

# FECKENHAM



May 2021

News

Published by Feckenham Church for the Village

Editor: Gilly Cooper

[feckenhamnews@gmail.com](mailto:feckenhamnews@gmail.com)

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# Feckenham News in May

## In the magazine:

Something for everyone.

We have updates on the village activities which are still happening, a couple of farewells and some introductions as well as plans for new activities within the village. Also some extras: a recipe and a nature section.

## Dates for your diary

May  
12th Book Club  
20th Parish Council meeting  
June  
26th Horse Show TBC

This goes to press just after Prince Philip's funeral, and I know the village marked his passing in different ways: the union flag on the church was at half-mast of course and the bells were rung at 1430 just before the funeral. I'm sure our thoughts are with the Royal Family, particularly, the Queen at this difficult time.

## Production Team

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## Front Cover

Chestnut Tree on the Green by Arthur Hind - now replaced with a younger one.

Magazine online at [www.feckenham.com](http://www.feckenham.com)

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

## Editor's Note

Hello everyone and welcome to the May edition put together as we gently emerge from lockdown and the weather gradually improves. I'm feeling optimistic while staying cautious.



I took my first baby steps seeing others indoors when I did a first session vaccinating at the Artrix. I was rather anxious but soon got into the new way of working - masks, swabbing down between patients and keeping distance from everyone as much as possible. What a possible vibe there was. The people coming for their jabs were so pleased. For some it was their first outing for months.

I hope you liked April's new look magazine. Thanks to those who pointed out the missing page numbers. They should be there this month.

Knowing that Feckenham, as a community is so successful, I was listening to Radio 4's Thinking Allowed on the subject of Social Capital. It has been shown that communities with sustained community spirit are more

likely to help each other. For example mask-wearing is greater but we do so much more. This is why the magazine, as one of our 'hubs' for communication is so important.

In order for the magazine to serve the needs of all, it needs to bring information, local news and some extra pieces which may be of interest especially at a time when we have to keep our distance. I'm still looking for new ideas of topics to include from the community. Please don't hold back if you have something to contribute or suggestions for change.

I am particularly looking for current or past village residents who would like to share their life story in the "Introducing..." section. What a scoop we have this month, as Oobah is also front-page news on the BBC website as I write!

Another change for the magazine has been the formation of an editorial board. I am keen to run new ideas past others and also to have their thoughts on content and improvements. The board members include: Mark Wheatley, Ann Matthews, John Eaton, Ian Bellion and myself. We plan to meet quarterly. Thanks to all of the members for stepping up.

Gilly

# May Church Services

## PARISH CHURCH of ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST

**Priest-in-charge:** Rev Wyn Beynon **07595313035**

**Church Warden:** Ann Mathews **892180**

**Please contact Ann for Weddings at** [ann@the-madison-group.co.uk](mailto:ann@the-madison-group.co.uk)

**Wyn for Baptisms & Funerals at** [wynbeynon@gmail.com](mailto:wynbeynon@gmail.com)

**Church Website:** [achurchnearyou.com/church/18729](http://achurchnearyou.com/church/18729)

**Email:** [info@feckenhamchurch.org.uk](mailto:info@feckenhamchurch.org.uk)



At the end of April we shall cease the zoom services and open up the church for regular worship.

Revd Wyn Beynon will be leading the following services

2 <sup>nd</sup> May	11.00am	Eucharist
9 <sup>th</sup> May	9.00am <b>Note new Gme</b>	BCP Eucharist
16 <sup>th</sup> May	6.30pm	Said Evensong
23 <sup>rd</sup> May	11.00am	Eucharist <b>Pentecost</b>
30 <sup>th</sup> May	11.00am	To be confirmed

We will still need to adhere to current Coronavirus restrictions of 30 people and no singing.

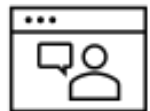
Please phone Ann to book a place 892180 or e mail [ann@the-madison-group.co.uk](mailto:ann@the-madison-group.co.uk)

We look forward to seeing you there.

## FECKENHAM ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH St John Fisher & Thomas More

There is a live-streamed Mass on Sundays at 4.30pm. Fr. Tony Rohan will officiate. The link is: [www.eventcast.uk/live](http://www.eventcast.uk/live)

*Note:* Type the link into your browser on your computer.



