

PARISH NEWS

OF

ST WEONARDS, GARWAY, ORCOP,
PENCOYD, TRETIRE, MICHAELCHURCH,
HENTLAND AND HOARWITHY

FEBRUARY 2022

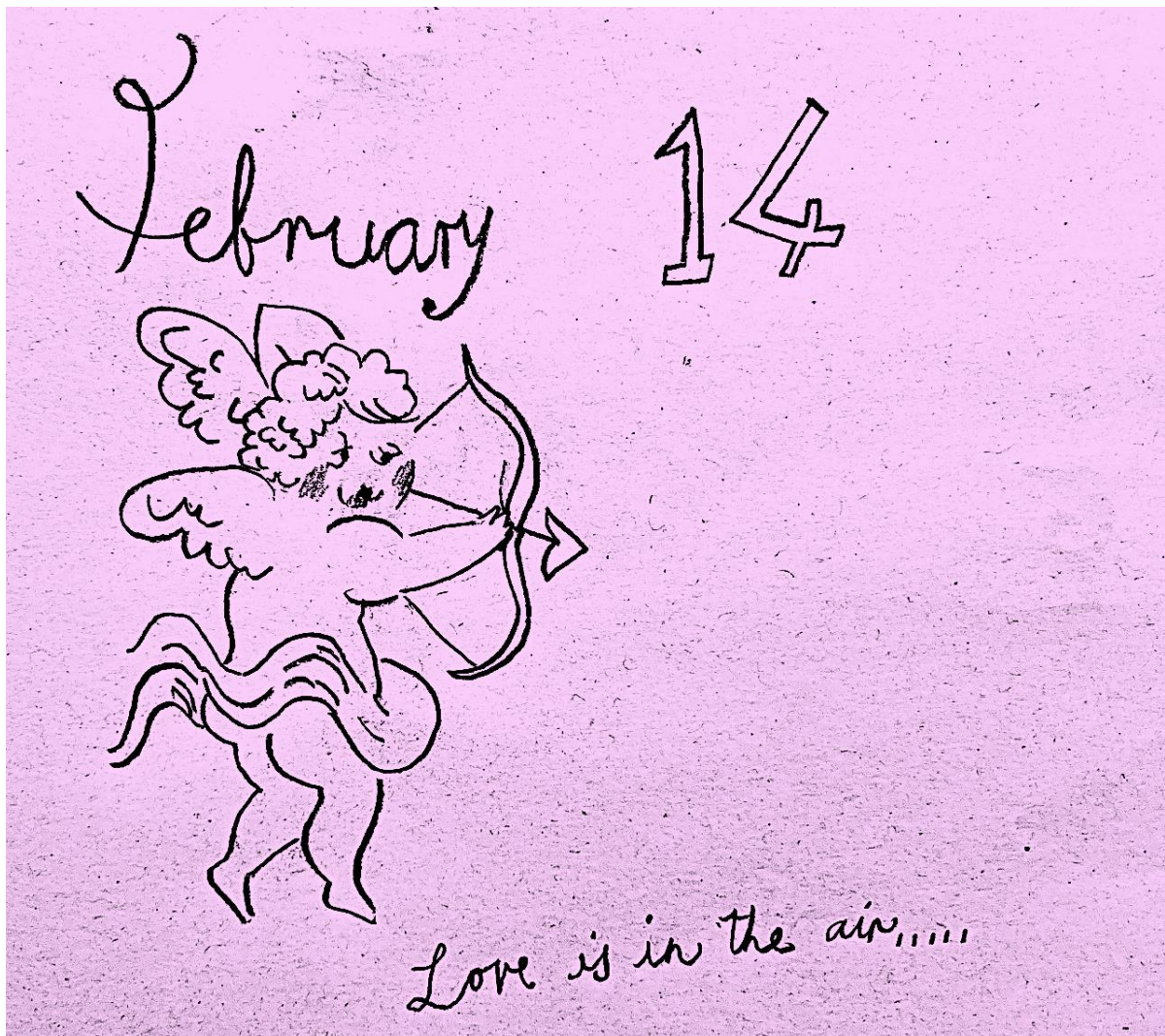


ILLUSTRATION BY LOUISE BROSNAN

CONTENTS

Page

3	Contacts in the Parishes and Councillors' details
4	Magazine Contacts/ Parish Council contact details
5	The Vicar's Letter
6	Benefice Service/ Bishop's Letter
7	Lent Lunches/ Magazine News/ Prescription rota
8	February Services
9	Hereford Cathedral Events
10	Village Pages/ St Weonards News/ School News
11	Winter Snow
12	Garway News/ Garway Schools News/ Coffee morning/ The Big Breakfast
13	Flicks in the Sticks/ Garway Heritage Group
14	St David's Day Coffee Morning/ Orcop News
15	Owl Lunch/ Orcop Development Plan/ Tretire with Pencoyd and Michaelchurch News
16	Tretire with Pencoyd and Michaelchurch News
17	Rainfall in 2021
18	Wildlife in our Garde
19	Tomatoe/ Book Review
20	Book Review continued/ Garden Notes
21	Garden Notes
22	Archenfield Arts/ Vegetarian recipis
23	Chuckle Corner

CONTACTS IN THE ST WEONARDS GROUP OF PARISHES

Churchwardens

St. Weonards	Richard Mynors	01981 580208
Orcop	Margaret Fletcher	01981 540790
Garway	Vacant	
Tretire & Pencoyd	Elizabeth Malcolm	01989 730201
Hoarwithy	Peter Pember	01432 840254
	Jeff Goulding	01432 840492
Hentland	Mr Robin Symonds	01989 730439

Local Contacts

Editor Parish Magazine	Fiona Mynors	01981 580208
Group Choir	Sir Richard Mynors	01981 580208
Bellringing	Mr Peter Hallewell	01981 580203
Royal British Legion	Bea Morris	07932 668363
Orcop Evergreens	Gill Bannerman	01981 580685
Woman's Fellowship	Miss June Griffiths	01981 580353
Youth Group, Tearfund	Mrs Fay Rowlands	01600 750242
Orcop Hall Bookings	Jude Loveridge	01981 241614
St. Weonards Hall	Anna Williams	01981 580201
St Weonards Pre-school	Maggie Evans	07855 550108
Singing Tree choir	Hilary Smallwood	01600 614012
Garway Hall Bookings		hires@garwayhall.org
Garway Pre-school	Julie Jones	01600 750273
@Garway	Graham Bevan	01981 580215
Flicks in the Sticks	Claire Adamson	01600 750465
Much Dewchurch		
Gardening Club	Linda Ashton	01981 540804
OWL Good Neighbours	Jane Rigler	07940 030 8696
Dore Community Transport		0345 2020144
St Weonards Group website		www.stw.org.uk

