

FECKENHAM NEWS

May 2024



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

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Feckenham News May

Dates for your Diary

May

1st	S&B Gardening Club
2nd	Annual Parochial Church Meeting
9th	Parish Council meeting
10th	FeckenOdeon 2
11th	S&B Plant Sale
15th	Readers Group
18th	Harp and A Monkey
20th	WI
29th	Charity Quiz Rose and Crown
30th	Charity Race Night Rose and Crown

June

7th	Oh What a Lovely War
22nd	Wake

Regular Sessions

Wednesdays	Playgroup
Thursdays	Bridge; Hatha Yoga; Pilates
Fridays	Meditation Class
Second Monday of the month:	Mobile Library
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

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Front Cover

Picture by the editor.
Book Exchange in
Feckenham Church

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

It's actually a sunny dry day today which is a blessing at last and that leads me to the unintended theme of this month's magazine: gardens and gardening. You'll find information about the work of Feckenham in Bloom, next year's Open Gardens, the Plant Fair and other activities run by Stock and Bradley Gardening Club, as well as the usual articles towards the end of the magazine.



I suppose I can't let this month go by without mentioning our wedding! On 6th April Martin Strange and I married at Stratford Registry Office and then came back to our garden, as the weather was dry if rather blowy, for a reception followed by a party in our wonderful village hall. So many of the villagers helped make it a real joy for us and our families. Special mention goes to: Kathy Gee, Clare Furey, John Morris, Alan Smith, Malcolm Cookes, Gwyn and Paul Bradley and Liz Teisen.

I wonder if everyone knows about the Book Exchange which has been set up in the church. I



pop over there regularly. It's very well stocked with fiction, biography and children's books which are changing all the time as people come and swap books. What a great resource it is.

Finally, I'm saddened to hear that the Lygon will be closing on 7th May. The food has been very good lately and it will be sadly missed. It's been so good to have two differing pubs in the village. Wouldn't it be good for villagers and staff if the owner reconsidered this decision?



ALL SYSTEMS GO!

Things are really revving up behind the scenes as the Wake Committee redoubles its efforts to make 2024's event the best ever. Attractions, performers, stall holders and caterers have been recruited, licences have been obtained and the only thing that can't be guaranteed to behave is the weather.

All the attractions that have stood the test of time will be there - the **Arrow Valley Brass Band**, **The Punch & Judy Show**, **the Fun Dog Show**, **Pig Roast** and, of course, the enormous **Classic Car Show**. New this year for music lovers will be a genuine **Fairground Organ** and the adventurous will be delighted to hear that the terrifying **Climbing Wall** will be returning.

Bouncing around the Wake will be a pair of 9ft tall kangaroos who have a reputation for impudence and trickery - in fact they may well live up to their name and become quite "**Roo'd**". Also appearing, when and where you least expect him, will the amazing **Thomas Trilby** - an internationally renowned juggling stilt walker and all round entertainer.

Taste buds will be tantalised by a larger than ever selection of food outlets and there'll be two bars to keep the thirst away - as well as teas and cakes in the church.

All seems to be set for a great afternoon on 22nd June....but....

IT'S YOUR WAKE

Like most village events, The Wake is totally dependent on volunteers to make it work. When it works it's magic but it takes a lot of effort to conjure up that magic. The organisers would love to hear from you if you can spare some time to help them keep this Feckenham

tradition running smoothly. Perhaps you can help

on a stall, man an attraction - or just

help us put things up and take things

down again? Whatever you

can do, it will be much

appreciated. Please get in

touch to find out more.

Call Julian Bull on 01527

892522 or email

julianbull.777@gmail.com



Village Notices

Death Announcement:

Kenneth William Keight

Ken moved to Feckenham in April 1978 with his wife Mavis when they took over the ownership of the garage. He was born in Hull on 25th October 1933 and died on 7th April 2024 at Heathbrook House Care home in Bromsgrove.

He built the house in front of the garage in 1980 and lived there for 40 years until becoming a resident at Heathbrook House in March 2020.

A celebration of Ken's life and his funeral service will be held at St. John the Baptist, Feckenham on Tuesday 14th May at 12noon followed by his burial.

Anyone from the village who knew Ken and wishes to attend will be made very welcome.

