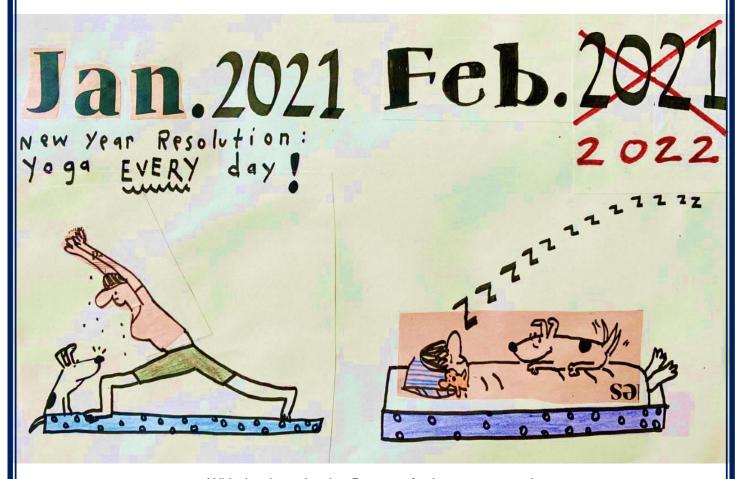
## PARISH NEWS

OF

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

FEBRUARY 2021



With thanks to Louise Brosnan for her apt cartoon!

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#### **CONTACTS IN THE ST. WEONARDS GROUP OF PARISHES**

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HEREFORDSHIRE COUNCILLORS					
·			J		
St Weonards Group website					
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OWL Good Neighbours			07940 308696		
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Flicks in the Sticks					
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Garway Hall Bookings	•				
Singing Tree Choir	• •				
St Weonards Pre-school					
St Weonards Hall Booking					
Orcop Hall Bookings					
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Orcop	Margaret Fletcher		01981 540790		
St. Weonards	Vacant				
CitalCitwaiaelis					

#### 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 12<sup>th</sup> of the month:

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Contributions by email to archenfieldmag@btinternet.com or paper notices to: Miss June Griffiths, Hillside, St Weonards

#### **PARISH COUNCIL CONTACTS**

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

## PARISH NEWS

#### THE ARCHENFIELD GROUP

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#### Vicar's Letter

#### Dear Readers.

'Laughter is the best medicine!'

I remember reading the Reader's Digest years ago, and enjoying the section with that title in each issue, full of funny anecdotes and jokes. What I didn't know then was that the quote comes from the biblical book of Proverbs, Chapter 17, verse 22 which reads that "A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones". An ancient piece of wisdom indeed, but well supported by recent medical research, which shows that laughter and happiness boosts our endorphin levels, strengthens our immune systems, and of course enhances our social relationships.

I think our bones have definitely been a bit dry this last year, and perhaps it is because everything has been rather dismal and depressing that anything that makes us laugh is such a lovely gift, something to be truly grateful for. Peter Garratt's lovely story about applying the R number to his efforts to repair his drainpipe in last month's magazine made me chortle out loud. (So true too - we all know how often one small job leads on to half a dozen more!)

And then there are the cartoons and jokes in the mag, (more Bonnie and Sue, please, Fiona!), the friends who share funnies that they have found on the internet, or the lovely people who have the ability to make jokes about anything and everything - their gift of humour is such a help at times when we feel surrounded by troubles.

In fact there is such a lot to give thanks for at the moment, that it feels wrong to be sad or depressed. Lovely cheerful faces when we meet neighbours out for a walk: seeing children playing in the snow: a genuine welcome in our village shops, and the ability for most of us to get outside and enjoy our beautiful countryside. And because we see so few people, it is such a pleasure when we do meet someone, even if it has to be on Zoom!

The first snowdrops are in flower in the garden outside my kitchen window, and the primroses in the wood are showing new growth.

So ring a friend up and chuckle about something, or make a video call and laugh when you press the wrong button. Spread a little happiness!

#### **Frances**

#### **February Benefice Service**

Our February benefice service is at 10am on Sunday February 7th 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. I hope to see you there – *Frances* 

#### **Service Rota February 2021**

#### Check www.stw.org.uk for any possible changes

We're all becoming used to the disruptions to life that Covid19 presents us with. But familiarity doesn't always make for an easy acceptance, and so the absence of, or changed format of, a particular service can be irksome to any of us. Please be patient – we're doing our best.

Here is a part of our recent message from the bishop, sent on 5<sup>th</sup> January, concerning use of our church buildings during the current lockdown.

Following the PM's announcement last night about the new lockdown, you will have noted that places of worship are allowed to remain open both for private prayer and public worship. I am glad that this is the case, as in this time of crisis our buildings provide a place of peace and restoration.

Having said that, I want to make clear that there is no obligation either way....... Where it is decided that churches are to remain open, risk assessments should be reviewed and, in particular, all mingling before and after worship must be most rigorously discouraged. You should be aware that risk assessments conducted on the basis of the previous variant of COVID may no longer be valid. It would appear this variant is far more transmissible and can remain active for longer on surfaces. Many medical professionals would advise us that closing the buildings would be the most socially responsible thing to do.

Our churches are mostly able to remain open for private prayer and reflection, but for some of our buildings there's a need to maintain more limited opening times, so do check before you go if you're making a special visit. In the St Weonards Benefice we plan to hold all of our services on Zoom during February, with prayers, readings and reflections available on the website each week also.

7 <sup>th</sup> February	10am	Holy Communion	Zoom
14 <sup>th</sup> February	9.15am	Morning Prayer	Zoom
	10am	All-age service	Zoom
17 <sup>th</sup> February (Wednesday)	7.00pm	Ash Wednesday service	Zoom
21st February	10am	Holy Communion	Zoom
28 <sup>th</sup> February	10am	All-age	Zoom
	11am	Lay-led Iona style service	Zoom
	6.30pm	Evensong	Zoom
7 <sup>th</sup> March	10am	Holy Communion service	Zoom

Once released YouTube and website services will be available to view at any time.