HEREFORDSHIRE COUNCILLORS

Birch Ward Toni Fagan (Green) tonifagan@btinternet.com
 Office hours 01981
 540721

Dinedor Hill Ward David Summers david.summers@herefordshire.gov.uk

Samaritans National Helpline 08457 909090
 Hereford 116 123 free calls
 0330 094 5717 local rates
 jo@samaritans.org
 HOPEline UK (Prevention of Young Suicide) 0870 1704000
 01978 367333

Golden Valley & Hereford Rural South local policing teams

Sgt Emma Freer, PC Kirsty O'Brien, PC Jim Phillips, PCSO Lowri Anderson, PCSO Adam Westlake, PCSO Christina Howard, PCSO Hayley Cohen and PCSO Christopher Yarwood.
 How to get in touch—101 to talk to you local SNT or report a crime.

herefordsouthside.snt@westmercia.pnn.police.uk www.westmercia.police.uk Only call 999 in an emergency, when a crime is in progress or life is in danger.

MAGAZINE CONTACTS

Contributions to the Parish news can be given to your parish representative by the **12th of the month**:

Magazine Editor	Fiona Mynors	01981 580208
Garway:	Mrs Ruth Maskell Windy Ridge, Garway	01600 750454
Hentland/Hoarwithy:	Mr and Mrs Pember One Eleven, Hoarwithy	01432 840254
Orcop:	Mrs M Fletcher 3 Wilkes Row, Orcop	01981 540790
Tretire/Pencoyd:	Mrs Meg Oubridge	01981 580233
St. Weonards:	Mrs P Craig 8 Mount Way St Weonards	01981 580433

Contributions by email to archenfieldmag@btinternet.com

PARISH COUNCIL CONTACTS

Garway:	Mark Hearne clerk@garwayparishcouncil.co.uk	01981 251887
Orcop:	Mark Hearne clerk@orcopparishcouncil.org Parish council website www.orcop.wordpress.com	01981 251887
St. Weonards:	Mrs Kate Hughes Meadow View St Weonards HR2 8QS Email: clerk@stweonardsparishcouncil.org	01981 580498 07967 352903
Llanwarne:	Mark Hearne Email: clerk@llanwarnegrouppc.co.uk	01981 251887
Ballingham Bolstone & Hentland:	Nicky Mackenzie clerk@ballinghambolstonehentland-pc.gov.uk	07581 353103

VILLAGE INFORMATION, PHOTOS AND NEWS www.stw.org.uk

PARISH NEWS

THE ARCHENFIELD GROUP

Revd Frances Phillips
Associate Priest of the St Weonards Group of churches
New House
Garway Hill
Herefordshire
HR2 8EZ
01981 240032
franjphillips@gmail.com

Vicar's Letter

Hello Everyone,

Well Christmas is finally over! As you might be aware, in the church calendar, we mark the end of the Christmas Season on February 2nd – the feast of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple, 40 days after Christmas Day. The old name for the date is Candlemas because it was customary for candles to be blessed at the service and then taken back to people's homes. This linked in with the days increasing in length and, even though it might seem that Spring was still a way off, the light of Christ would be present in every house.

Which got me reflecting on how easy it is for us to light our homes. We just flick a switch and the darkness is banished. In previous generations, light was a precious thing – and we don't have to go too far back in our history of this part of Herefordshire to remember the time before electric lights.

It is not surprising that we use the symbolism and imagery of light in so many different ways, from candles in church, to baptism and Christingles, to Jesus being the Light of the World, transfigured on top of a mountain and in the Old Testament God's glory shining forth. In paintings and frescoes, the image of Christ the Light has been used since the earliest days of the church.

And what of us? Are we the bearers of light? One of the images we use in our prayers is that we carry the light of Christ into the world. That in the things we do, the words we speak, the people we meet, we should shine with the light of Christ. As Jesus said "You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hidden" (Matthew 5.15). So let us shine!

With every blessing,

Revd Mark

February Benefice Service

Our February benefice service is at 10am on Sunday February 5th via Zoom. This will be the only service in our group of parishes on this day, so that we can all gather together and share each other's company and fellowship. It will be a Communion service.

If you are not already a member of our Zoom congregation, and would like to be, then please send me an email today at franjpillips@gmail.com

Do join us.

Frances

Letter from Bishop Richard

Some of us have been planting trees as part of the Queen's Green Canopy Project. It is a fitting way of marking Her Majesty's 70

years as sovereign, and the tree-planting project acquires an urgent relevance in the light of the climate crisis. Gardeners will have collected seeds to multiply their stocks. It is a longer-term view and cheaper way than buying established plants from our suppliers.

Seeds are remarkable things. There is little correlation between their size and the size of the plant that emerges. What is more extraordinary is that the complete blueprint for the established plant resides in such a small package. Every detail is written in the DNA, ready to emerge when the conditions are suitable for germination. The seed is as much the plant as the tree is, despite their very different appearance.

All metaphors have their limitations. But when we contemplate the events of Christmas and the reality of God's incarnation in Christ, the seed to plant metaphor can be helpful. In his letter to the Philippians, St Paul said that Jesus Christ was God in very nature. In Jesus, God reveals himself not just as the creative hand behind all that is but also as personal. The human (albeit extraordinary) attributes of personality we see in Jesus are the characteristics of God himself. Paul is essentially saying that because Jesus was God, he took the lowest place, showed humility, and gave himself up for others. Appearing in human form, born as the infant Jesus was not a disguise for God, but God in his very essence.

The humble familiarity of the Christmas story reminds us that we can know God. The good news is that knowledge can be transformative as we enter into a relationship with him. I pray that we all enter afresh into this reality.

+Richard

Advance notice: **LENT LUNCHESES**

On each Wednesday during Lent, the parishes will take turns to host a light lunch of soup, bread and cheese. Do make a note in your diary, and come along to meet your neighbours, have a catch up and support a worthwhile charity.

