

FECKENHAM

January 2025

NEWS



Published by Feckenham Church for the village.
Editor Gilly Cooper - feckenhamnews@gmail.com
(Copy Date 14th)

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Feckenham News in January

Dates for your Diary

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<u>Regular Sessions</u>	
Mondays Junior Dance Class	
Tuesdays Tai Chi	
Wednesdays Playgroup; Bridge	
Thursdays Bridge; Hatha Yoga	

Second Monday of the month: Mobile Library

First Tuesday of the month:

Lunch Club, Feckenham Sessions

First and Third Wednesday: Community Choir

Second Wednesday Art Club

Third Monday of the month: WI

1st and 3rd Fridays : Erstwhile Morris Dancers

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Many articles in Feckenham News are contributed by members of the public. They remain the responsibility of the writers and neither the production team nor the publishers can be held responsible for the views and assertions contained therein.

Editor's Note

Firstly, may I wish everyone all the very best for the New Year.



Thanks should go, once more, to the hard working committees who make the village such a great place to live. I'm particularly thinking about the Square Management Committee who made The Green look so pretty for Christmas and, as ever, treated us to mulled wine and mince pies while we gathered for carols around the tree. We should also thank the Feckenham in Bloom committee who are gradually improving the look of the village. In the Spring there should be a lot more bulbs on show and later you'll note some new climbers on Church Walk, as well as newly planted trees on Astwood Lane. If you are new to the village or just want to get to know more of your neighbours, joining a committee or even the Parish Council, is a great way to meet people and to put something back into the community. If you want a pointer, don't hesitate to contact me directly.

Of course there's the newest committee who are carefully looking into the multiple plans for Battery Storage. There's more detail on page 5 about this, links to their website and Facebook page. This seems to be the largest risk to our village in decades, if not, of all time. Though the use of renewable energy is vital for our environmental impact, these plans seem to unnecessary and poorly considered. Please add your comments to the planning officer, to have a much input as possible from the community.

Our village hall is very busy. I've updated the diary on page 3 to include all the regular classes and groups that meet there. Take a look - something may catch your eye which might align with your New Year's resolution. Perhaps a trial of yoga, tai chi, a game of bridge, the choir or maybe you want to take your little ones to playgroup. There's something for everyone.

Just a reminder that the Mobile Library visits us on the second Monday of the month.

In order to bring the magazine out every month, there are many people who help. Some people send me articles monthly, some occasionally. Others help with distribution. Ian Bellion sends many regular articles and checks my editing before it goes to print.

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Tuesday, 7th January in the Bar from 8pm - Free
TRADITIONAL MUSIC

Thursday, 23rd January
QUIZ NIGHT *Please book your table!*

Saturday, 25th January
BURNS NIGHT Specials

Thursday, 30th January
FISH MENU

www.roseandcrownfeckenham.co.uk

Feckenham Against Battery System Storage & Solar

FABSSS is a group of highly skilled and unbelievably determined villagers from Feckenham. We are all working together to raise awareness in the community about the proposed applications for Battery Storage Systems & Solar Farms (BESS) that threaten to surround our beautiful precious rural village home if we don't take immediate action to prevent it.

What a number of quite different companies want to do is plant large containers full of batteries in Feckenham to store electrical energy. This is the electrical equivalent or a large reservoir, storing energy for peak times.

These are really large containers and each have a cooling system similar to an air pump but on an industrial scale. One air-conditioning unit when its running is noisy but imagine maybe 1000 or more all running all of the time to cool these batteries on our doorstep. There is a BESS bandwagon and because of our local substation, there are companies and landowners who want to access it and make money from it. We had a number of successful 'drop in' sessions and the next step will be a survey initiated by the Parish and Borough Councils.

If you wish to keep up to date on developments as this issue is moving at pace. Please check www.fabsss.co.uk or our Facebook page.



Village Notices

Mobile Library

My name is David and I am the County Mobile Library customer advisor. Many of you may not be aware that the mobile library visits in your area and many other rural areas of Worcestershire each calendar month.

