

PARISH NEWS

OF

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

MARCH 2022



PAT MACRAE

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HEREFORDSHIRE COUNCILLORS

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		office hours 01981 540721
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Samaritans

National Helpline	08457 909090
Hereford	116 123 free calls
.....0330 094 5717 local call rates apply	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 your 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**:

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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
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Herefordshire
HR2 8EZ
01981 240032
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Dear Readers

You will be reading this on or about the 1st of March, which is St David's Day, the patron saint of Wales. When my little Welsh nieces were at primary school, 20 years ago, they always had to be dressed up in traditional Welsh costume for the day, complete with tall black hat and apron. Back then, it was always in doubt as to whether the daffodils, national flower of Wales, would be in flower in time to be worn as part of the celebrations. In the first week of February this year, my family and I had a few days' holiday in South Wales and saw daffodils in all their sunshine glory at every turn. It was lovely to see them, and to feel that maybe the worst of the winter is over. But at the same time, it is worrying. Recently, a Cambridge research time reported that plants in the UK are coming into flower up to a month earlier than in past years. This is of concern in case a late frost kills blossom and prevents plants from setting fruit, for example, endangering farmers' livelihoods and our food sources. Even more importantly, it may create an 'ecological mismatch', where host plants, and the insect and bird life which they normally support, fall out of time with each other, so that there is nothing for the creatures to eat when they need it most. This could result in entire species being at risk if they are not able to adapt rapidly enough. Great efforts are being made by our government, and by the energy industry to limit the extent of global warming, but it is up to us to all do our best to help. Although we may individually feel powerless to make a difference, if we all turn the heating down, put on another jumper, economise on car journeys and air travel, we can make a difference. St David was famous for his asceticism, and living in a very simple manner. When he came to the end of his life, he is remembered for saying this: 'Be joyful, keep your faith, and do the little things you have seen me do.' Perhaps we can all do those little things, and it will help to make a difference to our world. **Frances**

March Benefice Service

Our February benefice service is at 10am on Sunday March 6th 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 franjphillips@gmail.com

Do join us.

Frances

LENT LUNCHES

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. 12 Noon - 2.00pm

March 9th: Hoarwithy, Charity Care 4 Calais supports refugees across Europe

March 16th: St Weonards, The Dower House, Treago HR3 8QB

March 23rd Orcop Village Hall

April 6th: Garway Community Hall

YOUR MAGAZINE, HOW IT WORKS AND HOW TO PAY

Firstly, a big thank you to those subscribers who have already paid and a gentle reminder to those who have yet to do so.

There are three ways to pay:

1. By cash payment handed or delivered to your distributor.
2. By cheque, payable to "**St. Weonards Group Magazine**" handed or delivered to your distributor.
3. By BACS transfer from your bank account. This payment method has gained favour during the pandemic and it works well. The account details needed for this form of payment are as follows:

Account Name: St. Weonards Group Magazine

Sort Code: 20-00-85

Account number: 70786276

If you chose to pay via BACS, please enter your surname as the reference.

Many have already paid, which enables us now to make grants as follows, totalling £2000, from the 2021 profit: Dore Community Transport £600, Garway School £150, Garway Youth Group £150, Archenfield Arts £100. Under the magazine constitution, 50% of the annual profit goes to the St. Weonards Benefice (£1000).

The monthly process of compilation, editing, word processing, printing, binding and distribution is fairly complex, but it runs smoothly (usually!) and it is appropriate to acknowledge the efforts of all involved and thank them for ensuring that your copy reaches you each month. The distributors deserve particular mention, as they receive no boot allowance (or any remuneration at all!) but are out each month, whatever the weather. Apart from subscriptions, the magazine relies for its profitability on advertising. Those who manage the process of promoting the advertising, placing the adverts and processing the revenue also deserve our thanks. I have deliberately avoided naming the individuals involved, for there are many, and most will be known to our subscribers already, so I shall avoid the risk of leaving anyone out!

Our magazine is an important community asset and we are fortunate to have a dedicated team to ensure its continued success.

