

FECKENHAM

December 2023

NEWS



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

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Feckenham News in December

Dates for your Diary

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January

4th	Parish Council Meeting
9th	Lunch Club

Regular Sessions

Wednesdays Playgroup
Thursdays Bridge; Hatha Yoga; Pilates
Fridays Meditation Class
First Tuesday of the month:
Lunch Club, Feckenham Sessions
First and Third Wednesday: Community Choir
Third Monday of the month: WI
2nd and 4th Fridays : Erstwhile Morris dancers

Front Cover

Photo: Janine Lynn's remembrance display by the editor

Magazine online at www.feckenham-parishcouncil.gov.uk

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.

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Editor's Note

As we say in Scotland, where I grew up, "The nights are fair drawing in". When the season becomes colder and darker, in many cultures and religions there are celebrations involving lights and fun. Christmas is celebrated in various ways in our country both religious and secular, Hinduism has Diwali and Judaism has Hanukkah to name a few.



Apparently Christmas owes its roots to the ancient Roman holiday of Saturnalia, which was a pagan festival celebrated from December 17-25 each year. This custom was altered and absorbed into Christmas, and this allowed early Christians to gradually erase these old pagan holidays.

So this is a chance for some winter bacchanalia - feasting, drinking and fun. In ancient Greece and Rome this meant an orgy celebrating the Greek god Bacchus but nowadays, in some ways we are more civilised, and shall enjoy some mulled wine, carols around our Christmas tree and traditional foods with friends and family as well as an opportunity to be kind to those less fortunate than ourselves. This we do in so many different ways. You'll find the Village Christmas Card circulated with the magazine. The donations from the card will be split equally between the charities, Shelter and Crisis. The church Charitable Giving has covered the printing cost, so that all donations you have made will go to the chosen charities. I know people show their generosity in a multitude of ways, perhaps welcoming a stranger to spend Christmas with you or sending toys to children who are in need. This year, perhaps more than in recent times, the needs of others is greater as we think about those affected by war and humanitarian disasters. Anyway enough of doom and gloom, I hope you all have a fabulous Christmas and a very happy, healthy, peaceful 2024. With hope and optimism. Gilly

Feckenham Square Management Committee

CHRISTMAS IS ALMOST HERE

..and that means that it's time for an extra tree to appear on The Square. The Square Committee have sourced an excellent specimen so now all that needs to be done is to erect it and decorate it. This is where you come in - if you could spare an hour on Saturday 9th December you could help haul the tree into place and dress it in tasteful lights and baubles. The tree is provided by the Committee for everyone to enjoy over the festive season so it would be good if you could help at **10 am on 9th December** - just meet us on The Square and we'll tell you what to pull or push!

CAROLS ON THE SQUARE CHRISTMAS EVE AT 6.30pm

Everybody's welcome to join the merry throng on The Square on Christmas Eve for Feckenham's traditional welcome to Christmas. Carols On The Square will feature all the usual ingredients - mulled wine, mince pies, raucous singing and guaranteed snow in abundance.

We suggest that you abandon your preparations, leave the turkey to stuff itself and head to the centre of the village for an hour amid friends and neighbours. Everything's free - it's the Square Committee's way of thanking the village for support throughout the year. (There will be a collection for the County Air Ambulance Service). The singing will be led by the All Round Voices choir. There'll be soft drinks for the kids and a large portion of goodwill for everybody!



Newshound - Jen Cary



We are Sue and Bill Rollins and are in our mid sixties and are now both retired. Having lived in Birmingham all our lives, we promised ourselves that when we had retired we would find ourselves a home in the country, never dreaming that we would end up in such a wonderful location as number 9 Mill Lane. It would be fair to say we have been blown away by the warm welcome the residents of the village have given us and already realise what a very special place this is and look forward to becoming more involved moving forward. At the moment, weather permitting I am out working on the garden and Sue is busy about the cottage and filling her bird feeders; she is overjoyed with the amount of birds in the garden and the green wood pecker that pays us a visit every day. The other member of our family is Ruby, our 5 year old sausage dog who has decided that she likes it here too, so all is well in the world.

New Newshound Needed!

I've been the village newshound for the last 5 years and since my youngest child was born I've found it increasingly difficult to get round to see people to interview them. I don't want new people to miss out on their welcome (which many unfortunately have already) and a chance to introduce themselves to their new community, so if anyone feels like they would like to take on the role, please let Gilly, the Feckenham News editor, know.

Warrilow Household Celebration

Many Happy Returns to Cyril "Pops" Warrilow from Timber End Cottage as he celebrates his 90th Birthday this December. Also congratulations to Grandson Ellis who has achieved the amazing feat of becoming a 2nd Dan Black Belt in Tae Kwon-Do at just 13 years old. What a finish to the year!

Lunch Club - Change of date

Due to the Christmas holidays, Lunch Club in January will be held on **Tuesday 9 January** at 12.30 pm in the Village Hall.