Stock & Bradley Gardening Club

Summer Coach Trip

Friday 21st June 2024

We are opening this outing up to non-members, who would like to join us on this exciting garden visit.

A morning visit to Kingsbridge Farm Gardens in Steeple Claydon, Bucks - a stunning 6-acre garden. Then on to Buckingham Nurseries, which has evolved over 50 years. The final stop is at Thenford Gardens and Arboretum spread out over 70 acres. Lord and Lady Heseltine have created an impressive garden of importance over the past 40 years.

Price is £50, which includes all entry fees, coach transport, and refreshments at Kingsbridge. The coach will leave Stock and Bradley Green Village Hall car park B96 6RW at 08.30am PROMPT, Leaving Thenford gardens at 16.00pm, returning to the Village Hall, approximately 17.00 hrs .

Please contact Gay Bligh - m.gbligh49@gmail.com to book a place.

ANNUAL PLANT SALE – SATURDAY 11th May 2024

Stock and Bradley Gardening Club will be holding their Annual Plant Sale at Bradley Green Village Hall, Church Road, Bradley Green on Saturday 11th May 2024 from 10.00am to 12 noon.

This event has become more and more popular and successful over the years and is an ideal opportunity to buy plants at very competitive prices, all grown by the Club members. In addition there will be two local nurseries and a stall selling plant supports.

Make a note in your diary now !

SAVE THE DATE

FECKENHAM FLOWER AND GARDEN FESTIVAL

**Saturday 17th and Sunday 18th May 2025,
11am to 5pm.**

After much deliberation, we are delighted to announce that next year's Flower and Garden Festival is to take place over the weekend of Saturday 17th and Sunday 18th May 2025.

As many of you will know, this triennial Festival with numerous Open Gardens and a Flower Festival in the Church raises funds for the maintenance of our historic Parish Church and Churchyard.

This is always a great fun event for the village but requires many volunteers to help with the event. Please get in touch if you would be willing to help in any way.

Catherine Fisher
catherine.fisher@talk21.com

CHURCH SERVICES



PARISH CHURCH of ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST

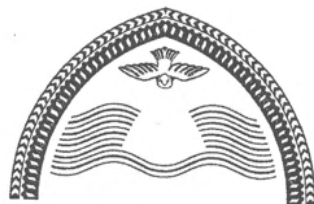
Vicar: Fr Glenn Reading 01527 894436

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 May 2024

5th May	10.30am	Morning Prayer	Rev Fiona Carter
12th May	9.00am	BCP Communion	Fr Glenn Reading
	10.30am	Family Service	Rev Fiona Carter
19th May	6.30pm	Evensong	Rev Fiona Carter
26th May	10.30am	Eucharist	Fr Glenn Reading



Drop in (in church)

Wednesday at 10.30am - 12.00pm

8th May and 22nd May

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

We have had a busy time in Church with all the Easter services, but it is settling down back into our normal pattern now. We were very privileged that the school came in to do their Easter bonnet parade and they sang some hymns Lord of the dance and Shalom. Along with spring chicken and other poems and songs. It was an absolute delight.

Spring is here. A time to spend with family when we can get outside and be in the fresh air and be able to go for walks or days out. Spring is a time of new life and new beginnings and new starts. And this is all around us with spring lambs, chicks and spring flowers. I am going to a farm with my grandchildren this week and I am hoping I can bottle feed a lamb. Last year we went to a farm at Easter and paid to be able to stroke a piglet but when it came to it they didn't really like it and made it quite clear.

I love all the spring flowers our rhododendron is budding and everything is shooting up it really is a beautiful time of the year. But not only are all the flowers springing up but also the weeds. It is not surprising really with the amount of sun and particularly all the rain we have had. So hence the weeds are growing just as quickly. And it makes me think about the parable of wheat and the chaff. And how in Jesus's parable if you pulled up the weeds while the wheat was growing then it would be damaged because the weeds have much stronger roots. So they have to grow together. Then are separated once they are grown. I know in early spring when we are weeding in the garden, we often have a discussion is this a weed or a plant and I am sure some lovely plants have been weeded up because we can't tell if they are a weed or a plant. It was the same with the wheat and the chaff in Biblical times it was very hard to tell the difference.

