mr Nicholas Vanacker settled a debt?
- 6) Which popular tradition is celebrated in the United States and Canada on February 2nd?
- 7) In the poem called 'The Months' by Sara Coleridge, if 'hot July brings cooling shower' what does February bring?
- 8) What country's New Year celebration often lands in February?
- 9) The February Revolution was the first of two revolutions which took place in Russia in which year?
- 10) Which human rights leader was assassinated on February 21st 1965?
- 11) Who was beheaded at the Tower of London on 12th February 1554?
- 12) In February of which year was the social networking site Facebook founded?
- 13) Which British monarch celebrated their accession to the throne in February 1952?
- 14) Which English singer, born on 17th February 1991, is known for the songs "Galway Girl", "Perfect" and "Shape of You"?
- 15) True or False: February is the 2nd month of the year in the Roman calendar?

Answers: 1) Aquarius 2) Violet 3) Amethyst 4) Latin 5) A cheque 6) Groundhog Day 7) Rain. 8) Thaws the frozen lake again 9) China 10) Malcolm X 11) Lady Jane Grey 12) 2004 13) Queen Elizabeth II 14) Ed Sheeran 15) False

Did You Know?

The first recorded link between Valentine's Day and romance is in Geoffrey Chaucer's 'Parliament of Fowls' (1382), where he wrote about birds choosing mates on that particular day.

Bonus fact!

Brits consume over 52 million eggs on Pancake Day!

Word of the Month 'Famelicose'

Definition: constantly hungry, eager for food

December/January Answers

1. ARMOUR	2. EUROPE	3. BETTER	4. FASHION	5. MEXICO	6. BETTER	7. CASHING	8. TIPS
9. AMASS	10. DELICATE	11. UNIT	12. TROUSERS	13. EMPLOYER	14. ESCORT	15. VETO	16. OPTIN
17. SLIDER	18. ABASH	19. TIME	20. ADULT	21. PARCELS	22. OPU	23. RIVERS	24. TSARS
25. DEATH	26. RESIGN	27. OLD	28. ADULT	29. PARCELS	30. OPU	31. RIVERS	32. TSARS
33. LANS	34. LEVER	35. ALL	36. OATH	37. BEAST	38. BURDEN	39. TIPS	40. TSARS
41. SETS	42. ACADEMIC	43. LESS	44. SHADOW	45. BEAST	46. BURDEN	47. TIPS	48. TSARS
49. LEQ	50. TNC	51. LESS	52. SHADOW	53. BEAST	54. BURDEN	55. TIPS	56. TSARS
57. MEXICO	58. TIPS	59. BETTER	60. FASHION	61. EMPLOYER	62. ESCORT	63. VETO	64. OPTIN
65. PARCELS	66. OPU	67. RIVERS	68. TSARS	69. BEAST	70. BURDEN	71. TIPS	72. TSARS
73. SHUT	74. MIRA	75. NIP	76. ABINE	77. SHUT	78. MIRA	79. NIP	80. ABINE
81. SHUT	82. MIRA	83. NIP	84. ABINE	85. SHUT	86. MIRA	87. NIP	88. ABINE
89. SUNSHADE	90. EVIL	91. SHUT	92. MIRA	93. SUNSHADE	94. EVIL	95. SHUT	96. MIRA
97. SUNSHADE	98. EVIL	99. SHUT	100. MIRA	97. SUNSHADE	98. EVIL	99. SHUT	100. MIRA
101. CAN	102. YON	103. TALLE	104. R	101. CAN	102. YON	103. TALLE	104. R
105. CAN	106. YON	107. TALLE	108. R	105. CAN	106. YON	107. TALLE	108. R

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Copy Deadline for

March Issue - 20th February 2026

Severn Stoke & Croome D'abitot News

Happenings in Severn Stoke and Environs

John Henderson

St. Denys' Church, Severn Stoke

Once again, the proposed Flood Bund to encircle the Church, Rose & Crown and several houses has been postponed by the Environment Agency, as the scheme has failed to meet the financial criteria required. Despite the welcome continuing intervention of our MP, Dame Harriet Baldwin, to seek other means involving the County Council, our hopes of preserving our ancient church for future generations seem to dwindle with each negative decision. We are grateful to the Parish Council for raising pertinent questions as to what shortfall there is and whether there are alternative ways of funding, as this process has been delayed annually for the last five or six years. Our church and the other