March 9th: Hoarwithy

March 16th: St Weonards

March 23rd Orcop

March 30th. Tretire and Pencoyd

April 6th: Garway.

For details of times and venues, see next month's magazine.



PRESCRIPTION COLLECTION



February 1st Liz Lloyd 01981580 002

FEBRUARY SERVICES

Sunday January 30th – Café style group service at Much Birch Community Hall at 10.30a.m.

6 Feb	10a.m.	Zoom	Benefice – Family Communion
13 Feb	10a.m.	St Weonards & Zoom	All Age Communion
	11a.m.	Orcop	Holy Communion
20 th Feb	10a.m.	Tretire	Holy Communion
	10a.m.	Hoarwithy	Dedication Festival – Holy Communion
27 th Feb	10a.m.	St Weonards	All Age Service
	9.15a.m.	Hentland	Holy Communion
	6.30p.m.	Pencoyd	Evening Service
2 nd March	10.30a.m.	Much Birch Church	Ash Wednesday service
6 th March	10a.m.	Zoom	Benefice – family Communion

For enquiries about baptisms, weddings or funeral services, please contact the relevant churchwarden or Rev Doctor Frances Phillips.

If you would like to receive the link to a Zoom service which you have not previously attended, please send a brief email to the contact below:

HOLY COMMUNION at 10a.m. on 1st Sunday franjphillips@gmail.com

Iona Style service on 2nd Sunday peter@pember.plus.com

Evening prayer at 6.30p.m. on 4th Sunday elizabethmalcolm@outlook.com

All Age Worship at 10.00a, on 2nd and 4th Sunday stweonardspcc@gmail.com

HEREFORD CATHEDRAL EVENTS & EXHIBITIONS

All Things Bright: A thousand years of metalwork from cathedral and diocese

Monday 24 January to Saturday 23 April. Monday to Saturday, 10am to 5pm

The latest exhibition in the Mappa Mundi & Chained Library highlights a wide variety of metal objects, some fundamental to the act of Christian worship, others tucked away and

perhaps overlooked. As well as its own metalwork treasures, the cathedral also cares for the historical silver no longer in regular use in churches in the Hereford Diocese. This exhibition shows some of the finest pieces from these collections. **Normal admission charges apply.**

HCA Crafting the Cathedral: Saturday 29 January to Saturday 26 February

Crafting the Cathedral is an exhibition bringing together contemporary craft artefacts, created and designed as a personal response to Hereford Cathedral by students from Hereford College of Arts BA (Hons) Contemporary Design Crafts and BA (Hons) Jewellery Design courses in the Cathedral Crypt.

Free Entry, open during normal cathedral opening hours

Living in Love and Faith - A 5 week course led by Revd Canon Chris Pullin

Sessions will take place on Mondays at 7pm - (Jan 31, Feb 7, Feb 14, Feb 21 & Feb 28)

How do questions about identity, sexuality, relationships and marriage fit within the bigger picture of the good news of Jesus Christ? What does it mean to live in love and faith together as a Church? Canon Chris Pullin will explore these questions when leading this Church of England course. **This course is free to attend but advance booking is essential via the Library: library@herefordcathedral.org or call 01432 374 225/6**

'Notorious, but remarkably efficient, Gurney stoves' - A talk by Elizabeth Semper O'Keefe

Wednesday 16 February, 3 pm. Noticed by many visitors (especially in the winter!), the cathedral's Gurney stoves have been a feature since 1867. In this talk our Cathedral Archivist will look at the history of the stoves in the cathedral.

Tickets cost £8 and can be purchased via the cathedral website

Half Term Family Storytelling: *Mappa, Minotaurs and Mysteries*

Tuesday 22 February & Thursday 24 February, 1pm – 2.15pm

Join the Hereford Cathedral team for stories about the Mappa Mundi, Minotaurs and other mysteries with colouring-in activities included. Children must be accompanied by a responsible adult.

This event is free and can be pre-booked via the website or drop in on the day

Sketch a Gurney Stove – half day workshop with Iain Welch

Friday 25 February, 10 am - 12.30 pm

Join local artist Iain Welch as he leads this half-day workshop to sketch one of the cathedral's stylish and stately Gurney stoves. With contextual historical background provided by Cathedral Archivist, Elizabeth Semper O'Keefe.

VILLAGE PAGES

ST WEONARDS

Do join us at our All Age Services at 10.00am on February Sunday 13 (communion) and 27th.

We hope that everyone had a good Christmas and start to the New Year. We were pleased to welcome many people who came to St Weonards Church to share in the celebration of Christ's birth. For the carol service we enjoyed a full church, the large choir, delicious refreshments and plenty of time to catch up with friends and neighbours. The crib service was popular with families, and as always Anna Williams and her girls had made amazing Christmas biscuits for everyone! Midnight communion with Bishop Richard was a very special occasion and we are grateful that he could come to celebrate for us.

The New Year has brought more complications with the increase in Omicron cases, and the planned baptism is postponed. In view of the increased infections locally, it was also decided to cancel the service of celebration for the Queen's accession where we hoped to have a large choir to sing Handel's 'Zadok the priest'.

However, the All Age Services continue in church on 13th and 27th Feb with the appropriate distancing measures in place. We are looking forward to welcoming again the Rev Tiffany Jackson who will celebrate communion on Feb 13th.

It is interesting to see the building work in the village progressing and the enormous amount of earth moving taking place!

On a very sad note we send our condolences to the Williams family over the tragic death of Rees in a car accident abroad.

Richard Mynors

St Weonards Academy School News

Shining stars pre-school is open. We welcomed our first intake of children during January and they are settling in well. It is lovely to see the pre-school room in use and the play area filled with laughter. Should you know anyone locally looking for a place for their child from the age of 2 years please do let them know about the pre-school at St Weonards and encourage them to get in touch with the school to come and view the wonderful setting we have to offer.

The PTFA are working on plans to hold a Valentines Bingo, many wonderful prizes are being organised and we are very hopeful that we will go ahead on Friday 11th February 2022. Pam Craig, a great supporter of St Weonards, has agreed to be the Bingo caller. Doors Open at 7.00pm, Eyes Down 7.30pm. A warm welcome awaits all.