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

**Local contact: Phylis Mott, Feckenham. Tel 893898**

## St John the Baptist PCC Prof. Mark Wheatley

### ‘Thank you’ and ‘Thank you’ .....

The eagle-eyed amongst our readers will have noted a subtle transformation on the front cover of *Feckenham News* over the last few months. The issues from December 2020 to February 2021 proudly stated “Editor: Sasha Furey”. This became “Editors: Gilly Cooper & Sasha Furey” on the March and April editions before becoming “Editor: Gilly Cooper” on this issue (yes, you can have a quick look at the front cover now to check before carrying on reading!). When Sasha kindly volunteered to take on the editor’s role back in October last year, it was on the understanding that it could only be for a short term, as important school exams were already written into her diary for May 2021, so April was always going to be Sasha’s last issue. At the other end of her tenure, Sasha’s first issue ensured that we could enjoy the reassuring sound of the *Feckenham News* dropping through our letterbox at the start of December in J me for Christmas. So we owe Sasha a debt of gratitude; she volunteered to be editor with no prior experience but bringing plenty of enthusiasm to the role and has done a thoroughly splendid job. She has ‘carried the ball’ at an important J me for the *Feckenham News*.

With Sasha’s time at the helm coming to an end, the *Feckenham News* needed a new editor – and I’m delighted to say, up stepped Gilly Cooper in February. This allowed Gilly and Sasha to over-lap in the role and facilitated a slow and seamless hand-over of the baton, with the March and April issues being co-edited before Gilly became sole editor, starting with this month’s edition. Like Sasha before her, Gilly brings shed-loads of enthusiasm and fresh ideas to the role and I am sure that the *Feckenham News* will continue to flourish far into the future in Gilly’s capable hands. So on behalf of the PCC and congregation of Feckenham Church I would like to say a big ‘Thank you’ to Sasha Furey for offering her time and talents and for a job well done; and I would like to say an equally big ‘Thank you’ to Gilly Cooper for enthusiastically offering her skills and time as the new editor of *Feckenham News*.



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1 Coupass Cottages

Dear Madam Editor,

I have noticed, over the last few months, that more and more people are using the soubriquet, “Feckenhamster”, for inhabitants of the village.

It has occurred to me that you might be interested in the origin of the “Feckenhamster”.

As with all good ideas of this type, it started in the ‘local’! In this case it was the ever popular Rose and Crown, in the centre of the village.

Saturday and Sunday lunchtimes saw a small number of like-minded ‘villagers’, (i.e. We all enjoyed a pint or three of beer!), gathered in the lounge to ‘set the world to rights’.

Lew Bennett had recently moved into a cottage on the square; Norman Ward, Tom Harman and Patrick Ward also strolled to the “Crown”. Campbell Kerr and his wife Kitty, former residents of the village, drove down and I cycled from Astwood Bank.

The original idea was Pat Ward’s and as with all beer fuelled ideas it went apace!

Lew, of course, took on the design and art work for the ‘Feckenhamster’. He chose the ever sartorial and elegant Tom Harman as the model! Pat took on the logistics and

we all forked out £20-30 for the purchase of sweatshirts.

I still have a couple of these from which I have attempted to reproduce Lew’s original design.

Long may Feckenhamsters inhabit the village!

Cheers,

Sawbridge Feckenhamster.



All the while I was trying to copy Lew’s Feckenhamster, I heard his voice in my ear: “Hopeless” it said. “Told you for years you can’t draw” it said. “The colours clash!” it said. “You are rubbish!” “Give me a pencil and go away” it said So, that’s what I did! “There you go, that’s so much better!” it said.

## Village Notices

**C**alling all gardeners! Exciting News! ...We are proposing to set up "Feckenham in Bloom" which will enable us to apply for grants from Redditch Borough Council as well as discounts from local garden centres and hopefully attract some sponsorship from local businesses. All of which will help us to sustain the current planting around the village but also to expand this further. There have already been some good ideas for new locations for bulb planting but all ideas are welcome. **Also welcome are all volunteers who would like to be involved in this project.** This need not be too time consuming or too onerous as there are a number of tasks involved, from advice and suggestions, through to bulb planting, dead heading and watering (hopefully residents who live near a planter will pop out with a watering can of water when needed!).

