

FECKENHAM

February 2024

NEWS

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

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Bromsgrove / Droitwich

Feckenham News in February

Dates for your Diary

Contents

February

- 7th S&B Gardening Club
Readers Group
9th FeckenOdeon 2
19th WI
24th FeckenOdoen

March

- 7th PC Meeting
9th Maybe Dick in the Village Hall

April

- 14th Desert Island Flicks

Regular Sessions

- Tuesdays Tai Chi; Meditation
Wednesdays Playgroup; Art Club; Bridge
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

	Page
Editor's note	4
Letter	4
Square Committee	5
Swanbrook Radio	5
Obituary	6
Church Matters	7-8
Feckenham Archive	8
Fecknodeon	9
WI	9
Village Hall	10-11
Lunch Club	11
What's On	12-13
Parish Council	14
Village Shop	16
Gardening	18-20
Cricket Club	21

Front Cover

Picture courtesy of
Wendy Powell:
Morning sky

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

Production Team

- Gilly Cooper - Editor feckenhamnews@gmail.com
Distribution 07500115581
Ian Bellion - What's On whatson@feckenham.f9.co.uk
Jen Cary - NewsHound jen@28highstreet.co.uk
Mary Smith - Advertising fnadvertising@btinternet.com

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Editor's Note

I cannot let this moment pass without mentioning Ann Matthews whose funeral took place on 16th January. Many of us gathered in the village hall to see the service live streamed. You can watch it in your own time by following this link:

<https://www.achurchnearyou.com/church/18729/service-and-events/events/1022282/>
Just click Join Online. Ann's chosen charity is Freedom from Torture. If you wish to donate, details are on the link on page 7



February seems to be a quiet month and many of us are hunkering down, trying to keep warm during these cold wintery days. I noted a recommendation on our Facebook page of a walk from Feckenham to Inkberrow avoiding wet areas which

become impassable at this time, so I wrapped warm and set off. A very enjoyable tramp down Moors Lane, across a couple of bridges, up Morton Underhill and into Inkberrow. The sun was milky, there are wonderful views back towards our village and over towards Bredon Hill. I couldn't see the Malverns but I think that was due to cloud cover. I saw lots of birds, mainly bluetits, as well as plenty of sheep and lambs. It was about 3.5 miles. That day I was just recovering from a nasty bug and was grateful to be driven home from Inkberrow but in normal fitness it would be an easy part of a circular walk. Does anyone else have a walk they'd recommend?

Towards the end of this edition is a piece I received about dog poo. I had thought that I'd avoid this topic in the magazine as it is discussed at length elsewhere but I do know that it is a persistent, increasing and significant problem, so please read Paul Furey's piece and if you do have a dog that you walk locally, please pick up!

Letter: Library Service at Home

"I was talking to Mary Wilkes in church last night, we got chatting about reading she told me that although she finds getting about difficult these days she still manages to have plenty to read thanks to the Library Service at Home. I believe that they had a chat to her to get an idea of the kind of reading material that she would enjoy and call in once a month to collect the books she has read and to give her a fresh supply. I told her I'd not heard of this before and of how maybe others might benefit too."

Lin Preece

The Library Service at Home is overseen by a staff member who can pick books you like or look for them online including large print and audiobooks. A volunteer collects and delivers the books. Just get in touch with our local library. This is in addition to our mobile library visit on the second Monday each month.

Editor

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DAMP BUT MERRY...

Christmas Eve seems ages ago but it's worth reporting that the Carols On The Square event was again both successful and enjoyable. The Square Committee worked throughout the day to put everything in place for the event and by 6pm everything was ready... just in time for the heavens to open. Organisers hurriedly covered anything that could be damaged. Thankfully, just at the point when it looked as if the event might have to be cancelled, the squall desisted and calm was restored. At one moment The Square was deserted, the next saw hundreds of people emerge from the damp darkness to warm themselves by the four wood burners dotted down the green. Mulled wine and mince pies were dispensed, carol sheets handed out and, only a few minutes behind schedule, Choir director Amanda Gordon pressed the giant plunger to bring the village's Christmas tree to twinkling life. The carols began immediately after - sung with gusto as if to ward off a repeat of the unpleasant mini-tempest. Of course it snowed - Feckenham always has a white Christmas Eve! Before you could say "Ding Dong Merrily" a rousing chorus of We Wish You a Merry Christmas rounded the singing off - and Feckenham had once again welcomed Christmas in its time honoured way.