#### !!! Magazine News !!!

Because of current covid restrictions, it has not been easy to collect the annual subscription of £7 for the magazine. Many thanks to those who have already paid, and we will be following up the payments when times become easier. For this month and as long as necessary, the magazine is available online. We appreciate that some people do not have access to the internet, and a few hard copies will be available at St Weonards Shop and Broad Oak Garage for them. Articles for the magazine are always welcome. We hope that everyone is keeping safe and well in these challenging times.

Fiona Mynors Editor

#### PRESCRIPTION COLLECTION



2nd February Carolyn Trew 01600 750544

Ruth Maskell writes: 'Thank you to the people who collected the Garway prescriptions from Ewyas Harold Surgery last year. It is very much appreciated by all of the residents who use this service.'

## VILLAGE PAGES

#### ST WEONARDS

A small group of socially distanced members of the Benefice Choir and others sang carols outside the home of some of our church community who are isolating in their homes, and for the benefit of shoppers at St Weonards Shop on a Saturday morning. The singers hugely enjoyed the opportunity to sing carols 'live', and the people visited joined in with gusto and a good, safe time was had by all. Thanks to those who came to sing and those who risked us visiting and for donations to Ross Community Larder and St Weonards Church!



Thanks also to the St Weonards flower arranging team who ensured that the church looked wonderful for our service on Christmas morning.

*Ray Mival* died on 20<sup>th</sup> December in a care home. He and his brother Ken, who died some time ago, lived at the Old Farm on the Treago Estate for 85 years. They worked for many years as foresters preferring to live quietly away from the public view. They loved machines and would happily mend any ancient mower for us. The brothers had a wide range of vintage tractors which they were proud to show off at village events. When we first lived in Treago, Ken explained to me that, before the war, he was being trained as a footman! On one occasion we persuaded them to seek help from a doctor, but as they had not visited one since before the war, they assumed that they could not go as they 'had not paid their panel fee.' To us, and those who knew them from long ago, it definitely seems like the passing of an era with the death of the two brothers.

#### Fiona Mynors

#### **NEW EASY & SECURE GIVING TO ST WEONARDS CHURCH**

There are many ways you can support the life and work of the local church, whether in prayer, or helping out practically on a regular or occasional basis. We'd love to hear from you. Please do speak to our vicar, associate minister, or a member of the PCC if you would like to get involved.

An important area of support that you may be able to offer is through your financial giving to the church. It costs over £450 per week to keep St Weonards Church and churchyard open, and contribute to the costs of our parish vicar. We are totally reliant on generous donors and fund-raisers to meet these costs -- we receive no money from the government, county or parish councils, or the central church. This is a priority for us at the moment, as income from service collections, fees and visitor donations has reduced over the last year by around £5,000 due to the COVID-19 restrictions.

Could you help sustain the life and ministry of our local church by considering a regular donation now? This would be a great help as it will enable us to plan for the future.

The best way you can do this is via our Parish Giving Scheme (PGS) account. This allows you to make a monthly, quarterly, or annual donation, with the assurance of the Direct Debit guarantee. It includes an option to increase your gift each year to keep pace with the rising cost of living, with the peace of mind that you can adjust your donation at any time if your circumstances change.

The PGS team makes it safe and easy for you to give, and our church to receive. Every pound you donate can be put to Christian service in our local community, free from time-consuming admin for church volunteers.

With the addition of a simple and secure online process, there are three easy ways to donate to your church through the PGS: you can set up your Direct Debit online, by telephone, or fill in a gift form at church.

Donors in St Weonards parish are among the first in England to be making use of the new online service from PGS, as part of a pilot project. To get started, simply visit <u>parishgiving.org.uk</u>, find St Weonards using the easy search tool, and follow a few simple steps to set up your donation securely.



Or you can scan the QR code on this page, which will take you straight to St Weonards parish landing page on the PGS website. It couldn't be easier.

Alternatively, you can set up your regular gift by phoning the PGS team on **0333 002 1271**, Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm. The PGS code to quote for St Weonards is **180618246**.

If you'd like to know more, please visit <a href="www.stw.org.uk/St-Weonards-church/">www.stw.org.uk/St-Weonards-church/</a> or get in touch with your PGS Representative, Stephen Herbert, at <a href="mailto:stweonardspcc@gmail.com">stweonardspcc@gmail.com</a> or 01981 580667.

Thank you very much for your generous support. Stephen Herbert





#### **Garway School and Pre-school**

Julie Jones wrote in the newsletter: Happy New Year and welcome to a new term. This week is not the return we had anticipated, but our value this month is PERSEVERANCE and we are all digging deep, rolling up our sleeves and getting on with what needs to be done. I am reminded of the quote from Nelson Mandela: "It always seems impossible until it is done."

The school is grappling with the frequent changes required in the current times to provide meaningful learning opportunities for all the pupils whether in school or at home. Wherever they are, the exciting topics for this part of the term are:

Pre-school – Earth, space and transport.

Class R - Dinosaurs.

Class 1 – Great Fire of London and everyday materials.

Class 2 – Using materials, houses and the history of London.

Class 3 – Water cycle, rivers and states of matter.

Class 4 – Properties of materials and mountains.

We look forward to hearing more about these and congratulate Julie Jones and her team for all their hard work in keeping the education of the children on track. *Fiona Mynors* 

#### A Challenge! Hot chocolate and biscuits for 130+ considering COVID-19 isolating procedures.



Garway Primary School planned a festive walk through Garway Village to reunite themselves with villagers and to enjoy the beautiful Advent windows and Christmas lights. These had been put in place by villagers in response to an invitation from the Spice Girls to bring some cheer to the village in these difficult times. One of our ladies suggested that it would be nice to offer the children a cup of hot chocolate and a biscuit at the end of their walk. We asked Julie Jones, headmistress of the school, whether this would be possible/practical and she was delighted with the suggestion and accepted.