We have two bank holidays this month. One

at the beginning of the month and the other at the end. They are a time to rest and recuperate. We may go away or we may stay at home, it doesn't really matter. Even Jesus had to rest and go away to a quiet place by himself there are many accounts in the gospels where he needed to get away from the crowds. He would go up a mountain to be alone and sometimes the disciples would go with him, but he did have the need to retreat from the crowds and spend time praying to the Father. We could take a leaf out of his book and relax without feeling guilty, we haven't got to be doing things all the time. I really do hope and pray you all have blessed bank holidays this month and are able to fully rest and recuperate.

God bless you all.

Rev'd Fiona



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Traditional Music
Thursday, 23rd May
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Feckenham Archive - Marion Chute

This month we have had a plea for help. The following dropped into my email. My knowledge of Feckenham families is very limited. Is there anyone out there who can help? If you know anything please contact me in the first instance.

I am looking for the following information and wondered if you could advise me as to who I should be contacting or where I might find the information.

John Sparry married Elizabeth Price on 20/04/1891 at Feckenham Parish Church, entry no .318. The witnesses were John Mason and Annie Price and the vicar's name was Marshall. I did take a photograph of the church and the Old Vicarage.

John was a groom - where?

John's father, John Sparry, was a labourer and I wondered if I could find out where they lived and worked for.

Elizabeth's father, Thomas Price, was a baker and, as above, I would like know where to find the information.

Stop Press

It seems that there is an alternative solution to the the mystery house. A new informant suggests that it looks like the Brook Inn at Elcocks Brook. I can certainly see how it could be? Many thanks to our detectives



Feckenham Village Hall



MOLECATCHERS AND MONKEYS...

Songs about cuckolded molecatchers, a lone English oak tree that grows at Gallipoli, care in the community, medieval pilgrims and Victorian bare-knuckle boxers... We can only be talking about the acclaimed song and storytelling trio Harp & a Monkey.

"Harp and A Monkey... they never fail to interest and entertain. Storytellers supreme and musically adventurous, they embrace both tradition and possibility. Add all this to a comfortable and engaging rapport with the audience reflecting the personalities of three of the nicest guys you could wish to meet, and the result is, as ever, however long you spend in their company, it will be time well spent."

Harp & a Monkey were the last act to play at Feckenham Village Hall before the pandemic shut us down - so we're delighted to be able to welcome them back - hopefully under happier circumstances

HARP & A MONKEY

Saturday, 18th May 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

Draw results

**Feckenham Village Hall Improvement Fund
April draw.**

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

1st (£25)	40	Peter & Liz Teisen
2nd (£15)	149	Stve & Ita Daniels
3rd (£10)	60	Peter & Barbara Masters

Feckenham WI



WI Bike Night

Our April meeting was another active one, designed to inform and inspire us ready for a Summer of cycling. We are very grateful to Feckenham residents Gilly Cooper for coming to talk to us about her life-changing ride from Lands End to John o'Groats, to Sharon Lavin for taking us through her epic ride across the length of Ireland for her chosen charity BICA (Birmingham Irish Cycle Appeal), to Gareth Somers for teaching us bike-ability skills and giving us confidence on the road, and to Doug Pinkerton of

Pinkerton Classic Cycles in Ham Green for showing us how to care for our bikes and keep them safe. We all learned loads, had a lot of fun and came away thoroughly inspired. We also wish Sharon all the very best for her BICA ride this Summer as she attempts to ride through all 32 Irish counties, covering around 700 miles in less than 10 days.

Our next meeting is on Monday 20th May, when we shall be going to Ipsley Alders Marshes. We will be car sharing to get there, leaving Feckenham Village Hall car park at 8pm prompt. We will then be holding our AGM at The Oast House Pub. Wellies and a change of shoes will be essential as it will be very boggy.

Our subs are due by the end of April and it is £48 to cover all 12 meetings. Guests are more than welcome to attend any meeting at a cost of £5 per meeting. For more details, contact Jen Cary 07773 883039.

Charity Bike Ride for BCIA - Fundraising begins

Matt Clarke of the Rose and Crown and the Lavin family of Moors Lane are doing a massive Irish sponsored bike ride: a major fundraising event cycling all 32 counties of Ireland in July. This is a cycle of nearly 700 miles over a week cycling through all counties and all weathers in All of Ireland as part of BICA Birmingham Irish Cycling Association raising money for local charities. Helping people in need directly where possible. Mel told us that Matt is only a small cog in this very big wheel of cyclists including all 5 of the Lavin Family,.