The mobile stocks a wide range of adult fiction and non-fiction, large print books, local history, and spoken word CDs. There is also a selection of children's books from pre-school to teenage. New borrowers can join on the mobile without having to visit a main library and reservations can be made and collected from the mobile on the next visit or sent to any other library. In addition, items that are issued from other sites can be returned to the mobile and you can also return mobile loans to any other county library. The existing mobile has been in service for ten years and offers a pleasant, bright environment with full disabled access.

Check the timetable to see if the mobile stops in your area.

The mobile also visits a number of other villages in the surrounding areas and across the county. If you wish to find out where, go to the libraries and learning page of the Worcestershire County Council website and click the mobile library section to access an A to Z list of all the stops in the county or call 01905 822722 and speak to a member of the libraries hub team.

David Foley
County Mobile Library Customer Advisor
worcestershire.gov.uk/mobilelibraries

T4U CHRISTMAS SHOEBOX APPEAL 2024



Thank you, for your Christmas Shoebox Gifts, for children and families in Eastern Europe who have so little !

This year, our boxes have been distributed in Moldova. Such a poor country !

Thank you Feckenham and all of our Shoebox friends from Stoke Prior, Callow Hill, Bromsgrove 1st Otters Cubs, Horton Hall Retirement Apartments, Bradley Green, Hanbury, Droitwich Church, to all who kindly made donations and for all of the beautiful hand knits too !



We collected 364 boxes, added to that £894 from generous donations and proceeds from Wake Day T4U were able to make up another 85 boxes on our behalf. Therefore it is with the greatest of pleasure that I can tell you our GRAND TOTAL this year is 449 boxes.

Thank you so much, for giving all of these children some joy and lasting happy



memories this Christmas. They will know that we haven't forgotten them and they will have hope for better times ahead

YOUR BOXES REALLY DO CHANGE LIVES

Local Hero

From Kim Jones, Redditch Foodbank Coordinator:

This is my uncle Alan. He is an absolute gem! I love having him on my team of Foodbank volunteers at Tesco.



Alan replied:

So there is life in the old dog. Did a total of 4 shifts (2 on Friday and 2 on Saturday) making a total of 6 hours standing and speaking to every customer who came my way to explain what the FOOD bank does and how it relies on them purchasing an extra item and donating it to the FOOD BANK.

WI

We had a change to the planned speaker and so our December meeting was our Christmas party, which involved comparing home-made with shop-bought mulled wine (turns out that we're not fussy, they were both nice!); a game of '2 Truths and 1 Lie', which was very enlightening; charades, which we were quite rusty at (might have had something to do with the wine though...); and finally a game of toilet roll races (we didn't want to risk ruining the newly-cleaned back room carpet so we played with empty glasses rather than full). Who says that you're ever too old to enjoy a bit of Christmas silliness?

Our next meeting is on Monday 20th January, when we shall be learning how to do a Thai hand massage (we all need a bit of pampering after Christmas!).

Our meetings are free for members and guests are very welcome at £5 each. We meet in the back room of Feckenham Village Hall on the 3rd Monday of every month. Please contact Jen Cary for more details on 07773 883 039.



CHURCH SERVICES



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Vicar: Fr Glenn Reading 01527 894436

vicar@feckenhamchurch.org.uk

Church Warden: Vacant

For Weddings, Baptisms & Funerals please contact Fr Glenn

Website: www.feckenhamchurch.org.uk



PARISH CHURCH
OF
ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST
FECKENHAM

Services for January 2025

5th January	10.30am	Eucharist	Rev Linda Nicholas
12 th January	9.00am	BCP Communion	Rev Fiona Carter
	10.30am	Family Service	Rev Fiona Carter
19 th January	6.30pm	Evensong	Fr Glenn Reading
26 th January	10.30am	Eucharist	Fr Glenn Reading

Drop in (in church)

Wednesday at 10.30am - 12.00pm
8th January and 22nd January



All are welcome (coffee and cake)



FECKENHAM ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH St John Fisher & Thomas More

Mass will not be held at St John Fisher and Thomas More until further notice.

Mount Carmel 6 pm Sunday Mass is now the Live Streamed Mass.