A bucket collection yielded nearly £700 for the Air Ambulance (this was joined by £60 collected at the Boxing Day walk).

Carols on The Square is organised by Feckenham Square Management Committee as a way of thanking the village for support received throughout the year. Thanks are due to all who helped make 2023's event such a success. In particular the Committee is grateful to Amanda Gordon and members of the church and All Round Voices choirs for leading the singing.

Technical arrangements were by Alan Smith, the MC was Ian Bellion, wine was mulled by Judy Hooker - assisted by Judy Underwood, Gilly Cooper and Jane Bull. Bucket rattling was undertaken by Jay Neale, Martin Strange, Ian Ridley and Julian Bull... and Dave Powell, who rigged all the lights, was in bed with the flu - get well soon Dave!



CHOOSING THE TUNES

How do you choose music for a radio show? If you're working for one of the big national stations or commercial local radio you don't have much choice - you have to work to the playlist dictated by your employer. Many of these lists are the results of commercial deals or are tied to charts and hit lists. That's where tiny little stations like Swansbrook Radio have the advantage. Our license allows us to play any recording which has been published in the UK - ever. So, the world's our musical oyster. We can play anything we choose... but, when an hour long programme can contain up to 15 tracks, it's sometimes difficult to make decisions - and to keep things fresh. Computers do help in this case - our Happy Hour programme uses tracks which relate to the topic we've been talking about - so it's simply a matter of typing in the subject and seeing what comes up.

Colin James, our veteran DJ, has his own massive collection of music, but even he feels spoilt for choice on occasions. For the last couple of years he's presented programmes themed around a word - playing tracks with the word of the week contained in the title. Now he's changed tack and has started a new series of shows taking a letter of the alphabet as the key - playing tracks that start with a letter - he's started with the letter B and he's come up with some remarkable discoveries. To find out what he's discovered all you have to do is tune in and listen! Of course, you can help in our musical searches by making requests via radio@swansbrook.com

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
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Ann Matthews 13th October 1958 - 14th December 2023 by Jeff Matthews

Firstly, can I thank all our friends and neighbours in the Feckenham community for the kindness, love and support you have shown us as a family during Ann's illness and in her subsequent death. We have greatly appreciated the kind words, thoughts and reflections on Ann's place in this community and in the hearts of many.



I, together with Emma and Thea have been particularly touched as people have recalled the small acts of kindness and thoughtfulness that she showed in the nearly 20 years we lived in the village, although our association with Feckenham goes back to 1990, when we first moved to Callow Hill.

Daughter Thea wrote the following on Facebook, and I think it deserves repeating here. "In the last few weeks, I've found myself reflecting on the kind of person Mum was.

She was determined to make a positive difference in the world, in whatever way she could. She got a medal for the number of times she gave blood.

She recycled things before it was cool and you had a bin in your house for it.

She was one of the UK's top sellers of Fair-Trade produce.

She once told me off in Sainsburys for picking up a brand of French bread because she didn't agree with their nuclear weapons testing.

The woman was a force to be reckoned with, but also full of kindness and love. There was her work in Africa for Mission Morogoro (as both trustee and volunteer). That saw her, with others, climb Mount Kilimanjaro in 2013 to raise money and she made several visits to that part of Tanzania. At home she was an ardent supporter of many causes such as the soil association, amnesty international, a committed environmentalist, a vegetarian for 35 years in protest over the ways animals were being treated to make food for us.

She was Church Warden in Feckenham for nearly 20 years, and an active member of the PCC for longer.

A founding member of the Feckenham village shop, she gave 10 years of unpaid service in its day to day running."

Then there was Lunch Club, The Village Hall and the WI, which Thea didn't mention. It's quite a list, and I make no apologies for recording them here, acknowledging and recognising them in her contribution as a builder of community.