Peter Garratt, Treasurer

About the lovely cover picture

I've seen and heard quite a few dippers lately, as I visit the river frequently to do my 'citizen science' water monitoring. I'm pleased that the dippers are common on the Monnow, as it's an indicator that the river is still in good health. Their sparkling colouration and constant dipping can make them hard to spot against the flashing movements of the water. Their song, too, is like the lively chattering of water splashing and breaking over pebbles and rocks. **Pat Macrae**

PRESCRIPTION COLLECTION



March 1st Tony Philips 07971 550859

Service Rota

For any changes please check the benefice website www.stw.org.uk

March Services

2 March	10.30am	Much Birch Church - Ash Wednesday Service
6 March	10.00 am	Zoom Benefice - Family Communion
13 March	10.00 am	St Weonards - All Age Communion and baptism
	11.00 am	Orcop - Holy Communion
20 March	10.00 am	Hoarwithy - Holy Communion
27 March	09.15 am	Hentland - Holy Communion
	10.00am	St Weonards - All Age Service
	06.30 pm	Tretire - Evening Service
2 April	10.00am	Zoom Benefice Family Communion

For enquiries about baptisms, weddings or funeral services, please contact the relevant churchwarden or Rev Dr 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 10am on 1st Sunday: franiphillips@gmail.com

Iona-style service on 2nd Sunday: peter@pember.plus.com

Evening prayer at 6.30pm on 4th Sunday: elizabethamalcolm@outlook.com

Hereford Cathedral Events in March

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

Lockdown with Bach

Friday 4, Tuesday 8, Tuesday 15, Thursday 17, Tuesday 22 & Tuesday 29 March, 1.15pm

Hereford Cathedral's Assistant Director of Music Peter Dyke, will give six short recitals from Book 2 of Bach's 48 Preludes and Fugues on the grand piano in College Hall

Tickets cost £5 per recital via the cathedral website: www.herefordcathedral.org/Event/lockdown-with-bach

Living in Love & Faith - One day course led by Revd Canon Chris Pullin 5 March, 11am- 4pm

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**

Chorister Open Morning: Saturday 12 March, 10 to 11am (with registration from 9.30 am)

The Chorister Open Morning will give children and their families an opportunity to learn about the life of a cathedral chorister, meet members of the cathedral's music department and hear the choristers sing. Places at the open morning are free of charge but advance booking is essential.

To register for a place, or for further information, please call Geraint Bowen on 01432 374 238 or email organist@herefordcathedral.org

Medieval Colour Talk by Dr Rosemary Firman, Wednesday 16 March, 7pm

Today we live in a world which is saturated with colour, but in medieval times colour was a luxury and its production labour intensive and expensive. There are still traces of medieval colour in the cathedral, but it is in the pages of illuminated manuscripts that the colours still blaze.

Tickets cost £10 and can be purchased via the cathedral website: www.herefordcathedral.org/Event/medieval-colour2022 or by calling 01432 374 225/6

Stitch from History - full day textile workshop Friday 18 March, 10am – 4pm

Taking inspiration from the objects and designs in the current exhibition 'All Things Bright', make a brooch, a bag charm or other accessory using your choice of threads, fabrics and embellishments.

Tickets cost £50 and can be purchased via the cathedral website: www.herefordcathedral.org/Event/stitch-from-history or by calling 01432 374 225/6

Spring Garden Opening Friday 25 March, 10am – 3pm

Explore the beautiful gardens of the cathedral and see all of the hard work that has been undertaken by our volunteer gardeners before the gardens officially open for our summer tours and events.

Tickets cost £5 and can be purchased via the cathedral website: www.herefordcathedral.org/Event/spring-garden-opening2022

Medieval Bookbinding Talk by Arthur Green, Wednesday 30 March, 7pm

Local book conservator and bookbinder Arthur Green will talk about his work and the training that formed the foundation of his current practice. He will bring examples of his work to explain the craft and its historic context.