Sharon described her first long distance ride at WI last week. She rode 100 miles per day from south to north Ireland over a week as a part of a group of 40 including her family. It took lots of training and the logistics of

getting bikes to and from Ireland were interesting.

Sharon said "Joining BICA as a new cyclist has been a life-changing experience. The welcoming community, supportive riders, and shared sense of purpose have made my first year unforgettable. I've grown as a cyclist, found lifelong friends, and discovered the joy of making a positive impact. BICA is more than just a cycling club—it's a family that I'm grateful to be a part of."

There are two fundraisers for the charity. All money going the charity as the cyclists pay their own costs. Details in the What's On pages.

The FeckenOdeon Cinema Society



GOOD CHEER!

An instant classic - this generously warm-hearted comedy from director Alexander Payne follows the unorthodox festive period endured by a cantankerous teacher who is tasked with looking after a wayward student on campus over Christmas. To say that the two don't get on is the understatement of the century. Add the school's blunt speaking head cook into the mix and you've got a pot of festive cheer - even though it's not Christmas. A hugely entertaining film that's gathered armfuls of awards including Oscars and BAFTAS and which will set you up in good spirits for the weekend. (USA 2023)

THE HOLDOVERS (15)

Friday, 10th May at 8pm

COMING SOON:

Friday, 19th July : PAUL (15)

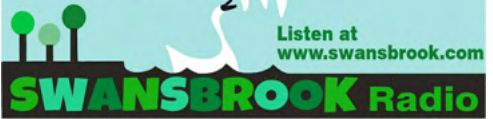
OUR 23rd SEASON:

The main programme for the FeckenOdeon's 2024/25 Season has been announced. There are details to be found at www.fecknodeon.co.uk and in leaflets available at the Shop, The Village Hall and The Rose & Crown. Films showing include: Wicked Little Letters, The Treasure of the Sierra Madre, Bob Marley - One Love, South Pacific, The Great Escaper, The Producers and A Haunting in Venice.



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's Own...



IT'S BRIAN!

Last month we encouraged you to listen to the return of our "In Conversation" programme in which local people talk about their lives here in Feckenham - and their lives before coming to Feckenham. We didn't name the subject of the first programme so we now have great pleasure in announcing that this month's chat is with **Brian Robson**.

Brian talks frankly and fearlessly with **Paul Furey** about his chequered past, his childhood in Finstall, his years as a banker, his stardom on the stage, his pioneering work in the early days of computers and his career with Aston Villa football club - alongside some tender recollections of the ladies in his life.

It's a fascinating listen and an insight into the life someone who made a great impression here in the village as long standing custodian of the Village Hall and as a leading volunteer at The Village Shop.

"In Conversation" can be heard streaming live and On Demand - just go to swansbrook.com to listen.

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Happy Hour with Ian Bellion - keeping you up to date with goings on and things to go to within easy reach of Feckenham.

Letters - Colin James explores his vast archive to pull out tracks with the Letter of The Week in the title.

Classical Swansbrook - Chris Fletcher presents her selection of the world's most beautiful music.

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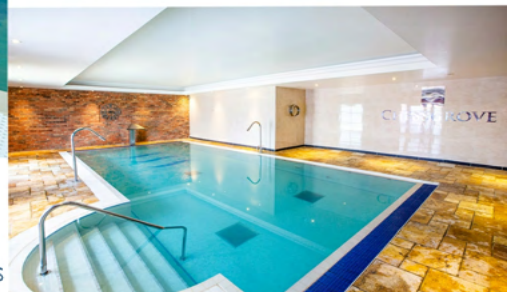
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WHAT'S ON IN

theWIM

INSPIRING WOMEN

Next Meeting - Monday, 20th May
IPSLEY ALDERS MARSHES
Leaving Village Hall car park at 8pm prompt
Wellies & change of shoes essential!
Followed by AGM
at the Oast House Pub
Visitors welcome - £5
Contact jen@thecarys.co.uk for details

FECKENHAM VILLAGE HALL

HARP & MONKEY

'Award-winning folk and storytelling trio'