To provide 130 plus cups of hot chocolate whilst observing the six COVID-19 *bubbles* in place in Garway School, was quite a challenge! So hot chocolate and mini marshmallows were purchased, biscuits, cookies and mince pies made, milk ordered from Kelsmor dairy, thermos flasks and jugs borrowed.

Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> December arrived and so did the rain! Dressed in thermals and waterproofs we parked six cars in the car park in front of *The Moon* and served the hot chocolate etc. from their boots!

The children, dressed in wellies and waterproofs, had walked up through the village waving to the villagers on their way. The shortest legs visited the beautiful fairy grotto and then returned to the common. However, the rest of the school marched on and visited the new houses at Malferna View. They then negotiated the flooded road towards Skenfrith by taking a detour across the grass, before returning to the common for their refreshments. They waved and sang Christmas songs and appeared oblivious to the weather. What a treat for the villagers!

On the common the children waited patiently as The Spice Girls organised themselves into six feeding stations. There was a lovely moment for the children as a Christmas pony arrived bedecked with tinsel, a lovely red blanket for a saddle and a teddy on board!

The children after drinking their chocolate and eating ALL the biscuits etc made their way back to school waving and singing. We hope they still ate their Christmas dinner.

This was the loveliest morning, forgetting the rain. We all benefited from the children's cheery faces and just being able to "do something" and actually see people face to face. It would appear this may become an annual event!

Thank you, Julie, and all at Garway School for brightening up a very gloomy day in our village, what a lovely idea that was. *Garway Spice Girls* 

#### Litter on the Hill

It's lovely that more people are finding their way to Garway Hill and enjoying its natural beauty. But today, once again, I came home with more than I left. A smashed child's plastic toboggan, several crisp packets, sundry discarded plastic and metal detritus; plenty of it from McD – all potentially harmful to livestock. People kindly pick up lost items like a sweet tiny pink wellington and single gloves and leave them by the gate. But what is in the minds of those who take the trouble to remember a dog poo bag, collect the mess up and then leave the bag by the gate? Who do they think will deal with it? I usually pick up any I spot because I don't want dog owners getting a bad name - but really? And, no – a rubbish bin is not the answer! *Liz Lloyd* 



#### GARWAY HILL COMMONERS' ASSOCIATION; LOCKDOWN LITTER

Garway Hill Commoners' Association would like to re-enforce Liz's comments about litter on Garway Hill. At our recent AGM we discussed this increasing problem. Whilst being pleased that more people have enjoyed this beautiful wild place during lockdown, we must condemn the habits of some who abuse the place, leaving lager cans, crisp packets and plastic bottles. I removed a carrier bag full of rubbish on just one afternoon. Worse than that, a friend and I had to discuss how best to remove dog poo bags which had just been placed underneath the bench at the summit. She carefully carried the offending item home on the end of her walking pole. The Commoners' Association asks everyone to take their rubbish home with them (including *of course* dog mess). It is a danger to the sheep and the horses, it is a danger to peoples' health, (in the case of the dog poo), and it is an assault on the wild beauty of the hill which, as Liz says, is emphatically NOT a municipal park with litter bins. So, if you see anyone leaving rubbish, perhaps you could ask them (politely) to take it home. And we should all make sure to leave nothing behind on the hill but our footprints.

#### Corinne Westacott GHCA

#### **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.

Our focus is on learning how historical events, from the Bronze Age to the present day, have impacted on our area and have influenced -- and continue to influence -- the bigger picture of social development.

Monthly talks are held between September and April on the third Tuesday of every month. During the summer months, walks, visits and events are arranged and advertised through an email list and this magazine. To find out more, look at the website. <a href="https://www.garwayheritagegroup.co.uk/">https://www.garwayheritagegroup.co.uk/</a>

For the time being, we will be posting some pieces on an irregular, more or less frequent, basis depending on what you send us – whether you are a Garway Heritage Member or not, you are welcome. These will offer a little more depth to previous talks, reminisces of World War 2, looking to the future post Coronavirus and more. Please send them to me, the chairman – liz@fouracretrust.org.uk

As there is no news yet of the reopening of Garway Community Hall or, indeed, the end of Covid restrictions, our programme of talks looks uncertain; please look out for details in our newsletter or by emails which you can receive by logging in to our website.

#### ORCOP

We are sad to report the recent passing of two distinguished senior Orcopians, *Bill Taylor*, aged 92, and *Peter Davies*, at the age of 97.

Bill and his wife Margaret lived in Orcop for many years and were very active in the local community and loyal supporters of Orcop Church. Following Margaret's death a few years ago, Bill moved to be near his family in Devon. A man of many accomplishments, he will probably be best remembered for his skill in bell-ringing. With the benefit of long experience, he educated many in this ancient art, including Peter Hallewell, who is now very ably passing on the skills learned from Bill to the next generation of ringers.



Peter Davies was a veteran of the Normandy landings and the subsequent advance of British forces across Europe in the Second World War. He had many stirring recollections of the campaign as viewed from the turret of his tank. Following the death of his wife, he lived alone in his bungalow up the hill from Orcop Church, where he continued to display the self-reliance nurtured during his distinguished military service. He was a keen fly-fisherman and tied his own flies well into his nineties. He was employed for many years by the National Coal Board and I believe he benefited from free coal deliveries in perpetuity. He was a keen supporter of the British Legion and attended the act of remembrance at the Orcop War Memorial in November 2020. I always found it a great pleasure to meet him, not least on this final occasion, when he was supported on his daughter's arm and looking frail. We managed to exchange salutes, nevertheless.

Both Bill and Peter will be sorely missed and we extend our condolences to their families and friends.