Tickets cost £10 and can be purchased via the cathedral website: www.herefordcathedral.org/Event/medieval-bookbinding or by calling 01432 374 225/6

VILLAGE PAGES

ST WEONARDS

We continue to hold services in church twice a month and enjoy sharing fellowship and singing. Do join us at our All Age Services at 10.00am on Sunday 13 (communion and baptism) and 27th March.

We are delighted that Bishop Richard will celebrate communion on Sunday 13th March at 10.00am. We are also pleased that he will be baptising Charlotte Nicholls, and we look forward to welcoming her family on this special occasion.

Lent Lunch

We will be hosting a Lent Lunch, a simple meal of soup and cheese, at the Dower House, St Weonards on Wednesday 16th March from 12.00 to 2.00. Donations this year will go to MSF-Afghanistan and Hereford Food Bank.

Food Bank Donations

As the pressure on food banks increases with the rising cost of living, we will be collecting donations for Hereford Food Bank in church. Please put goods, toiletries etc in the box in church which we will deliver each month.

Richard Mynors

St Weonards Academy School News

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

GARWAY

Garway Service

On Sunday, 20th March at 10am, it will be Garway's turn to host the church service.

We will be thinking about and celebrating the role of women in our society, as mothers, grandmothers, daughters and community-builders.

Do come and celebrate and have a good sing!

Frances

Garway Primary School and Pre-school

Life at school has been complicated with staff and pupil absences because of covid. However, everyone has worked extremely hard to ensure that the pupils continue to benefit from the many opportunities to learn and activities to add breadth to their experiences. As part of the Queen's Green Canopy Project, pupils planted trees with the assistance of Deputy Lieutenants Tamsin Clive and Kay Garlick.

The annual focus on keeping safe online focused on 'All fun and games? Exploring respect and relationships online'. This day is celebrated globally each year to promote the safe and positive use of digital technology for children and young people, and to inspire a national conversation about using technology responsibly, respectfully, critically, and creatively. ***Fiona Mynors***



Aged 16 –24?



**Claiming Universal Credit?
Enjoy working with
children?**

Garway School would like to give you the chance to gain valuable work experience, and to share in the work of this happy school community.

At the same time there will be training to provide you with new skills that will help your career.

Talk to your Work Coach at the Job Centre or follow these links:

Early Years

Teaching Assistant <https://findajob.dwp.gov.uk/details/8057721>

Reading Champion <https://findajob.dwp.gov.uk/details/8057722>



Spring on the Common

28th April 1.30 - 3.30pm



Come along and explore wildlife as we celebrate the spring and attempt to record as many species as we can in 2 hours. In collaboration with Garway Primary School we will be looking for spring flowers, trees, spiders, ants, snails, birds, mammals and much more. We will have all the equipment you need – just bring yourself for whatever time you can spare. Refreshments will be provided by the ‘Spice Girls’

To book or for more info tim@clan-cic.org

www.hbrc.org.uk

Come and try your luck!

April 1st 2022

Garway Hall

7.30pm



Garway Stitches

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

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. Refills from Hopes of Longtown Everyone welcome—men allowed!!!

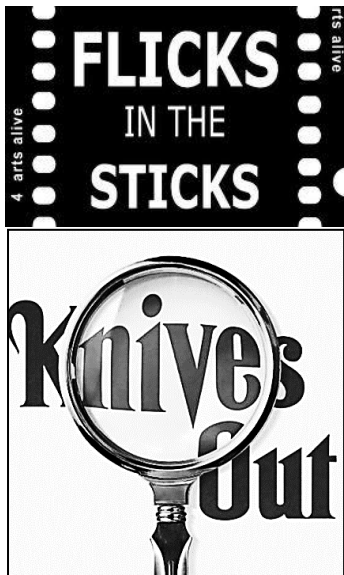
Britain's biggest rural film festival comes to Garway Hall this March with two unmissable films.

On **Friday March 4th** we will be showing **The Courier** which

Stars Benedict Cumberbatch in the true story of a British businessman unwittingly recruited into one of the greatest international conflicts in history. Forming an unlikely partnership with a Soviet officer hoping to prevent a nuclear confrontation, the two men work together to provide the crucial intelligence used to defuse the Cuban Missile Crisis. "A damn good explosively, explosively tense story" **The Spectator**.