"Bold and brilliant" - The Observer

"Excellent" - The Guardian

"Unique Sound" Kathryn Tickell (BBC Radio 2)

"Fantastic" and "Fascinating" - Mark Radcliffe (BBC Radio2)

SATURDAY, 18th May - 7.30pm

OH WHAT A LOVELY WAR

FRIDAY, 7th JUNE - 7pm

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

Rose & Crown



Birmingham Irish Cycle Appeal
BICA

Two charity events in support of
The Birmingham Irish Cycle Appeal
Supporting local charities
700 mile fundraising Cycle ride

Wednesday 29th May - 7.30pm

Rose & Crown QUIZ NIGHT

Teams of 4-6 - £5 per person
Every penny goes to charity!
Includes nibbles!

Thursday 30th May - 7pm

BICA RACE NIGHT

A race night of small bets but big fun!!
£10 per person
including light finger food on the table

ERSTWHILE



BORDER MORRIS

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

Feckenham READERS GROUP

Wednesday, 15th May - 7.45pm

This month's book:

THE CHEQUER BOARD

By NEVIL SHUTE

Details: 892285



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, 7th May

Stock & Bradley GARDENING CLUB



The Fragrant Garden

With PHILIP SMITH

Bradley Green Village Hall
Wednesday, 1st May
at 7.30pm

ANNUAL PLANT Sale



Bradley Green Village Hall
Saturday, 11th May
10am to 12 noon.

Feckenham Parish Council

MEETING

Thursday, 9th May - 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

The Holdovers

2024 Oscar & BAFTA
winning comedy.



FeckenOdeon 2 Friday, 10th May at 8pm

2024/25 programme now out
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The FeckenOdeon Cinemas
at Feckenham Village Hall

Tickets for all shows from The Rose & Crown and Village Shop
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www.feckenodeon.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
WAKE
Saturday, 22nd June
12.30pm to 5pm

Watch out!
You might get ROO'D!

CLASSIC CAR SHOW
over 100 cars

Juggling and japes
With THOMAS TRILBY

PUNCH & JUDY - Fun DOG SHOW
CLIMBING WALL - FAIRGROUND ORGAN
CRAZY GOLF - BRASS BAND
PIG ROAST - Real Ale BAR - CREAM TEAS
...AND MUCH, MUCH MORE!

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

COUNCIL MEETINGS

At the Annual Parish Meeting on 11th April the Chair, Cllr. Alan Smith touched on the following points in his annual report:

- The precept collected through Council Tax bills had been substantially increased. A difficult decision but essential due to increased demands on the council's finances.
- The council had been active in instigating measures to tackle the problem posed by flooding.
- The Council continued to oppose the proposed large battery stations and, through its work in researching the safety threats involved, had influenced national policy in these matters.
- The Council continued to monitor planning applications to ensure that they are lawful, compliant and will not adversely affect the heritage and beauty of the village.
- Cllr. Smith expressed appreciation of the work of Feckenham in Bloom which was now paying off.
- Cllr. Q Cary had recently resigned and the Chair thanked him for his work since 2015.

The full text of Cllr. Smith's report will be available on the Council's website.

At the same meeting Redditch and Bromsgrove District Inspector for local policing, Richard Field, gave an overview of local crime. Fortunately, Feckenham is a low crime area, but there are still incidents. The local police team will be at Feckenham Wake in June.

At the Parish Council meeting on the same evening it was agreed new white gates could be ordered and will be placed at better locations with the correct angles to the road. These were paid for by divisional funds from our County Councillors. The Parish Council was successful in a grant application to the Police and Crime Commissioner's fund which will pay for two new VAS machines to be sited on Alcester Road near Moors Lane and the other on Astwood Lane.



150 NOT OUT...

When old friends get together to tell tall stories they usually do it over a tippie or cuppa in private - but some folk have to be different and when they're well known broadcasting personalities they can be forgiven for hanging out their dirty washing in public.

Nick Owen, Pat Murphy and Jim Rosenthal have clocked up 150 years of "on air" experience between them - and in the process have amassed an almost inexhaustible collection of experiences and anecdotes (most of them true). Now they're giving their adoring public the chance to share these hitherto unaired secrets and they're doing it on the stage of The Palace Theatre in Redditch on Wednesday, 5th June. All three started their careers at Pebble Mill in Birmingham. Nick is well known as the long term anchor of Midlands Today, Jim has been at the forefront if ITV's sports coverage for many years and Pat, who masterminded the show, has reported for BBC Radio sport from all over the world. Pat also makes an annual appearance at Feckenham Cricket Club when he plays in a charity match. Tickets for "Behind the Mic" can be had from the Palace Theatre Box Office.



