

PARISH NEWS

OF

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

FEBRUARY 2024



BY PAT MACRAE

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CONTACTS IN THE ST. WEONARDS GROUP OF PARISHES

Churchwardens

St. Weonards	Richard Mynors.....	01981 580208
	Anna Williams.....	07779 006994
Orcop	Margaret Fletcher	01981 540790
Garway	Tracy Somerville	01981 580263
Tretire & Pencoyd	Elizabeth Malcolm	01989 730201
Hoarwithy	Peter Pember	01432 840254
	Jeff Goulding	01432 840492
Hentland	Valerie Lilwall	07775 611128
	Phil Watkins	07831 317904

Local Contacts

Editor Parish Magazine	Fiona Mynors	01981 580208
Group Choir	Richard Mynors	01981 580208
Bellringing	Peter Hallewell	01981 580203
Royal British Legion	Bea Morris.....	07932 068363
Orcop Evergreens	Gill Bannerman	01981 580685
Youth Group, Tear Fund	Fay Rowlands	01600 750242
Orcop Hall Bookings	Julia Garlickenquiries@orcopparishhall.org	01981 580515
St Weonards Hall Booking	Anna Williams.....	07779 006994
St Weonards Pre-school	Anna Williams.....	01981 580352
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 308696
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 Davies david.davies2@herefordshire.gov.uk
07931 733336

15 Hever Road, Lower Bullingham, Hereford HR2 6EW

MAGAZINE CONTACTS

Contributions to the Parish news can be given to your parish representative by **10th of the month**:

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

Contributions by email to archenfieldmag@btinternet.com

PARISH COUNCIL CONTACTS

Garway:	Contact HALC (temp. contact) lynda@halchereford.gov.uk Website: www.garwayparishcouncil.co.uk	
Orcop:	Neil Barrington	07380 132702
	clerk@orcopparishcouncil.gov.uk Website: www.orcopparishcouncil.gov.uk	
St Weonards:	clerk@stweonardsparishcouncil.org Website: www.stweonardsparishcouncil.gov.uk	
Llanwarne:	Neil Barrington	07380 132702
	clerk@llanwarnegrouppc.co.uk	
Ballingham, Bolstone & Hentland:	Nicky Mackenzie	07581 353103
	clerk@ballinghambolstonehentland-pc.gov.uk Website: www.ballinghambolstonehentland-pc.gov.uk	

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

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

West Mercia Police

Safer Neighbourhood Officers: PC 21260 Martin Gillett 07970 544262, PC 21349 Chris Yarwood 07773 042896, PC 21847 Jenny Rees 07929 783693, PC 21946 Jack Davies 07971 051386.

Police Community Support Officers: PCSO 6324 Carol Marsh 07890 524667, PCSO 40259 Hayley Warne 07773 052560, PCSO 40272 Lewis Thomas 07773 051508, PCSO 40559 Tally Hunt 07773 054156.

How to get in touch: 101 to talk to your local SNT or report a crime.
herefordsouthside.snt@westmercia.police.uk www.westmercia.police.uk

Only call 999 in an emergency, when a crime is in progress or life is in danger.

PARISH NEWS

THE ARCHENFIELD GROUP

For enquiries on baptisms, funerals and wedding please contact the Rural Dean:
Rev. Sheila Anthony, sheila@saintintraining.co.uk, 07775 588716 and your churchwarden.

EXCITING NEWS ABOUT A NEW VICAR!

On 1st July 2024 at 7.00pm in St Weonards Church the **Revd Angela Dawn Kateley** (known as Angie) will be licensed to our parishes.

Put the date in the diary and come to welcome Angie as our vicar.

Letter from the Archdeacon of Hereford

Ash Wednesday this year will fall on the 14th of February which of course is also St Valentine's Day! Ash Wednesday is traditionally the beginning of Lent, and this has been marked over the years as a period of self-discipline, fasting and spiritual journeying. It is a period of penitence and self-examination and seeing ourselves from God's perspective. Even if we don't have a strong faith, we have learnt through the work of Educational Neuroscientists that intentional self-reflection helps us to learn and enhances how we apply, transfer, retain and recall new ideas and information.

The bible recognises that as we go through life we will be tempted and tested and that our response to those times will help to shape the depth of our spiritual lives. I am often astounded by the way many Christians have been shaped by sermons and theology that promise good things, but never talk about the cost of following Jesus. The writer and theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer called this a theology of cheap grace.

"Cheap grace is the grace we bestow on ourselves. Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, Communion without confession, absolution without personal confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate."

Lent gives us an opportunity to realign our lives with God's values, it gives us a prolonged and focussed time to reflect and pray and to read the bible and deepen our faith. The 40-day period is time enough to build in new habits and actions into our lives, which will have a lasting effect.

With ongoing war in Ukraine, the conflict between Israel & Hamas and so much uncertainty in our world, I am finding that there is a great deal of anxiety in society about the future and a sense of aimlessness and general anger and tiredness. Lent gives us as Christians an opportunity to give these feelings back to God and to ask him to heal and restore us. It is also, as Paul reminds us, a time to recognise that our human experiences are common. Whilst they are heightened by the personal challenges or world events, they are not unique to us, but the difference is that our faith will endure.

1 Corinthians 10:13

"No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to all. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it."

As Christians, whilst we can use this time for reflection, we also know how the story ends and we have an enduring hope within us because Jesus has conquered death and brought forgiveness to us. We are forever Easter people who live in the light of the resurrection, and we can mark Lent because of His sacrifice for us.

The rhythm of the spiritual and liturgical year is a helpful tool. It reminds us that there is a cost and a purpose to our faith, which is not about self-benefit and self-fulfilment, but also about generosity, servant heartedness and a simple humbler faith. As Christians, we have a message of hope for a better future and Lent gives us the perfect opportunity to prepare our hearts and minds to share the good news.