If you would like to be involved please email me [ericaguise@live.co.uk](mailto:ericaguise@live.co.uk) or Jane Bull, the Parish Council Clerk, [clerk.feckenhampc@feckenham.com](mailto:clerk.feckenhampc@feckenham.com)  
Telephone 01527 892522

**W**e are (bravely) holding The **Feckenham Horse Show** on the first Saturday after the full Covid restrictions are due to be lifted – Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> June. Boris, don't let us down! This annual affair invites all riders, children and adults alike, and whatever your ability level, to come and take part as there is bound to be a class that suits you, even if it's the Fancy Dress. A fun, family friendly show where spectators are also welcome. Come celebrate your new found freedom!

**T**ennis Club Update: We are gathering momentum and many thanks for the interest already shown. We're now working towards making a planning application for the new courts in the second quarter of this year. As with any new venture, there will be hoops to jump through and it will be a little while yet before we have our own courts. A lot of work has been going on behind the scenes, which we are keen to share.

In order that we can proceed, we do now want firm expressions of interests in Feckenham Tennis Club. We need a membership list so we can work with the main grant awarding bodies: Sport England and The Lawn Tennis Association. Once we know the true level of interest, we will then be able to take our plans further. We are planning a website, will form a properly constituted club and are busy researching all that is entailed in setting up a new club. If we have sufficient interest, we will ask people to take out a modest membership fee to cover outlay on some incidental, initial costs. We want Feckenham to have its very own modern tennis club and are hugely enthusiastic about the challenge.

We hope to take this to the next stage and have lots of plans ..... so all we need now is definite expressions of interesting in joining the club.

If this is something you'd like to do, please email [Feckenhamtennis@gmail.com](mailto:Feckenhamtennis@gmail.com) - as soon as possible, so we can take the planning of our club to the next level. If there is not sufficient interest, obviously we will not be able to take this initiative further, very disappointing though that will be, as we think it will be an opportunity missed.

## Thought for the Month

Rev. Wyn Beynon

Dear Friends

This is my last letter as Rector of the Feckenham. I'm effectively retiring at the end of May and moving with Melissa to Halesowen. The really exciting thing is that Melissa is being ordained deacon on 4th July at Worcester Cathedral and she will begin her curacy with the Halesowen team - being based at Lapal. After a couple of months off I'm going to be helping out at the Blakedown and Belbroughton parishes until they become part of a new arrangement of parishes.

I have been the Vicar or Rector of 4 parishes and before that Curate of 2 parishes over the past 40 years. If I'm honest I'm looking forward to letting go of much of the responsibilities that goes with being the Priest in Charge but by no means am I stopping being a Priest - it's just a change in what I actually do day by day whilst drawing my pension!

So it's goodbye from me and above all "Thank You". One of the most noticeable things about working in the West Midlands after many years in the South East is how much friendlier you all are. You talk to each other in the street and when out walking, and there is a bit more time for each other. It's not always what I experienced nearer London!

Melissa wanted me to add how much she has loved living here too. We will

have a lot of people to miss! It was living and worshipping in these communities that encouraged Melissa to offer herself for ordination - so thank you for that too!

It's been a privilege to be responsible for worship in St John the Baptist Church, and to officiate at baptisms, weddings funerals and to be with families as they marked, sorrowed and celebrated the rich cycle of life.

In the end a Parish is people, and I've loved being with you all, being part of the 5 communities that made up the Wychebrook Benefice, with their ups and downs, fallings in and out, their joys and their worries. So thank you, and may God bless you, and bless these communities, as, hopefully, we begin to emerge from the pandemic that has made this the most bizarre, and for too many, a tragic and sorrowful year.

My thanks to Ann Matthews as Churchwarden, the PCC, Organists, the Choir... and and and... so many people I'm going to stop naming them now! But special thanks to The Revd Barbara Wheatley who has been a brilliant priest colleague and also to Fiona Carter our Lay Reader.

I know you will be well served by Fr Glenn and Mother Victoria as the parish helps form a new parish team with what was the Christ the Kings team in Astwood Bank, Headless Cross and Webheath.