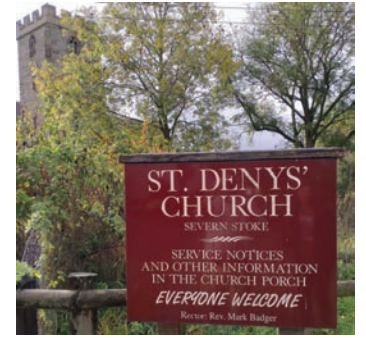
properties have been flooded four times out of the last six years. With global warming likely to cause further violent weather, it puts into question the viability of maintaining the Church building, when it is supported and funded by so few, although it exists to serve the whole Parish and Benefice and our heritage.

Stop Press

It has just been announced (22nd January) that with pressure from our local MP, the Minister for the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, has confirmed that funding to construct the Flood Bund has been secured and that the scheme should commence this Spring. Thanks to all who have worked so hard in the Village and further up the line to reach this moment.

Friends of St. Denys, Severn Stoke

Raising funds to modernise the church!
The Grand Christmas Draw arranged by the Friends in aid of church funds raised over £700.00. With grateful thanks to all who gave towards the prizes and sold tickets! We hope that the winners enjoyed their rewards.



TOOLS WITH A MISSION

This charity collects and refurbishes gardening, carpentry, building tools, sewing machines and bicycles for distribution in Africa. We collect them here in Kempsey and send them to a national centre to be shipped to needy families. Please telephone Joy Clee 01905 820317

Spot & Shop December/January Winners

- | | |
|-------------------|------------------------|
| 1) V. Michell | 5) Gill Medicott |
| 2) Jean Hanmer | 6) Henrietta Pritchard |
| 3) John Beeton | 7) Sarah Phelps |
| 4) Brian Grainger | |

Last month's answer: *Jeynes Cleans Auto Detailing*

Kempsey WI



Christmas activities stretched over several weeks for members of Kempsey WI. First, performance historian John White stepped in at short notice to present a Christmas compendium to members, after the musical entertainer scheduled for November was taken ill. He read an excerpt from 'A Christmas Carol' and from a ghostly poem, and explained the background to many of our popular traditions. He told how the kindly, real Saint Nicholas, born in what is now Turkey, morphed into Father Christmas or Santa Claus. Next, several volunteers manned a WI stall at the Christmas Fair at St Mary's Church. They held a 'Name the Gnome' competition and sold a variety of crafted Christmas decorations, jewellery, knitted toys and blankets. Many of the items were made and donated

by member Lynda Flanner. Money raised was split equally between St Richard's Hospice in Worcester and Kempsey WI funds. The following week, it was time for the annual festive lunch, this year held at the Seaborne clubhouse in the village. Thanks went to Marian Walters for organising the event and to the Seaborne staff for a lovely meal.

The December meeting was a party, with festive food, fun and games. Member Julie Smith devised a dog and cat-inspired quiz, and there was pass the parcel, a large raffle and Santa's socks gifts. Once again, raffle proceeds aided St Richard's Hospice. The next meeting on Monday, February 16th is due to feature Philip Bowen talking about Britain in the 1960s. *Kempsey Youth Centre, Plovers Rise, 2pm.*

COMPETITION TIME!

Take a look at the anagram
The answer is the name of a business that is advertising in the Kempsey Times this month



This month's prizes!

- 1st - £50 cash
- 2nd - £25 cash

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3rd £20 Food Voucher
at The Queen Elizabeth, Elmley

4th £10 Voucher
at Revills Farm Shop, Defford

5th £10 Voucher
at Craftypyro, Bakers Arcade, Pershore

6th Reg Moule Gardening Book

7th Pat's Pantry -
Jar of home-made marmalade/jam

Complete and return this form or email:
news@hughes.company for your chance to win!