Link: www.eventcast.uk/live (Type the link into the browser)

Fr. Anthony Rohan, The Presbytery, Redditch. Tel 63096

Local contact: Phylis Mott, Feckenham. Tel 893898

Reverend Fiona writes...

New Year Reflections from Reverend Fiona
Traditionally, the New Year is a time to re assess our lives. Many of us will start a new year resolution like going to the gym, losing weight or giving up alcohol, smoking or vaping. In my life previously I used to be a Weight Watcher leader. I was the person who stood at the front of the class and asked the question "who has had a good week?" You had to be a counsellor as well because people would get very upset at the scales if they had tried very hard and then not lost any weight, that is very hard. They also would get upset if they had had a traumatic week and then not been able to stick to the diet. We are very complex human beings. But to get to the point, in January lots of people would join Weight Watchers and would probably have left by March. Which is all very normal.

I think the media also get on the band wagon and encourage us to give up something by using terms such as Veganuary and dry January. They have probably got an ulterior motive. What I am trying to say really is, be kind and gentle to yourselves. There is a lot of pressure to be perfect, especially physically, and if we have high expectations of ourselves then as we are fragile human beings we may falter. There are many Saint's feast days in January so traditionally we should feast on those days. Some of you may remember Mother Victoria who was here in Feckenham as a curate. She knows all the Saints feast days and has a recipe for virtually all of them for some sort of cake that is appropriate for that feast day.

Jesus liked a party, and he turned water into wine at a wedding. It was his very first miracle, the wedding at Cana. In those days it was a disgrace to run out of wine, so he saved the family from disgrace and embarrassment.

Some people may have a serious addiction problem or a health issue like diabetes so they may well really need help and support to face these issues head on. And my prayers are with them.

Every day is a new start in God's eyes his mercies are new every morning. Anything that we have done that we felt we shouldn't have done or could have done better or anything that worries us can be left at the foot of the cross every day and we start again.

God bless you all and I hope you all have a blessed New Year.



Feckenham Village Hall



MUMBO JUMBO.

A long established trio has undergone a facelift and is heading to Feckenham Village Hall. Mumbo Jumbo now features two fabulous piano players in Richard Hughes and Phil Bond and the band is led by trumpeter and vocalist Oliver Carpenter. This eclectic singer/songwriting trio sit somewhere in the folk, blues, and acoustic areas of music and are renowned for their witty and audacious banter - and equally witty lyrics.

Twice nominated in the British Blues Awards and commissioned to write the official song for VE Day 75, the trio write about everything from old soldiers to 19th Century cartoon characters, love, light and wealth of even more unusual subjects.

This is a professional show coming to Feckenham as part of the Live & Local programme. Supported by Arts Council England and local councils.

MUMBO JUMBO - FOUR HANDS AND A HORN

Sunday, 9th February at 7.30pm

ALSO BOOKING

23rd March : **THE TIM KLIPHUIS TRIO**
"One of the world's finest fiddlers"

5th April : **THE MIDLAND SINFONIA**
The Good The Bad and The..."

TICKETS for shows at the Hall
 are on sale at **The Village Shop**
 and **The Rose & Crown.**

Book online through www.feckhall.org
 Book by phone on 0333 666 3366

Draw results

Feckenham Village Hall Improvement Fund

Draws carried out on 3rd December, 2024.

November

1	£25	113	Bob & Amanda Gordon
2	£15	159	Mel Clarke
3	£10	77	David & Jill Rowe

December

1	£25	123	Alan & Geri Slater
2	£15	176	Brandon Clayton
3	£10	16	Miranda Powell

Feckenham's Own...



Listen at
www.swansbrook.com

SWANSBROOK Radio

SOMEBODY'S LISTENING

It's very difficult to judge just how many people are listening to Swansbrook Radio. Our transmission system gives rough figures but people listen through different systems which aren't always detected. It's a hopeful sign that there is somebody out there when requests come in for our Christmas programmes. As the station is on the internet, it can be heard anywhere in the world so it's a useful tool for letting distant friends know you still care.