Best wishes,  
Wyn



By the time you read this month's Feckenham News, we should have completed the new and vastly improved outside seating area for the café. I do hope you approve of the very smart decking, it's a considerable improvement to the previous café facility, and I am sure, with the help of some decent summer weather, it will prove to be very popular during the months ahead. After the long winter lockdown it's great to be able to socialise outside again, so come along and take advantage of the new amenity at the Village Shop. Our thanks are given (again) to David Rowe for his management of this final phase of the shop's refurbishment project.

Mentioning things new, I'm delighted to announce the introduction of two new gift ranges of affordable luxury products that are perfect if you are looking for a last minute present. The Little Soap Company in Broadway are providing us with artisan toiletries that are all priced below £5, whilst Stoneglow are supplying us, as well as John Lewis and Waitrose, with a selection of Reed Diffusers and Candles all priced below £20. If you would like to see what they look like, the products are on display in the Shop and are featured on our Facebook page.

This month I would like to thank all the children who entered our Easter Colouring Competition and congratulate the three winners, Seb Darby, Chloe Farmer and



Sophie Farmer, who were chosen to each receive a prize of a special Easter Egg. Congratulations must also be given to Margaret Green who hand-knitted the lovely Easter Bunnies that the Shop sold on her behalf during March. An incredible £460 was raised for the Mission Morogoro Charity, so well done Margaret and a thank you to all our customers who supported such a worthy cause.

Until next month thank you for continuing to support the Village Shop and fingers crossed for another glorious summer and the opportunity to make full use of our new outdoor café.

SHOP LOCAL



## Feckenham Cricket Club – April 2021

The ground is looking rather splendid, with the boundary fences repainted with help from all sections of the club, kicked off by our ladies team The Feckenham Fillies, senior players and the junior team. The first match of the year – a friendly against Bromsgrove – was abandoned due to sleet and rain. The great British summer must be just around the corner.

On a freezing grey day, the match was very entertaining, with captain Jamie Reddish hitting 131 from 72 balls, with the team finishing on 292 for 7 from their 40 overs. Bromsgrove reached 95 for 3 in the 15 overs that they were able to play.

We are launching the ECB “All Stars” program for 5-8 year olds on Thursday May 13th at 6pm and running for 8 weeks. Registration at <https://ecb.clubspark.uk/AllStars/Course/d10a5216-9515-4693-bdac-98ed27b0fe9b>

In an exciting development, the club is working with John O’Brien and his team to explore the feasibility of tennis courts at the cricket ground.

Upcoming senior fixtures at Mill Lane (12:30 start unless stated):

Sat May 1 <sup>st</sup>	1 <sup>st</sup> XI v Coombs Wood
Sat May 8 <sup>th</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup> XI v Evesham 1 <sup>st</sup> XI
Sat May 15 <sup>th</sup>	1 <sup>st</sup> XI v Ombersley 2 <sup>nd</sup> XI
Sat May 22 <sup>nd</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup> XI v Cleobury Mortimer 1 <sup>st</sup> XI
Sat May 29 <sup>th</sup>	1 <sup>st</sup> XI v Hagley

There are also regular junior matches on Sunday mornings (and possibly afternoons) as well as early evening on many Mondays and Tuesdays. Pick up a fixture card from the dispenser on the club balcony.

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## Feckenham Village Hall Ian Bellion

### SOFTLY SOFTLY...

The Village Hall is very gradually coming out of hibernation. At the time of writing children's activities are permitted and it's expected that, by the time you read this, the first young people's activities will be up and running. The All Round Theatre School will probably be the first to start with small group sessions on Wednesday nights. It is also hoped that the Village Nursery will reopen soon - though this has been delayed by the late arrival of official paperwork.