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Feckenham Village Hall



Saturday 2nd December - 7.30pm **ORCHESTRA OF THE SWAN MIDWINTER**

Join Orchestra of the Swan for a breath-taking tribute to winter and the festive season, featuring music and words from across the centuries - ancient carols, folk fiddling, traditional Christmas songs and classical favourites.

Midwinter is a pre-Christmas orchestral concert that sets the Christmas mood with beautiful arrangements for strings, harp & percussion by David Le Page of well-known carols and trad tunes, interspersed with familiar classics. A lively evening that delights in all sorts of festive music - expect 'Fairytale of New York' by The Pogues, alongside Vivaldi 'Winter' from the Four Seasons and upbeat arrangements of 'Riu Riu' and 'Three Ships' - and many more!

BOOK NOW TO AVOID DISAPPOINTMENT!

**TICKETS FOR ALL EVENTS AT
FECKENHAM VILLAGE HALL**

Are on sale at The Village Shop
and The Rose & Crown.

Book online through www.feckhall.org

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IMPROVEMENT FUND DRAW REMINDER

The first draws of the 2023/24 year will take place on Dec 5th, so if you wish to be included in the chance of a monthly cash prize of £25, £15 or £10, it is just about not too late to enter.

Most village households will have received an individually numbered letter earlier in the month

explaining how to contribute the £12 to enable entry to the monthly draws. If you haven't yet, but do still wish to participate, please quote the FVH*** number on that letter when making your contribution.

If you still wish to join, and have mislaid or didn't receive the letter, please contact the treasurer, Peter Chute (chutes@btinternet.com) before 5th December, and we will be able to add you to the list.

Last year's Fund contributed £1,080 (after paying out the £600 draw winnings), so this is a worthwhile and important contribution towards covering the cost of improvements to the hall and its facilities.

IMPROVEMENTS IN PROGRESS

Sharp eyed readers will already have noticed that the exterior doors to the Back Room and kitchen have been replaced. Redditch Joinery have supplied and fitted new doors which match the existing ones in the Main Hall. In the next few weeks the Back Room windows will be renewed. The old doors and window frames, despite annual maintenance, had started to rot and would soon have become unsafe.

In addition, work has now started on replacing the Hall's aged stage lighting system - some of the components are over 60 years old. A new LED system will be in place soon and this will cut the Hall's electricity usage during live and cinema performances by 75%.



Feckenham Church Notices

Feckenham Church Charitable Giving

As we approach Christmas, we are delighted to see the Shoe Boxes accumulating in the Church. The Church is also, and has been for many years, a collection point for the local Food Bank donations. This year we are also a collection point for the *"Make Christmas Special Toy Appeal"* being organised by Churches in our Deanery at St Stephen's Church in Redditch Town Centre. If you would like to donate a toy (New Toys only, for the Birth to 18 years age group) we have a box at the back of the Church which will remain there until 15 December.

As a Church we have always made donations to other Charities to demonstrate God's love with generosity and acts of kindness. In 2022 donations made included a Toilet Twinning Project organised by Tearfund (Feckenham is twinned with one in the Democratic Republic of Congo), the Royal British Legion, the Salvation Army, Crisis, the village Christmas Card Printing costs, and the local Charities Nightstop and Acts of Kindness (Foodbank). The amount we can give depends on the level of general fund donations we receive. The Giving Group will be meeting soon to decide on what Charitable donations we will be making this year.

T4U CHRISTMAS SHOEBOX APPEAL 2023

Thank you all so much for the love, kindness and generosity you have sent to a child in need this Christmas!



I am sure that at some point on Christmas Day we will be thinking about the children and praying that our Shoebox Gifts will be giving them all the best Christmas ever and hope for better times to come.

I will be able to tell you where our boxes were distributed in next months Feckenham News.

On behalf of all the children and their families, I would like to wish you A Very Happy Christmas

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CHURCH SERVICES



PARISH CHURCH of ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST

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

Services for December 2023

3rd December	10.30am	Morning Prayer	Rev Fiona Carter
10th December	9.00am	BCP Communion	Fr Glenn Reading
	10.30am	Family Service	Rev Fiona Carter
17 th December	6.30pm	Benefice Carol Service	Fr Glenn Reading
24 th December	10.30am	Crib Service	Rev Fiona Carter
	9.00pm	Christmas Eve Eucharist	Fr Glenn Reading
25th December	9.00am	Christmas Day Eucharist	Fr Glenn Reading
31st December	10.30am	Benefice Eucharist	Fr Glenn Reading

Drop in (in church)

Wednesday 13th December at 10.30am - 12.00pm

All 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

Fr Glenn writes

Autumn is here and winter won't be far behind. The clocks have gone back, and days will shorten, all this hastens the end of the year that will come all too quickly. There is a sense of urgency as we throw ourselves into a hive of activity.