Kempsey Times closing date: 20th February 2026

Answer:

Name:

Telephone/email:

Return to: Hughes and Company/Kempsey Times

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Camera Club



'Holy Man' by Colin Trow-Poole

All at the Club wish you a Happy New Year! We have had a busy January (perhaps more so than was anticipated) and hope that this has given us continuing energy as we hurtle through the dark days of February towards the Spring. Our programme in February commences on Wednesday 11th, with members viewing and discussing the latest iteration of our Edit Challenge. This involves the original author and one other member each editing an image file in their own ways, and then comparing the results. It has, from its first occasion, proved a very interesting and stimulating exercise, which is why it has become a regular feature of our season. This is followed on Wednesday 25th by our second Open projected image competition of the season, for

which the judge will be Jonathan Vaines. Jonathan is a new face to the Club, so we look forward to finding out how he critiques and ranks our images. *We would be delighted to welcome anybody interested in the evenings listed above. For further details of our programme for the rest of the season, please make contact via our website <https://www.kempseycameraclub.uk/>* In the meantime, we hope that you will take pleasure from these two quite different images, 'Holy Man' by Colin Trow-Poole & 'A Sense Of Scale' by David Winter, the former from the group of eight top-placed images, the latter from the group of ten commended images, respectively, in our first (Open) projected

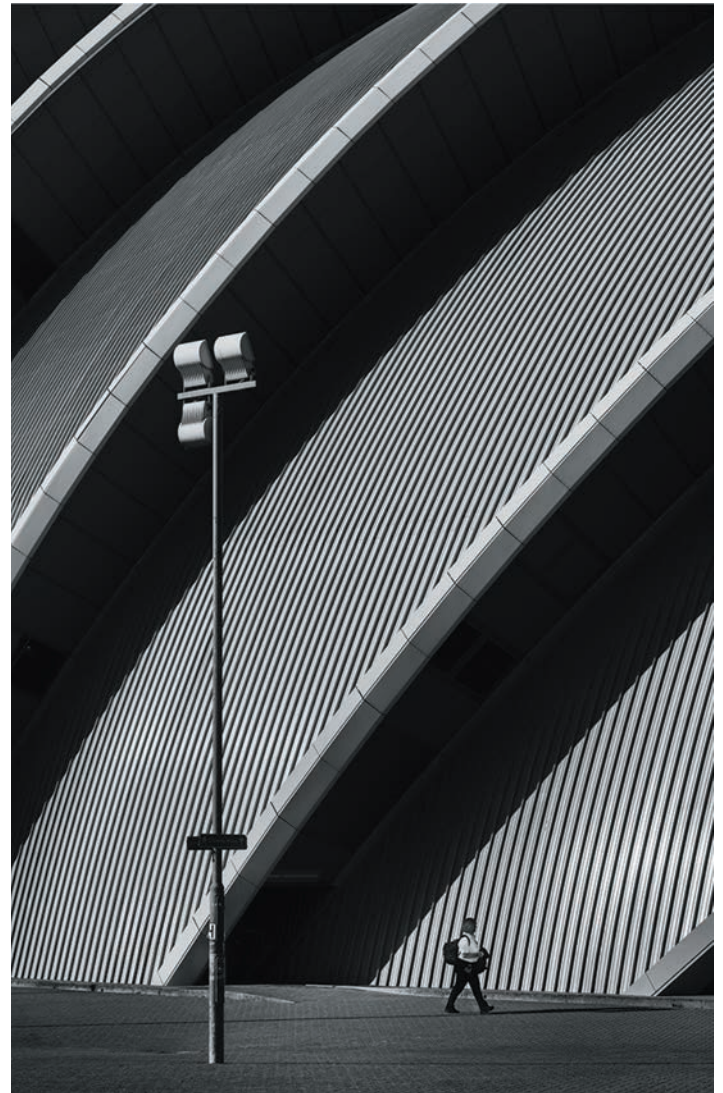


image competition of the new season, held in early October.