The Orcop "Carol Service Without Carols" was held on 13<sup>th</sup> December. The traditional order of lessons and carols was rendered impossible, so a bespoke "Poets' Church" order of service was devised, which retained the readings but included some less traditional items. We managed to ring three bells, which barely did justice to the stirring rendering of Tennyson's "Ring out Wild Bells" which followed, by Tim Bannerman, with appropriate musical accompaniment by Chris Northam. Rik and Jude Loveridge gave an amusing and moving rendering of Nativity from the viewpoint of the inn keeper and his wife, with John Davies taking the crucial part of "The Star", which he switched-on at precisely the right moment. There followed further poems, John Betjeman's "Christmas" (modified extracts) and finally David Donaldson's own composition, "The Christmas Tree ". The proceedings were inevitably a little chaotic, but Elizabeth presided with admirable patience and stoicism.

We are indeed fortunate to have the wealth of local talent that enables us to come up at very short notice with something a bit different, as the circumstances dictate. Many parishioners contributed to this "alternative service", and thanks must include all those who organised the wonderful floral and other decorations, the readers, including Sarah Griffiths (for whom we must find something other than "The Shepherds Abiding" next year), the bell-ringers, Peter Hallewell (of course) Chris Davies and one other, Tim, Rik, Jude and John, for their Thespian endeavours, Chris, for his beautiful playing on the newly tuned organ and David Donaldson for composing and reciting his own work. Last but not least to Margaret Fletcher for overseeing things and Elizabeth for presiding with such tolerance.

The Christmas Day service followed a more traditional format, with numbers obviously depleted by Covid 19. Here we must thank Elizabeth and Margaret Oubridge who played for us the carols we could not sing.

#### Peter Garratt

#### Orcop Neighbourhood Development Plan - Update January 2021

The Steering Group held a remote meeting with our planning consultant on 17 December after receipt of the formal statement from Hereford Council which was largely in line with our previous discussions with them. We agreed the consultant should commence drafting the NDP document based on the preferred option C in the Housing Delivery Report. This will then need more detailed input from the Steering Group, and subsequently a six week consultation period will take place when further contribution and comments are welcome from parishioners. The consultant will be involved to clarify content and answer questions.

Meanwhile all queries should be addressed to Mark Hearne, Orcop Parish Clerk, tel: 01981 251887 <a href="mailto:clerk@orcopparishcouncil.org">clerk@orcopparishcouncil.org</a>.

Margaret Serle, Chair, Orcop NDP Steering Group

RAINFALL IN 2020 - Another Record Breaker



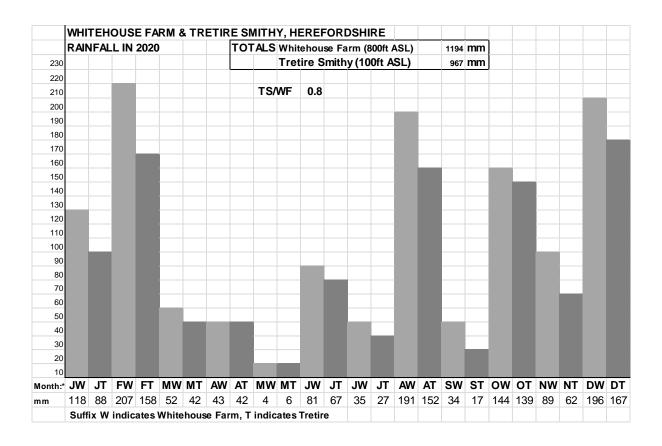
As for the past eight years, this commentary is based on records from Whitehouse Farm (on the southern rim of the Orcop Basin at about 800ft elevation) and those kindly provided by John Oubridge for Tretire Smithy (Elevation about 100ft). The two sets of monthly totals are summarised on the bar chart below. I have records for Whitehouse Farm from 2009 to 2020. 2020 now has the distinction of being the second wettest year since 2009, with a total of 1196mm, it was almost 50mm wetter than 2019 and only 30mm short of the total of 1226mm recorded in 2012.

The record is much too short of course to invoke climate change as the reason for another year of very high rainfall and extraordinary monthly variation, but both 2019 and 2020 have exhibited trends that are consistent with the changes we have been advised to expect. Monthly totals ranged from 207mm in February to only 4mm in April. Last year we reported that, over 36 hours in late October 2019, Whitehouse recorded 86.7 mm (3.5inches). There was a further extreme rainfall period only four months later. In the week 9 to 17 February an extraordinary total of 130.7mm (over 5 inches) was recorded at Whitehouse, of which 95.2mm fell in four days. This brought further flooding misery to those affected by the earlier event, and in some areas brought severe flooding to properties that had not been affected previously.

Whilst the monthly totals for February, August and December were each close to 200mm, the spring and early summer period from April to July was exceptionally dry, with a monthly average of only about 40mm. This was something of a blessing in that the fine weather coincided with the first period of Covid lockdown. Average annual rainfall at Whitehouse over the 12 year record is 945mm, so 2020, at 1196mm, was more than 25% above average.

As usual, it is interesting to compare the Whitehouse Farm and Tretire records. In 2020 there was remarkably good agreement between the two. They followed a similar pattern with the Tretire annual total 80% of that recorded at Whitehouse Farm.

In summary, had the media not had Covid 19 to worry about, it is likely that the extreme volatility of the weather and the disruption it caused to many would have featured more prominently in the headlines. The redeeming features of the weather in 2020 were the fine, dry spring and the fact that hardly any of the precipitation fell as snow. Will we be so lucky this year?



### TRETIRE WITH MICHAELCHURCH AND PENCOYD

We have been so concerned about the long and severe illness of Rosemary Evans, necessitating many weeks in hospital. So I was delighted when I rang for news of her this morning to have Rosemary answer me! So Welcome Home Rosemary! So many people have been asking after you and we hope you will continue to recover and feel stronger every day.

We would like to welcome the Crowther family, Ben, Sophie and Freddy, and Charlie the dog to their new home at Cross Ways, Tretire. We hope they and their flock of sheep will find Tretire a happy and friendly place to live.

An even newer arrival to our villages is baby Edith Rose, born to Tina and James Snow on January 4th. What a wonderful New Year present for you both, and for David and Paula! Many congratulations to you all and we hope that mother and baby are doing really well.