We began the season in November which is a month of remembrance, we begin the month celebrating All Saints Day, recalling the men and woman whose lives and legacies are left as a reminder of God's grace to his people and his church. Soon after we remember All Souls and we commemorate our loved ones that go before us and we commend them into his care and that place where there is no more pain or tears. Our final act of Remembrance recalls the duty and service of so many men and woman that paid the ultimate price of giving their tomorrow's for our today's. In all our remembering we are looking back with a mixture of emotions, grief and loss, gratitude and humility and we redouble our commitment to the duty we have to the communities of which we are apart.

As we leave November behind and enter December, we also enter Advent, a time of waiting and expectation. Here we look back and we wait with expectation the coming of the Christ child as baby in the manger once again. Advent is also a time that requires us to pivot and look ahead, again with expectation as we look for the coming of the Christ, but this time as a King of all creation.

Advent prepares us for the reality that the Christ child in the manger, grows into Christ the man. Christmas will soon be here, a time where Christians wherever they are found re-tell that story of Jesus, the baby born of Mary. A baby foretold by the prophets, worshipped by Angels, Shepherds and Magi and feared by the religious and secular leaders of the time.

It's a story of a baby so special it echoes down the years, it is the story of God's Son, Jesus, Emmanuel, the story of God who saves, of God who is us and among us.

Isaiah the prophet foretold and foreshadowed the coming of this baby, the coming of the world's Saviour. Isaiah tells us

“those who have lived in a land of deep darkness, on them a light has shined. For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace...and there shall be endless peace.”

As we celebrate the birth of the baby Jesus we remember the darkness of this world, the world where a world where too many know, hunger, fear, and lives where hope is dead. Our world is full of hurt and failure.

Yet Christmas is the night where the Christ child comes to us again, bringing love and hope to the world and to each one of us, God's love and healing for a broken world, God's love and healing for our broken lives. The birth of Jesus, born of Mary, sees a child, that will change the world, that will change lives, that will change us.

We remember the birth of Jesus the Christ child, this child born when Angels sang 'glory to God in the highest and peace to the earth', this child born bringing joy to lowly shepherds, this child born where Magi came from afar bringing gifts, this child born into a world torn by hate, division, pain and poverty. This child is born again wherever men and women say I will follow him as my Saviour, I'll follow him as my Lord.

Because this child grew to be a man and he said his reason for coming was to be bring 'good news, to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to captives, release to those in prison, to proclaim the Lord's favour'.

This child born to us again brings hope to the darkest world, this child, the son of God, comes to a world and changes it, this child Jesus, changes the lives of those who follow him and as we are changed, this child asks us, to take the light he brought and to share that with the world.

Our world is a world that knows too much darkness, pain and anxiety, it is my prayer that as we celebrate the birth of this special baby that changed the world, that we can be part of a movement that works to change this world, bringing light and hope, and the message of God's plan to save the world, let us go and change the world together. May God bless you and those you love and may you know the peace of the Christ Child this year. Amen.

WALTER RICHARDS

7 December 1933 - 29 September 2023

Born in Accrington in 1933, Walter never lost his Lancashire accent, despite living in the Midlands for over 50 years; his rendering of "Albert and the Lion" was a much-loved feature at many events in Feckenham village hall. He was



widely read and his love of music, poetry and especially languages was well-known; during National Service in the RAF he added Russian to the Spanish and French he had learned at school. In choosing a career, he was influenced by his parents' conviction that a suitable job should carry a pension - and because he was tall, joining the police was suggested. He opted instead for a career in tax which fortuitously led to his meeting Muriel and living in Marsden where they both became involved in amateur dramatics. Susan was born in Marsden, and a move to Huddersfield saw the arrival of Paul and Helen. A job with GKN in Smethwick brought them to Barnt Green, where he and Muriel were active members of the church and local choir and, Susan recalls, "organisers of our amazing holidays, involving long drives to France and a wide range of activities which left us all with a love of the outdoors". After taking early

retirement from GKN Walter set up his own tax advisory business, enlisting Muriel and Helen to join him. A move to Feckenham found them actively involved in village life, always to be seen accompanied by a Border Collie, Walter's expertise in matters financial much sought-after. He kept up his Spanish at a class in Redditch and joined four Feckenham friends for a week each May when they hired a narrowboat to follow one of the several canal-ring routes in the Midlands. Walter proved competent at piloting uncooperative barges and introduced them to Mexican Train, from then on an essential component of every trip. Later, he was instrumental in setting up the now thriving village shop. Feckenham was the perfect setting for spending time with his five grandchildren, playing football in the garden or chess and Mexican Train indoors. He passed on to them his love of reading, travel, and football. Although a supporter of Accrington Stanley, he kept up to speed with the progress of all teams so as to be able to chat with his grandsons. A final move to Wood Norton saw them both embracing new opportunities and making new friends. Ever the financial expert, Walter was involved in getting the Council Tax banding for residents there reduced. He became a regular at Pilates, and joined a French-speaking group in Evesham. He and Muriel, who had travelled all over the world, continued to have holidays abroad. During the last days of a holiday in Spain Walter was taken ill and died, Muriel by his side. It seems a fitting end, somehow, for one who was so quietly efficient, and who loved to travel so much, that he should die so peacefully, and on holiday in Spain.