And on **Friday March 18th** we have **Petite Maman**, an acclaimed French film which **The Guardian** called an "astonishingly insightful and heartbreakingly hopeful cinematic poem" – a lyrical modern-day fable about healing intergenerational wounds with just a touch of Back to the Future type time travel. It got five stars from critics and is simply unmissable.

Both films start at 7.30pm. Tickets £5.00 can be reserved on 01432 340555 or at the Borderlines website www.borderlinesfilmfestival.co.uk. Top class refreshments will be served! Including our cakes which are now famed far and wide!!



TUESDAY MARCH 8TH 7.30PM GARWAY HALL £5.00

Whodunnit or Howdunnit, *Knives Out* is our April choice for Flicks in the Sticks with a stellar cast having great fun romping through this country house murder mystery which somehow manages to send up the clichés of the genre whilst at the same time keeping the audience guessing with a stylish, razor-sharp plot - complete with surprise ending. When best-selling crime author Harlan Thrombey (Christopher Plummer), is found dead the day after his 85th birthday party, he leaves a house full of dysfunctional, devious, twisted or just plain eccentric family members. Cue the arrival of the none-too-normal amateur detective, Benoit Blanc, (Daniel Craig), who delights in the cynical bunch of possible murderers he's got within his grasp. And since the family mansion is dominated by an artwork made of 100 lethal knives, you can guess how well they all get on. "As smart, witty, stylish and exhilarating as any movie-lover would wish for" said the Guardian film critic, and we agree. We'll be on hand with cakes, wine, teas, coffee for the interval. More information and a fun trailer on www.facebook.com/GarwayFlicks.

GARWAY HERITAGE GROUP

Tuesday 15th March at 7.30pm, Garway Hall HR2 8RG

Dr Ann Benson

Ann, a published author and lecturer on gardens and the UK's architectural history specialises in the Tudor and Stuart periods. She will bring a fascinating, surprising and rather startling insight into the history of Raglan Castle and its secrets. Come and be surprised!

Lockdown – An anthology of newsletters produced by Garway Heritage Group during Covid lockdowns 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 GHGmembership@btinternet.com

ORCOP

On 9th February the Orcop Parochial Church Council (PCC) met for the first time since June 2021. The main item for discussion was the future of Orcop Church, in the absence of an incumbent vicar. We have been fortunate in recent months in being able to resume 11am communion services on the second Sunday of each month, thanks to Bishop Anthony Priddis and the Revd Crispin Pemberton kindly agreeing, on a temporary basis, to take these services. The regular congregation attending these services was in decline before the pandemic, which has hastened this process to the point where it is rare for the congregation to reach double figures. This is not a sustainable situation. The current arrangements will continue for the time being but will end in the coming months and we do not anticipate the appointment of a new vicar. The Diocese is undertaking a consultation process on reorganisation, but it will be some time before the outcome of their deliberations is known. Meanwhile, the PCC has an outline proposal as to how we might proceed, and the intention is to seek the views of all parishioners on this before putting it to the Diocese. **A letter will be circulated in the coming weeks inviting your views on the future of your church.**

We recently received, via the Parish Council, an enquiry from one Kurtis Gale, whose Great Grandfather's brother, George Benjamin Gale, was a school master at Orcop School. He was seeking any light we could throw on this item of family history. He died in 1923, aged only 33. Not only were we able to identify his grave in Orcop Churchyard, but we also have in the church a stone plaque that was erected in his memory by his grateful students. This was rescued from the school when it was converted for residential use and has been in the church since then. Photos of both the grave and the plaque were sent to Kurtis.

Margaret Fletcher, Churchwarden



ORCOP LENT LUNCH

Wednesday 23rd March 12.00 to 2pm: Orcop Parish Hall

Donations will go to Medecins sans Frontieres (Doctors without Borders) to support their vital work in Afghanistan

Come and enjoy a simple lunch with convivial company and donate to this excellent charity

Flowers and cleaning for March: Mrs A Morris.