A raffle with a difference took place on the evening of December 17th via the new, but much appreciated, medium of Zoom. The prize was a beautiful quilt depicting the *Twelve Days of Christmas* most ably made and generously donated by Helen Goodwin, and the draw revealed Tom and Sarah Vaughan as the lucky winners. Thank you once again Helen. Your hard work has contributed £715.00 to church funds, so very much needed, and so very gratefully received.

Tom and Sarah feature again in our next item of news, as they very kindly extended an invitation to the communities of our three villages to use their grounds for an Outdoor Carol Service. This was originally to have taken place round a bonfire in their field, but the preceding days of relentless rain made that totally unfeasible. Undaunted, along with the help of a very resourceful group of Pencoyd villagers, a new site was prepared on

the gravel area to the side of Pencoyd Manor. In place of the bonfire, three fire pits were kindly supplied by David Snow and Nick Snell, who also supplied the wood.



The visitors were able to assemble around the fires, keeping their feet dry on firm ground, and join in the act of worship led by Elizabeth, our vicar. It was focused around the story of the nativity, told by Elizabeth Malcolm, reading from the familiar gospel story, and illustrated by a cast of younger families from the villages. The Holy family were the very newly arrived Crowther family from Crossways, Tretire; the Pursey family from Trevase supplied the shepherds; while James and Jonathon Snell and Jim Holt were the Three Wise Men. Alex Inkin left the heavenly realms to appear to Mary and the shepherds.

James Snell kindly supplied the musical accompaniment for the carols on the carol sheets which were heartily sung by all who had remembered to bring their torches. After the service, Alex returned in human form to recharge glasses with the mulled wine she had prepared which was keeping warm by the fire pits. Sausage rolls and mince pies were supplied by ladies of the PCC and other church members. People stayed on and chatted at safe distances, enjoying the warmth of the fire and the attractive setting provided by all the lights in the Manor House windows and their twinkling Christmas Tree. Folk were reluctant to disband from what had been a most convivial community gathering after months of so little happening in the villages. "We should do this again," we kept hearing from many participants, but maybe Tom and Sarah would like someone else to offer next year. It must have required a lot of hard work preparing for such an event, and I am sure we all say a huge, "Thank you" to Tom and Sarah for inviting us all and making it possible.

Thanks too, for Paul Snell and Mark Evans for helping us to park safely, and for helping to set up and then dismantle the "scene";

And to those who provided gazebos to shelter the refreshments;

To Alex for supplying the mulled wine;

To the ladies who provided the tasty eats;

To all of you who took part in bringing to life the Christmas Story;

To Elizabeth Malcolm for masterminding the whole event;

And to Elizabeth Cathie for helping us to feel we had welcomed the Christ Child in Pencoyd- on that dark and cold night, transformed as it was by the warmth and the light of the fires, and the familiar words from the Bible readings and the carols.

**Margaret Oubridge** and more from John Oubridge who swears he found it in a cracker:

What did the big bobble hat say to the warm woollen scarf?

You hang around while I go on ahead.

**Found**: on the verge of the B4521 at Tretire, dropped, fallen or thrown – a video camera – Canon HD Legria HF R205 18X Zoom – somewhat battered.

If the owner would like it back, email oubridge@phonecoop.coop to arrange collection.

#### HENTLAND

#### **News from St Dubricius**

We had our Carol Service on Sunday 13th December. The order of service was in the usual format, with eight carols and seven lessons. We had worked out that to comply with social distancing requirements, we could seat 30 in the nave, with one household in every other pew. This involved clearing some of the rear pews where parts of the dismantled Walker organ had been stacked. The organ was not allowed, so Selina Hamilton on violin and her son Sam, cello, accompanied a choir of five, led by Antonia who sang the first verse of Once in Royal as a solo. Her daughter Harriet joined us with James, a friend from Durham university, who also happened to be a choral scholar and tenor. They gave the ensemble a muscular timbre, together with Elizabeth from St Margaret's singing alto and the ancient churchwarden bass. Mince pies and a warm drink were served afterwards, for which the congregation raised the face-masks which had been worn throughout the service. The face-masks meant they couldn't really join in singing the carols, but they were invited to hum along which made it all the more inclusive. This was the first time the church had been used for worship since parish communion last February, and with the latest restrictions is likely to be the last time till next February or possibly even March. With work on the chancel having continued sporadically during the intervening months, there was a lot of tidying up and cleaning to be done before it was fit to be used and Val and her friends spent the best part of three days cleaning before it was ready for use. The myriad candles lit on every level added to the sweet singing and made it a truly memorable occasion.

The work on the chancel continues in the new year. The churchyard is more or less clear now, with the spoil from the new drains spread about and sown with grass seed; tombstones released from their protective boards, and some of the new gutters and downpipes fitted. The vestry roof still needs to be made weatherproof, with some cracked slates replaced and the lead under the coping stones fitted. The jungle that has sprouted over the years in the valley between the north aisle and the nave needs to be cleared. Inside, the Walker organ is gradually coming together while all that remains to be done on the chancel decoration is to paint the pattern on the new plaster above and to the left of the organ. **Robin Symonds** 

#### Wildlife in our Garden

Thank you Rob Taylor, for answering the question about the migration of fieldfares and other species from the north. No one has yet commented on whether robins migrate or not.

Garden life here through December has appeared to be relatively quiet. I am unable to report any significant thefts, vandalism or murders this month. The squirrels have been quite well behaved. The only concern I have is that moles have (or a mole has) become active again. That is to say that several large molehills have appeared in the lawn. What they have been doing deeper in the earth all autumn, I do not know. Could it be that they are now hollowing out chambers ready to rear their young in when spring arrives?