For Ann, it was actions not words as she lived out her commitment to her Christian faith.

May she rest in peace.

Link to Ann's page: <https://ann-elizabeth-matthews.muchloved.com/>

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 February 2024

4th February	10.30am	Eucharist	Rev John Green
11th February	9.00am	BCP Communion	Fr Glenn Reading
	10.30am	Family Service	Rev Fiona Carter
18th February	6.30pm	Evensong	Fr Glenn Reading
25 th February	10.30am	Eucharist	Fr Glenn Reading

Drop in (in church)

Wednesday at 10.30am - 12.00pm



14th February and 28th February

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

Fr Glenn writes

There is an old joke amongst the clergy, that straight after Christmas Dinner, the Vicar sits down to start writing the Lent course. There is truth in the sentiment, that the Church is always looking ahead to what comes next. In 2024 Easter is early falling on the last day of March and so, Lent does come early barely halfway through February.

For Christians Lent is a time of journeying and growing. We journey with Jesus through those last eventful days of Jesus' life on earth which culminate at the Cross of Calvary. During that time, we pray that we grow in our faith and relationship with God and his Son. This time of Journeying and growth is enabled by a process of self-denial, a giving up of the things that can act as a barrier in that journey and growth. Hence where the tradition of giving things up for Lent comes from.

Lent should be a time where Christians spend more time in prayer and reading their bibles, reflecting upon the events and teaching of Jesus and praying that as we deepen our faith, we can live lives that make a difference in our world and communities. Lent is also a time when those new to the Christian Faith undergo their teaching and learning in preparation for baptism at Easter.

More recently during the time of Lent, Christians have added to this rich Lenten tradition that in addition to, or instead of giving something up for Lent, they have taken on or taken up new things. Whether that be an act of charity or of service. Some token of living their faith in small way that builds up the whole.

During Lent the local churches will continue their usual Sunday services where we will explore the themes of the season and we will be joining together for a **short 5-week Lent course** that will help us explore Gospel themes during this season of Lent. The Lent course is based around that famous 1942 film Casablanca, here we will explore themes of love, loss, faith, and sacrifice. The Lent

course will happen in person and online via Zoom. Should you wish to join us for this or any of our worship, you will be more than welcome to, please get in touch with myself at vicar@feckenhamchurch.org.uk and I will let you know the details, also watch out for our leaflets with all these details on.

However, you spend your Lent, be assured of my prayers and those at S. John the Baptist, Feckenham.

Archive - Marion Chute



Does anyone remember the filming of The Afternoon Play: The Hitch in 2004? Samantha Janus, Nicola Stephenson, Jason Merrells, Neil Stuke and others filmed in two houses on the Square and in the Churchyard. It caused quite a stir

I seem to remember it being a romantic comedy and Brian Robson is anxious to find a recording that he made and lent to interested people. Can anyone trace his VHS tape?



The FeckenOdeon Cinema Society



A TRUE CLASSIC

Cinema Paradiso, winner of multiple awards, has been restored for a new audience – and for those who loved it 35 years ago. The film is a charming drama about friendship, childhood and the magic of cinema. In an Italian village young Salvatore finds himself enchanted by the flickering images at the Cinema Paradiso, yearning for the secret of the cinema's magic. When the projectionist, Alfredo, shares his knowledge, a deep friendship is born. *(Italy 1988)*

CINEMA PARADISO (12A)
Friday, 9th February at 8pm



A LITTLE KNOWLEDGE...

James Stewart and Doris Day are on holiday in Morocco when the French chap they've been chatting to is suddenly murdered. Before he dies the Frenchman whispers a secret - a secret so secret that people will kidnap and kill to hear it... or to keep it secret. Sounds far-fetched? Well, this is an Alfred Hitchcock film and we can guarantee that you'll be on the edge of your seat long before the nerve shattering climax in the Royal Albert Hall... *(USA 1956)*

THE MAN WHO KNEW TOO MUCH (PG)
Saturday, 24th February 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

WI - Jen Cary

WI Goes Nuclear

Our January meeting was something a bit different; a talk by CEO of Moltex Energy Ltd, Ian Scott on his innovative nuclear technology and the energy industry. Ian set up the company with the aim to reduce fossil fuel usage and therefore the rate of climate change, by making his new nuclear option the clear winner on cost and safety. He also showed us the coal usage trajectory and what that means for global emissions, which was a real eye opener. His talk also covered what makes his technology so much cheaper and safer, how the development is going in Canada and what direction the whole industry is going in. It was due to be 45 minutes long and when we got to 75 minutes because of so many engaging questions from the fabulous audience, he had to have a break because of his voice! We then had a good 15 minutes of more questions and debate amongst the audience.