Advance Notice: Orcop Churchyard Bingo

Friday 29th April 2022

At Orcop Parish Hall

Doors open 7pm, Eyes down 7.30pm

Everyone welcome

If anyone would like to donate to the evening
please contact Julia Garlick tel 01981 580515

TRETIRE WITH MICHAELCHURCH AND PENCLOYD

Services on the first Sunday of the month have continued to be held on Zoom by Frances Phillips and are always well attended. But cautiously, we are returning to holding other services in our churches, and on January 20th, Rev. Mark Johnson kindly agreed to lead a service of Evening Prayer at St Mary's Tretire. We did wear our face masks, and there was no singing, but Mark provided music on his phone at various points during the service. It was so good to share worship together in that familiar setting, with some small degree of normality. The church was looking beautifully clean after a small band of ladies had tackled it the previous day. The task has become considerably easier since the roof was repaired, and there are no longer falls of plaster every time a wind gets up!

At our PCC meeting on Feb 1st, it was decided that we would continue to muster a team of cleaners for St Mary's before future services, as it made the task far less onerous than it has been for single person in the past. So, on the premise that "many hands make light work" and do cut down the cleaning time dramatically, if any of our villagers would like to offer help on a cleaning team in the future, do please contact Elizabeth Malcolm on 01989730201 or me on 01981580233. We would most appreciate your help. We will however, continue to keep the flower arranging rota as it is at Tretire. Even though our services are less frequent, I am assured by relatives visiting family graves in our churchyard that they do often slip into the church afterwards and really appreciate seeing fresh flowers in there.

At the PCC meeting it was also agreed that, as there would not be a Palm Sunday walk in the St Weonards Benefice this year, those who would like to may join parishioners from the Wormelow 100 Group on a walk on Palm Sunday from Pencoyd to Llanwarne, led by Rev Mark Johnson. The walk begins at Pencoyd church after a short service at 10.00, when palm crosses would be blessed and distributed. There would be a couple of stops on the route to Llanwarne where a hymn will be sung, and the expected arrival time at Llanwarne is 11.00 am. There will then be a service of Holy Communion at Llanwarne church. I understand that lunch will

be served at Llanwarne Church Hall after the service, but people will need to book for that. Details of that will be in the Wormelow 100 magazine.

Well behaved dogs will be welcome on the walk, and Rev Mark will welcome them in the church. It is hoped that a couple of Shetland ponies may accompany the walk in lieu of a donkey!

If anyone feels they can only manage the walk one way, there will be some transport back to Pencoyd. If you would like to take advantage of that, or would be able to offer transport yourself, please let Elizabeth know.

If you have time to take a detour to Tretire church in the next week or so, the snowdrops are an absolute picture, and we will soon be moving into primrose time, again worth a detour. Before we know it, it will be time to start mowing again! We are so fortunate at Tretire to have a dedicated band of ladies who clean the inside, and a willing gang of mowers and strimmers for the churchyard. I'm sure I speak for all those of us who attend services there when I say how much we appreciate the upkeep of both church and churchyard and thank you all very much.

I spent a very happy morning with Sue Pope over at Fownhope a couple of weeks ago, and she asked to be remembered to all her friends and acquaintances at Tretire and Pencoyd. **Meg Oubridge**

HENTLAND AND HOARWITHY

Hoarwithy Vision



The view without Cedar Rise.

Following completion of our purchase of Cedar Rise on 26th November we have been working hard to progress our vision by setting up the following community groups to help the PCC with all that has to be done:

- a) maintaining and reviewing letting options of the bungalow in the short term,
- b) creating disabled access to the church,
- c) funding (grants) and fund raising,
- d) publicity.

We have already engaged our church architect to draw up plans to submit for pre-planning advice for the disabled access, and we are meeting with Laura Theophilus and Wendy Combey from the diocese to pick their brains. Work is going on in the bungalow to enable it to be let,

We had an open day on 29th January which generated much interest and useful discussion.