A more general relaxation and reopening comes on 19th May when many activities can restart subject to strict social distancing. All measures are in place to make the Hall a Covid Safe environment. For information on which activities are restarting and when please check the Hall notice board and the website at [www.feckhall.org](http://www.feckhall.org)

### BRIGHT AND BEAUTIFUL

The Village Hall Committee has been active throughout lockdown and the opportunity has been taken to make improvements which might not have been possible when the building was busy. The Back Room now has a new boiler, storage areas have been spruced up and new energy saving lighting has been installed throughout. Many other minor jobs have been done to ensure that the Village Hall is in prime condition to welcome back users. To book the Hall or enquire about activities please contact the Booking Secretary, Liz Teisen, on 01527 821233 or use the enquiry form at [www.feckhall.org](http://www.feckhall.org)

### BRIAN RETIRES

If you've hired or used the Hall in the past you will have met Brian Robson who was our Booking Secretary and (unofficial) caretaker for many years. Brian has now retired from the role and handed his masterkeys over to Liz Teisen. His retirement happened during the period when Feckenham News was dormant so the news may not have reached everyone. Brian is a very hard act to follow. He cared deeply about the Hall and about the organisations and people who used it and he did everything possible to make sure that hirers felt welcome and that their endeavours succeeded. The Hall's Committee would like to record their gratitude to Brian for his years of hard work and dedication. He continues to offer assistance to his successor – and he's thrown himself into a new career as a published author.

### DRAW

The Village Hall's Improvement Fund Draw for April, 2021 was made at the meeting of The Trustees on 6th April.

### Winners:

169	Peter & Marion Chute	£25
159	Ian & Sue Ridley	£15
5	Jeremy & Fiona Hawker	£10

#### **HELP FOR YOU if you are self-isolating** From Volunteers Co-ordinated by Feckenham Facebook Group & Parish Council

A group of local volunteers from the village are available to assist you with PICKING UP SHOPPING, or POSTING MAIL, picking up URGENT SUPPLIES (including medications) or just having a FRIENDLY PHONE CALL during this challenging time when many people are being advised to self-isolate if they are either vulnerable or ill.

If you would like some help then please contact JANE BULL, Clerk to Feckenham Parish Council either on 892522 or [clerk.feckenhampc@feckenham.com](mailto:clerk.feckenhampc@feckenham.com) and we will be in touch (& the help is free!). Any goods will be left on your doorstep. More updates on our local radio: [swansbrook.com](http://swansbrook.com)

NOTE: Coronavirus is contagious. Please take every precaution to ensure you are spreading only kindness – Avoid physical contact (keep at least 2m distance from others) and Wash your hands regularly



#### YOUR CHOICES ON AIR NOW

Swansbrook Radio is YOUR local radio station - so it was gratifying to receive such a large number of responses to Chris Fletcher's appeal for requests to feature in her Classical Swansbrook programme. Feckenhamsters sent in enough requests to fill at least two programmes and a third is filling up nicely. You can hear the results on air now - by the time this magazine is published the second programme will be playing on the live stream - if you missed the first one you'll still be able to listen to it by going to our On Demand page. There are all sorts of interpretations of the definition of "classical" - everything from Rachmaninov to the Rolling Stones - perhaps more classic than classical but we're not fussy! It's not too late to contribute - an email to [radio@swansbrook.com](mailto:radio@swansbrook.com) will do the trick. Just let us know what you want to hear... and the same applies to all of our music programmes. Colin James is an expert on the Golden oldies and Ian Bellion can find the most obscure of tracks. Just ask and we'll play it!

#### JOIN US

Swansbrook Radio has soldiered on throughout the pandemic. Lockdown hasn't allowed us to get out and about very much but we're hoping that will

improve soon. We're a very small band and we would welcome a bit of help - particularly in the fields of administration and reporting. If you have skills in those areas and can spare a bit of time we'd love to hear from you. Just email [radio@swansbrook.com](mailto:radio@swansbrook.com) and we'll be in touch.

#### LISTEN TO THE SWANS

Just go to [www.swansbrook.com](http://www.swansbrook.com) and follow the instructions you'll find there. Most programmes are now 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](http://www.swansbrook.com)

The FeckenOdeon  
Cinema Society  
Ian Bellion



#### WATCH THIS SPACE

It now looks almost certain that cinemas will be allowed to reopen from 19th May - and that's the only clarity we have from the powers that be. We don't know whether showings will have to be socially distanced or how many people we'll be allowed to admit. The message from Feckenham's village cinema is much the same as it was last month - we're waiting, we're watching and, as soon as it's safe to do so, we'll spring into action and continue our mission to bring the very best big screen entertainment to the village.