The Venerable Derek Chedzey

SERVICE ROTA

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

Sunday 4th February	10.00 am	Orcop, Benefice Holy Communion
Sunday 11 th February	10.00 am	St Weonards, All Age Communion
Sunday 18 th February	10.00 am 6.30 pm	Hoarwithy, Holy Communion Pencoyd, Evening Prayer
Sunday 25 th February	9.15 am 10.00 am	Hentland, Holy Communion St Weonards All Age
Sunday 3 rd March	10.00 am	Pencoyd, Benefice Holy Communion

For enquiries about baptisms, weddings or funeral services, please contact the Rural Dean: Rev. Sheila Anthony, sheila@saintintraining.co.uk 07775588716 and the relevant churchwarden.

**Sunday February 4th 10.00 am Benefice Communion
Orcop Church**

This is the only service in our parishes on that day. Come and join us!

Praying for our communities and the wider world

Come along to pray for each other, our communities, and the wider world on the first Tuesday evening each month, at Treago, St Weonards HR2 8QB
8-9 pm.

Just turn up - everyone is welcome.

Lent Lunches

During Lent we have simple lunches from 12.00 to 2.00pm to raise funds for different charities.

Wednesday 21st February, The New Harp, Hoarwithy

Wednesday 28th February, The Dower House, Treago, St Weonards HR2 8QB

PRESCRIPTION COLLECTION



30th January Tony Philips 07971550859

27th February Lawrence 01981 580548

!!! Magazine News !!!

Subs for the magazine are due. Please note the information on the slip on the front of your magazine and pay as requested. Many thanks for your support.

Please send WORD documents as our software cannot copy PDFs. Please keep fonts and presentation as simple as possible! Flyers in wonderful colour really do not work! Articles of general interest are always welcome. Let the inner writer in you flourish!

VILLAGE PAGES

ST WEONARDS

Last week we received the excellent news confirming that the Revd Angie Kately is to become our vicar on July 1st at 7.00pm. The service of licensing will be held in St Weonards Church with refreshments afterwards. Do come along to welcome Angie. She has been working as a curate, trainee priest, in the Abbey Dore Deanery so she is used to rural ministry in small communities.

When I wrote before, the Christmas tree in church had not been put up in church. You may have seen a picture of it on social media. It was wonderful and so tall it nearly reached the roof! Stephen Herbert and Martin Williams spent an afternoon sorting it out, and even managed to put a star on the top! Many thanks to them for all that effort and to the decorators who made it look so good.

It was busy in church over Christmas with a full church for the carol service with the nativity story retold, and Alex Herbert helping us to reflect on our lives through some interesting insights on the well-known carols. Everyone sang with such enthusiasm encouraged by the choir, who also sang their own beautiful pieces. We are always grateful to the additional choir members who add to our numbers on these special occasions.

The Christmas Eve crib service is always so popular, and this year was no different with about 110 people coming including many children! They heard the nativity story, sung carols, dressed up and put the crib figures back in the special place under the altar. Many thanks to Anna Williams and Alex Herbert who organised this and to the Williams family for the delicious refreshments.

Sadly, Bishop David developed covid and was unable to take our midnight communion. At short notice we were so grateful to Rev Sheila Anthony for stepping in to take the service instead. This too was well supported, and a small choir sang the 'Ding Dong' carol adding to the joy of the occasion. We are glad that David is fully recovered.

Our church hosted the first benefice communion of the New Year when we welcomed Archdeacon Derek to celebrate for us, and plenty of people stayed to help dismantle the giant tree!

Every five years, the church has a formal inspection by a professional surveyor to ensure that its structure is kept in good condition. St Weonards Church is Grade 1 listed and dates from the C13 and C15 with Victorian alterations. Like any building of such an age it is inevitable that repairs are ongoing. However, we were pleased that the surveyor felt that overall the church was in good shape. Damp is the main ongoing problem. Last year we undertook some vital roof repairs. We continue work on the pointing of the church walls to help keep out damp, and we need to keep the valley gutters clear of debris. Other maintenance work will continue as we raise funds.

A simple lunch, as part of our Lent preparations, will be held at the Dower House, Treago on Wednesday 28th February from 12.00 to 2.00pm. Do come and enjoy some company and contribute to a charity yet to be decided by the PCC.

Richard Mynors, churchwarden

Village Hall Coffee Morning 10.00 to 12.00am

Thursday February 8th

Come and meet old friends and make new ones.

Everyone Welcome.

Gwyneth Williams

Date for the diary: Coffee morning on Thursday March 14th

Hereford Food Bank

Many thanks for the donations to the Food Bank. I know that people often drop things off when shopping at a supermarket, but if it is easier for some, a box is always available in church for items. Please check that any goods are well within the use by date.

Fiona Mynors

GARWAY

Garway Church

Despite Christmas being a very active time for the churches in our benefice, Garway church has had a quiet two months.

Behind the scenes, work is still going on to engage with the repair works needed for the church roof and tower. Builders and quotations have been organised and possible grants are being researched. If we are able to raise sufficient funds for the repairs to go ahead, it is likely that they will begin in the autumn.

It is also our delight to let you know that the Revd Angie Kateley, has been appointed to be our vicar for Garway and the St Weonards benefice. Angie is a warm and friendly young woman, who is looking forward to working with us, eager to take an active role in the life of the village. Angie will begin her role at the beginning of July, and we will welcome her into our community.

Tracy Somerville, churchwarden

Garway Village Hall

On 22nd December the village hall car park played host not only to Father Christmas but to two live reindeer during the Carols on the Common, which decamped from the common to the hall in flight from bitter winds. Indoors were mulled wine and mince pies and much seasonal cheer. There was a splendid turnout for this community event, and some lusty singing. The reindeer came in memory of Louise Williams whose wonderful idea they were two years ago and whose 60th birthday was remembered. Thanks to all who made this happy event possible, including of course the Spice Girls, the musicians and all who rolled up to join in. And thanks to Austin Keenan for the donation of the Christmas tree up in the common and to Matty Heath for installing it – unfortunately we never got to sing under it this time – maybe next year!?