The bulk of this year's requests were for Christmas music in Chris Fletcher's Classical Swansbrook show. Chris bent her own rules slightly to allow Chris Rea, Chuck Berry and Andy Williams to qualify as "classical" - though she did have to grit her teeth while playing The Pogues. Other programmes featured messages about long lost friends (lovers perhaps?) and even a request for a pet pig.

CAROLS ON THE AIR

It's become a bit of a tradition that Swansbrook Radio transmits the annual Service of Lessons and Carols from the church. This began during the pandemic in order that people could experience the service without putting themselves in danger. Colin James has masterminded these broadcasts throughout but recent advances in technology have changed things dramatically. The earlier transmissions involved multiple microphones and mixers with cables running everywhere. This year a far superior result was achieved using just two radio microphones and a tiny recorder - progress!

LISTEN TO THE SWANS

Go to www.swansbrook.com and follow the instructions you'll find there. Many of our programmes are available for you to play ON DEMAND - listen when and where you like - as often as you like.

FECKENHAM'S OWN Local Radio

www.swansbrook.com

The FeckenOdeon Cinema Society



“LAST TIME HE WENT THERE THEY WERE BLOWING HIM UP”

Michael Caine and Glenda Jackson bring a huge amount of joy to the heartwarming true story of Bernard Jordan, the 89-year-old veteran who snuck off to attend the 70th anniversary of D-day. A moving and surprisingly nuanced drama offering far more than flag-waving nostalgia. This was Glenda Jackson's last film (she died in June 2023) and Sir Michael Caine says he's retired... but he's said that before! (UK 2023)

THE GREAT ESCAPER (12A)
Saturday 25th January at 7.30pm



A LITTLE DAY OUT...

When an aging artist persuades her nurse to take her on one last attempt to gain recognition neither of them reckoned on it turning out to be an epic journey. At times hilarious, at others touching, this is a delightful film that celebrates eccentricity and humanity. Based on the experiences of real life artist Audrey Amiss, this is a warm and offbeat film that will both move and amuse. (UK 2022)

TYPIST ARTIST PIRATE KING (12A)
Friday 7th February at 8pm
Doors open at 7.30pm - Licenced Bar

Tickets for all FeckenOdeon shows are on sale at The Village Shop and The Rose & Crown. You can also book by phone on 0333 666 3366 or online at www.fecknodeon.co.uk

Feckenham Square Management Committee

ALL'S WELL...

Every two years the Square Committee commissions a safety survey to ensure that the trees on and around The Square aren't going to suddenly fall over or drop branches on passers by. Recent storms seem to have proved that everything is pretty sound but, just in case, the men in hard hats appeared on 11th December and had a good look. Their report arrived a few days ago and concludes that all of the trees are sound but two require minor work to remove some dead branches. This will be done in February

MOWING AND BLOWING

You may not be aware that The Square is maintained entirely by volunteers. It's mowed and trimmed regularly throughout the growing months by members of the Committee. Recently the job has been taken on by a new member in the form of Bill Rollins who has approached the task with enthusiasm and gusto - so much so that the elderly sit-on mower reacted to the onslaught by falling to pieces. It has now been repaired and refurbished and stands ready for the spring. At Bill's suggestion the Committee has invested in an industrial strength leaf blower. Bill has used this powerful tool to clear all the leaf fall from the pavements, roadways and The Square itself - so no more squelching through rotting leaves on the way to the church or pub. Bill extended his efforts to Mill Lane... though it's perhaps a pity that no-one told the horse that "decorated" the Lane profusely the very next day...

CHRISTMAS HAS BEEN AND GONE

By the time you read this Christmas will be but a memory - but, at the time of writing, preparations are still in hand for Carols on The Square. We can only hope that it actually happened and thank, in anticipation, all those who helped put it together. We'd also like to thank the two gentlemen who came to help us put the Christmas Tree up - much appreciated. There's still a chance for others to muck in and help because the tree and all the lights will come down on Saturday, 4th January - just pop down to the Square at around 10am and give us a hand.

WHAT'S ON IN

FECKENHAM VILLAGE HALL



LIVE & LOCAL

Twice Nominated in the British Blues Awards

Mumbo - Jumbo

Four Hands and a Horn!