I have nothing against moles except for what they do to lawns; in fact I find them rather charming, so I have no wish to harm them. For a number of years I strove to find a humane method to persuade them to leave us and move into the fields around the garden. I tried hollow tubes made from plastic bottles stuck into the ground (they are supposed to make a noise when the wind blows over them). I tried children's windmills (also to vibrate and make a noise). I tried a battery operated probe that makes a noise underground. I tried putting mothballs into their holes and planting Allium mollis in strategic places. I also tried weeing into their holes! None of these ploys had any noticeable effect. One summer I was driven to putting sprung metal traps into their runs. I caught several moles, whose death must have been pretty swift, and had no more trouble from molehills for nearly two years after that. So I have to decide, which do I value most, wildlife or the garden?

The birds coming to our feeders have not changed much. There are always about half a dozen bluetits busily queueing for a turn on the nuts, plus four great tits and a pair of great spotted woodpeckers. A variety of species visit the seed feeder, including sparrows, chaffinches and robins, and the same birds plus a pair of dunnocks enjoy the bread crumbs and seeds put onto a low wall. Sadly the marsh tit has not been back. The most dramatic sight has been the black birds feeding on the rotten apples that we've thrown out under the feeders, especially since the frosts have been more frequent. We now often see up to seven of them in quite a small area, four males and three females, chasing a competitor off their apple and losing it to a third!

#### John Oubridge

#### Additional nature notes from our area

We have a very ordinary garden, quite pretty in the summer. It is exposed to some wind directions but does seem to attract plenty of wildlife and opportunities to observe all around us. Wildlife to us is as you see it, not as it is supposed to be according to Google and some publications.

Most wildlife is welcome in our garden, some more than others. The ones we do not welcome are moles and mice. Moles are quite easy to catch and I do capture quite a few every year. A very unusual thing happened two years ago. I spotted a new mole run and decided to place one of my tunnel traps in it. I caught one within a few hours and thought that would be it, but replaced the trap back just in case. The next morning, to my surprise I had caught another two, one each end. Surely that would be it, I thought, but replaced the trap anyway. Again next day another catch and on it went for ten days in which time I had caught thirteen and a stoat. A friend of ours is a pest controller so I rang him to ask if it was rare to catch so many in a single run. He said not rare but very unusual. It was April and Chris thinks they were speed dating as it was the breeding season. The stoat catch was rare according to my friend so I am pleased I have photos of it for reference.

Mice are quite pretty, but can be very destructive when they get into our potatoes or any material items in the sheds. Fortunately, they do not seem to chew electrical wiring any more, now that they are plastic not rubber. They were responsible for many fires in the past with their chewing. We have a live mouse catcher, and any catches are released unharmed a few miles away as they are at the bottom of the food chain and sustain quite a few others higher up including owls.



A couple of years ago I was catching wood mice weekly and occasionally some very large ones, all released unharmed miles away. It intrigued me as to why these large mice were suddenly about so again I asked my pest controller friend. He had no idea, and asked me to let him see the next one I caught. Upon doing so he was intrigued and took it away for identification. He eventually identified it as a Yellow Neck Mouse. These mice are not known to be in this area at all and mostly confined to the south of England and mid Wales he said. Well I can confirm they certainly are in this area as I have relocated nine in one year. Mysteriously I have not caught any in this last year. Yellow neck mice are quite distinctive when you look at them closely, apart from their size, at least twice the size of a wood mouse. They have a yellow marking between their front legs going up around their bibs, hence the name we assume.

Last year in early November we had the privilege of having the Great Egret visit the field opposite our cottage. It only stayed four days this time before moving on. Two years ago it visited in October and was around for four weeks. The bird appears to be pure white and is the same size as a Heron. When we have the privilege of seeing this bird it is nearly always accompanied by herons. Maybe it is lonely. We understand the bird has been seen by others in our area, but where is it the rest of the year, and has it got a mate somewhere? Also where does it roost I wonder?

Next month I would love to tell you of some of our other experiences we have had this year on a private lake nearby and some more observations of one of my favourite birds, the swift.

Remember what my old gamekeeper friend always said, Nature and wildlife do not read books so never be surprised at what you see.

#### **David and Christine Pleace**

#### **Book Reviews**

#### The Other Side of the Bridge by Mary Lawson

I was enchanted with this book – so full of fluent prose and subtlety.

The narrative dodges about in time from the 1930/40s to the 60s, neatly signposted by dated headlines from the local paper at the start of each chapter. Arthur and Jake are the two sons of a farming family in a remote corner of northern Canada. Arthur, the elder son, is solid, slow-thinking and honest to the core; Jake, his younger brother, is his opposite – mercurial, charismatic and self-serving, but adored by his mother.

Jake subtly manipulates and confounds his apparently dull brother throughout the whole of their lives; and this is built up very cleverly, evoking a sense of menace and evil behind apparently innocuous encounters. At the outbreak of the second world war neither Jake nor Arthur are called up – Arthur because of his flat feet and Jake because of the aftermath of a previous accident which left him with a limp. Arthur is left to manage the farm and deal with his guilt as his boyhood friends succumb to the war one after the other; while Jake vanishes to pursue his own affairs, both financial and amorous.

Come the 60s, we are introduced to teenage Ian, son of the local doctor, who goes to help Arthur on his farm during his weekends and vacations, along with two German POWs. Mesmerised by Arthur's wife Laura, he becomes a close friend of the family. And then Jake returns unexpectedly, driving a red and cream Cadillac and sweeping all before him - tensions are ratcheted up bit by bit with inevitable tragic consequences.

Lawson's writing is cleverly wrought – she meticulously builds up her characters and their connections. It is a masterly account of the dangers of charisma and its potential to quench simple honesty.

#### Crow Lake

Also by Mary Lawson, this, her first novel, is equally compelling. Set once again in fictional small town Struan in northern Canada, the Morrisons are a family that set great store by education. The four children of the family are tragically orphaned, and Luke, the eldest son is determined to raise the family himself, in spite of lack of money. He spars with his brother Matt, who is in a close twosome with sister Kate, the main protagonist; and he takes on all the tasks associated with raising toddler Bo – changing nappies, potty training, bedtime stories – to all intents and purposes, a teenage father, with a strong sense of dedication to his task, but a somewhat laissez-faire chaotic approach to his responsibilities. Matt and Kate share an interest in biology, and spend many hours studying the teeming life in the local ponds.