And then there was the New Year's Eve party lots of happy people, dancing and having fun to see in 2024. Another successful event run by the hall for the benefit of the community.

www.garwayhall.org

Hilary Smallwood

The Spice Girls and Garway Live!

present

Monmouth Male Voice Choir

Saturday 24th February (almost St David's Day)

At Garway Village Hall

7.00 for 7.30 start

Tickets £15.00 (to include Supper)

Please book your place by contacting Christine Davies on
01981580129/07846861683 or email christinesdavies@hotmail.co.uk

In aid of Garway Church Roof and Air Ambulance

Garway Stitchers



At last we are really happy to say that our very first panel which began long ago now in 2018, is finished and framed ready for hanging. The panel has had a long journey which hasn't been without its ups and downs. But with an enthusiastic team of stitchers, both experienced and new to embroidery, who were keen to see the panel grow to its completion, by the time you read this we are hoping for it to have found its home on the walls of the village hall.

Do have a look when you are next there. There have been many hours of stitching and we have learned a lot along the way. We hope you enjoy the result.

Join us for a friendly morning, once a fortnight, to stitch together. Garway Stitchers meets every other Wednesday from 10.30 – 12.30. Our dates this month are 7th and 21st February. You are also welcome to drop in for a chat and a cuppa, or maybe even a bit of stitching. As always you are welcome to bring a project of your own, it doesn't have to be embroidery, bring along your knitting/wool crafts or any needlework that can be done by hand!

For more details, contact **Tracy** 01981 580263.

Editor's comment: None of this could have happened without the vision and guidance of Tracy, strongly supported by Frances Philips a superb embroiderer herself. Tracy planned the panels, drew up the individual pieces for people to sew and kept encouraging us all. As a pretty hopeless embroiderer, she encouraged me to try and even I managed a labrador dog and tractor! I continue to marvel at the skill of everyone. Do take a look. Thank you so much Tracy.

Garway Coffee Morning

The Garway Spice Girls invite you to our monthly
COFFEE MORNING
February 6th 2024
10.15am – all welcome
Coffee/tea and delicious cake and good company
Library and Post Office available



TUESDAY FEBRUARY 13TH
7.30pm GARWAY HALL £5.00
RYE LANE

Fizzing, smart, funny, stylish and romantic (but in an off-beat way), this is a film which won over hard-bitten film critics last year with its unashamed delight in the vibrantly urban setting of 'sarf Lundun' and its new take of how to do a rom-com with sharp wit and no schmaltz. Recently dumped Dom goes off for a quiet weep in a toilet stall at his friend's gallery opening not realising it's a gender-neutral loo. Enter Yasmin who tries to commiserate with the pair of sobbing pink sneakers she spies under the locked door. Turns out they both have scores to settle with their respective exes and a day plotting the retrieval of a piece of classic vinyl from Yas's pretentious boyfriend's flat gets them bonding. This is a film where colours leap out at you and the Peckham, Brixton and South Bank locations never shouted vibrancy and melting-pot joy so loudly as they do in this unashamed hymn to south of the river. This film is just wildly enjoyable and just the thing for a pre-Valentine's heart-lift. The Flicks cake makers will, as usual, be doing their chocolatey, lemony, fruity and fudgy bakes and there'll be wines, teas, coffees before the film and during the interval. More information on www.facebook.com/GarwayFlicks Why on earth would you not come?

Green Garway Book Group

Great to welcome new members to the book group this year.

So *Winter* by Ali Smith - Once we'd got over the initial confusing "head / stone " and "death of's", most of us actually quite enjoyed this book. None of us had read *Autumn*, maybe we should have started there but half of us would like to read that in the future, that is the first in this quartet.

Once the narrative became more straightforward and less enigmatic it was a good read (tricky to listen to perhaps as there are lots of jumps in time). It is political with Sophia's sister an ex-Greenham Common activist, certainly humorous in places and it nicely portrays the irritations of modern life. The son Art with his *faux Art in Nature blog* is truly awful and the heroine of the story is definitely Lux, paid for by Art to attend the fractious Christmas celebration so that his mother thinks he is still with his ex girlfriend. Lux is the voice of intuitive intelligence, without any of the family history she is free to speak openly and honestly.

Rating: 6.5/10

If you'd like to come along to any of the next book groups, details are as follows:

Mon 12 Feb: **Ravenous by Henry Dimbleby** (non fiction)

Mon 11 Mar: **Little Wing by Freya North** (fiction)

Mon 8 Apr: **The Arbornaut by Meg Lowman** (non fiction)

You can join our Facebook page Green Garway Book Group or send an email to greengarwaybg@gmail.com

Julie Hudson

ORCOP

"Orcop Community Carols", on 23rd December, was well supported and the formula of traditional carols and readings, interspersed with more contemporary verse and readings related to "The Spirit of Christmas" appears to be successful. The carol singing gathered momentum as the proceedings unfolded, culminating in rousing renderings of "Hark the Herald" and "Oh Come All Ye Faithfull". Thanks go to all who contributed by donating mince pies and mulled wine, decorating the church, reading the varied texts, playing the organ (Chris) and most importantly, those who came along and participated heartily in the singing and subsequent seasonal bonhomie!

As I write this, the outside temperature is hovering close to freezing and snow is in the forecast, so it is as well that there will be no second Sunday communion at Orcop Church in January.

On February 4th, at 10am, Orcop hosts the monthly Benefice Communion Service. It is to be hoped that, by then, the weather may be kinder to us and the heating will be switched on well in advance, so please come if you can!

Margaret Fletcher, Churchwarden

Flower and Cleaning Rota: Mrs. D. Garman

Sheila Meadmore unfortunately passed away on 10th December 2023 after suddenly becoming ill with complications. Her cremation service was held at Hereford Crematorium on 3rd January 2024. This was followed by the Interment of her ashes at Orcop Church on 18th January 2024 with her close family members. The Meadmore family wish to express their sincere thanks to all relatives, friends and neighbours for their messages of sympathy, attendance at the service and the kind donations received which will be passed on to Cancer Research.

Andrew Meadmore.

Orcop Hall

Jumble Sale on Saturday 10th February, from 2pm.

There will be clothes, books and white elephant stalls as well as a raffle, refreshments will also be available. Everyone is welcome.