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Feckenham in Bloom - Gay Bligh

A Lot has Been Happening!

I hope you will agree that after two years in existence Feckenham in Bloom (FIB) is now making a difference to our lovely village. The seven native trees planted along the Winfield's fence are starting to burst into leaf and blossom. Many of you may not know that the trees, planted in late 2022, commemorate Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee – a tree for each year of her reign. The trees have been underplanted with snowdrops and daffodils which will be added to in the autumn; and a small plaque will be mounted to explain the significance of the trees. Together they will provide an attractive entrance to our village.



FIB have now taken on the responsibility of looking after the tubs at the 'bus stop' end of the Square. During the last few months, the tubs have provided a colourful and attractive display of winter and spring flowers. Similarly, the planters near the Lygon Arms have brightened up the village even on the gloomiest of days. As we move into spring and summer the tubs and planters will be rejuvenated with seasonal plants. A big thank you must go to all the

wonderful volunteers in the village who help with all the watering particularly during the summer months.

And have you noticed the improvements to the Pound? There has been a general tidy up of the area and the two wild roses planted against the wall will hopefully bloom this year in time for the Wake. A hundred narcissi Pheasant's Eye have also been planted along the wall and by the time you read this they should be blooming.

After two years of jumping through various hoops via Feckenham Parish Council, Redditch Borough Council, Feckenham Moated Manorial Site, and Historic England for Scheduled Monument Consent we finally have approval to install a bench at the top of the Recreation Field. Jane Bull, Clerk to the Parish Council, has worked tirelessly to ensure that we have the bench so please enjoy it! In the autumn we will be planting bulbs in its vicinity. Thank you to Feckenham Charity for funding this project.

Our current project is to improve the rather unsightly approach to the Church. Whilst we are unable to remedy the drainage problems, we hope that we can at least make the right-hand side of Church Walk a bit more attractive; so, watch this space!

If you have any ideas for projects and/or you would like to help with planting, watering etc please do get in touch.

Gay Bligh

Feckenham Village Shop - Alan Slater



VILLAGE SHOPS UNDER THREAT (but thank goodness not us!)

A couple of weeks ago there were some very alarming reports in the national media about how many village and community shops are currently struggling to source their product supplies. The problem is being exacerbated by one of the largest Wholesalers in the UK namely Bookers whose parent company is Tesco. They are being particularly unhelpful towards their smaller rural customers i.e the village shops. Apparently a change in policy has meant that they are either refusing to deliver to certain rural areas or have massively increased their minimum order requirement thus creating both a cash flow and product storage issue for many smaller outlets. I have to admit that I wasn't surprised to hear the media reports because our Buying Team encountered this exact problem two years ago. We had been good customers of Bookers since our shop opened but we were told that they were no longer prepared to deliver to Feckenham and that in future if we wished to continue trading with them,

we would have to collect our orders from their depot in Worcester. Needless to say their decision came as a blow, however, our resourceful Buyers quickly discovered an alternative supplier who was prepared to deliver into the 'wilds of Worcestershire'. It appears that many of our colleagues nationwide are not so fortunate.

We haven't completely stuck two fingers up to Bookers aka Tesco, we still use them for emergency top ups and a limited number of stock items, but we have to undertake a 30 mile round trip for the privilege of trading with them.

Sadly many village shops are not as fortunate as ourselves and do not have the number of willing volunteers able to make collections or the benefit of choice of an alternative supplier.

With a recently declared sixty billion pound turnover and a record pre tax profit of over two billion pounds, I suppose it's fanciful to think that Tesco/Bookers will reconsider their policy on small village shops. I just hope that other wholesalers fill the gap in the supply chain created by Bookers to prevent the much valued, and for many essential rural amenity of a Village Shop does not go the same way as many country pubs and disappears.

On a more positive note and underlining the important role that a village shop plays within a local community, I'm delighted to report that we have sold almost £900 of Margaret Greens knitted products in support of Project Morogoro in East Africa. A tremendous effort by Margaret and only achieved by the magnificent support of our customers. Thanks to everyone involved.