Please do get in touch with me, **Mrs Anna Williams**, Office Administrator, with any queries regarding the school and pre-school. Tel: 01981 580352 Email: admin@stweonards.hmfa.org.uk

Winter Snow



Our family moved to St Weonards in the 1880s and since then we have accumulated a lot of documents in the form of diaries and account books. I thought I would share on of my own memories, albeit vague, from the 1960's.

I believe it was Boxing Day when it started snowing. My sister and brother-in-law were visiting and decided to return to Hereford before it got worse, which of course it did.

The snow continued overnight, and it caught everyone by surprise, including our pregnant sheep still stuck outside in the fields. My older brothers were going out regularly to check them and bring any which needed shelter into the barn. On one of their trips, they decided to inspect the state of the road through the village. Between the village and Penygate crossroads they spotted something in the snow. It turned out to be a Wye Valley Motors coach from Hereford which I believe had been returning from a panto trip. A group of people were very glad to be rescued!

With roads impassable the community relied on local farmers to ferry goods back and forth. When larger traffic could get into the village, they brought mild and bread and returned churns of milk to the town.

I remember walking along the road, although I was quite small I am sure the snow as level with the hedges. Because we had earth moving machinery we were called out by the council to clear minor roads in the area. In some places, such as Garway Hill, this turned out to be a major task. The foreman for council roads in the area was Derry Dance of Garway. I remember playing outside until I could not feel my fingers and toes, and I would go into the house and stand by the Rayburn until I defrosted. Sometimes I shared the space with orphan lambs in baskets who were being revived.

I believe St Weonards School closed for a while, but we were soon back with the teachers, Mr Humpries and Mrs Crout, who I think had to travel from Longtown. We were so glad of the iron stove which stood in the middle of schoolroom.

I tried to keep this brief but as I wrote more memories came flooding back.

Phil Evans (Phil shared this on Facebook and generously agreed that we could publish it, and it provoked many memories in others too)

GARWAY

Garway Primary School and Pre-school

Another busy term began at Garway with the continued complications of coping with the contagious Omicron variant and staff and pupil absences. However, the pupils have plenty of activities. They planted trees as part of the Queen's Green Canopy Project, thought about E safety and older pupils took part in 'Lego We Do'. Unfortunately, Young Voices had to be cancelled, but much music takes place regularly within school. Parents were able to find out more about how maths is taught in a session with Mrs Eynon, and a useful chart and games to support tables learning ensure that children enjoy their maths! Pre-school have had real challenges with Omicron but they have been busy looking at different modes of transport.

Fiona Mynors

Garway Stitches

This group plan to meet on February 9th and 23rd in the morning at the Community Hall. Come and see the amazing progress and join in as well.

The panels are beautiful and we are all indebted to Tracy Somerville for her vision and skill in making the project so successful.



Garway Spice Girls

Invite you to a

Coffee Morning

In the community hall at 10.15 am on

Tuesday 1st February

Post Office, books to borrow, refills of household products and shampoo etc., good company, and yummy cake

We were really sorry to have to postpone our Big Breakfast as Garway Hall was closed. However, your patience is rewarded. Please join us.

You are invited to

A Big Breakfast Garway Community Centre Sunday 20th February 2022

From 10 am—2 pm or when eggs and bacon run out!

£10.00 Adult (full Garway Experience!) Child under 16 £5.00 Under 5s free Please come and join us for a good fry-up (or just muesli. All money raised will be sent to MSF, Afghanistan to help (in a very small way) those poor people in desperate need.

<https://msf.org.uk/issues/crisis-afghanistan> We are hoping for a well-known pianist to charm us through the morning, but if you would like to join in, do a turn, sing a song, play something - please feel free.

There will be a raffle of course! If you have a spare bottle, box of chocolates, etc we would welcome donations! Look forward to seeing you there.

Liz L and Chris D



FLICKS IN THE STICKS GARWAY

Tuesday February 8th 7.30pm
THE WHISTLERS
Garway Hall, £5.00.

Romanian director Corneliu Porumboiu moves into film noir territory with the tough, twisty, double-dealing comedy thriller *The Whistlers*. Corrupt cop Cristi (Vlad Ivanov) is a member of a Bucharest crime syndicate. He travels to the Canary Island of La Gomera as part of a plan to free a Bucharest businessman who might be the key to uncovering millions in hidden cash. Cristi is taught the art of Silbo, the secret whistling language used by shepherds that sounds like birdsong. But he's not exactly a natural...Constantly under surveillance, never sure who he can trust, Cristi is a marked man whichever way he turns. The film is a bit of a homage to Hitchcock and the Hollywood films of John Ford complete with its own scarlet robed femme fatale. Deadpan, understated and suspenseful this Romanian film pops and cracks with style. As ever we'll be serving our famous Flicks cakes and delish drinks in the interval. And there's more information at www.facebook.com/GarwayFlicks. You can reserve a seat by emailing clarea.hollowash@gmail.com

Dates for your diary in this year's Borderlines Festival at Garway - March 4th *The Courier*.
March 18th *Petite Maman*

Garway Heritage Group

The Garway Heritage Group (GHG) was created to explore the rich and diverse heritage of Garway and the surrounding area and to make its work available to others who may share our interests.

Tuesday, 15th February 7.30 pm, Garway Community Centre, HR2 8RQ
Chris Over

Herefordshire Postcards – an in-depth social history of the collecting and sending of local postcards – saucy, scenic and spectacular. Postcards represent a surprising story of the first social network while marking economic and cultural changes.

Refreshments will be served

NOW ON SALE OUR LATEST PUBLICATION AT £10:-

LOCKDOWN: A Garway Anthology, a compilation of the monthly newsletters from March 2020 - April 2021 will be available for sale at £10 per copy at St Weonards Shop or Broad Oak Garage or contact us at www.garwayheritagegroup.co.uk

If you are already a paid up member of GHG you may attend meetings up to and including April 2022 free of charge. This arrangement is by way of an apology for the cancelled meetings of 2020 and 2021. If you would like to join GHG the annual charge is £10 and you can do so at your first meeting. If you would prefer to attend without becoming a member you will also be welcome at the existing rate of £5 per meeting. GHGmembership@btinternet.com

Date for your Diary!
Garway Coffee Morning in March
Tuesday 1st March at 10.15 am
Come and celebrate St David's Day and
Shrove Tuesday with the Spice Girls' delicious Welsh cakes and pancakes.
Also Post Office, library books etc.