We're very grateful to Ian to take the time to come and speak to us and to come out on such a cold night. He's normally to be found talking to Parliamentary Select Committees and international agencies, so to have such a high profile speaker come to our little WI was fantastic.



Our next meeting is on Monday 19th February and will be a craft night. *We meet on the 3rd Monday of every month at 8pm (doors open 7.45pm). WI members are free and guests are £5. For more details, contact Jen Cary 07773 883 039.*

Feckenham Village Hall - Liz Teisen

2024 has arrived and your village hall is as busy as ever. The New Year is a good time to try something new – meet other people – try to get fitter!

- All the fitness classes are very accommodating, happy to include any level of ability: try yoga on Thursday 6 till 7pm, pilates 7.30 till 8.30pm, or maybe Tai Chi Tuesday 7 till 8 pm and first Saturday in the month

- Artistic and would like to paint? Art club Wednesday evening (once a month)
- Come and enjoy the company of the WI, you never know what you might be doing, or finding out about.
- Erstwhile Border Morris group meet twice a month on Fridays and would love new members.
- If the Christmas festivities left you frazzled, then join Sarah – relax and meditate quietly each week. White space Tuesday evenings and first Saturday in the month.
- Bridge club, meets twice weekly (Wednesdays and Thursdays)
- Sing and lift your spirits by joining the community choir “All Round Voices” Wednesday evenings, twice a month
- Playgroup every Wednesday morning is bursting with toys and bustling with fun and a good place to chat to other mums and dads. Hayley would love to see you there.
- And of course Lunch Club in the back room. The friendly church ladies make a delicious lunch, very reasonably priced once a month. If you are living on your own, or would like to meet others for a chat around the table. Everyone would make you feel welcome.

And come along to the hall to be entertained - FeckenOdeon once a month September to March. Full size screen, old time cinema experience and Friday back room shows with a more arty flavour.

- The hall hosts, Lilo shows, which may be drama, music... or comedy. All are professional touring acts of a high standard sponsored by the Arts Council and others to bring theatre and song to rural communities for a very reasonable ticket price. On your doorstep, why not come along?

The committee also organise fundraising nights to help with the upkeep of the hall. Our last was a very successful Steak Night, the next will be a quiz with fish and chip supper... always fun.

The hall is busy most weekends with bookings for all sorts of events, ranging from ferret shows to charity concerts.

In January there were six children’s parties - illustrates what happens in the spring!

For information on any of the above or to make a booking contact me, Liz Teisen, email: liz.teisen@btinternet.com or phone: (07855) 162146/(01527) 821233.

The Village Hall is your hall – come along, use it and enjoy it!



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Thursday, 29th February
MEXICAN MENU

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Feckenham Village Hall



WHALEMEAT AGAIN...

Live shows return to the Village Hall at the start of March with Maybe Dick - Hambledon Production's new parody of Herman Melville's Moby Dick - NOT to be missed if you need a good laugh!

John Hower performs his one man show playing over eight different characters.

There is Captain Ahab who bears more than a passing resemblance to Abraham Lincoln, Starbuck who brings the captain a wide variety of coffee in the morning, and Elijah the ship's oddball. His incredible range sees him transform seamlessly into characters with such a huge variety of flawless accents.

Along with his seagull companion, the aptly named Steven Seagull, Maybe Dick is jam packed with silly humour but you don't need to have read Moby Dick to get the jokes. John Hower says "The story-telling comes second to joke-telling, even though we've managed to stay pretty faithful to the book and the original characters."