## Happy 60th Wedding Anniversary to Babara and Peter Masters



Barb n Pete would like to say a huge thank you to everyone for their good wishes and wonderful presents on their 60 Wedding Anniversary, especially those who passed the word, you know who you are !!! It came as a complete surprise because of lock down proving yet again what a wonderful village we live in.

I took the opportunity to have a chat with them, socially distanced of course, to find

out how they met and their thoughts about the village. I have known them for many years. I had moved to Pound House in 1988 and in the early years, watched as they renovated Number 21, moving in permanently after 5 years of hard work.

Winding back, Pete was born in the village and brought up by his grandparents in the house where they live now. The couple met at the Square and Compass pub in Hanbury when they were teenagers and married on 25th March 1961 after courting for about 5 years. They moved to Cotteridge and lived there for 32 years before their move to Feckenham, Pete working at Longbridge and Barb at Cadbury's after their twin daughters, Karen and Nicky, started school.

Over the years living on The Square, in the centre of the village, Barb has concentrated on their garden, raising funds for Greyhound Rescue and housekeeping for the village surgery, while Pete has had many roles including Cleaner-in-Charge at the school, previous Parish Council Member, Village Square Committee since 1996 and he still chairs the Feckenham Charity. They are always involved with The Wake and Fun on the Square.



You can hear Peter Masters "In Conversation" with the late Stuart Knowles on Swansbrook Radio. Pete tells us about growing up in Feckenham, working at the Austin and living in the house he was born in. The programme will be live streamed at 4pm every day from 3rd to 16th May and is available to to On Demand. To listen go to [www.swansbrook.com](http://www.swansbrook.com)

Editor

In our discussion about memories of the village, it turns out that Pete's family, the Turners and Ladburys, have lived in the house since it was built, perhaps as a police house, in the early 1800s. I wonder if he has the deepest roots to the village of anyone living here now?

Barb said she loves the village because nobody is judged by their background: we are all villagers together and Pete loves the social side of life, particularly the village pub, where they can oüen be found of a weekend.

They have been the best of neighbours to me and the family.


48 High Street  
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B96 6HS

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## Introducing...

### **Oobah Butler**

**TV Presenter, Bestselling Author, Award-Winning Filmmaker**

Your editor couldn't fail to hear the news that one of our own has made it to the small screen. I remember him from the very early days and recall a madcap trip to Prague when we took my son, Jamie and his friend, Oobah to see Pearl Jam while they were in their teens. Needless to say there was significant stress caused when we allowed them some time to explore the city alone! The story has joined our family canon.

You may be wondering where his name originated. His slightly older sister, Becky, who was just learning to speak, called him Oobah and it stuck!

I asked him to write about himself for the village and here it is:

Thanks, Feckenham. You made me who I am.

Thanks to the Playing Fields' swings for giving me the scar between my eyes which has, for almost three decades, prevented me from being able to look in the mirror without being transported back home.

Thank you to Aunties Lynn, Marg and Sam at Nursery School and their patience with a moonfaced toddler who refused to stop turning his eyelids inside out, talking incessantly, and eating so many biscuits he earned the nickname 'Hoover'.

Thank you to Eve Doyle's Olivier Award-worthy sermons she gave at school every morning. To Frances Andrews, the wonderful Frances Andrews, for giving everything she had and introducing the idea of theatre, performance and 'DICTION, OOBAH, D-I-C-T-I-O-N' to me, my five siblings, and a generation of the young locals who didn't have much to do. Thank you to my parents for taking over the local pantomimes and all the amazing villagers who helped organise them.

Thank you to the 17ft tall Richard Hillman and the story he told me of being undercover with the secret service in Germany during the formation of the Berlin wall. Something I couldn't get out my head watching him dance, sing and strut dressed as Scrooge, Doctor Who and Ginger Rogers in front of the Village Hall crowd.



Thank you again to Lynn Preece for giving me my first job and £20 a week to clean up after the nursery school. To Michael Mott for converting me from high street dawdler to his Youth Club “little helper”. And Vanda Cookes for filling me with pork baps so large, and Paddy at the Crown for my first ever shandy to wash them down.

Thank you to The Church for being the first place my friends Jamie, Harry and I publicly performed music together, and its graveyard for providing an idyllic spot for my grandmother and my grandfather to look down expectantly at the cricket square from their final resting place.