Songs and laughter from three singer-songwriters

SUNDAY, 9th February - 7.30pm

Book online at feckhall.org
by phone 0333 666 3366
or in person at The Rose & Crown
or The Village Shop

Feckenham Parish Council

MEETING

Thursday, 9th January - 7.30pm

Feckenham Village Hall

(Back Room)

All welcome - Meetings Include a Public Forum where parishioners can bring matters to the attention of the Council and ask questions.

theWVI

INSPIRING WOMEN

Next Meeting

Monday, 20th January

THAI HAND MASSAGE

8pm - Feckenham Village Hall

Contact jen@thecarys.co.uk for details

Send details of events for FREE listing to:

FECKENHAM



THE
FECKENHAM
SESSIONS
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First Tuesday of every month from 8pm
NEXT SESSION: Tuesday, 7th January

Stock & Bradley
GARDENING CLUB

SNOWDROPS
To
DAFFODILS

A talk by
ROB COLE

Bradley Green Village Hall
Wednesday, 15th January
at 7.30pm

Feckenham READERS GROUP

Tuesday, 14th January - 7.45pm

This month's book:

THE MAGICIAN

By COLM TÓIBÍN

Details: 892285



THE
FECKENODEON CINEMA
SOCIETY



MICHAEL CAINE
GLENDA JACKSON

INSPIRED BY A TRUE
LOVE STORY

12A
THE GREAT ESCAPER

FeckenOdeon 1 Saturday, 25th January at 7.30pm

REALITY IS JUST AROUND THE BEND

TYPIST ARTIST
PIRATE KING 12A



"RIOTOUSLY FUNNY AND TOUCHING"

Time Out

FeckenOdeon 2 Friday, 7th February at 8pm

The FeckenOdeon Cinemas
at Feckenham Village Hall

Tickets for all shows from The Rose & Crown and Village Shop
Telephone Booking 0333 666 3366* Online Booking* & full information at

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*Booking Fee applies to Phone and Online Bookings

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whatson@feckenham.f9.co.uk or call 892130

Feckenham Archive - Marion Chute



Did you know that the bridge on the Droitwich Road has listed status? It also has this lovely milestone which has listed status too but is rarely seen as you take your life in your hands trying to look at it. It is described below by the Milestone Society,

Milestone, Feckenham, Bow Brook Bridge, B4090, N side, partially inset into bridge. Carved stone post, erected by Stratford to Bromsgrove (Alcester) turnpike trust, 18th century. Inscription reads: // To (A)lcefter / 6 / To / London / 108 / Miles //. Grade II listed by Historic England. Milestone Society National ID: WO_DWAC07A. Last record: 2013. (See www.milestonesociety.co.uk)

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RESIGNATION

After many years of service to the Parish Council Cllr. Pat Dormer has decided to step down. The Council wishes to thank Pat for her past efforts. The resulting vacancy will be advertised following consultation with the Electoral Services Department of the Borough Council.

NEW COUNCILLOR

The recently advertised vacancy has been filled by co-optation at the Council meeting on 12th December. The new Councillor will be Karen Reynolds and the Council thanks her for her application and looks forward to working with her.

FINANCES

At their December meeting councillors discussed the Precept Request which will be submitted to the Borough Council by the end of January. The precept is a sum of money, collected through Council Tax bills, to be used for the operation and activities of the Parish Council. The total amount requested last year was £60,000 and it is likely it will be a similar amount for the coming year

The monies collected in this way are used to run the Council as well as to pay for the Parish Lengthsman, Feckenham in Bloom and to award grants to other organisations within the Parish. This year grants have been paid to Feckenham Wake for storage facilities, the Coronation Celebration entertainment, Feckenham Erstwhile Border Morris Group and the Moors Lane Residents' Association.

The Parish is also required to have adequate reserves to enable the Council to cope with contingencies, pay for elections, etc. The Parish Council will be making a major contribution to flood prevention works which are expected to cost around £20,000. It is hoped as the Council builds up reserves, It may be able to consider other projects in the village.