Buen viaje, Walter.

Feckenham's Own...



Listen at
www.swansbrook.com

SWANSBROOK Radio

HAPPY SWANMAS...

The folks at Swansbrook Radio always enter into the Christmas spirit and it has been known for some of them to drink a drop too much of it... We're all

conscious that we can be heard anywhere in the world thanks to the Internet and

that means that we can reach Feckenhamsters in exile - perhaps working abroad or emigrated - as well as folk closer to home. If they can't come to you for Christmas we can send them a greeting and play a piece of music for them. All you need to do is to drop us an email with the details to radio@swansbrook.com - and, if you feel like a more personal approach, we can even record you reading your greeting. Just contact us and we'll make the arrangements.

Our programmes already have a tinsel tinge - Chris Fletcher's Classical Swansbrook is now airing with a fine selection of carols (traditional and unusual) as well as Christmas classics from round the world - many of them requested by listeners. Ian Bellion's Happy Hour will be featuring the somewhat dafter side of Christmas and will also contain your requests - while Colin James will be Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree... We'll also have some festive music in our Longer Listen streaming programmes. - so twiddle that dial to swansbrook.com for a Feckenham festive sound!

LISTEN TO THE SWANS

Go to www.swansbrook.com and follow the instructions you'll find there. 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



FAIR LADY RE-BORN

The FeckenOdeon's Christmas film is a real cracker - the word "lavish" could have been coined for this film. The production budget was the highest ever known at \$17 million - and it shows on the screen. The sets are glorious, the costumes are ravishing and the whole thing was shot on extra high quality 70mm film.

A copyright problem has kept this spectacular movie out of cinemas for around 25 years - this is one of the first theatrical showings where the film can be enjoyed on a giant screen in its original SuperPanavision glory - super sharp picture, glowing colour and immaculate 6 track stereophonic sound.

My Fair Lady features a vast cast headed by Audrey Hepburn and Rex Harrison aided by Stanley Holloway, Wilfred Hyde-White, Dame Gladys Cooper and Jeremy Brett. The Queen of Transylvania is played by Baroness Rothschild. The story of the poor flower seller picked out of the gutter and taught to speak "proper" comes from George Bernard Shaw's Pygmalion and the music and lyrics added by Lerner and Loewe have made it a long running favourite.

Come and join us for a festive treat - it's luvverly!
(UK/USA 1964)

MY FAIR LADY (U)

Saturday, 30th December at 7.30pm

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



Not sure whether there will be any snow this year but this one is from March 2008 with the Whirly Hole looking particularly picturesque. I know that we are all out photographing our village in all weathers, so any weather events would be gratefully received. Please email to marionchute@me.com or let me know if you have a hard copy that I can digitise.

Jazz for Charity - David Rowe



An enthusiastic audience of over 80 was brilliantly entertained with big band music from 1930s to the 1980s on Saturday 18th November. The Birmingham-based Out Of The Blue Band, conducted by Jo James, played in aid of the Sick Children's Trust with solo performances by talented vocalists Jan Harris and Lee Hamblett. Musicians ranging in age from 18 to 88 wowed everybody. With a raffle, an auction of Feckenham-made seasonal items and a bar some £1300 was raised. Many thanks are due to all those who assisted, helped, facilitated, attended and donated. It was a wonderful evening!

Feckenham WI

Many thanks to Maggie Stephens for her talk on her work in Samaritans for our October meeting. It was a very interesting and informative discussion and we're very grateful to her for taking the time to speak to us after she had been so recently busy with several village events.

Our November meeting was another active one as we were joined by Alcester White Hart Morris Men. After having bumped into them in the Rose & Crown in August 2022, we were delighted to finally be able to do a session together. We were very impressed with their musicians and dancing but I'm not sure they were so impressed with our efforts! They were very patient teachers though and we all had a very enjoyable evening.

Our next meeting is on Monday 18th December and it will be a crafty one, ready for Christmas. Janine Lynn of Feckenham Artisans will be very kindly demonstrating and helping us to have a go at wet felting.

Also, anyone visiting Worcester Cathedral this year for the Christmas tree display, please look out for the Worcestershire Federation of WIs' Christmas tree as several of our members have made some beautiful contributions.