*Malcolm A Hay
Secretary*

*Above:
'A Sense Of Scale'
by David Winter*



MALVERN Walking Festival

The 21st Malvern Walking Festival is coming soon and taking place from Saturday 16th through to Bank Holiday Monday on 25th May; the website will be open for bookings from 19th January at www.malvernwalking.uk. Our spectacular Malvern Hills National Landscape (formerly known as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) covers parts of Worcestershire, Herefordshire & Gloucestershire, and attracts visitors to enjoy the dramatic contrasts between the distinctive north-south ridge and the pastoral farmland. Which? magazine frequently votes the Malvern Hills as having the best walks in the Midlands, where most of the Festival walks are focused. This year's Festival boasts over sixty walks, so


there's plenty of choice for everyone. There are multi-day walks, all-day walks, and shorter half-day walks either in the morning, afternoon or evening. A lot of the walks are also themed, including wartime Malvern, Malvern's water cure, farming, gardens, geology, local history - including the Battle of Worcester, beer & pubs, to mention a few. Each walk is graded from Gentle to Strenuous, so no one need let themselves in for more than they wish to handle. There are walks ranging from 2 miles to 32 miles plus - for the keen, there is the iconic 19-mile Malvern Hills end2end & back, the 32-mile Worcester Way in 3 days or a 4-day exploration of the Wye Valley. Commenting on the new programme, Festival Chairman



Peter Reynolds said "Our 2025 20th anniversary Festival was a huge success and makes us one of the largest walking events in southern England. As a consequence, I urge you to get online early to book a walk or two to avoid being disappointed, as there are so many wonderful places to visit in and around Malvern. I'm also pleased to confirm that we will once again be supporting the Worcester Air Ambulance charity, although of

course we sincerely hope we will have no need of their fantastic services anytime soon." *Booking and further information will be available on the Festival website www.malvernwalking.uk from Monday 19th January. Or, to book personally, drop into the Tourist Information Centre in Great Malvern, Upton-upon-Severn or Tenbury Wells*


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Severn Stoke and Croome d'Abitot Parish Council

This month, your parish council is getting ready to bid a fond farewell to one parish councillor, but also to welcome another. More on this in the next issue.

Flood bund

Parish Councillors were sorry and upset to hear two days before Christmas that the project to protect the communities of Severn Stoke, Clifton, Sandford and Sheepcote Lane is again on hold. At the time of writing, the Parish Council and residents still have not received official confirmation or notification on this matter. We hope that matters will progress quickly and we are seeking clarification from all parties. As soon as we know more, we will directly inform those residents most affected first and then place an update on our website and on social media. Our website has an option for residents to sign up to receive notifications of news and press releases.

<https://severnstokeandcroomeadabitot-pc.gov.uk/>

Budget for 2026/27 -

The Precept Explained

Councils across the UK are facing severe funding pressure and budget shortfalls, and they no longer make regular funding contributions to parish councils. To address this, your Parish Council has been debating an increase in the local Precept. What is a Precept?

The Precept is the main source of income for most parish councils as they do not receive direct funding from Central Government. It is a small part of each household's council tax payment and helps fund the parish council's operations and services. In addition, parish councils seek grant funding for some projects.

What does a Parish Council provide?

Here are some of the key activities/outgoings:

- Maintenance, insurance and public liability for parish council land and assets, including the war memorial, street lighting, litter bins (which accept mixed waste and dog waste), heritage phone booths, bus shelters, community noticeboards, seats and benches. In 2025/26, insurance was £700 per annum, expected to rise in the coming year.

- Membership in the Lengthsman Scheme, contributing to the hire of a contractor for roadside maintenance across the parish, maintaining and installing signage, keeping visibility splays clear, clearing drain tops and gullies etc, assisting landowners who are maintaining their roadside ditches, reporting flytipping and liaising with the parish clerk on any issues parish-wide.

- Provision and maintenance of speed VAS signs across the parish.

- Contribution to the maintenance of Public Rights of Way and related infrastructure.

- Statutory consultee on planning applications and a local voice on highways and environmental matters.

- Representing residents' views to higher-tier councils (like district or county councils) and other organisations.

How is the Precept raised?

Worcestershire Council collects your Council Tax on behalf of themselves, Police, Fire, Adult Social Care, and the Parish Councils in their district.

How is it calculated?

Each January, your Parish Council sets the Precept for the next financial year by considering

projected income, grants, and expenses. The Precept is the amount needed to balance the budget and deliver services. This year, your Parish Council is accounting for potential additional services due to the upcoming process of Devolution (the merging of County and District Councils 2027/2028).

How much does the average household pay for the Precept? The average Severn Stoke and Croome d'Abitot household's Precept for 2025-26 was £46 per year, costing a Band D household £0.88 per week. Parish Councillors are considering increasing this to £0.95 per week, which would be £49.50 per year - a 7% increase. The final amount depends on the number of contributing households.