To the Playing Fields; the backdrop to every young Feckenham’s rites of passage. The first goal into an empty net; the surrounding benches for witnessing my first kiss. To my Great Grandfather Arthur Davis and his fellow founders of the football and cricket clubs for building those communities. To the late-Malcolm Hawkes, Matt, and the people of the future who will

keep them going. I thank you all, I really do.

Now, I’ve left. I live in London. And in the past six years I’ve been incredibly lucky. I’m presenting a new TV series named ‘Catfish’, which will be shown in 180 countries on MTV. Before the pandemic, I was travelling the world making documentaries, exploring subjects like fake news by doing things like creating TripAdvisor’s top-rated restaurant in a garden shed. I’ve written articles for the likes of The Guardian and VICE Magazine which have won British Media Awards, and have been described by The BBC as “hugely elaborate and curiously insightful”. My 2019 debut book was a Los Angeles Times and USA Today #1 bestseller in America.

But Feckenham could never leave me. And no matter where I go, you’ll find imprints of those footpaths – from the Whirley Hole to Blackberry Hill; the churchyard to the school – in my deepening crow’s feet, and in my genes.

## Book Club



### Days without End by Sebastian Barry

Again we met on Zoom, so there were no drinks and nibbles to share. The book was almost universally given the thumbs up. We can recommend this and many of his other books.

This is a coming of age novel set in the US during the civil war and concerns the

relationship of two men and a young girl they take under their wing.

Next month’s meeting is on 12th May. We are reading *The Buried Giant* by Kazuo Ishiguro

Newshound

Jen Cary



### Welcoming some more new arrivals to our village

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2020 **Dave and Miranda Powell** moved into 4A Mill Lane with their slightly mad but lovely spaniel Badger. Dave is a self employed painter and decorator and Miranda works at the Alexandra Hospital. Both are in their mid fifties and they have three grown up children who have flown the nest, two of whom live locally and one who is in Australia. "We have always thought how lovely a village Feckenham is, so eventually after 20 years in our old family home in Callow Hill we're so pleased that we decided to up sticks and take the plunge. Having moved into a new build, Miranda being the gardener of the family, is enjoying getting the garden planted up, and we're both enjoying an allotment that we've taken on up Moors lane. We're looking forward to things getting back to normal and getting involved in the many Feckenham events that we've heard so much about."

## ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING

This will be held on zoom on

**Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> May 2021 at 7:00 pm**

For the election of **one** churchwarden, **one** parochial representative of the laity to the Parochial Church Council and **one** representative to the Redditch & Bromsgrove Deanery Synod.

The Meeting will consider reports on the Electoral Roll, proceedings of the PCC, our church's activities, Droitwich Deanery Synod meetings and the Financial Statement for 2020.

Formal notice of the meeting will be displayed on the church door for at least two Sundays before the meeting and can also be found on our website [www.achurchnearyou.com/church/18729](http://www.achurchnearyou.com/church/18729)

Sally Eost  
(PCC Secretary)

## Feckenham Parish Council

Meeting 15th April postponed due to the death of HRH The Prince Philip Duke of Edinburgh

## Back to nature

### Hedgehog Awareness Week 2<sup>nd</sup>–8<sup>th</sup> May

Hedgehogs have consistently won the poll for the nation's favourite mammal and nature icon.

However their numbers are in decline. In 1995 there were estimated to be 1.5 million and today this figure is down to 500,000. They are considered to be vulnerable to extinction in the next 20 years and are on the Red List for British mammals.

A report on the *State of Britain's hedgehogs* which is published every three years, the last being in 2018 stated that urban hedgehog numbers were down 30% and rural hogs by 50%. Whereas the urban population has levelled off, since the previous report of 2015, rural hedgehogs are in a serious decline.

The key problems are habitat fragmentation and loss of food. A study by Tom Moorhouse at Wild CRU, a part of Oxford University, concluded a healthy population would need a minimum of 30 individuals and a square kilometre of habitat. The average garden size in the UK is said to be 188 square metres so the hogs need access to many gardens to enable them to thrive. A hole 13cm square in your fence or wall is all that is needed for the hog to gain access to your garden. Habitat creation can be achieved by letting your grass grow a little longer, creating wildflower areas, leaving brambles, creating a log pile and a compost heap. Make sure ponds are accessible to provide drinking water and that the hog is able to get out. Remove any litter or netting that the hog could get caught up in and mow or strim with care. Hedgehogs don't

have a flight or fight response and will just curl up into a ball.