Please can you bring any donations to the Hall between **9 and 11 am on the morning of the sale, Saturday 10th February**

Coffee Mornings/warm space will continue to be held every Thursday on a weekly basis until March. Everyone is welcome to come along.

Peta Long

Orcop Hall Craft Workshops

Pewter Casting with Mandy Nash ♦ Saturday 17th February ♦ 10 – 4.30 ♦ cost £55

Discover the art of lead-free pewter casting - from creating your design and carving the mould, to finishing off the shiny treasures. Each participant will be able to make at least two finished pieces. Pendants, keyrings, brooches, earrings or fridge magnets are just some of the possibilities.

Basket Weaving with Frances Keenan ♦ Friday 1st or 15th March ♦ 9.30 – 5 ♦ cost £60

Learn how to weave a useful and beautiful round, willow basket – with, or without, a handle.

Felting with Mandy Nash ♦ Saturday 13th April ♦ 10 - 4.30 ♦ cost £55

Learn how to convert fluffy wool fleece into a hardwearing and functional bag. All materials and equipment will be provided but students need to bring at least two old towels and a plastic bag to carry their work home.

Weaving – we are planning a two-day workshop in May. (More details in the next parish mag)

To book, or for more info - contact Gill Bannerman – gill.bannerman@outlook.com

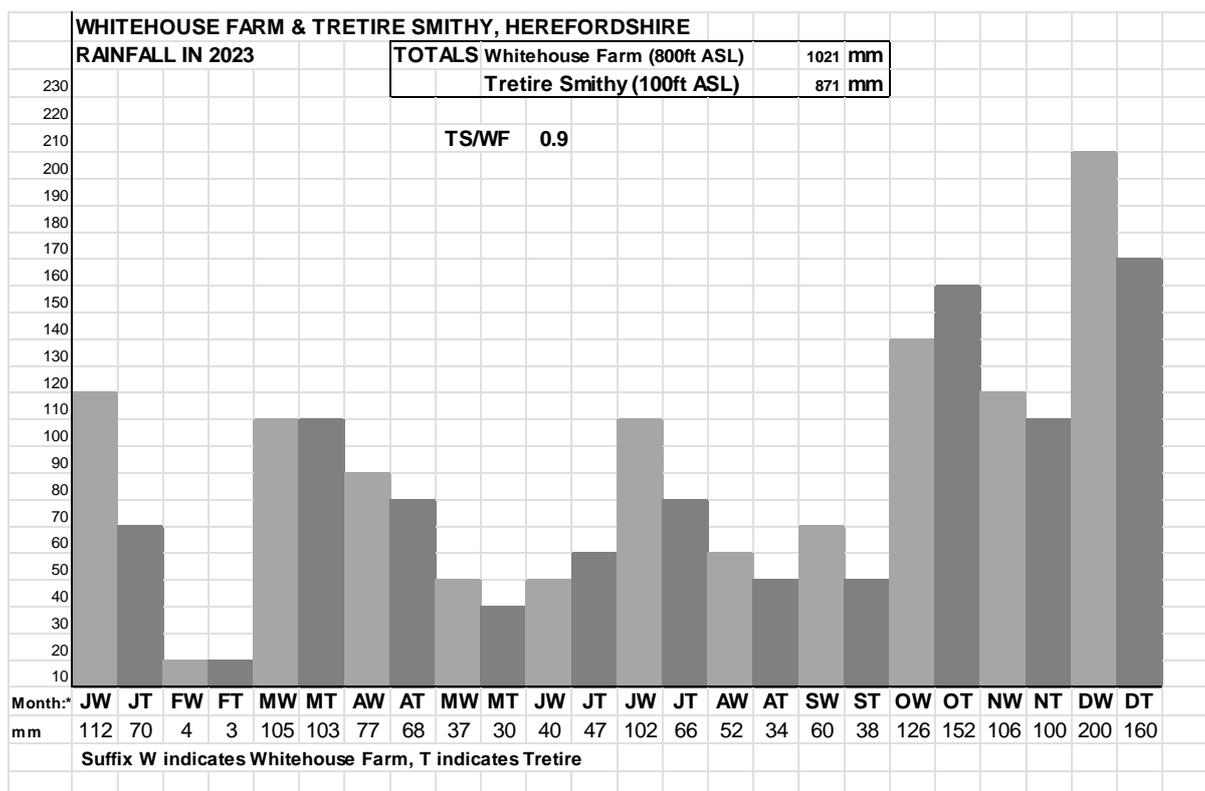
RAINFALL IN 2023 – After a couple of dry years, a rather wet one!

As for the past eleven 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 2023. The average rainfall over this 15year period is 934mm.

2021 and 2022 were both relatively dry years, with total rainfall about 10% and 15% below average respectively. February 2023 delivered a big surprise. Hardly “February Fill-dyke”, with a monthly total of only 4mm at Whitehouse Farm and 3mm at Tretire Smithy. March was much wetter, with over 100mm, but

thereafter things were relatively dry, with some grand haymaking conditions in June, when the monthly total was only 40mm. Those on Stewardship Schemes who cannot make hay until July (like us) were lulled into a false sense of security, for on 1st July the heavens opened and it rained steadily, pretty much for the whole month, with a total of 102mm at Whitehouse Farm. The real excitement, however, was saved for the last 3 months of the year, which delivered over 40% of the annual total. The heavy rain towards the end of December continued into the New Year, resulting in severe and extensive flooding. Despite this, 2023 was not a particularly wet year overall, being only the fifth wettest in the 15-year record. Wettest was 2012, with a total of 1227mm and close behind was 2020, with 1192mm. 2020 included two exceptionally wet months, February, with 207 mm, and December, 196mm. So, the 200mm total in December 2023 was very high, but not unprecedented.

There was again good agreement between the two recording locations. 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 somewhat lower than those for Whitehouse Farm, except in June and October, when Tretire recorded higher monthly totals, probably due to local shower activity.