ORCOP

Despite growing concerns about the Omicron mutation of the covid virus, "Orcop Community Carols" went ahead on 19th December, with a congregation of about 30. The limited number did not come as a surprise, given the circumstances, and indeed it facilitated compliance with the regulations, as family groups could easily observe a good distance from others given the ample floor space in the Parish Hall. Feedback from those who attended was very positive. So, firstly, we must thank them for being brave enough to come and support this event. Secondly, sincere thanks go those who volunteered or were coerced into reading. It was a challenging set of readings, ranging from Isaiah the Prophet to Zephaniah the Poet, all delivered with the customary aplomb and respect for custom and the true message of Christmas. Hopefully, this event delivered a dose of "comfort and joy" in difficult times. Thirdly, we must thank Chris for producing such inspiring sounds from the former Ewyas Harold Methodist organ and Liz for delivering the descants – a bit like cream on the Christmas pudding!

The Christmas Day service also went ahead and again we thank those who made this possible and Frances for presiding.

Sadly, the New Year has brought a further tightening of restrictions and concerns about community events and the Orcop service planned for 9th January was cancelled.

A further casualty of the pandemic has been the weekly bell-ringing practice at St. Weonards, ably led by Peter Hallewell. His apprentices include a number of Orcopians, who look forward to the resumption of the Thursday evening sessions as soon as circumstances permit.

Meanwhile, in anticipation of better times, there are exciting stirrings in the pantomime area.....

Margaret Fletcher. Churchwarden

Flowers and Cleaning Rota: Flowers and cleaning for February: Mrs. Dexi Garman

OWL GOOD NEIGHBOURS
First Community Lunch of '22!
Wednesday 2 February at 12.30 for 1.00pm
Orcop Parish Hall

Owl Good Neighbours are pleased to announce the first community lunch of 2022. All the dishes are home made by Owl volunteers who are local people. The lunch is two courses with a drink and costs £8.00 payable on the day. Please let us know if you have specific dietary requirements such as vegetarian or gluten free so that we can accommodate these. Ring Dexi 01981 540268 or Jane 01981 241310.

If you are interested in cooking for the lunch please ring Dexi or Jane. We also welcome volunteers who could help set up the hall or wash-up afterwards. If you require a lift to the lunch, we can usually arrange that as well. Hoping to see you on the day. *Jane Rigler.*

Orcop Neighbourhood Development Plan – Update January 2022

The drop-in event was held on 11 December and NDP Comments forms have been sent to every household. We hope many replies will be received before the end of January in order that we may reflect your views in the Plan which can be seen at the Parish Hall, Fountain Inn and Ross-on-Wye Library. Please look online for further information www.orcopparishcouncil.org or contact Mark Hearne, Orcop Parish Clerk, tel 01981 251887 clerk@orcopparishcouncil.org

TRETIRE WITH MICHAELCHURCH AND PENCOYD

As I write this, we are already past the first week of January, which in some ways is rather sad, as we empty our homes and church buildings of the Christmas decorations and put them all back in their boxes and up in the loft again for another year. But probably plenty of you enjoyed celebrating the coming in of the New Year, with fervent wishes that it proves better than the last and are now back at work or school. Now many of us are trying to keep the new resolutions we made only 10 days ago and wondering how much longer this rampant Omicron will upset our lives.

Memories of Christmas Day are fading fast, but we still have our nativity set up, now hosting three wise men, or kings, (depending on your family tradition), in place of the shepherds. Our set has them very definitely dressed up as Kings, but certainly there is nothing in the Bible to say that they were.

The hand carved wooden set made by the Kentchurch carvers has them as wise men from foreign parts; one a European statesman with suit and briefcase; one as the Dalai Lama and

one as an Ayatollah. They have been on display under the altar at St Weonards Church over Christmas but were taken away this morning.

We owe a huge amount of thanks to Tom and Sarah Vaughan at Pencoyd for once again hosting the outdoors carol singing on Dec 19th, orchestrated by Elizabeth our churchwarden and made possible by many different members of the villages.

The fire pits and large tent protecting the refreshments and the wood for the fires all provided by Nick Snell; the sound systems provided by David Snow and Harry Waymouth; the refreshments by Sarah Vaughan, Kathy Handby and ladies from the villages; and the mulled wine by the Inkin family. This year the nativity story was narrated by Mark Evans, and the cast were James De le Billiere as Angel Gabriel, Alex Inkin as Mary, Charlie Baker as Wise Man, Dorrie Campbell as shepherd and her 2 grandchildren as sheep. And a wonderful crowd of people who sang carols accompanied on a very versatile instrument lent by Elizabeth, which provided gentle piano accompaniment for quieter carols such as *Silent Night* and *Away in a Manger* but sprang into cathedral organ mode for *Hark the Herald* and *O Come all ye faithful*.

Not quite so many people attended this year due to the cold and damp weather which kept some of our older regulars at home. We missed them, but it was lovely to see a number of families, and even some visitors to the area.

It was so good to be able to celebrate Christmas together in this way, in spite of Covid doing its best to keep us apart.

Pencoyd church was looking very festive with all the windows decked in variegated greenery and candles, when several of us met again on Christmas Day at Pencoyd church for a service of Holy Communion led for us by Rev Brian Phillips, a retired clergyman from Ross on Wye who has taken a number of services in both our churches over the years. About 40 people attended the service including a number of children, and we were able to put into use for the first time, a splendid clavivona donated to the church by the Snow family which greatly enhanced our singing. We are so grateful to the Snows for giving us such a beautiful instrument as a permanent fixture in our church, which we have lacked for a considerable time.

We also need to say a special thank you to Rev Phillips who came to our church that morning having already taken a service at Midnight elsewhere.

What some of you may not realise is that Brian Phillips is also the name behind "Pastorprint" which those of you who take the monthly magazine regularly will have seen on the back of it. Brian took up printing when he retired and has been printing our "Parish News" for over 20 years! He has declared himself very willing to come and lead more services in our churches in this time of scarcity of clergy, which is welcome news indeed! I'm sure you will all make him very welcome at Tretire or Pencoyd.