Our January meeting is going to be a bit different: The ex-Chief Scientific Officer of Unilever, Ian Scott, will be giving us a talk on his new company, Moltex. You may have heard him on BBC Radio 4's '39 Ways to Save the Planet'. After Ian retired from

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Tuesday, 5th December - 8pm

TRADITIONAL MUSIC in the bar

1st to 21st December

CHRISTMAS FAYRE MENU

Bookings and pre-orders essential

Wednesday, 13th December

CHRISTMAS JUMPER NIGHT

Turkey Dinner & Xmas Pud - £15.95

Xmas Day & Boxing Day - drinks only

NEW YEAR'S EVE - Celebrate with us!

www.roseandcrownfeckenham.co.uk

Unilever he decided that he needed to put his substantial intellect to finding a way to tackle climate change. This led to him going back to his old passion for nuclear energy and so Moltex was born. Moltex reactors are fuelled by the waste from traditional nuclear power stations and are cooled by molten salt, making them much safer, cheaper and smaller. All are welcome to come and join us for what will no doubt be a fascinating and inspiring talk.

We meet on the 3rd Monday of every month. Members are free and visitors are £5. We meet in the back room of the village hall in Feckenham at 8pm (doors open 7.45pm). Contact Jen Cary for more details 07773 883 039.

WHAT'S ON in

**FECKENHAM
VILLAGE HALL**

Orchestra of THE SWAN



MIDWINTER
Saturday, 2nd December - 7.30pm

Tickets for all Village Hall events are on sale at The Village Shop and The Rose & Crown

Book online at www.feckhall.org
Phone bookings: 0333 666 3366

Fight the Christmas FLAB!
Join us for our 47th Annual

**BOXING DAY
WALK**

Tuesday,
26th December



Meet on The Square at **1.45pm** -
Walk starts at **2pm prompt**

Stout, waterproof footwear
essential - Dogs on leads please
Tea stop half way round

Feckenham Square Management Committee

CAROLS
round the **CHRISTMAS TREE**
On Christmas Eve

Sunday, 24th December

6.30pm on The Square

Hot Punch - Mince Pies - Everything **FREE**
Collection in aid of County Air Ambulance

Send details of events for **FREE** listing to:

Feckenham



THE
FECKENHAM
SESSIONS
TRADITIONAL
MUSICMAKING
at THE ROSE & CROWN

First Tuesday of every month from 8pm
NEXT SESSION: Tuesday, 5th December

Stock & Bradley GARDENING CLUB MY JOURNEY



A talk by Samantha Hopes
at Bradley Village Hall
Wednesday, 6th December - 7.30pm

Festive Shopping Experience

At The Jinney Ring, B60 4BU

30th November 2023 from 6pm
A portion of the proceeds will go towards
helping Age UK Herefordshire and
Worcestershire support those that need it
during the cold winter months.

ERSTWHILE



BORDER MORRIS

Twice monthly Sessions
at Feckenham Village Hall
2nd and 4th Fridays - 7pm

Christmas Opening Times at The Rose & Crown

Christmas Eve: Open all day
(Food 1- 3pm & 5.30 - 8pm)

Christmas Day: 12noon to 1pm - Drinks ONLY

Boxing Day: 12 - 6pm - Drinks ONLY
27th to 30th Dec. Open all Day (Food 12- 3pm & 6 - 9pm)

New Year's Eve: Open all Day

(Food 12 - 3pm + Evening Bookings Only)

New Year's Day: Food 12 - 3pm only

THE FECKENODEON CINEMA SOCIETY



Back on the BIG screen for the first time
in 25 years!

FeckenOdeon 1: Saturday, 30th December at 7.30pm

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
www.fecknodeon.co.uk

*Booking Fee applies to Phone and Online Bookings

*Phone calls answered by Ticketsource and charged at standard rates - NOT a premium line

Feckenham READERS GROUP

Wednesday, 6th December - 7.45pm
This month's book:

Boy Giant

By Michael Morpurgo

Details: 892285



theWIM INSPIRING WOMEN

Next Meeting - 18th December

WET FELTING

8pm at Feckenham Village Hall

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



FLOODING

At the recent Parish Council meeting flooding was a major item of concern. Our Parish Lengthsman spent most of Friday 20th October trying to clear the village drains as much as possible but due to the huge amount of rainfall, it was a very difficult task. The Parish Council thanks him for all his hard work. The Parish Council and Worcestershire County Councillors spent a large amount of money in 2021 improving the drainage around Poplars Lane down to Swansbrook Lane. It would seem this now requires more maintenance. It is hoped agreement can be reached with various landowners, North Worcestershire water management, Parish Council and our County Councillors.

HIGHWAYS

David Rowe, Chair of the Highways working party gave an update and presentation: David advised that the working party would concentrate on public safety around the village and the lack, quality, and depth of footpaths. The group felt the Equalities Act of 2010 would encourage Worcestershire County Highways to try to improve things. The act covers both physical and mental health conditions. The Dept of Transport's guide to best practice and inclusivity includes wheelchairs, prams, pushchairs, and mobility scooters to be able to access suitable footpaths. Four areas in the village were identified as being unsuitable:

- A. Droitwich Road Bridge.
- B. Alcester Road by the steps. Pavement can only be accessed by climbing 4 deep steps, which precludes people with mobility issues and prams/wheelchairs.
- C. Yeates Acre.
- D. Droitwich Road, Village shop. Approx 80% of villagers who use the shop must cross the road to use it.