Peter Garratt

TRETIRE WITH MICHAELCHURCH AND PENCLOYD

On Sunday Dec 17th, lots of our community turned up at Pencoyd Manor, home of Tom and Sarah Vaughan at their kind invitation to hold our carol singing on their forecourt. The children were invited to create angels to hang on the Christmas Tree sheltered in the garage. There were quite a number of busy hands making angel bodies and attaching wings and heads with the finishing touch of a string with which to suspend them from the tree. The final effect was most attractive and looked very festive in the chancel of Pencoyd Church on Christmas morning.

Whilst this activity kept a lot of children and quite a lot of adults busy, refreshments were being served as people mingled and chatted and caught up with each other's news. After a while, the carol singing started and a fair number of carols sung, some better known than others, so more enthusiastically sung! But there was a cold wind blowing throughout the evening, and younger children needed to be got home to bed, so it wasn't a late night for most of us. However, we were well aware that Tom and Sarah would have a fair bit of clearing up to do, so a small group stayed to help with that. It was so very good of them to let us all gather

there in their now very smart garage! So, once again, Tom and Sarah, a big thank you to you both, and to Elizabeth for entertaining children with her angel crafting workshop!

That all took place on 17th Dec, and on the following Saturday, a group of us gathered at Pencoyd church bringing lots of festive greenery from our gardens. We decorated the windowsills, the pulpit and behind the altar in true Pencoydian fashion, with candles amongst the greenery, so that on Christmas morning, the church looked really festive and beautiful with all the candles and tea lights lit, and the angel clad tree up in the chancel.

The service was at 9.30am, which might have proved a bit early for those who like a Christmas lie in, but the church was packed with over 50 people attending and a good number of children as well. The service was led beautifully and meaningfully for us by Rev Simon Tarlton from Goodrich.

There was some very enthusiastic singing of the Christmas hymns and carols, and after the service, a lovely buzz of neighbourly chatter as everyone wished each other a Happy Christmas; what a wonderful way to start it!

I wish you all a healthy and happy year in 2024.

Margaret Oubridge

HOARWITHY AND HENTLAND

As usual December was a busy month in both our churches.

The Hentland Carol Service congregation of 61, including 7 Children enjoyed a service of lessons, carols and readings with Revd Ben Bentham and Hoarwithy Singers followed by seasonal refreshments. There was a huge Christmas tree and a convivial atmosphere.

The Hoarwithy Carol Service and Celebration was well attended with 70 including 10 children. Hoarwithy Singers gave us a varied programme of traditional carols, contemporary songs and seasonal readings. Particular thanks to our youngest contributor Gwendolyn Woods who had memorised her piece and delivered it perfectly.

Ross Folk Choir Concert *"The Longest Night"*. The church was packed for this very enjoyable concert. Supporters of Ross Folk Choir and St Catherine's Church provided refreshments and raised £260 for UNHCR.

We had a congregation of 35 for our Midnight Communion celebrated by Revd Gavin Douglas OBE and organist Mr James Gould. Our travelling Nativity arrived in time for Baby Jesus to be added at about midnight.

On Sunday 17th December a number of Hoarwithy Singers sang Carols in the New Harp Inn in the early evening.

The Friends of Hoarwithy organised a Village Christmas Party at Wye Meadows courtesy Lou and Nick. Both events were much appreciated.

Our thanks go to all clergy who have taken part during the year enabling us to have regular worship in our churches. Also our ladies who decorate the churches, those who provide refreshments and the team who run our Pop-up café for hArt and other events. Also to all those who volunteer for cleaning and other duties both in the churches and Cedar Rise. Last but not least, Revd Mark Johnson who comes to our PCCs and has taken occasional offices.

Flooding in Hoarwithy

The torrential rain at the start of the new year saw several parts of the village cut off along the roads adjacent to the banks of the Wye and even Wiggles Brook played its part. We have a 'WhatsApp' group which has enabled us to connect with people affected. The New Harp was badly flooded, but villagers both far and near rallied around moving furniture and pumping and sweeping, many working overnight to help. Simeon said he,

Kaytie and the family were surprised how quickly the water came up and wished to thank all those who helped them during this difficult time.

Peter Pember, Churchwarden

Services and Events February

Sunday 18th February 10.00am Holy Communion Hoarwithy with Bishop Anthony Priddis

Wednesday 21st February 12.00pm Lent Lunch New Harp Inn

Sunday 25th February 9.15am Holy Communion Hentland



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Garden Notes

I am perfectly happy to admit that I have severely neglected our two elderly apple trees. It has not really been deliberate but every year I study the RHS Fruit book and examine the pages on apple tree renovation. I stand in the garden comparing the diagrams with our trees, frown a few times and then put the book back on the bookshelves and leave it for another year.

The poor things display every disease known to apple trees – canker, scab, bitter pit, brown rot, blossom rot, codling moth. We have the lot. Add to that the nuisance created by the branches that prevent the washing line from rotating, the branches that get in the way of the shed door and the gate to the hen run, and most people would have chopped the trees down years ago. However, when I see them covered in their delightful blossom in spring, harvest the delicious apples in late summer and watch the blackbirds (and the occasional fieldfare) gorging on the ones I can't reach in autumn, I know that I cannot possibly remove them. They have great character, they are good for the insects and birds and, despite being elderly, they produce far more apples than I can possibly use.

So, finally, we employed a professional fruit tree pruner. It added some excitement to a dreary December when I really did not want to be in the garden at all and there was something very pleasurable about watching someone else do all the hard work.

By the time all the dead, dying and damaged branches had been removed, crossing branches removed, the centre opened up to allow air to circulate and branches removed that wack my husband on the head when he goes to the hen run, the poor trees were shadows of their former selves. However, within a couple of days I had become quite used to the new look and now cannot remember what they used to look like before. Our tree pruner assured us that they would still give us a good crop of fruit and he even removed the prunings so that we didn't have the hassle of dealing with them. I look forward to seeing them in spring with their new leaves and pretty blossom.

What were you doing on Christmas Eve? Wrapping presents? Making mince pies? Listening to Carols from Kings? What was I doing? I was getting very cold and muddy, planting a bagful of tulip bulbs. A neighbour delivering a Christmas card admitted that she too had a bagful to plant, but like me, had not wanted to trample all over the sodden border and risk doing too much damage. Anyway, they are planted now, and I look forward to looking out of the dining room window at a glorious display of red tulips interspersed with primroses.