There are many hoops to jump through, but as you can see, we are working on it. There is a lot to do and if you would like to join one of the groups, please let Jeff or Peter know. **Peter** and **Jeff**, Churchwardens

Dates for your Diary:

On Palm Sunday, 10th April, there is the Pax Service at Hentland, when we all assemble at the lychgate and process to church, singing Ride on, ride on in majesty, to the playing of a trumpet, pausing for a prayer to the churchyard cross, to take our places in church for a service of Evensong. After the service, the Pax cakes will be distributed with the shaking of hands with the greeting 'Peace and good neighbourhood!'. The service starts at 5pm.

On Wednesday 13th, at St Catherine's Hoarwithy, we shall once again be holding our Holy Week Concert. The principal work will be Pergolesi's wonderful *Stabat Mater*, presented by our old friends The Musical and Amicable Society, with soloists and other works to be announced in the April issue. The Musical and Amicables are an early music group, playing period instruments at baroque pitch. Tickets are £20, with up to 2 children under 18 free, obtainable at the New Harp Inn, Hoarwithy, and by email from robin.symonds@btinternet.com or telephone 01989 730439, or on the door.

The Musical and Amicables will have been in Ross the previous Saturday, 9th April, performing Handel's *Messiah* with Ross Choral Society with professional soloists, in St Mary's Ross-on-Wye. Ticket details to follow.

To celebrate the HM the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, at Hentland on Sunday June 5th, there will be a flower festival in the church and an organ recital. We shall be serving a picnic barbecue in what is usually the car park, and we shall hope to be able to park cars in Pengethley Park. More details in months to following

Wildlife in our Garden

In January we were favoured by visits from two more bird species. On 9th a family of long-tailed tits appeared fairly briefly on the low wall where we put out seeds each morning. I counted nine of them.



Long-tailed tits are not really closely related to other tits. They behave in quite distinctive ways. Their family life is especially remarkable as they seem to stay in extended family groups throughout their lives. They go about their feeding area together, staying only a few minutes in one place, then moving on. They remain close, both literally when they huddle up on the same branch at night and presumably help to keep each other warm, and also in the sense that they look after one another. For example, if a father bird dies its brother will step in

to help the mother look after her brood by helping her fetch food and keep them warm. Their nests are roughly spherical but elongated from top to bottom with a domed roof and a hole in one side, windproofed with leaves, moss, and lichen, stuck together with cobwebs and comfortably lined with feathers. From the January 18th till early February a marsh tit, which could have been a willow tit (they look the same to us amateurs) visited the low wall nearly every day.

We were rather pleased to be able to include it in our count when we took part in this year's Big Garden Birdwatch. I wonder how many of our readers also take part? If you are a member of the RSPB, you will certainly have heard about it. It is not very difficult. You just have to allocate one hour of your choice during the last weekend of January. The most difficult part we find, is keeping an eye on all the different species at once, so that we don't miss any. We find it helpful to make a list of the species we think we will see and divide it into half each, which halves the number either of us must watch. We were quite surprised, when we seriously tried to count the maximum number of any one species at any one time, to find that there weren't as many as we thought. For example, blue tits flutter about the nut feeder almost continuously, back and forth to the tree. If we're watching rather casually, there seem to be at least six or seven around. But a careful count, avoiding counting any twice, showed us there were really only two pairs! For the first part of the hour there were also two pairs of chaffinches, and one of them was Scruff, so we were delighted to believe he had a mate. But later on, another male joined them, making five. So now we're not so sure.



The squirrel with the damaged hind quarters and tail, Scraty, continues to come regularly to feed on seeds on the ground. He or she seems well enough in him or herself. We don't know whether squirrels are pairing up to mate yet, but when they do, I don't think Scraty stands much chance with the opposite sex.

John Oubridge 8th February 2022

Book Review

The Sweetness of Water by Nathan Harris

Long listed for the 2021 Booker Prize *The Sweetness of Water* is the debut novel of Nathan Harris, an American in his 20s. It instantly found favour with publishers and readers alike.