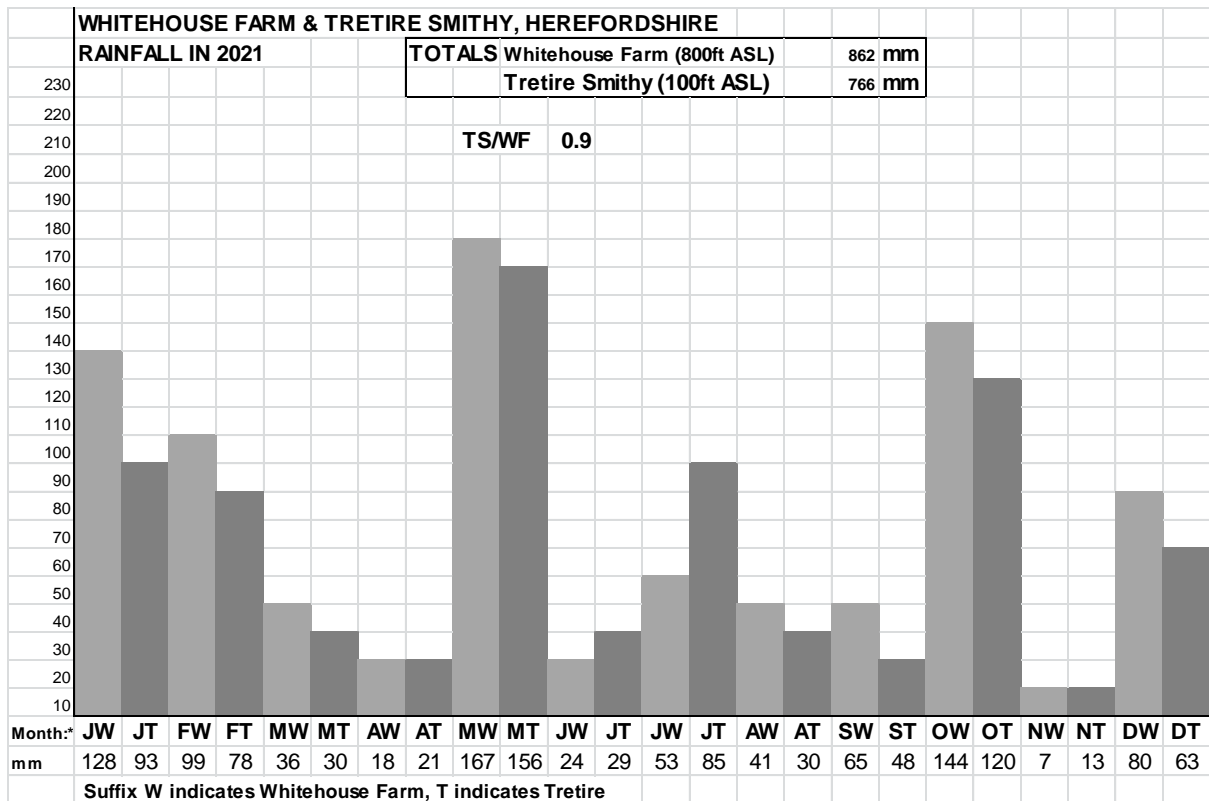
Margaret Oubridge

RAINFALL IN 2021 – An upside-down year

As for the past nine years, this commentary is based on records from Whitehouse Farm (on the southern rim of the Orcop Basin at about 800ft elevation) and those kindly provided by John Oubridge for Tretire Smithy (Elevation about 100ft). The two sets of monthly totals are summarised on the bar chart below. I have records for Whitehouse Farm from 2009 to 2021. The average rainfall over this 13 year period is 939mm.

After two very wet years, the 2021 total rainfall of 862mm is about 10% below average. Whilst the year was not remarkable in terms of the annual total, it certainly was in terms of monthly and seasonal variability. After 128mm in January, there was a monthly decline until a very dry April, when less than 20mm was recorded. This was followed by an extraordinarily wet May, with a total of 167mm. From June to September the monthly totals were around 50mm, but this period was followed by another wet month in October, with 144mm recorded. There followed an extraordinarily dry November, totalling only 7mm. Thankfully, there were no extreme rainfall events leading to serious flooding, such as occurred in 2019 and 2020 and hardly any of the precipitation fell as snow. The most notable feature of the 2021 record is probably the reversal of seasonal expectations, in that the wettest month by far was May and the driest by far was November.

As usual, it is interesting to compare the Whitehouse Farm and Tretire records. In 2021 there was again good agreement between the two. They followed a similar pattern with the Tretire annual total about 90% of that recorded at Whitehouse Farm. The monthly totals for Tretire were consistently close to or significantly lower than those for Whitehouse Farm, except in the summer months of June and July, when they were probably influenced by heavy local showers.



Peter Garratt (with acknowledgement of the data kindly provided by John Oubridge)

Wildlife in our Garden

The species count is going up. There are all our regulars, many blue tits, chaffinches and sparrows, several great tits and blackbirds, a pair of jays, a pair of woodpeckers, Percy the cock pheasant; to which we can now add three magpies, a collar dove and a moorhen. They all congregate on or around the feeding area each morning. The nuthatch, the wren and the dunnocks are only occasionally seen.

The male chaffinch we called Scruff is now easier to identify again. Many of his feathers just won't lie down. In all other respects though, he seems quite normal.



We are very interested to see, this winter, that both male and female woodpeckers are behaving in the same way, in that after one of them has seized a nut from the feeder, it flies up to the same fork in the hazel branch where it lodges the nut in order to peck at it. Last winter we thought it was only the female behaving like this. Has the male learned from his mate?

Whatever were they thinking, the person who gave the moorhen its name? Of course, we don't know whether the one that visits us is male or female, but if it is male, what are we to call it? The cock moorhen? Or the moorcock? Surely not!

We have noticed how easily a pecking order is established between the birds of each species. The chaffinches give way to the robin who gives way to the blackbirds. The blue tits give way to the great tits, etc. Very rarely is there any sign of aggression, let alone fighting. Evolution in this case seems to have favoured peaceful co-existence.

Finally, the squirrels: Scratty, the one with the flaccid tail, has quite a lot of fur on it, but its tail is never bushy. It lies down, bedraggled and dirty, as he or she drags it through the wet and the mud. It must be quite heavy and sometimes quite an encumbrance. Even so, Scratty is still successfully chasing other squirrels off his feeding area under the seeds.