Julie Davies

Wildlife in the garden

Through the run-up to and during the Christmas period we have been watching two Grey Squirrels. In previous years there have always been a few squirrels about, often 3 or 4 at a time, coming up from the little spinney by the stream each day in search of an easy meal of peanuts from our bird-feeders. Last winter we were successful in finding ways to prevent them from raiding the feeders and we have continued with the same system recently. Of course, it does not stop them from eating any seeds we have put out on the low wall, but this does allow us a good view of them and their behaviour.

We are a little surprised this winter that there have rarely been more than two at a time, always the same ones. We wonder whether they are a male and a female. We have no way to be sure, but one is very slightly bigger and has a lot of brown fur on the head and down the back. The slightly smaller one is almost completely grey but for some cream fur on the back of each ear. These differences make it easy for us to tell them apart. On one rare occasion when a third squirrel appeared, it was promptly chased off by the larger of our two, while the smaller watched from the trunk of a tree. As it is common amongst mammals for a male to be the larger and more aggressive than a female, we have rather assumed that this is the case here too.

I have read that grey squirrels normally have litters twice a year, the first at the end of February and March; the second in June or July. Therefore I would not expect them to be mating until February. Also apparently, they do not pair up until they are about to mate, so the behaviour of our two does seem a little unusual. We shall continue to observe this pair, and any others that may make an appearance as the year goes on, and report what we find interesting.

I have been doing some de-cluttering of old paper files and folders recently in an attempt to fulfil a New Year's Resolution! We were both surprised when I found four printed articles, two headed Garden Page and two headed Garden Diary. They are not dated, but must have been written by Margaret between 2003 and 2005, judging from references to some building work on an extension we had about then. We think they were written for Parish News which at that time would have been edited by Frances Pullen (now Phillips). Reading them now we find it very interesting to see which features have changed and which have not. Her descriptions then covered both our gardening work and also wildlife. Obviously, the garden has matured a lot and there have been both gains and losses. The wildlife really has not changed much at all. This, in spite of the RSPB reporting changes at a national level. I wonder whether out here in our corner of the west we are relatively insulated from forces such as climate change and industrialisation which we hear so much about elsewhere? In spite of record floods all around, in Shropshire, Worcestershire and Gloucestershire, this winter our little stream has not even overflowed its banks. So far!

John Oubridge 7th January 2024

A Peek in the Bookshop

After a very busy festive period the bookshop has been de-Christmassed and everything is slowly going back to normal; the baubles are back in their box and the Christmas trees put away for another year. Surprisingly, by far our bestseller was ***Politics on the Edge* by Rory Stewart** – if you were lucky enough to have it for Christmas, I hope you enjoyed it, it is an excellent read. (See the book review for this month)

January usually sees a lot of books published in paperback that were bestselling hardbacks the previous year. ***Ravenous* by Henry Dimbleby** is an accessible and engaging guide to our food industry (which we're reading at Green Garway Book Group for February) and I highly recommend. I'm also looking forward to reading ***The Wager* by David Grann**. He is the author of *Killers of the Flower Moon* and *The Wager* was recently Radio 4's book of the week. It is the true story of shipwreck, mutiny and murder.

If you've been enjoying **Andrew Taylor's Marwood & Lovett's historical fiction series, *Shadows of London*** is also out in paperback in February and to mark the occasion we're delighted to host Andrew at an author evening event in our Monmouth shop on **Wednesday 21 February**.

1st February sees the publication of a new mystery novel by **Matthew Blake called *Anna O***. It follows psychologist Dr Ben Prince trying to make sense of the strange case of a woman found asleep in the middle of a murder scene and according to David Baldacci has one of the best twists he's read. The author has done extensive research into sleep-related crime and the illness known as resignation syndrome which is the theme for this book.

For our younger readers I'm very excited that there is a follow up to one of my favourite ever picture books, *The Day the Crayons Quit*. ***The Crayons Love Our Planet*** combines the wonderful illustrations of **Oliver Jeffers** with the wit of **Drew Daywalt** in a celebration of our planet.

Look forward to seeing you in the shop soon!

Julie, Bookseller at Rossiter Books

Christmas Cards

Many of you will have either stopped sending Christmas cards or become aware that there are not so many being sent as there used to be. What has also become evident is that there are now a much higher proportion of "charity" cards amongst those that are sent. I was interested and decided to do a small survey. As they arrived, I looked on the back of each one and made a note of who was raising money from its sale, or who had made or commissioned it.

The total was **64 cards**.

The most numerous were those that support **a group of charities**; I counted **10**.

Next most common were those supporting **Oxfam, 6.**

Those **made by the senders** themselves, **5.**

Only **4** were what I would call **commercial cards**, all takings presumably going to the producer, manufacturer, printer and shop.

There were **3** for the **British Heart Foundation** and **3** for **Cancer Research.**

There were **2 each** for **MacMillan, British Red Cross and NSPCC.**

There were no less than **24 other** charities supported, and we received **1 from each.** They were:- **Embrace, Barnardo's, Myeloma UK, Woodland Trust, WWF, ICS, Friends of the Norris Museum, British Library, Friends of Wisley & Pyrford, Dementia UK, Sue Ryder, Shelter, Mind, Fitzwilliam Museum, Motor Neurone, Yorkshire Air Ambulance, St Michael's Hospice, Leprosy Mission, Marie Curie, Mouth & Foot, the Princes Trust, All Saints Wokingham, The National Trust and Medecins sans Frontieres,** in the order in which we received them.

Finally, there were **3** commissioned by the senders; 2 of which were sent by charities on behalf of themselves.

So, overall, there was a very wide range of charities represented, each being chosen by a small number of people. I think this is as it should be. The ones most chosen were those which (according to my memory) have been around for the longest, such as Oxfam. I did not analyse the ones from groups of charities, but again I think they mainly included well-established ones such as Christian Aid, Cafod and Oxfam.

It remains for me to hope you all had a good Christmas and to wish you well in 2024.

John Oubridge.