MAYBE DICK

Saturday, 9th March at 7.30pm

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
Book by phone on 0333 666 3366

Feckenham Village Hall Improvement Fund January draw.

The draw was carried out on 2nd January, 2024.

1st (£25)	25	David & Jill Rowe
2nd (£15)	107	D. Peate
3rd (£10)	129	Trish Tricklebank

Lunch Club



Eating good food in the company of familiar people is surely one of life's pleasures.

Following the closure of the original Village Shop in the High Street, villagers (especially those retired and/or on their own) felt the loss of a place to meet and chat. These issues were behind the setting up of the Feckenham Lunch Club. It was originally begun by Elizabeth Nixon as a venture supported by, and on behalf of, the Parish Church in the 1990s. It has since continued to provide a meal for its members, who are people over sixty and live in and around Feckenham. It meets on the first Tuesday of each month in the Village Hall's back room. Since Elizabeth's day, the Lunch Club has been run by a succession of volunteers headed by Muriel Richards, and more recently by the late Ann Matthews. Each month's menu uses local seasonal produce and comprises a main meal and a dessert followed by tea or coffee – all for a nominal charge.

The Lunch Club provides a pleasant social amenity for up to 32 members.

Please contact Jill Rowe (07817 049 437) for further information. Volunteers to help with the Club would be particularly welcome.

WHAT'S ON IN

theWV INSPIRING WOMEN

Next Meeting - 19th February

CRAFT NIGHT

Come along and have a go!
8pm at Feckenham Village Hall
Visitors welcome - £5



DROP IN

For Coffee & a Chat
at Feckenham Church
14th & 28th February

from 10.30

Entries on these What's On pages are FREE to Feckenham voluntary organisations. If you're organising an event just email the details to:
wotson@feckenham.f9.co.uk

Feckenham's Own...



2024 DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

FECKENHAM WAKE

22nd June, 2024

SCARECROW WEEKEND

5th & 6th October, 2024

FECKENHAM VILLAGE HALL

FORTHCOMING ATTRACTIONS

HAMBLEDON
PRODUCTIONS
present

John Kewer in

MAYBE DICK



LIVE
LOCAL



SATURDAY, 9TH MARCH



DESERT ISLAND

LIVE LOCAL FLICKS



SUNDAY, 14TH APRIL

QUIZ & CHIPS

SATURDAY, 20TH APRIL



HARP & MONKEY

'Award-winning folk and storytelling trio'

SATURDAY, 18TH MAY

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

Send details of events for FREE listing to:

FECKENHAM



THE
FECKENHAM
SESSIONS
TRADITIONAL
MUSICMAKING
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First Tuesday of every month from 8pm
NEXT SESSION: Tuesday, 6th February

Stock & Bradley
GARDENING CLUB



BUTTERFLIES
with John Tilt

Bradley Village Hall
Wednesday, 7th February - 7.30pm

ERSTWHILE



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

Feckenham Parish Council

MEETING

Thursday, 7th March - 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.

THE
FECKENODEON
CINEMA
SOCIETY



**cinema
PARADISO** 12a

FeckenOdeon 2 Friday, 9th February at 8pm



**ALFRED HITCHCOCK'S
THE MAN WHO
KNEW TOO MUCH** PG

DORIS
DAY
JAMES
STEWART

FeckenOdeon 1 Saturday, 24th February at 7.30pm

The FeckenOdeon Cinemas
at Feckenham Village Hall


Tickets for all shows from The Rose & Crown and Village Shop
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www.fecknodeon.co.uk

*Booking Fee applies to Phone and Online Bookings
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Feckenham READERS GROUP

Wednesday, 7th February - 7.45pm
This month's book:
TRUST

By HERNAN DIAZ
Details: 892285



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



COUNCIL TAX

At its January meeting the Parish Council discussed the finances and decided upon an amount it feels it needs to perform its statutory duties for the coming year. The money is called the Precept and is administered by Redditch Borough Council as part of its council tax collections. Currently the Parish Council is spending more money than it receives by using its reserves. By law, the Parish Council is required to have between 3-12 months of reserves.