John Oubridge 8th January 2022

TOMATOE

(Tale of malfunction at the opera ending)



This is the true story of a disaster that befell Cesare Siepi, as he played Don Giovanni at the Vienna State Opera in 1958.

In the final act, Don Giovanni descends into the underworld amidst whirling clouds of smoke. In this performance, this was accomplished by his standing on a stage-lift, upon which he was supposed to

disappear from view. However, on this occasion the lift stuck half-way down, so that the audience could still see him from the shoulders upwards. The stage technicians duly brought him back up again. Siepi was not one to admit defeat, so he ordered the lift operator to try again, with the same result as the previous attempt.

The audience was naturally stunned into a shocked silence, until a single voice rang out, in Italian.

“Oh my God, how wonderful – Hell is full!” *Acknowledgement: Great Operatic Disasters by Hugh Vickers, 1979.*

Peter Garratt.

Book Review

***The Land of Spices* by Kate O'Brien**

Irish author Kate O'Brien was a controversial figure in her lifetime (1897 – 1974) and some of her books, including *The Land of Spices*, were banned in her native country.

This beautifully written book follows the school life of Anna Murphy, the youngest ever boarder in an Irish catholic convent school. Anna slowly finds herself in an unspoken allegiance with the Mother Superior, Helen, who sees something of her former self in Anna. One pivotal incident, expressed in just one line in the book, caused Helen to turn her back on her contented bucolic home life, close up her heart and devote her life to God. That one line resulted in this book being banned. Just one line.

Turning her energies, sharp intelligence and political acumen into making a success of convent life, she speedily rises through the ranks in posts all around Europe before the final accolade of Mother Superior of an Irish convent.

Anna enters Helen's life at the point where, despite her high status, she is calling her vocation into question, doubting her faith and struggling to tolerate the inevitable pettiness and bickering that are so central to the enclosed life. Anna, unknowingly, steadily erodes her formal exterior and Helen feels *“a storm break in her hollow heart.”*

Anna herself is intelligent, poetic, solemn, and somewhat detached from and puzzled by the girlish cliques around her. She is conscious of Helen observing her from a distance, following her progress and gently protecting her, but does not know how to respond to this.

Land of Spices has long been my favourite book and I have returned to it many times over the years. It is hard to pin down its appeal. It is a joy to read - subtle and beautifully constructed - and it gently explores the distant and very proper, but deep, relationship between the two main characters. It skillfully evokes the milieu of the convent with its snobbery and kowtowing to rich middle-class parents; subservience to the local priests who greedily exploit their power; and the sheer bitchery and petty cruelty of some of the nuns, who mercilessly wield their power over the schoolgirls in their care.

Perhaps its appeal is that the convent is a microcosm of society, illuminating the complex tangle of human relationships that makes up every culture. Ambition, frustration, greed, pettiness, sorrow, fear, anger – it is all there – alongside human determination, kindness, intelligence, respect, patience and the triumph of the human spirit.

I cannot recommend this book too highly.

Hilary Smallwood

Garden Notes

One of the Christmas cards I received from an old work colleague, included a note asking about my garden, saying, 'I always remember how full of flowers you have it'. I do indeed always make sure that the garden is chock full of flowers for the bees, butterflies and other insects in the summer, but looking around the garden now in January, I am wondering if I can add more early flowering plants for when the insects all start to become active again. By the time migratory butterflies such as the Red Admiral and the Painted Lady start arriving in April building to a peak in May and June, there will be a great variety of plants in flower to satisfy their hunger. However, it is the insects who will be stirring before then that I am concerned about now.



With milder winters, bees are more active and need many more winter-flowering plants to sustain them. Here we have shrubs such as mahonias and the winter-flowering honeysuckle (the one that I threatened to remove about five years ago because I hated its untidiness but I am quite glad I didn't now). Last summer I grew some hellebores from seed which will be appreciated by the first queen bumblebees to appear. Other insects such as hoverflies, butterflies and solitary bees will also be hungry when they emerge from hibernation, some as early as February. For the very earliest bees, bulbs like snowdrops and winter aconite are invaluable. We have only a small clump of snowdrops and a handful of winter aconites. Now is the time to buy them in the green and get them planted so I will be placing an order for those very soon. Even though we are surrounded by bluebells on the Common, I plan to plant bluebells in the garden too.

Nectar provides bees with sugar and the pollen provides protein and fats. Crocuses are both pollen and nectar rich and I am ashamed to say that we only have a few *Crocus* 'Ruby Giant'. That is the first thing I will rectify when it comes to bulb planting time next autumn. Bees and insects seem to be drawn to purple ones so I will be adding more 'Ruby Giant' - such a lovely one which, despite the name, has glorious deep purple flowers. *Crocus tommasinianus* is another good one, so I will add some of those too.



The Bowles' Mauve perennial wallflower is very useful too, flowering from as early as February right through until October. I had a lovely group of three of them but as they only last a few years before they flower themselves to death they are long gone. The Small Tortoiseshell, Comma and Peacock butterflies will be drawn to these when they emerge from hibernation so I will be looking out for new plants arriving in the garden centres. I adore primroses and there are many in this garden, not just the wild primroses but also in pink, red and purple. Other flowers loved by the bees are honesty, sweet rocket and forget-me-nots which I allow to seed all around the garden in their hundreds. Heathers are good too, although we don't have the right soil to grow them here.

And of course there are the early flowering fruit trees – in this garden, damson, apple and pear trees. And not forgetting our beautiful broom plants, the pulmonaria and bugle. I suppose I could plant a flowering redcurrant, one of the smaller pussy willows, some dead-nettles... I could go on...

Julie Davies

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Lentil Gratin Recipe



By popular request I have included this vegetarian recipe which meat eaters enjoy too.

For 6/8 people.

300g Le Puy Lentils

25g butter or oil

2 carrots or other root veg chopped or grated. (I use parsnip and or celeriac)

150ml cream (I often leave this out)

175-225g strong cheese grated

2 onions, chopped

Salt and pepper

1 leek, chopped. (Celery works as well for a bit more crunch)

25 g walnuts. Chopped roughly.

- Preheat oven 350F/180C
- Cook lentils slowly in water until soft (about 30 mins) or use packet of pre-cooked.
- While waiting gently sweat/fry veg in butter.
- Add lentils when cooked, cream and half cheese. Mix, season. Transfer to oven proof dish.
- Put mixture in and top with walnuts and cheese.
- Bake for about 20 minutes until bubbling.
- This freezes really well.