Book Review

***Politics on the Edge* by Rory Stewart**

If you want to induce a state of serious gloom – if you want to put your head in your hands in despair at the UK political system that is known as “the envy of the world”, then read this book. But have a good comedy handy to lift the spirits; possibly “Yes Minister.”

Stewart has an interesting history as a former conservative MP and candidate for PM: a previous Labour voter, deputy governor of an Iraqi province, hiker through Afghanistan just after the Twin Towers fell, and later commander of a besieged compound in Iraq knowing he would be executed should the defences be breached. So – ready you might think for the cut and thrust of British politics. But not the politics of Brexit, Johnson and populism. Eventually it spat him out.

“Governing might be about critical thinking, but the new style of government was not if critical thinking requires humility, this politics demanded absolute confidence; in place of reality it offered untethered hope; instead of accuracy, vagueness ... the new politics demanded loyalty, partisanship and slogans, not truth and reason, but power and manipulation.”

It rapidly became clear to Stewart that serving the country and their constituents was of secondary importance to MPs, whose focus had to be on furthering their careers and gaining promotion in order to have any influence at all; even to the point of voting in a PM whom they openly acknowledged to be totally unsuited to the job, simply on the basis of promised cabinet positions.

Dominating the narrative throughout is Brexit and the fall-out from the referendum. Recognizing the slim majority, Stewart campaigns tirelessly for a rejection of no-deal and for the safety and peace of Ireland. But sound bites dominate, and his parliamentary career is eventually sacrificed on this particular altar.

The merry-go-round of changes in cabinet roles leads to departments being headed by people who are totally ignorant of the content of their briefs and expected to become experts and ready to make public statements within days of gaining office. *“The details it seemed mattered hardly at all, nor did their implementation, for this was only a press release masquerading as a plan.”* He observes that in one particular reshuffle, a doctor was moved to the Department of Justice; a lawyer to the Department of Health. And Stewart is blunt about Johnson’s unhappy time as Foreign Secretary: *“A man who enjoyed the improbable, the incongruous and the comically over-stated had been trapped in a department whose religion was tact and caution.”* And on Johnson’s role as PM he quotes a civil servant who *“explained that [the PM] liked to agree with the last person he had spoken to, even if this contradicted the last instructions he had given, and therefore Civil Servants could not be expected to act on his apparent endorsement.”*

As Prisons Minister, Stewart threw himself into the role, appalled by what he saw, and he appears to have had a real grasp of the malaise and underfunding that result in filthy prisons, the drug barons’ stranglehold on many prisons, leave on license with no proper support, releases with no follow-up, and shocking rates of re-offending. Financially, this is in stark contrast to his previous role as governor of an Iraq province: *“Our money was apparently limitless – in my case delivered in vacuum packed bricks of a million dollars in bills which I could spend without audit.”*

Central to Stewart’s thinking on foreign policy is the necessity to listen to the recipients of aid or defence activity and to try and get inside their history and mindset. Above all else there is the importance of reviewing and rethinking policies. On the Iraq invasion he says: *“Our 2003 mission was a grotesque satire of every liberal aspiration for peace, growth and democracy. Most chilling was not the failure, but the failure to acknowledge our failure.”*

Whatever your politics, Stewart’s insights into the workings of Westminster are illuminating, and his passion is inspiring. His one-time boss Liz Truss, whose genius he tells us lay in *“exaggerated simplicity”*, told Stewart he must *“Stop being interesting.”* I doubt that will happen any time soon. I certainly hope not.

Hilary Smallwood

The danger of volunteering!

I heard that Hereford Cathedral were short of volunteer stewards for the Christmas Eve Crib Service. Although there are more than 300 wonderful regular volunteers at the cathedral, inevitably many are away or busy at Christmas time. As I had some time, I offered to help, envisaging giving out leaflets and generally doing whatever was required.

Imagine my surprise when I received an email with FULL details of the event. We think we do well at St Weonards with many attendees at our crib service. At the cathedral - well they prepare 600 Christingles for the children!!! So, with their families the place is packed, literally!!

I received my marching orders:

Steward to welcome and hand out Christingles and paper bands for headdresses. Fine.

Fire warden to direct people to the north door if there was a fire. Fine.

Angel Gabriel...what????...the email said *we need a Gabriel to take part in the short nativity play.. if you could wear something white.. did this mean adapting a white sheet or something? Well yes please. No, not words to learn just a brief statement to Mary from a script. Really?*

Thankfully there was no fire, but I did find myself wearing a white alb (the sort of robe worn by officiants in church) lent to me by the Chancellor of the cathedral James. He had also made me some amazing wings! Apart from welcoming Mary and Joseph into the stable, I also had to demonstrate how the Christingles were to be lit safely, not leaning over but sharing them upright. We were keen not to have 600 frazzled heads of hair! Despite many years of teaching English and drama, I had never dressed up as an angel or lit candles in any classes.

It was wonderful to see so many families in the cathedral, but I shall enquire a little closer when asked to volunteer again!

Fiona Mynors

Chuckle Corner

A Few Ingenious Business Names from Peter Garratt

Jean Claud Van Man (removals, Southport)

Some Fin Fishy (pet shop, The Wirral)

Pest in Peace (pest control, Wilmslow)

Thaitanic (Thai restaurant, Belfast)

Hairy Pop-ins (pet nannies, Shetland)

William the Concreter (concrete mixer van, Battle, East Sussex)

Jason Donervan (kebab van, Bristol)

Taco Look At Me Now (Taco van, West Sussex)

Bonnie Tiler (tilers, Llantwit Major, Glamorgan)

Love you a Latte (café, Mumbles, Swansea)

Apocalypse Cow (barbecue restaurant, not sure where!)