In the past year the Council has contributed to efforts to combat speeding traffic by the provision of new white gates at the entrances to the village. Three additional Vehicle Activated Signs (VAS) have been purchased - two have been installed and a third is awaited. The Council has also provided a new bench in the recreation field and funded improvements to Church Walk. The final decision on the level of Precept to be requested will be made at the next Parish Council meeting - everyone is welcome to attend to observe the process.

NEXT MEETING

The next Parish Council meeting will take place on Thursday, 9th January at 7.30pm in the Back Room of the Village Hall. All are welcome to attend.

GET IN TOUCH

If you have queries or need help with local problems you are very welcome to contact the Council. Initially you can call the Parish Clerk on 01527 892522 or Email:

clerk@feckenham-parishcouncil.gov.uk



Visit the Parish Council's website for information about the Council, planning issues, local organisations and useful contact details to help you solve problems. You'll also find digital editions of Feckenham News going back to 2012.

feckenham-parishcouncil.gov.uk





Community First established its bulk oil buying scheme in 2013. Helping people living in our rural communities reduce their bills. The idea is simple; by bringing people together to place their orders we can make the most of joint buying power and negotiate a lower rate for everyone. The savings

are passed directly to you, so you pay less per litre.

The way it works.

You pay an annual fee of £20 per household. Over the years customers have saved much more than this each year. You get a great price every time with just one e mail to us. No more shopping around and chopping and changing. Just one simple e mail order to francesw@comfirst.org.uk

Community First will contact you to ask if you want to place an order. The minimum order is 500 litres and you can order as often (or as seldom) as you like and by e mail is best. They will then negotiate the 'best price' for the bulk order from a range of suppliers, making sure you get the best possible deal. We aim to be around 2.5p per litre lower than the English Average price each time. Community First will then tell you who the supplier is, the price per litre and when the delivery will be.

The oil will be delivered to you and you pay the company supplying the oil direct.

Richard Timney of Community First in Herefordshire and Worcestershire says:

"We are an independent charity working with rural communities in the two counties since 1974.

Our aim is to build better communities, helping to make sure that rural communities not only survive but thrive with our team that is all local, friendly and committed.

So if you want to join our group get in touch at francesw@comfirst.org.uk.

Being rural shouldn't mean that you can't get good value fuel and convenient service."

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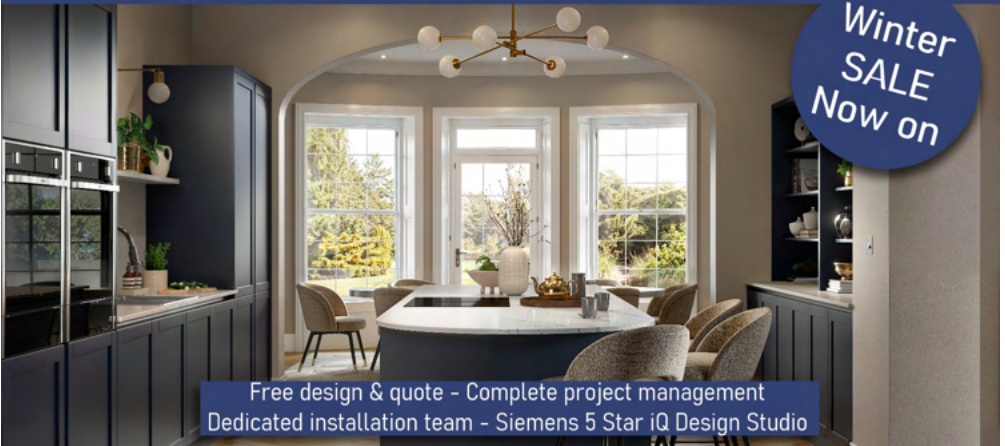


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Village Shop - Alan Slater

Let me start by wishing all our customers a very happy, prosperous and hopefully healthy New Year. We never take for granted the support you give the Village Shop and we are looking forward to serving you throughout 2025. As you can imagine the run up to Christmas was very busy and I would like to thank all our volunteers who worked during the festive season. This month we are rewarding them with a party to celebrate the seventeenth anniversary of the opening of the Shop. It's hard to believe that we have been going for so long and, amazingly, some of our original volunteers are still appearing on the daily rotas. Many village residents will remember that for twenty three years Feckenham did not have a shop and that a trip to Redditch was required to obtain even the basic necessities. We have come along way since 2008 and the Shop continues to go from strength to strength not only as a profitable retail outlet but also as a major contributor to the social life of our village. Your support allows us in turn to support many events and organisations that enrich the Feckenham way of life, long may this continue.