Finances will not stretch to the two older boys both going on to further education and a choice has to be made. Matt is the more academic, so he prepares to leave home and pursue his studies, the family's finances to be invested in his future, which will hopefully lead to a secure career from which he can help to support the progress of his siblings. But circumstances unexpectedly dictate otherwise and Kate goes through her life unhappy at what she sees as a waste of Matt's abilities.

This is a book about human frailties and determination, with the upbringing of little Bo providing some lighter moments. It is about finding purpose in life, and examining the accepted wisdom of what makes a good life.

#### Hilary Smallwood

#### Lincoln Lightfoot and the Eccentrifuge a Novel by P.S. Lightfoot

Penned by an author who resides in these parts, this debut work shines light on the sort of ancestor I suspect we all secretly hope might be found skulking in our family closets.

This stirring account of the author's great-great-grandfather's eventful life starts in 1882, when Lincoln's activities as a petty swindler lead to his being sentenced to deportation. He skilfully sidesteps justice by stowing away on a steam ship bound for New York. From there, his wayward nature leads him inexorably toward the untamed west. However, this is no conventional Western story. The usual casserole of 'cowboys and Indians' has no place here. A much richer dish is offered, as Lincoln - after discovering a flair for showmanship - finds himself wading into a mix of rogues, urchins and ladies of ill-repute, all locking horns with the land-grabbing powers-that-be. This heady brew is further enriched by such literary dumplings as the famous showman, Barnum, an elephant, a solid gold egg and, of course, Lincoln's remarkable invention, the Eccentrifuge, with which he is determined to make his fortune. But then he falls for a feisty Native American, who sees in Lincoln and his Eccentrifuge a way of saving her vanishing Indian Nation ... by fair means or foul.

I found *Lincoln Lightfoot* and the *Eccentrifuge* to be an engaging and extremely entertaining read. With never a dull moment, humour and pathos are skilfully woven into every paragraph. There is always something afoot to stimulate the curiosity or tax the imagination of the reader and so ensure the turning of pages right up until the dizzying climax.

The novel is published by Archetype Books (<u>ArchetypeBooks.net</u>). To find out more about P.S. Lightfoot's mission to showcase his family's hitherto overlooked eccentrics, visit PSLightfoot.org and, while there, order a copy. You will not be disappointed. As mentioned, P.S. Lightfoot lives locally, so by ordering his book, you will be supporting our rich and diverse rural economy!

In conclusion, I recommend you look to the legendary Lincoln Lightfoot to light up your lock-down.

#### Peter Garratt

#### DID I HAVE COVID?

It was four days after Christmas. I went to bed feeling rather hot, and as the night wore on I felt hotter still. My temperature was clearly rising, but not yet the required height. I had no cough and I have never had any real sense of smell, but I began to feel I had Covid. On my iPad I looked up all the instructions, where to get a test, all the rules about self-isolating. Then I began to think about whom had I been in contact with? St A's where I had taken two Christmas services, then St J's where I worked with J. Would she have to self- isolate? Then I remembered that I had at least had the first part of a vaccine. This would surely save me from the worst effects of Covid, from being on a ventilator with my pace maker. I went down to my study to find the leaflet we had been given. Could I find it? NO.

As early as I could, before 6am I woke my wife to explain what we were in for. As always she was reassuring, but she apologised. By mistake she had left the heating on all night and as my bed was next to the radiator... this would probably account for my modest increase in temperature. By 8 am my temperature was back to normal. I had learnt a lot in one night and was even more determined to be responsible in the future!

(My brother is a retired parish priest and contributed this article recently to his local parish magazine! **Fiona Mynors**)

#### One day...

One day, we'll step out of doors, walk down the street, meet our friends, share a cup of coffee and chocolate cake.

One day we'll play football, build a fire, roast potatoes, sing a shanty, climb a mountain. We'll open wide church doors.

One day we'll cry for the lost, remember the stillness and separation with due respect, carry the candle

of calm into our daily lives, watch with joy, as petals open, birds build their nests, bumble bees fly from flower to flower.

We'll remember to stop, be still, cherish birdsong and new blossom. We'll cook and converse with new care, study and travel with eyes open.

We'll pray and praise with new vigour. We'll break bread with fresh delight. We'll message, email and zoom with new respect, with love and diligence.

Together with friend and stranger, we'll know our deep humanity, our links across waves and mountain. We'll hold hands and share vision.

One day we'll remember and share, carry the candle of calm into daily life, respect the stranger, cry for the lost.
One day we'll celebrate our whole world.

#### Judy Dinnen

## Chuckle Corner

Various important people in Washington DC considered encasing Donald Trump in concrete and burying him in the foundations of a wall, but decided against setting a dangerous President. (Courtesy of Janet Harvey)

and Les Philips added,

One thing is for sure he would never 'cement' good relations!

A farmer was up in London for an NFU meeting. On arriving at the

escalator for the underground, he encountered an official notice: "Dogs Must Be Carried". He arrived very late because it took him an hour to find a dog.

(Courtesy of Brian Phillips)

As always, we can rely on Peter

What's the difference between ignorance and apathy?

I don't know and don't care.

Where there's a will there's a relative.

'I stand corrected,' said the man in the orthopaedic shoe.

I went on a once in a lifetime holiday. Never again.

I called my lawyer and said, 'Can I ask you two questions?'
He said, 'Of course but what's the second question?'



#### The birds of the parish need your help - will you join us?



Since moving into the parish seven years ago, it has been gratifying to read the monthly notes on birds and other wildlife in the Parish News. It is great that there are people here who are committed to improving the fortunes of our wildlife. My interest in the birds of the parish is that I am Vice Chair of the Herefordshire Ornithological Club (HOC) and will be standing for the post of Chair in March 2021. I write to seek your help.