Harris takes on the much-chronicled post-American Civil War era but tackles it from an unusual angle. Unlike novels such as *Gone with the Wind*, which are written from the paternalistic perspective of comfortably off middle class Southern white families with their "loyal" slaves, this novel looks at what happened after the war – when the slaves were freed with nowhere to go, no way of making new lives, no education – left adrift to fend for themselves. As Harris says in an interview: *"It came to my attention that no one else had grappled with what those precious moments, upon being freed, must have been like for those men and women who had spent their life in bondage.....having your every moment controlled by others, and suddenly waking up to the earth-shaking revelation that the government has given you a new identity, one of being free – while you are still occupying the same traumatized body, living with the same tortured history of your past...."*

George Walker, a white farmer of limited means who is mourning the loss of his only son Caleb in the war, meets a pair of formerly enslaved brothers sheltering in the wood: Landry, who is virtually mute because of his mistreatment at the hands of his masters, and Prentiss, resourceful and fiercely loyal to his sibling. Unusually (and somewhat inexplicably given the prevailing attitudes of the times), George invites them to work his land in return for shelter in the barn and a fair wage. The inevitable outcome of this is that George and his wife Isabelle find themselves shunned by most of the townsfolk of nearby Little Ox.

This is not a story of human kindness overcoming prejudice. The book contains the expected inter-racial violence, triggered in this case by Landry witnessing a gay encounter between two white Confederate soldiers and the need for him to be silenced. And further violence, this time white on white, ensues as George's neighbours wreak vengeance on him for challenging the norms of the era.

Phlegmatic throughout, George appears to accept the resulting misery of his life and his failing body philosophically: *"Many a thinker had devoted himself to questions of aging and death, yet the thinkers died at the same rate as the idiots, and so George had grown quite content with the idea of ignoring the process altogether."*

This is a beautiful lyrical book that encourages the reader to approach American history in a new way. Major political themes run alongside the personal and private, and the simplistic concept of good and bad is unpicked and held up to scrutiny.

The book ends with Isabelle's musing: *"She might hope for more but had long ago learned to live with whatever came to pass. Yet sometimes – just sometimes – hope was enough."* **Hilary Smallwood**

Garden Notes

If you are only two and you are an energetic little dog suddenly presented with a four-month- old playmate, who better to charge around the garden with, and yippee, chase in manic circles on the only area of grass that could be graced with the term 'lawn'. Nine months later we have very little lawn, a lot of mud and numerous small holes. As neither of us enjoys mowing anyway, it seems that we have a new project for the spring. I am not entirely sure what that will be yet, but I do know that the once lovely circular lawn will be replaced by some other circular feature. We could replace the grass with gravel which would be cheap and utterly, utterly boring. Having just reroofed the house, paving it with something beautiful would be too much

of an extravagance. We could create the pond I have always wanted but that would not be easy due to our mains water supply (and our neighbour's) which run straight across the middle. A good-looking raised pond would be lovely but that too is overly extravagant. The best idea so far is to create a metal gazebo from two of the very cheapest self-assembly metal arches – a bit wobbly but we've used them elsewhere and they last a few years before rusting at ground level. These would be encircled by a gravel path - very easy, especially as the existing lawn already has a stone edging. I have visions of the whole structure being shrouded in a glorious mix of colourful clematis. I am not tempted to include roses as, having just pruned all the other roses, I have fallen out of love with anything with thorns.

To digress, I am not one of those gardeners that enjoys pruning roses. Despite pruning them every year and despite knowing all the theory and studying all the diagrams in the gardening books, faced with a rose, I never really know what to do. I just take the advice of Helen Dillon in her book 'On Gardening'. She says 'Have you pruned the roses? If not, why not? Roses are a bit like Rottweilers – they seem to know instinctively whether or not you are frightened of them. So, secateurs in hand, approach the rose in a business-like way, as if you actually know what you are doing.' So, I do just that and surprisingly, they survive my butchery. There is only one that I haven't tackled yet – 'Sally Holmes' obviously thinks that it is still mid-summer and is still hanging on to her very beautiful glossy green leaves – quite extraordinary.