January is our quietest month of the year as many of our customers will either be consuming the remains of their festive leftovers, or embarking upon a diet to shift the added pounds acquired during the last few weeks. If, however, you have been well behaved, we will be delighted to see you as our deli counter will be fully stocked and there will be an excellent choice of home made cakes to tempt you. A New Year resolution might be to become a volunteer. I can promise that you will enjoy the experience.

In the run up to Christmas we raised over £700 from the sale of Margaret Green's beautiful hand knitted decorations and dolls. All the proceeds have been sent to support Project Morogoro in Africa so a big thank you to those of you who helped us to raise the funding and a huge round of applause for Margaret for her tremendous effort. I believe she has already begun knitting Easter Bunnies that will be appearing by March.

So now the nights will slowly be drawing out let's hope for some better weather and, please, no more road closures.

Rob Cole's Gardening Tips

Plants for February Effect

A quick look around our garden in early February showed that there were a good number of plants which were effective, either as flower or foliage, and which would be still effective in the coming month.

One of the best for flower and fragrance in February is *Daphne bholua* 'Jacqueline Postill'. This evergreen variety is usually difficult to source and is often expensive, but well worth it. If fragrance is one of your winter criteria, the shrubby *Viburnum x bodnantense* 'Dawn' is a good choice and the smaller evergreen *Sarcococca confusa* carries shiny black berries at the same time as its little white flowers. For spectacular colour and fragrance the Witch Hazel is hard to beat and can be found in various shades of yellow, orange, and red. My favourite is *Hamamelis x intermedia* 'Orange Peel'.

Snowdrops are also at their best in February, and although I have acquired quite a few of the more unusual cultivars, I think that the common snowdrop *Galanthus nivalis* is both inexpensive and effective. They can be bought as newly lifted bulbs at about £20 per 100 from mail order advertisers in the gardening press at this time of year.

There are many evergreen shrubs and perennials which are useful as colourful foliage plants in the winter months. *Bergenia* is a tough evergreen perennial and many of the cultivars have rich burgundy winter foliage. Grow them together with Hellebores and the winter flowering *Cyclamen coum* to provide a bed of colour over a long period. Add in some of the foliage forms of *Euonymus japonica*, such as 'Emerald 'n' Gold' or some of the winter flowering heathers, *Erica carnea*, and you will be surprised at the very colourful effect.

Some deciduous shrubs, particularly many of the varieties of Dogwood, are grown

specifically for their winter stem colour and one of the most effective in our garden is *Cornus sanguinea* 'Midwinter Fire', aptly named because its lower parts are a rich orange yellow, running into red towards the tips.

February is usually a dull month for the gardener, but by careful planting it is easy to bring a delightful sparkle into the dullness. So now is the time to make a note of these suggestions, to seek them out in the coming year, and to plant them for your future winter enjoyment.

Wildlife Section

Hedgehogs in Winter

Hedgehogs are now rarer in the world than tigers and they need all our help to not become extinct in this country. Hedgehogs that haven't managed to gain enough weight to hibernate will still be active throughout the Winter, but their diet of beetles and insects will be hard to find (slugs carry parasites and are only eaten as a last resort). If you suspect you have a hedgehog visiting your garden, please leave out a shallow dish of clean water and a bowl of meaty kitten biscuits (meat or fish must be the first ingredient listed) every night. If cats start eating the biscuits, you can put a saucer over the top and the hedgehogs will push it aside to get to the food. If you ever see a hedgehog out in the daytime, especially at this time of year, please contact our local rescues ASAP as they are dying (Array4Hogs near the Maypole or Solihogs in Solihull). Never take them to a vet. For expert information on hedgehogs, visit Hedgehog Cabin's website.