Increases are never welcome, but we take the following points into consideration:

- Risk of Devolution Outcomes: Parish Councils may need to cover costs for services previously paid for by the County and District Councils. These include a much larger contribution towards the Lengthsman Scheme, wider responsibility for gully cleaning, hedge cutting, ditch clearing and mowing roadside verges (which includes taking responsibility for roadside biodiversity and general maintenance).

- Loss of Grant Funding: Parish Councils may no longer receive grants from County and District Councillor Divisional Funding, which can amount to £500-£600 or more annually.

- Inflationary pressure: Rising cost of labour and raw materials are impacting our capital spending and maintenance work.

- Need for Protected Funds: There is a need to build up protected funds for unforeseen repairs, renewals and any required legal processes.
- Parish Clerk Availability: The Parish Clerk is available 24/7 for emergencies and helps ensure that resident voices are heard.

Overall, the Parish Council believes a prudent increase is necessary given the current economic climate. Conscientious monitoring of income and expenditure has allowed the Parish Council to maintain a stable annual financial base of around £20,000, which is used to deliver community services and projects.

If you have any questions or would like further information, please contact the Clerk:

*Mrs Lisa Stevens
parishclerk@grimley-pc.gov.uk
parishclerk@severnstokeandcroomeadabitot-pc.gov.uk
07950256363 /
01905 820956*

Severn Stoke & Croome D'Abitot Parish Council Meeting Dates 2026

Please double check meeting dates/times before attendance, as details may change at short notice. Venue for all meetings (unless otherwise stated): SOQ meeting room at Croome National Trust Visitor Centre.

Satnav: Near High Green, Worcs, WR8 9DW.

What3words location: ///alleyway.rescuer.perfect

Wed 28th January - 7.30pm

Wed 25th March - 7.30pm

Annual Parish Meeting of Residents of the Parish Areas of Severn Stoke and of Croome d'Abitot

Venue: St. Denys' Church, Severn Stoke

A standard Parish Council meeting will occur afterwards at approx. 8.30pm. This is a meeting of the parish electors organised by the Parish Council. Residents may set the agenda.

Wed 20th May - 7.30pm

Annual Meeting of Parish Council. Appointments take place for: chairman, vice-chairman, committee members and reps to other bodies. The public are cordially invited to attend to observe proceedings.

Wed 10th June - 7.30pm

Audit Approval Finance Committee, full parish council present.

Wed 15th July - 7.30pm

Wed 30th September - 7.30pm

Wed 25th November - 7.30pm

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Happy New Year!

After a jam-packed Christmas, we are relaxing into the New Year, with quieter moments looking back on Christmas 2025. It may be cold outside, but our hearts are full of the warmth and laughter shared at The Lawns: From all the singing and entertainment, holiday treats, bright celebrations and wonderful stories shared over hot chocolates, sherry and fizz! Well, it was Christmas! We finished with a New Year's cheese and wine party with sparklers in the garden. Thank you to all our staffing team, who always go the extra mile to bring the magic and festive cheer. Thanks also to our volunteers, who are very much part of our Lawns family. Perhaps you have a New Year's resolution to give back to the community? We always welcome new volunteers, so please do give us a call. Thank you to the students from The King's School and Kempsey Primary who helped make Christmas events extra special. We are looking forward to seeing you again this Spring term. We have a Residents Committee meeting at the end of the month to discuss plans for the year, whether that's hobby goals, fundraising, events or outings. We do like to have a



full diary that supports residents in living their best lives. We are continuing our Monday coffee mornings and quiz to start the week and Walks for Wellbeing on Wednesday mornings. Clive is with us every Friday to round off the week with a sing-along. Tuesday afternoons through

January, we have Reminiscence Through Music from the 1940s, to the Rock n Roll 1950s and Swinging 60s. We are also starting a number of craft projects, including a Patchworking Group. We are welcoming new admissions for long stay or respite care. Please give us a call

for more information and see our new video on our website. www.heritagemanor.co.uk/our-homes/the-lawns With best wishes from Team Lawns. Main Road, Kempsey, Worcester, WR5 3NF 01905 821388



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