E. High Street to Astwood Lane.
The full details will be in the November 2023 minutes on the PC website.

GARDEN WASTE

Cllr Brandon Clayton (RBC) advised the Borough Council will shortly be making available a further 6,000 brown bins for garden waste. These can be purchased from the Council at a cost of £60 per bin. Applications to Redditch Borough Council on Tel :01527 64252.

COMPLAINTS

From time to time the Parish Council receives anonymous complaints and comments. The matter will only be investigated if a name and contact details are provided. This does not mean that your details will be made public, but the Council needs to be sure the complaints or comments are not malicious.

BESS

The planning application for BESS (Batteries) on Astwood Lane continues. Hereford Worcester Fire and Rescue have written a full report of their concerns regarding the planning application. It is of huge importance as many people as possible make Redditch Planning Department aware of their views. If you require any help with this, do not hesitate to contact the clerk (Jane) on telephone number 01527 892522. If you are interested in joining a small group of like minded people who have concerns about this application and others in the pipeline, again please contact the clerk.

COUNCIL TAX

At the January meeting, the Precept will be considered and requested from the Borough Council. It is likely the Precept will be significantly increased to consider flooding works, legal fund, and other Parish Council costs. If you wish to hear the discussions, you are invited to attend the village hall on the 4th of January 2024 at 7.30pm.

CONTACT THE COUNCIL

To contact the Parish Council please email the Clerk at clerk@feckenham-parishcouncil.gov.uk or call 01527 892522

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Mt. Kenya Trek October 2023

Chris Bristow

10 years ago, in 2013, I trekked with a group of friends from Feckenham up Mt. Kilimanjaro, the highest peak in Africa, 5,895 metres above sea level. It was such a great experience that I planned to trek Mt. Kenya, the second highest peak at 5,199 metres. I booked the trip with my daughter Jenny and Andy, my friend from university. The time was right while I was still fit and healthy !



We flew to Nairobi to meet the trekking group. On 1st October we drove to the base camp and on to the entrance gate to the Mt. Kenya Reserve with our guide. The first trek was 3 hours through pine forest to the first camp among the trees. The porters had put up the tents and prepared our evening



meal. It was dark in the forest that night and full of strange noises, mostly birds. It rained in



the night but had cleared by morning. Next day the terrain was more rugged and steeper. As we climbed higher the path became harder and the lower oxygen levels made it more difficult. The night-time temperatures dropped below zero and ice formed in our tents.

The day before “summit day” our guide warned us that the route would get even harder and oxygen levels even lower. We had to take stock of our position and fitness and decide whether to continue. Three of us took his advice and turned back with two porters and trekked back down to the gate. It was not all downhill as we followed the track over ridges and valleys for five hours. Eventually we arrived back at the base and spent a night in more comfortable accommodation disappointed not to reach the summit but still pleased with what we had achieved and that we were safe. Maybe we were a little too ambitious but it was a good effort and a wonderful experience.

Before catching the plane home we stayed a couple of nights at a safari lodge on the edge of Nairobi National Park just outside the city where we enjoyed game drives in the early morning and evening. We were lucky to see a great number of different animals including black and white rhino, hippo, lions, cheetah, giraffe, zebra, eland, buffalo, jackal, and various antelope, all wild and living in a natural wilderness. Incredible sights with the tower blocks of the city forming a distant backdrop to iconic African landscape and animals.

Many thanks to all who contributed to Cancer Research UK. We raised over £1,800.



Hello everyone,

As this edition lands on your doorstep I will be in La Gomera in the Canary Islands anxiously scanning the weather forecast for my rowing adventure which starts on 12th December. I want to thank all of you for your forbearance as I've sporadically written about the lead up to this challenge: I'm aware it has been a long build up but I have genuinely welcomed the positive feedback I have received from local people, either directly or via my parents. Memories such as these will help to sustain me when I'm on a night row at 2am in the morning and thinking of home.

My Dad asked me the other day what I was least looking forward to. My answer was homesickness and loneliness. These might sound a bit unusual considering the nature of the physical challenge but not seeing or having significant contact with friends and family for up to 45 days I will definitely find difficult – especially over the festive Season when I know everyone will be getting together. And loneliness? Yes, Matt will be on the boat with me, but our times spent together will be limited given how tired we will be and keen to crash at every opportunity. In addition two hours rowing on your own, day after day, night after night without any proper conversations or banter

will test me -hopefully the beautiful skies and the odd dolphin will keep me sane!

The boat is packed with all our food, endless packs of dried rations – each pack about 1000 calories and in addition we have about 1500 calories worth of 'snacks' per day. Snacks ranging from energy bars, bags of peanuts, mars bars, dried mango etc. I only just managed to fit it all in the two (very) small lockers on the boat but at least as time goes on the boat will get considerably lighter.