An Organic Allotment by Pete Delaney

... and so we start officially the first month of the summer, a month to look ahead with anticipation for the first real harvests of the season.

I have found April and May to be the hardest months to target with fresh veg from the plot, a time when last year's produce is all finished and this year's is all getting going. So early sown salad, young lettuce, rocket and chard leaves making it onto the dinner table at last are a welcome sight.

May is also a key month for planting out into beds or into pots young seedlings germinated during April.

This month I shall be planting out into prepared beds any brassica, courgettes and outdoor cucumbers, all of which I have been bringing on in small pots. I shall be keeping an eye on the weather for late frosts, not at all unknown in this month, and shall cover plants with fleece or glass protection if cold weather looks likely. If a late frost does come I protect young potato plants by covering the row with straw.

Near the end of the month, after filling in the compost trench I have been long preparing for them, I plant out runner beans, some seasons waiting till early June if there has been a spell of late cold weather. In the polytunnel I shall be transplanting from trays and small pots, indoor

cucumbers, tomatoes and peppers. This year I am growing some of my tomatoes in the ground (a large fruiting variety called Big Daddy) and some of our usual Money Maker in large compost bags that I use flat



as grow bags. Cucumbers I am planting in beds in the polytunnel ground fed with a forked in layer of my own compost to which I attribute last years crop of 46 cucumbers off 3 plants.

I have taken to switching between produce grown in pots or bags or in the ground so as to keep crop rotation going each year in the small indoor space so to avoid disease and pests.

Whether in the ground or in grow bags I top dress tomatoes and cucumbers periodically throughout the season to keep them fed. Also giving them the occasional dose of diluted comfrey feed up until they begin fruiting as it is full of nitrogen.

Peppers I plant into large pots filled with a mix of good soil and compost.

Out on the plot, broad beans are well in flower in fact they flowered early in the warm wet weather and I was worried that it was too soon for them but they have grown on as they flowered and look like producing a good crop. Garlic planted last November looks thick stemmed and strong, still I am wondering if there was enough of a frost during last winter to allow them to split into individual cloves.

Peas are finding their way up the rows of netting I provided for them to climb. My early planted out mange-tout I hope shall flower before the end of the month for a harvest in the first half of June. I feed peas regularly with comfrey water.

Parsnips seem to be doing their usual "hard to get" germination, I sow 2 or 3 times during spring to ensure a crop next winter. On the theme of winter crops, late last month or early this month I prick out leek seedlings from their seeding trays, potting each leek into its own small pot to grow on.

Back into this evolving summer, in between sowings and plantings as usual it's hoeing and weeding, the one never ending summer job.

Rob Cole's Gardening Tips

The Gardener's Lot

It's not easy being a gardener ! Although most gardeners love what they do, they must also bear the agonies of all the things that are stacked against them.

Weeds are the first enemy to come to mind. It is absolutely essential to keep on top of weed control - if you don't, they spread rapidly and it can be very difficult to regain control. Some of the worst weeds are Bittercress, Groundsel, Dandelion, Ground Elder, Mare's Tail, Euphorbia, but there are many, many more. If you have a lawn you have another raft of weeds, especially Clover, Daisies, Black Medick and moss. The best advice is to eliminate the weeds whilst they are still at the seedling stage, either by pulling them out or by hoeing on a dry day so that they wilt and die readily. The one thing you mustn't do is to allow them to go to seed - the old adage about 'one years seeding means seven years weeding' is only too true.

Then you have insect pests ! Blackfly, Greenfly, Whitefly, Red Spider, caterpillars, weevils, Lily Beetle - the list is endless. As is the list of diseases and other plant pests ranging from moulds, fungus, black spot and coral spot to eelworm, Narcissus Fly, Chafer grubs, Sawfly, slugs, snails and a whole host of others.

And just when you think you might be nearing the stage of being in control, the rabbits move in. Where do they come from, and how do they know which are the most expensive or best loved plants to consume? And how do they know that the delicious lettuce and carrots in your rabbit trap are to be avoided in favour of the ones on your vegetable plot?