The Parish Council has requested £60,000 which is a significant increase on previous years. The money will be used for projects within the Parish of Feckenham. These will include flood works, lengthsman payments, grants to Organisations and similar. As an example: In recent years, the Parish Council has been asked to improve the children's play area (owned by Redditch Borough Council). The Council has been unable to tackle such matters because it had insufficient funds. It's hoped that improved funding will make it possible to tackle this and other projects.

FLOODING

The Parish Council met on 4th January. Around fifteen members of the public were in attendance to discuss the recent flooding. A meeting was due to take place on Friday 19th January attended by Officers from Worcestershire County Council, North Worcestershire Water Management, County, Borough, and Parish Councillors to look at the issues and agree improvements. Flood works were last conducted in 2021, and it is now accepted this will need to be reviewed every two years.

MOORS LANE

The Parish Council learned that twenty-five residents from Moors Lane had held a meeting to

discuss the condition of the lane and possible improvements. It is understood that they intend to apply to the Parish Council for a grant to help with the repairs.

FECKENHAM IN BLOOM

Feckenham in Bloom has been successful in applying for a Redditch Renew Grant which they plan to use on improving the path into the church from the village square. It will have additional plants to the right-hand side which contribute to biodiversity in the village by using native plants and bulbs. Feckenham in Bloom is a voluntary working party reporting to the Parish Council. Meetings are held regularly at the Rose and Crown to decide on their next project. The group is always looking for new members. You're welcome to join even if you are unable to do any physical work. All that's needed is enthusiasm, and an interest in keeping our village looking lovely.

The next Parish Council meeting will take place on Thursday 7th of March at the Village Hall Everybody is welcome to attend.

Should anyone have any questions regarding the Parish Council please do contact the clerk on 01527 892522 or email clerk@feckenham-parishcouncil.gov.uk

For information about the Parish, the Council or village organisations please visit the Parish Council's website at:

www.feckenham-parishcouncil.gov.uk

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Feckenham Village Shop - Alan Slater



Over the last few months I've regularly been able to report excellent trading figures and I'm pleased to say that our record takings have continued during the festive season and into the new year. This success however, has brought a problem... our ability to adequately staff the Shop during some peak periods. In particular, on Saturdays which have become our busiest trading day of the week. Unless we can solve the problem we may have to sadly consider reducing our opening times which would be a tragedy as we have worked so hard to build up our weekend trade. So can you help? We need a few more hands to cover the late morning and afternoon shifts from 11.00 am until 4.00 pm. If you could spare a couple of hours that would be great and it doesn't have to be every week as we are very flexible when arranging the rota. Maybe you know someone who lives outside the Village who is prepared to travel a few miles to volunteer. We have team members who live in Droitwich, Alcester and Redditch so you don't have to be from the Parish to join the Feckenham Team. If you or a friend can help then please email me at slats1917@outlook.com. I'll be delighted and relieved to hear from you.

On a more positive note, our Champion Knitter and Volunteer Margaret Green, with a little help from Team Leader Eunice O'Brien, raised almost £900 from the sale of her knitted Christmas decorations. The money has gone towards funding a midwife at Project Morogoro in East Africa. A great effort and I'm formally advised that she has already started on the Easter Bunnies for sale in the Shop in March. As always thanks to all of you who support the Community Shop, without it Feckenham would not be the same, especially on Saturdays!

Finally, what about the brilliant Worcester Buoys? By the time you read this article they will have or nearly have completed their epic voyage across the Atlantic. What they have achieved is quite remarkable and deserves our utmost respect and admiration. To undertake such an awesome challenge requires immense courage and physical effort. You are probably aware that they are raising funds for the Acorns Hospice in Worcester and we urge you to support their Atlantic Challenge. There is a collection box in the Shop to enable customers to make a donation and the Management Board is going to double the final amount collected as the Shop's contribution towards their wonderful achievement. So be generous with your donation, the Lads deserve it!

See below for the latest position.