Before I left for La Gomera we held a presentation at Acorns in Worcester as the picture shows. We aimed to raise £100,000 for Acorns and at the moment we have hit about £80,000. Hopefully as we progress across the Atlantic more donations will push us closer to the mark – I will update you on my return and thanks again for your support so far.

George

George Farniloe

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Feckenham Village Shop - Alan Slater

Here is the answer to the question that everyone in Feckenham has been asking, 'What hours will the Shop be open during the Christmas and New Year period'

Christmas Eve	10.00-13.00 hrs
Christmas Day	Closed
Boxing Day	Closed
Wednesday 27 th	10.00 - 13.00 hrs
Thursday 28 th	10.00 -13.00 hrs
Friday 29 th	10.00 – 13.00 hrs
Saturday 30 th	10.00 – 13.00 hrs
New Years Eve	10.00 – 13.00 hrs
New Years Day	Closed

From January 2nd we will be back to our normal opening hours.

Although we have to reduce our trading hours to allow our hard working volunteers a well earned break to celebrate the festive



season with their own families, we will be open every day between Christmas and New Year should you need to make an emergency dash to replenish your store cupboard. Or maybe you might like to escape the family for an hour and join us to enjoy a coffee in slightly more relaxed surroundings!

Anyhow there are still twenty or more shopping days to Christmas and we have lots of lovely festive goodies in stock should you need a special present for that aged aunt you haven't seen for ten years. Alternatively just drop in for a hot chocolate and mince pie special, we would love to see you.

Again this year we have on sale some beautiful hand knitted novelty items made by our Champion Knitter Margaret Green. As you probably know, all the proceeds from the sale of these unique products are sent to Project Morogoro in East Africa and will help to fund the cost of providing a midwife for the local community. A cause worthy of our support.

We end the year on a high note having just received the Shop's half year accounts. Our sales and profitability continue to increase and our cost base is firmly under control so I am optimistic that come April we will be able to announce another record year's trading performance. Only achievable as a result of your continued support.

It only remains for me on behalf of the Shop Board to wish you all a really enjoyable Christmas and a healthy and successful 2024.

P.S Don't forget that the Feckenham Christmas card depicting the Square in winter is exclusively on sale in the Shop at just £1.95 each.

An Organic Allotment by Pete Delaney

Here we are at the last month of the year, with the short days taking us step by step nearer to the winter solstice, the shortest day and the turning of the year for nature's own calendar.

I love eating produce from the plot that was harvested at an earlier time and stored, pickled or bottled to be used during this season. Runner bean chutney, pickled beetroot and shallots. Also this year's first, my red gooseberry jam.

I am still harvesting enough produce for a decent stew. Such as parsnips, this year mine are few but large; winter radish, all different shapes and sizes but peppery and good in salad, stew or stir fry; leeks, I'm fighting thrips again the consequence being thin leeks after stripping away damaged leaves; Jerusalem artichokes, as last year, we

are already harvesting a healthy crop of tubers, also good in stew or stir fry. I leave them in the ground until I need them. As the plants die off I shall mark where the plant stem was with canes.

One autumn crop I harvested was my "mumpkins", the accidental pumpkin/marrow cross. A photo of my resulting prize orange mumpkin growing in situ was included in last month's magazine, so I thought I would include a picture of it carved on the 31st October when we ate it in a stew. When opened the texture was the same as a pumpkin.

Also in the ground is my all year winter lettuce growing under cloches of fleece. Last year they sprang to life in late March. I harvested their outside leaves through the spring months. However this year one by one they have all bolted and begun to grow up to go to seed. Maybe this is to do with



this year's season to season wet weather conditions. We have had to harvest them as whole plants. As each one begins upward growth, I pull the plant and take it home standing it in a vase of water as I harvest it's leaves over a few days.

Stored in the shed we still have plenty of onions (and we eat one in every meal) after a successful crop this summer. We still have some garlic, but did not crop very large bulbs this year, so this November I have planted plenty of large organic garlic bulbs that I brought in. I have planted them in an old strawberry bed I had left fallow this season. I cut out the over growth and threw it on my compost heap, forked out the roots to throw in my incinerator pile and added a layer of my own compost to the bed before planting the cloves and covering them with a net to deter inquisitive birds from pulling them up. Some gardeners say they then need a good frost to give them a kick start. At this time I feed cabbages with comfrey water periodically and also keep up the important search for slugs. My cabbages have been slow growers this year which I am also attributing to the damp conditions. At the rate they are growing I think I shall be harvesting winter cabbage next spring.

In the polytunnel I, unbelievably, harvested and ate my last cucumber in the middle of last month. I left my tomatoes going as late as I could, picking my last 7 or 8 ripe ones along with the cucumber.

I am still picking ripening chillies but I'm not sure if its many still green ones shall completely ripen. We also have a chilli plant that we harvested and dried the fruit. We now have placed it in the polytunnel in an attempt to try and see it through the winter as we are told it is a biannual plant. Well we shall soon be finding out I hope.