DIARY DATES

February dates for the diary

- 4 Benefice Communion, Orcop Church 10 am
- 6 Praying for our communities and the wider world at Treago 8-9 pm
- 6 Garway Coffee Morning 10.15 am
- 7 Garway Stitchers
- 8 St Weonards Village Hall Coffee Morning 10 am to 12 pm
- 10 Orcop Hall Jumble Sale
- 10 Monmouth Choral Society Come and Sing
- 12 Green Garway Book Club
- 13 Flicks in the Sticks
- 17 Pewter Casting workshop, Orcop Hall
- 18 Holy Communion, Hoarwithy
- 21 Lent lunch, The New Harp, Hoarwithy

- 21 Garway Stitchers
- 24 Monmouth Male Voice Choir
- 25 Holy Communion, Hentland
- 27 Prescription collection
- 28 Lent lunch, The Dower House, Treago

Future events for your diary

- 1 March Basket Weaving workshop, Orcop Hall
- 11 March Green Garway Book Club
- 14 March Coffee Morning
- 15 March Basket Weaving workshop, Orcop Hall
- 8 April Green Garway Book Club
- 13 April Felting workshop, Orcop Hall
- 1 July Welcome Revd Angie Kateley 7.00pm in St Weonards Church

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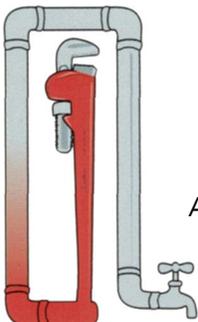
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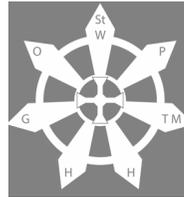


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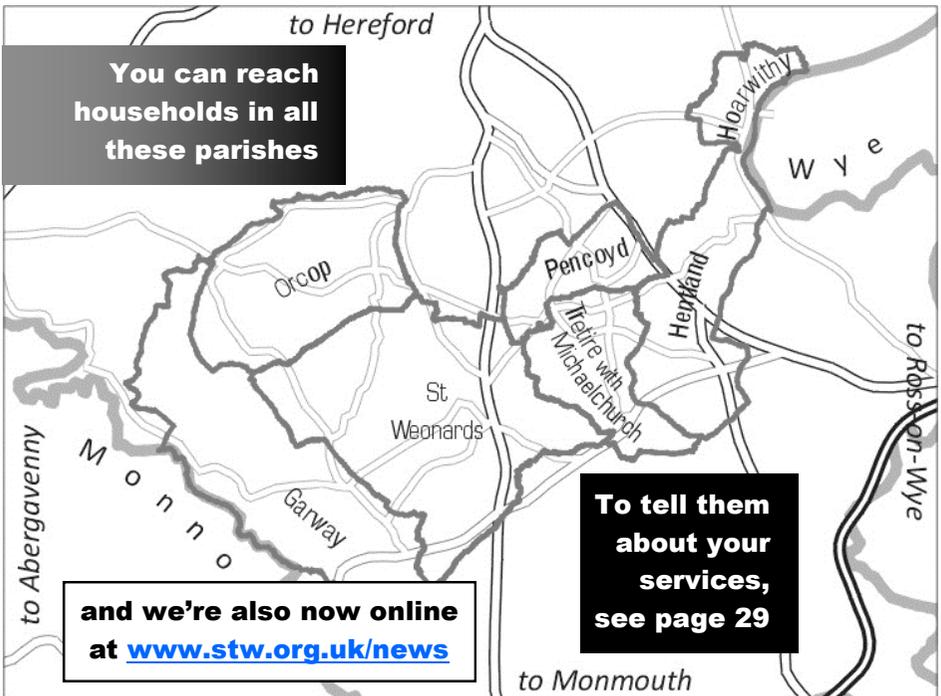
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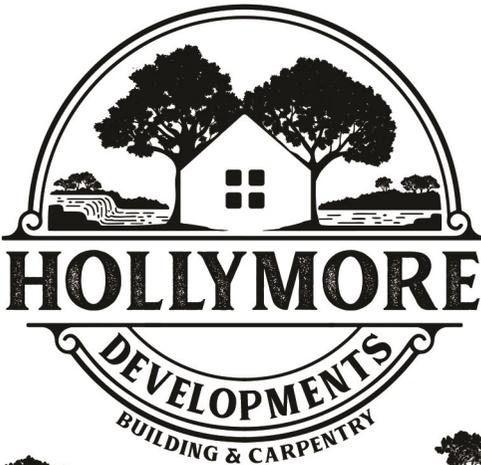
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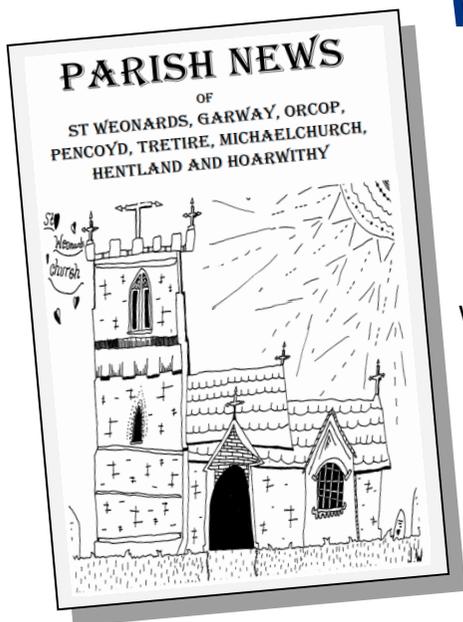
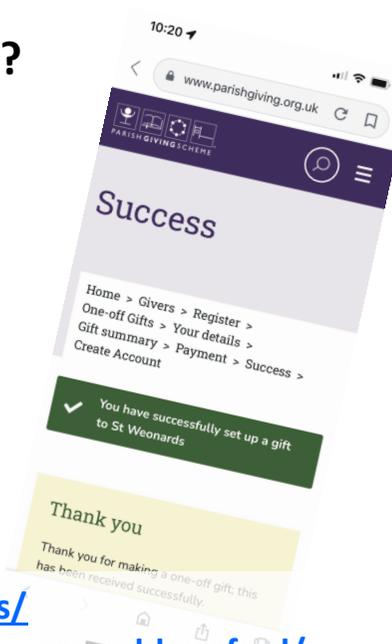
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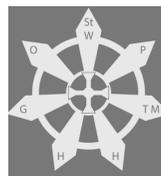
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