Serve with some green veg or as side with roast meat.

Fiona Mynors

Chuckle Corner

Christmas cracker jokes are a fruitful source of humour- I can almost hear the groans!

What type of athlete is warmest in winter? A long Jumper

What happened when the comedian entered 10 puns in a pun contest hoping one would win? No pun in ten did.

What did the sea say to Santa? Nothing it just waved.

What type of key do you need for a nativity play? A don-key.

What do they sing at a snowman's birthday party? Freeze a jolly good fellow.

And a couple of random oddments.

One of the functions of marriage is to train its subjects to become carers.

I am white and I am old. I am a man married to a woman. I voted for Brexit. I am a Christian. Is that the woke tumbrel I hear approaching?

There are three states of misery: sickness, fasting and travel (Eastern Proverb)

What do camels store in their humps? Fat.....no not water!

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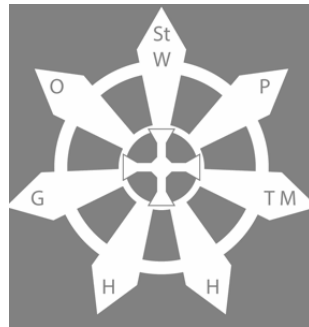


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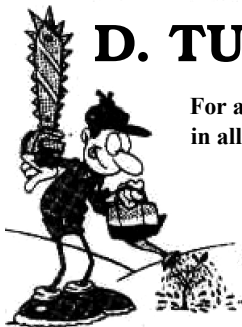
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Advertisers index

<u>Advertiser</u>	<u>page</u>	<u>Advertiser</u>	<u>page</u>
A & G Machinery Services	2	Gary the Gardener	10
Advance Joinery	3	Geolec Electrician Services	3
Aquassist	6	Gerald Benjamin	
Beyond the Clouds	18	(Electrical Services)	16
Bill McGinley (Maths Tutoring).....	17	Gleam Clean	18
Brian Colwell.....	3	Golden Valley Construction	21
Broad Oak Garage	8	Golden Valley Funeral Services.....	1
Catherine King	5	Golden Valley Tree Services	17
Certainlywood	19	Greenleaf Architecture	23
Cherished Funerals	23	Hereford Coatings.....	15
Chips Away.....	19	Hillman's Florist.....	16
Chris Strange		Hollow Ash	19
(Building & Carpentry)	12	Home Choice Flooring	2
Coley's	15	Inti Electrical Solutions.....	7
Colin (Garden Maintenance).....	9	Iyengar Yoga	14
Colin Beaumont-Russell		J P Mower Services	17
(Builder - Maintenance)	16	Jane Bovell (Singing Lessons).....	17
Computer Solutions	9	Jo Song APNT	
Creative Kinesiology	5	(Therapeutic Massage).....	13
D Tugwell Tree Services.....	10	Jon Winder (Chimney Sweep)	19
Deborah Cronshaw.....	11	Josephine Robey Therapies	18
Dennis Walker & Son		Julie Ablett Homeopathy	16
(Tree Services)	13	Kelsmor Dairy	7
Ethan Mitchell Tech Support.....	5	Lanyon Bowdler Solicitors.....	5
F R Ball Insurance	4	Leabrink Quails	24
FarmFlock.....	13	Llama Trekking	1
Feet First	16	Lynne Bradley (Piano Lessons)	17
Fiona Furnishings	9	Mark Serle (Tools)	17
Frameworks	24	Martin Honeyman Decorations	1
Franklin Plumbing & Heating	3	N R Evans & Co.....	5
Garway Hall & Community Centre	13	Nigel Payne (Tree Pruning)	10
Garway Pre-school	4		

(Continued on page 26)

Advertisers index *(continued)*

Advertiser	page	Advertiser	page
<i>(Continued from page 25)</i>			
Oldfield Forge.....	3	Snooky the Sweep.....	14
Orcop Parish Hall.....	10	South Herefordshire Dowsers.....	1
Oven Wizards.....	24	St Weonards Village Hall.....	2
Owl Good Neighbour.....	21	Stephen Williams.....	1
P G M & Son.....	11	Tony Webb Services.....	9
Parr Plumbing & Heating Services.....	7	Vivien Ray craniosacral therapy.....	1
Paul Ackerman (Carpenter).....	14	Wellington Consulting.....	11
Pengethley Farm Shop.....	12	Williams Dental Care.....	22
Physio and Health Matters.....	22	Woodcut Tree Surgery.....	14
Powells Land & Estate Agents.....	20	Wormelow Filling Station.....	8
Rob Evans (Hedge cutting).....	23	Wye Electrical Services.....	5
Ryeland (Rural Bookkeeping).....	19	Wye Valley Group.....	6
Sarah L Hope (Osteopath).....	19	Yogaskies.....	24
Shire Lawns.....	12	<i>for Advertisers Services index see ...p28</i>	

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Index of Advertisers' Services

<i>Advertisers name index see p25</i>	Hedge cutting	13,23
Agas, heating & plumbing services	Ice Cream & Milk	7
Architectural services.....	Insurance services.....	4
Blacksmith	Kindling.....	19
Bookkeeping & accountants	Lawn Care	12
.....	Llama Trekking	1
.....	Legal Services	5
Builders & decorators .	Machinery services	2,17
Car sales and repairs	Maths tutoring.....	17
Carpentry.....	Oven cleaning.....	24
Coatings	Owl Community Support.....	21
Computing	Pest Control services.....	11
Counselling.....	Picture Framing	24
Dentist	Piano lessons	17
Dowsing.....	Pre-school/Toddler	4
Electricians	Quails eggs.....	24
Estate Agents	Septic Tank emptying	6
Farm shop	Shepherding services	13
Firewood.....	Singing lessons.....	5,17
Fitness	Skip Hire, recycling etc	6
Flooring.....	Small bale hay	19
Florist.....	Soft furnishings.....	9
Foot care	Sweeps.....	14,19
Fruit juice	Tools.....	17
Funeral services	Tree services	1,10,13,14,17
Garages.....	Window cleaning.....	18
Gardening.....	Village Halls & Community Centres	2,10,13
Groundwork	Yoga	14,25
Health		