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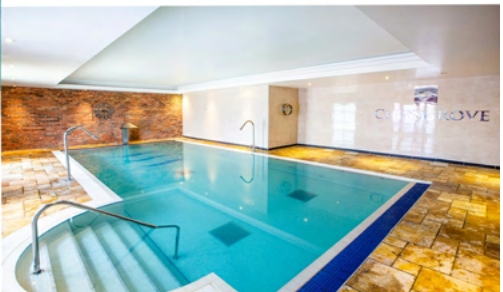


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An Organic Allotment by Pete Delaney

Welcome to another growing season as we begin the first real planting and sowing month of the year.

In January I prepared the beds for my broad beans, forking in some home made compost. I sow them in pots in early February and plant them out when they are big enough to cope, usually sometime during March. This month I also sow leeks into trays. In only a few weeks under glass with the broad beans, the leek seedlings are big enough to prick out individually and plant each one into their own pots.

My potato patch for the coming season usually takes the most preparation this month. I am rotating them onto last year's squash patch. Last month I forked in plenty of muck rich compost. For potatoes the muck must be decomposed into practically soil so as not to be too rich when you sow/ plant the spuds during next month.

A must plant for me this month is shallots. I grow plenty of them and pickle them all. Indeed I am still eating my last large jar grown and pickled last year.

My main crop onions, I tend to plant sets bought from garden centres though this year I am sowing some onion seed in trays and keeping them indoors to grow on and plant out later in the season. All onions I grow under fleece cloches until well into May at first to protect them from the cold then later on to protect them from the early flight of the onion fly in late April/early May.

In different parts of the plot I am feed-preparing with muck and compost, whichever beds I know need to be ready for plantings and sowings next month. Also I think it's never too soon to start a compost trench for this year's runner beans. I like the trench to become its own organic compost bin. I top it up with veg waste and greenery as with my other compost bins as the early season progresses. This gives plenty of time for the veg matter to rot into good soil and

hence good feed.

Still growing in the plot from last season I have a handful of leeks and 5 or 6 of our large parsnips. I grew a large crop of Chinese winter radish - they have done well but the last ones are going a bit woody now. Also I am a great champion of Jerusalem artichoke. Once again we have been harvesting them all winter. In fact we are eating them loads at the moment to finish the crop before those left in the ground start growing and they certainly do grow. Even small bits left in the ground grow into a thriving plant, once in the allotment they are difficult to totally remove again. Some don't like to grow them for this reason but myself, I view their reproduction qualities as an asset. They make a good replacement for potatoes. I harvest as many as I can find and keep a few back for the next crop although 1 or 2 will always pop up somewhere unexpected in the plot.

The garlic that I planted last November is shooting up nicely. It is said garlic needs frost to separate the bulbs, well it had a few light ones in January but the rest of the winter was very wet.



My only disappointment this winter was that my winter cabbage have not thrived as well as previous years which I am putting down to the wet conditions. Well with the main planting and sowing season about to be on us it's all feeding, forking and anticipation. Have a good season.

Rob Cole's Gardening Tips

Some Favourite Gardening Tools

When I retired at the end of September 2002, my work colleagues presented me with a sum of money to spend on something which I would remember them by. I decided to buy a good quality lawnmower, and thus remember them twice a week !

I bought a Hayter 'Harrier 41', a petrol, self drive, rotary mower, with a rear roller, and this machine has been wonderful in every way. It starts first or second pull, it has a simple height adjustment lever, the rear roller allows me to cut over the edges of the lawn, it gives the lawn its stripes, and the whole thing is reasonably light and manoeuvrable. The cut is clean, and it copes with the longer grass which sometimes accrues when the weather prevents me from doing the twice weekly cut.

I have had lots and lots of lawnmowers over the years, but none has been a patch on this Hayter for grass cutting. However, a year or so ago I bought a Honda Izy 16" rotary mower specifically to use as a shredder for all of the garden waste that would clog a normal petrol shredder. I spread the material to be shredded on the ground and simply mow over it. For this purpose, the mower has been outstanding, reducing a barrowful of garden prunings to half the volume, ready for the compost heap where it rots down quickly.