The world changed in 2020. The Covid-19 lockdowns gave greater opportunities for many of us to get out into our local

environment and notice the wildlife. Records of birds entered onto the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) BirdTrack site **increased** in 2020 reflecting this greater engagement with wildlife, and particularly birds, around us. However, much of the important bird surveying work carried out by the BTO was inevitably severely curtailed.

As background noise from the road networks and flight paths disappeared almost overnight, I became even more aware of bird song, particularly at dawn and dusk, even in rural Herefordshire. The significance of bird song is an emotional as well as a biological phenomenon. I remember reading Rachel Carson's *'Silent Spring'* in the late 1960s and being deeply affected. Who could not be moved?

"Those who contemplate the beauty of the earth find reserves of strength that will endure as long as life lasts. There is something infinitely healing in the repeated refrains of nature — the assurance that dawn comes after night, and spring after winter."

Birds are a bellwether of our natural world. When the insects that pollinate our plants go, our plants follow. When the plant seeds and insects that feed our birds go, so do our birds. We are all dependent on the health of the world's natural ecosystems.

So, the birds of our parish are a highly visual and aural indicator of natural well-being, and that is why their research and conservation is so important. If you have lived in the parish for any length of time, you can't have failed to notice changes in our bird populations. The two habitats with the most significant long-term changes in the UK are farmland and woodland – both of which lie at the heart of Herefordshire's economy and identity. Regrettably, many of the changes are for the worse. Corn Buntings no longer frequent our farmland hedgerows, Marsh Warblers no longer sing on the banks of the Wye, Corncrakes no longer utter their rasping call from hay fields, Nightingales may still be singing in Berkeley Square, but not in Herefordshire's woodlands, and the hypnotic churring of the beautiful Turtle Dove is but a distant memory. And many other birds, once common in the locality, Curlew, Lapwing and Snipe to mention a few, are now very scarce.

But it's not all bad news. In the 1960s, you would not have stood in the shadow of a Red Kite soaring overhead, nor would you have seen the magnificently wild Goshawk pirouetting high above the woodland canopy during its late winter and early spring courtship flights. The exotically-plumaged Mandarin Duck did not breed in the county and neither did the less-exotic Cormorant. Not until the creation of the county's gravel pits did Ringed and Little Ringed Plover breed. And whoever thought that our Grey Herons would be joined by startlingly white Little and Great White Egrets.

The reasons for these changes are complex and manifold. Changing land use and agricultural practices, government policies and climate change all undoubtedly play a part.

The HOC will be renewing its focus in 2021 and greater emphasis will be given to projects supporting the research and conservation of birds in Herefordshire, with a particular emphasis on farmland birds. The more members we have the more we can

do. If you are not already a member of HOC and have an interest in the future of our local birds, then please do consider joining us.

You can find out more about the Club at <a href="https://herefordshirebirds.org/">https://herefordshirebirds.org/</a> or contact our Membership Secretary directly at <a href="mailto:membership@herefordshirebirds.org">membership@herefordshirebirds.org</a>.

And what can we do for you? Well, you will join a dedicated band of over 300 members ranging from novices and casual birdwatchers to professional ornithologists. You will be able to join us (once circumstances allow) on guided walks throughout the county, attend bird identification courses, join local projects and surveys and listen to some of the best UK speakers on birds at our increasingly popular online talks programme.

Given this emphasis on farmland birds, we are particularly keen to work collaboratively with those from the farming and land-owning communities.

We also need also need volunteers with a wide range of skills to help run the club and to manage our range of activities. For example, we need volunteers with good administrative skills to help our committee function effectively. We need people with web design expertise; digital publishing skills; legal expertise; social media skills; marketing and publicity experience; statistical skills and people with good links to schools, further and higher education institutions.

Henry Bull, who published the first definitive guide to the birds of Herefordshire in 1888, wrote:

"The Turtle Dove has ever held a foremost place among the pleasant sounds and sights of spring....is common throughout the villages, hedgerows and small coppices of Herefordshire, but is most frequently heard than seen...[it] has ever been regarded as the emblem of peace, of love, and of constancy."

Just imagine hearing Turtle Doves again in spring....

Together we can make a difference.

#### **Dr Robert Taylor** (Hentland)

Editor's note: Since writing this article, Robert has had to withdraw from active leadership temporarily on health grounds. We wish him well.

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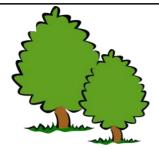
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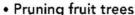
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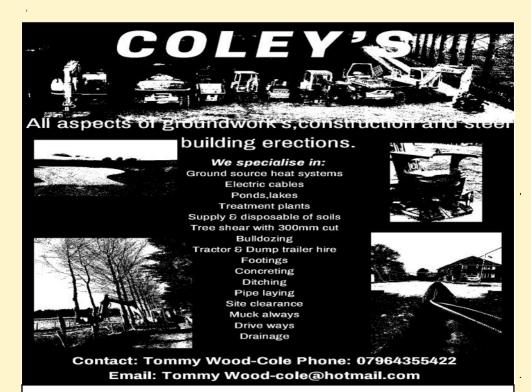


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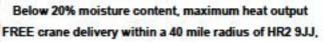
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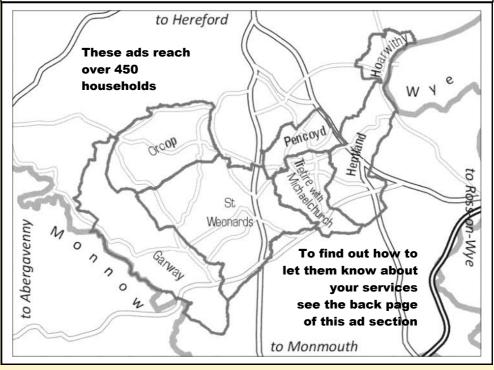


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