So it's keep on adding to the compost heap (muck and greenery and ashes), tidying up and looking around to start planning my next year's crop rotation.

With a season's greeting and a happy new year. Pete and Rachael

Rob Cole's Gardening Tips

A Winter Performer - *Erica carnea*

In the sixties when I began gardening for the first time, heathers were the fashionable plant of the day, and over the next twenty years or so I made a number of heather gardens, joined the Heather Society, and scoured the moorlands during summer holidays in Devon and Cornwall looking for variants of the wild plants. The species which I most loved, however, was the winter flowering heath, *Erica carnea* which is not a British native but hales from the northern Mediterranean.

Since those days, my interests have moved towards herbaceous perennials, but I have never lost my fascination with heathers and with *Erica carnea* in particular, whose main garden worth lies in its neat habit and long flowering period, often from mid-November to late March, a period when the garden is crying out for colour other than russet brown.

The wild species is a hummocky growing, small, evergreen shrub with mauvey pink flowers (*carnea* means flesh – referring to the flower colour). Numerous cultivars now abound including good clean whites, through pinks, to almost red, and golden foliaged forms are also widely available. All of the forms of *Erica carnea* are completely hardy, and the flowers shrug off the hardest frosts without turning a hair. Indeed a coating of frost is an added attraction, and when the frost melts the flowers emerge unscathed.

Most heathers require an acid, peaty soil to do well, but *Erica carnea* will grow in limey soils especially if provided with some compost or other humus to help retain moisture in times of drought. An open sunny position is best, but some shade (even quite heavy shade) is tolerated without turning the plant too

leggy. The annual extension growth is quite short, so little pruning is required, other than to cut out the odd straggly shoot.

Virtually all of the varieties available are good. 'Nathalie' is a good red/pink (left), as is 'Myretoun Ruby', and the old variety 'Vivellii' which was found in Switzerland in 1906 has dark foliage and carmine red flowers. 'King George' is another old favourite with rich pink flowers, 'Whitehall' is a neat white, and 'Anne Sparkes' is an excellent golden yellow foliaged variety raised by Jack Sparkes from Beoley, near Redditch, in the fifties.

Erica carnea is best bought as a small plant and should cost little more than a couple of pounds each, which means that you can afford to plant in groups which is how they look best. Plant them about 400mm (15") apart and they will join up within five years.

The fall of heathers from current favour should not deter anyone from including *Erica carnea* in the modern garden. They are easy, colourful and long-lived plants which provide interest at a difficult time of the year. Do try them, you will not be disappointed.





Our meeting on 1st November was a talk by Roger Umpleby entitled 'Aliens in the Garden'. Roger is a keen entomologist and showed us examples of the some insects and diseases which have found their way into our gardens in recent years, and which we should be looking out for.

NEXT CLUB EVENT - Wednesday 6th December 2023 at 7:30pm

Our next meeting is a talk by Samantha Hopes entitled 'My Journey Into Horticulture'. Samantha started out as a geology student but became fascinated by plants and decided upon a career change. Her talk will illustrate her progression from amateur to professional.

The subject for the members' monthly competition is 'A Winter Flower' and will be judged by our speaker.

Membership of the Gardening Club is currently by £5.00 annual subscription which becomes due on 1st January each year, so please come prepared to renew if you haven't already done so. Please make cheques payable to 'Stock and Bradley Gardening Club'. We welcome new members to join us at any time throughout the year.

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 2023. Visitors are made very welcome and may attend for £3.00 per meeting.

If you require any further information, ring Dinny Pynsent (Secretary) on 01527 821355 or Rob Cole (Chairman) on 07544 832052.



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The wet weather experienced in October culminated in much of the ground being under water for a couple of days and several boundary fences ended up in the stream.

They were eventually rescued once the water level fell below the top of my wellington boots. Many of the fences will need to be mended or scrapped, a task for the winter months.

This was not ideal with the annual bonfire and fireworks due on November 4th. The death knell for the event was the news that the field to be used for parking was far too wet and boggy to accept vehicles. With Winfield being unable to help, we were forced to call it off. We did consider postponement but with little likelihood that the cricket ground and the parking field would be dry enough in November, we decided that we will try again in 2024.

This leaves us with a huge pile of wood and we intend to carry on and burn it all, possibly on Christmas Eve or New Year's Eve. We will however need to wait until that area of the ground dries out sufficiently for people - and importantly a tractor - can move around safely and without leaving that corner resembling a first world war battlefield.

The conditions means that ground activities have mainly involved Steve Daniels applying his magic to the square following its recent role as the floor of a large lake.

By this time, our long-time captain Jamie Griffiths is expecting to make his way to

Australia to start a new life there with wife and child. Good luck Jamie and thanks for everything that you contributed to the club.

Over the winter our opening hours are as follows:

Thursday	6-8pm
Friday	5-11pm
Saturday	2-11pm
Sunday	2-10pm

Merry Christmas all and don't forget that the gardening season begins officially on January 1st (and ends on December 31st).

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