Most people use secateurs for cutting down herbaceous plants in the Autumn, but I have found them cumbersome and ineffective for anything other than spindly dry stems. The tool which really copes with the job is a One-handed Shear from a company called Jakoti. If you saw this tool for sale in the garden centre you would probably not give



it a second glance, but it is totally brilliant. The blades are concave in profile which avoids clogging, and they are sharp and make very light work of cutting down perennials. I use them to chop up Hemerocallis, Iris, Kniphofia

and Miscanthus leaves to put in the compost heap, material which is usually too tough and stringy to cut up or shred. You can buy a Jakoti on the internet for about £35 from various places.

I have another favourite gardening tool to use alongside the Jakoti hand shears when cutting down perennials in the garden. It is the Herbaceous Sickle from Burgon and Ball. This is particularly useful for cutting down



grasses and does the job very quickly and cleanly once you have mastered the action, but beware, it is very sharp. It is available on the internet from various places.



NEXT CLUB EVENT - Wednesday 7th February 2024 at 7:30pm

Our first meeting at Bradley Green Village Hall this year is a talk by John Tilt entitled 'Butterflies'. John is the warden of the nature reserve at the nearby Grafton Wood and will describe the butterflies to be found there as well as other features of the reserve.

The subject for the monthly competition is 'three snowdrop flowers (the same or different) with foliage'.

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. 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 2024. 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.

Doggone Waste - Paul Furey

There are a number of reasons why it really isn't necessary to pick up after your doggy. Here are ten of them:

1. I live in the countryside. It's all natural out here. Dog poo on your boots is just another feature of country life like the local hunt, hedgehogs and autumn bonfires.
2. Whilst dogs do not have opposable thumbs, and consequently cannot easily hold open, fill and then tie a poo bag, they really should try a bit harder to learn - think guide dogs and bomb disposal hounds. If they can do stuff like that... well really!
3. No one ever walks this way, so what's the point?
4. Children don't play in fields anymore (I haven't seen one in ages) and besides they should learn to watch where they're treading when they're running about playing.
5. It may be a steaming pile now but, for goodness sake, it breaks down...eventually.
6. I think it's going to rain today – it'll all get washed away and there will be nothing to see.
7. Oops, no bags.
8. Well, what's worse, a bit of poo left on a path or another harmful plastic bag going to landfill?
9. There's dog poo all over the field – one more won't make the slightest bit of difference.
10. It's just a bit yucky and embarrassing, isn't it?

And there you have it. So, as you're exercising your hound later today you can relax when it comes to picking up after them. Don't spoil your walk when you notice your little darling going to the loo. Just look the other way, quicken your pace and pretend it didn't happen and remember that there at least ten good reasons for why it's OK to not clean up after your dog. Hurrah.

Feckenham Cricket Club Bob Gordon

As I write this we are experiencing a brief respite from the wet weather as temperatures drop. The ground is still very waterlogged and it has been nigh-on impossible to carry out any of the usual winter maintenance. The bonfire pile remains in place as we cannot get machinery onto the ground to shift it – at present we are considering moving pieces onto the concrete area in that corner of the field and burning (if it will light!) pieces in stages.

The club has submitted a planning application for the 2-lane artificial practice nets installation that we have mentioned in previous articles and hope that this will be approved sometime in February. We are still of course largely dependent on grant funding to cover the bulk of the cost and we have some ongoing activity in that area. Improving our practice facilities will be of massive help to our junior players and adults, attracting more youngsters to the game.

We are also launching another online crowdfunding page using GoFundMe to help towards this project – if you would like to contribute, simply go the page here: <https://www.gofundme.com/f/Feckenham-Cricket-Club>. Thanks to Lisa Alekna for organising this.

In addition, Nev Drumm is organising a sponsored Walk from Arrow Lake to the cricket club, to take place on Friday 16th February. Last year we have a number of our juniors along with parents and supporters who undertook this 7.5 mile trek and we expect this year's will be as popular and will raise a little more towards the project.

The calendar indicates that we will be playing cricket in 10 or 11 weeks, let's hope that this is possible!

I'll sign off with an interesting fact – Alec Stewart was born on 8th April 1963 (8/4/63) and in his career he scored 8,463 runs in test cricket!



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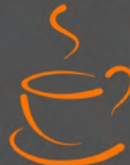
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