Deer have also become a problem recently, especially muntjac. Their appetite is varied

and voracious, especially for recently planted shrubs. They will also strip the bark from established trees. Unfortunately, a fence about eight feet high around the whole of a garden is not a viable solution, and we have trialled cheap smelly soap, either hung on a nearby branch or shredded around a new plant. We are told that it can be quite effective but have yet to be convinced.

Fortunately, the pleasures of gardening always outweigh the problems and I cannot imagine living without these overriding pleasures.

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STOCK AND BRADLEY GARDENING CLUB

Our 3rd April event was our Annual Bulb Show. 28 members attended and exhibited a wide range of daffodils, tulips and floral arrangements - and we each judged the entries to determine the winner in each of the nine classes. This event is also an opportunity to socialise, and it has become a tradition that we each bring along a few nibbles to share.

NEXT CLUB EVENT - Wednesday 1st May 2024 at 7:30pm

Our next meeting is a talk by Philip Smith entitled 'The Fragrant Garden', and Philip will show us a wide range of plants which will bring a whole new scented dimension to our gardens.

The subject for the monthly competition is 'A scented flower or scented foliage'.

PLANT SALE - at Bradley Green Village Hall, Church Road, Bradley Green

Our annual Plant Sale will be held on **Saturday 11th May 2024 from 10am to 12 noon** so make a note in your diary now! If you can donate plants to add to those grown by our members, it would be greatly appreciated. There will also be two stalls run by professional nurseries, and another selling plant supports. The event is an ideal opportunity to buy excellent plants at keen prices and is open to EVERYONE, not just Club members. Spread the word, and bring your friends.

There will be coffee and tea available, and home made cakes. There is no charge for entry, but we do appreciate it if you buy a raffle ticket at the door.

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.



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Feckenham Cricket Club Bob Gordon

I am a little weary in having to refer to the wet weather but I have no option - there is next to no chance of any cricket in April and mid-May is currently the most optimistic prediction from the ground team.

In the meantime we continue to prepare and repair – for example, the shower area in the home changing room is being refurbished. We are also trying to get the new boundary board panels painted and assembled into fences, but this is a slow process as it is incompatible with rain (oops, weather again).

So, let's imagine that this is a normal pre-season....

For the youngsters, we are offering a range of Junior Cricket for the 2024 season and are running the following league teams in 2024:

U13 - Pairs (8 a side - Midweek matches)

U13 - T20 (9 a side - Sunday mornings)

U14 - T20 (11 a side - Sunday mornings)

U15 - Hundred (11 a side - Midweek matches)

The U14 and U15 team are also entered into a Knockout Cup this season.

Once the outfield has dried out sufficiently Junior nets will take place on Friday evenings from 6pm for U12-U15s and will run through to early September.

We are on the lookout for new players and anyone that would like to help with either Junior Coaching, umpiring or scoring games. Please contact the club by email to feckenhamcc@outlook.com or send a message on the club's Facebook page.

Ladies cricket - we had a ladies/girls softball team before Covid struck and would like to revive this - if you are interested please get in touch.

Theoretically, our upcoming home fixtures are:

Sat. 4 th May 12:30	- Feckenham CC 2 nd XI v Ombersley CC- 3rd XI
Sun. 5 th May 10:15	- Feckenham U14 v Himley (T20 match)
Tue. 7 th May 18:00	- Feckenham U13 v Alvechurch & Hopwood
Sat. 11 th May 12:30	- Feckenham CC 1 st XI v Martley 1 st XI
Sun 12 th May 10:00	- Feckenham U13 v Redditch (T20 match)
Tue 14 th May 18:00	- Feckenham U14 v Droitwich Spa (Knockout Cup)
Sat 18 th May 12:30	- Feckenham 2 nd XI v Halesowen 4th XI
Mon 20 th May 18:00	- Feckenham U13 v Astwood Bank (Pairs match)
Tue 21 st May 18:00	- Feckenham U15 v Avoncroft
Wed 22 nd May 18:00	- Feckenham Ramblers v Five Ways
Sat 25 th May 12:30	- Feckenham 1 st XI v Brockhampton
Thu 30 th May 13:00	- Worcestershire Over 70s v Wales Over 70s
Sat 1 st Jun 13:00	- Feckenham 1 st XI v Himley 4 th XI



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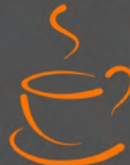
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