Many of us probably feed the birds and have bird/ bat boxes and pollinator friendly plants. Let's not forget the hedgehogs, in addition they love slugs!

We only have a small courtyard garden but when the bottom plank of the gate rotted we didn't replace it and inadvertently created a hedgehog entrance! I leave him some food and a saucer of water, preferably rain water, so that there are less chemicals in it, and he visits in the evenings.

Taken from BBC Wildlife magazine – for more information

[Discoverwildlife.com/hogs](http://Discoverwildlife.com/hogs)

[Brij\\_shhedgehogs.org.uk](http://Brij_shhedgehogs.org.uk)



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## Kathy's Flowers



At this time of the year, our field hedges are dusty white with blackthorn blossom (*Prunus spinosa*). The flowers appear before the leaves (which distinguishes it from hawthorn where the leaves come first) but both are part of the rosaceae family. These delicate flowers produce hard purple sloes later in the year, great for sloe gin. The wood is good for walking sticks and, apparently, the flowers can be dried to make 'tea' but I've never tried that.



Two flowers down Mill Lane intrigued me – Dog's Mercury and Dog Violet. I mean, why dog? One source says that 'dog' "can be used to describe something false, untrue, not what it seems, bad, impure". But that seems a bit harsh.

Dog's Mercury, on the left, can be an indicator of ancient woodland. It smells foul and is poisonous. Its 'untruth' is that it is not *proper* mercury – *Chenopodium*, sometimes known as goosefoot, was a cottage garden vegetable, now often found wild on verges later in the year.

I think the purple flower is early dog violet, so named to distinguish it from the more highly scented sweet violet. Botanists can tell the difference by examining the spur behind the petals, but I'm afraid I can't!

**Kathy Gee April 2021**

## Recipe from Belinda-a Robinson

### Spicy Beef Stew with Sweet Potato topping

#### Ingredients

1 tbsp olive oil  
1 onion, finely chopped  
2 carrots, finely diced (about 130g)  
1-2 sticks celery, finely diced (about 130g)  
2 fat cloves garlic, crushed  
400-500g braising steak  
1 tsp dried or fresh thyme  
1 tsp ground cinnamon  
1 tsp ground nutmeg  
1 tsp ground ginger  
1 to half a red chilli diced  
1 to half tsp ground black pepper  
half tsp salt  
1 low-salt beef stock cube  
2 tbsp tomato purée  
1 x 25g pack parsley, stalks and leaves finely chopped separately  
1 kg sweet potatoes, peeled and diced  
Knob of butter  
Handful grated cheddar

#### STEP 1

Heat the olive oil in a heavy-based pan. Add the onions and cook for 2 mins, then add the carrot and celery and cook until softened. Add a little water if the mixture sticks.

#### STEP 2

Add the braising steak and cook until browned, then stir in the garlic, chilli,

cinnamon, nutmeg, ginger and thyme and cook for a further 1 – 2 mins until the aromas are released.

#### STEP 3

Add the stock cube to 500ml boiling water and stir into the meat, along with the tomato purée and parsley stalks. Bring to the boil and simmer covered for 1 hour, then take off the lid and simmer for another hour or until the meat is very tender. Stir in the chopped parsley leaves.

#### STEP 4

Transfer the stew into a medium-sized ceramic dish (that would be big enough for four adults), or into 6 - 8 large ramekins for make-ahead toddler portions.

#### STEP 5

Meanwhile, steam or boil the sweet potatoes until tender. Preheat the oven to 200C/180C fan/gas mark 6. Drain the potatoes well and mash with the butter and a pinch of nutmeg. Spoon on top of the meat, sprinkle with the cheese and cook on the top shelf for around 20 minutes until golden and bubbling.

#### STEP 6

Alternatively, cover and freeze the pie or mini pies for another time. Defrost thoroughly before cooking - you can do this by leaving it in the fridge overnight if you like. Preheat the oven to 200C/180C fan/gas mark 6 and cook for around 30 - 35 mins or until golden, bubbling and hot throughout.



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