Back to clematis - I love all the *Viticella clematis* so I will have to include a couple of those; perhaps the gorgeous purple 'Etoile Violette' planted together with 'Minuet' or 'Tango' – so pretty with their white-veined mauve-red flowers. The fabulous deep red 'Madame Julia Correvon' would be lovely too, flowering all summer until early autumn. Ideally, I would plant something for spring too and a large-flowered one to contrast with the smaller flowers of the *Viticellas*. In this year of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, it is tempting to have a red, white and blue theme!

Yesterday I planted the very lovely *Clematis texensis* 'Princess Diana' elsewhere in the garden and I am looking forward to its dainty vibrant pink tulip-shaped flowers from August right through until October. Now that I am planting more and more shrubs in the borders, the clematis will add plenty of colour to all that greenery without adding too much to the workload.

Meanwhile, I have been cutting down the dead stems of last year's perennials and, nervous that the dogs will trample the young shoots of hostas, hardy geraniums and echinacea, I have been littering the borders with up-turned wire hanging baskets. The emerging plants are also protected from my own clumsy feet; there is nothing worse than that dreadful crunching sound of fresh new growth beneath a hefty boot.

Julie Davies

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Chuckle Corner

“Why English Is Hard to Learn”

We'll begin with *box*; the plural is *boxes*,
But the plural of *ox* is *oxen*, not *oxes*.
One fowl is a *goose*, and two are called *geese*,
Yet the plural of *moose* is never called *meese*.

You may find a lone *mouse* or a house full of *mice*;
But the plural of *house* is *houses*, not *hice*.
The plural of *man* is always *men*,
But the plural of *pan* is never *pen*.

If I speak of a *foot*, and you show me two *feet*,
And I give you a *book*, would a pair be a *beek*?
If one is a *tooth* and a whole set are *teeth*,
Why shouldn't two *booths* be called *beeth*?

If the singular's *this* and the plural is *these*,
Should the plural of *kiss* be ever called *keese*?

We speak of a *brother* and also of *brethren*,
But though we say *mother*, we never say *methren*.
Then the masculine pronouns are *he*, *his*, and *him*;
But imagine the feminine . . . *she*, *shis*, and *shim*!



— Anonymous

Thanks to Caroline Penn

FINALLY THIS WEEK – from Peter Garratt

This is the transcript of the actual radio conversation between the British and the Irish, off the coast of Kerry, Oct 98. Radio conversation released by the Chief of Naval Operations 10.10.98:

IRISH: Please divert you course 15 degrees to the South, to avoid a collision.

BRITISH: Recommend you divert your course 15 degrees to the North, to avoid a collision.

IRISH: Negative. You will have to divert your course 15 degrees to the South to avoid a collision.

BRITISH: This is the Captain of a British navy ship. I say again, divert YOUR course.

IRISH: Negative. I say again. You will have to divert YOUR course.

BRITISH: This is the aircraft carrier HMS Britannia, the second largest ship in the British Atlantic fleet. We are accompanied by three destroyers, three cruisers and numerous support vessels. I demand that you change your course 15 degrees North, I say again, that is 15 degrees North or counter-measures will be undertaken to ensure the safety of this ship.

IRISH: We are a lighthouse. Your call.

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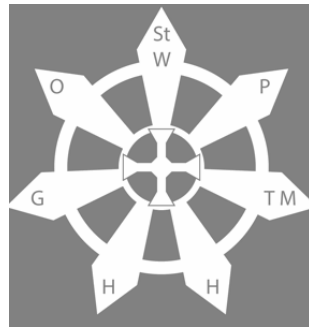


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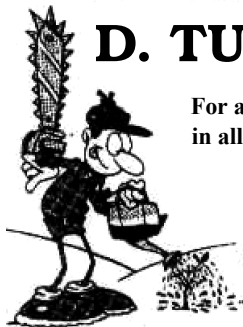
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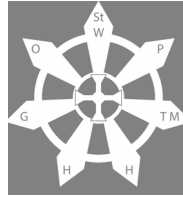
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