CLUB MEETING – Wednesday 4th December 2024

At our December meeting, members were entertained by Chrissy Barnes who runs her Enchanted Forest business from Elmley Castle. Chrissy gave a very effective demonstration of how to make a Christmas wreath and her skill, imagination and dexterity was very well received. She donated her completed wreath to the winner of a free raffle.

NEXT MEETING – Wednesday 15th January 2025

Our next meeting is in lieu of the usual Annual Dinner, and will be a talk by Rob Cole entitled 'Snowdrops to Daffodils. **Note the date**, which is different from our usual 'first Wednesday of the month'.

The theme for the monthly competition will be 'Something Flowering Today'.

Club meetings are normally held on the first Wednesday of each month at the Village Hall, Church Road, Bradley Green starting at 7.30pm, and are free to members for an annual subscription of £5.00 for 2025. Visitors are made very welcome and may attend for £3.00 per meeting. If you require any further information, ring Rob Cole (Chairman) on 07544 832052.



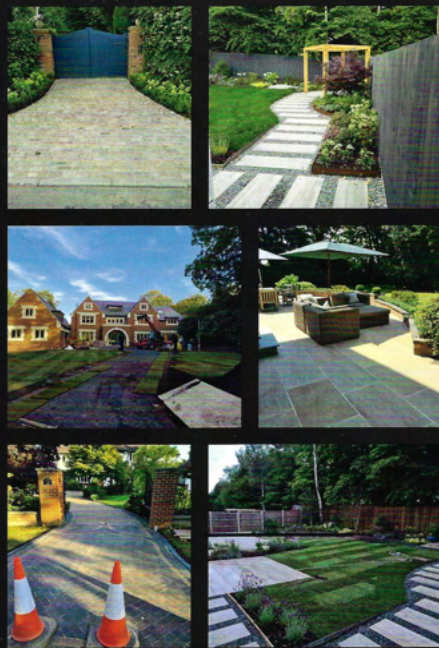
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Feckenham Cricket Club Bob Gordon

By the time that you read this Christmas 2024 is now in the past and the New Year is imminent. Storm Darragh hit the village hard in early December, resulting in flooding and trees down but fortunately the club was not badly affected – these weather problems seem to be coming much more regularly than I can remember and certainly looks to be part of global climate change. I asked our lead groundsman Steve to summarise the impact that this has on the club, and this follows.

Over the course of the last 20 years all cricket clubs have had to contend with the effects of floods, droughts, torrential storms and high winds which all cause expensive damage to facilities.

In recent years Feckenham CC has had to replace a number of items:

1. Boundary fences damaged by flood water
2. Sight screen frames, wheels and sheets damaged by high wind
3. Safety net support poles bent by high winds
4. Portable practice nets bent by high winds
5. Pavilion roof damage in recent storms
6. Trees damaged and felled for safety reasons

Related to the last item, Club members have purchased and donated many trees to replace those that have died from diseases like Dutch Elm disease and Ash dieback. The club is also extremely grateful for donations

from Feckenham Parish Council and the Feckenham Charity Fund for grant assistance to help offset these costs.

Clubs like ours have had to find ways to cope with the weather demands. Most now rely on mobile pitch covers and ground sheets to minimise the impact on wickets. The downside is that constant moving of these items is a heavy chore for a small group of volunteers.

Problems are exacerbated by league rules which demand that wickets are covered for a minimum of 2 days prior to a league game (or penalties are imposed). In periods of drought the same covers are used to protect pitches from damage to grass due to scorching sunlight and to help retain moisture on pitches that may have been irrigated as part of the match preparations. Watering pitches is of course very costly as the supply is metered!

The increasingly unpredictable weather is difficult to predict and manage. In one year, drought conditions put the emphasis on water conservation schemes, but when the heavens open the following year the emphasis is on improving drainage. Such projects are very expensive - running into many £000's - and grants from Sport England and the England & Wales Cricket Board (ECB) are not always targeted at these challenges.

In spite of this we continue to compete against our wealthier local rivals – bring on 2025!



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