

The Birches

Community Matters Newsletter

Kingsthorn, Much Birch, Little Birch,
Aconbury & Wormelow **January 2025**



Above: Sun and Snow in the Woods—photo Chris Fowler, David Irwin leading a parish walk. See p3
Right: Bob paints fab scenery for the sensational Cinderella pantomime!

Little Birch Village Hall
Presents

Cinderella

NEW DATES
Friday 24th Jan 7pm
Saturday 1st Feb 2pm
Saturday 1st Feb 7pm

~~SOLD OUT~~ Saturday 25th Jan 2pm
~~SOLD OUT~~ Saturday 25th Jan 7pm

All ticket sales for matinee performance on 1st Feb to go to St Michaels Hospice



Adult Tickets £10
16 & under £5

To book tickets call
Tonya 01981 540898
Margaret 01981 540374





Thursday 23 January - SWEDE CAROLINE 15

In this hilarious British mockumentary, we follow Caroline, a competitive giant vegetable grower, as she readies herself for the big annual National Veg Championship. However, Caroline finds her life turned upside down when her prized marrow plants are stolen. Desperate for answers, she turns to two private detectives she knows, who are then dramatically kidnapped. Are the events linked? No, of course not. But Caroline thinks they are and the hunt for her missing marrows takes her way beyond the allotments, plunging her into a national corruption scandal that goes all the way to the top!

Tickets £5 (£4 under 16s)

Refreshments including hot dogs and ice cream available from 7pm

Tickets available in advance or on the door (cash or card payments accepted) - for further info or to book tickets please email muchbirchflicks@hotmail.com or call 01981 540097

For further information about films and screenings visit www.artsalive.co.uk

FLICKS IN THE STICKS

FLICKS IN THE STICKS

Lottie O'Connor.

At Easter Lottie O'Connor took part in a week long introduction to rowing at Hereford Rowing Club. Over the summer she entered her first regattas, winning her first race at Worcester.

During the winter the club train indoors on rowing machines. On Saturday 6th December Lottie, who will only be 13 years old at Christmas, went with other club members to the British Indoor Championships in Birmingham. She took part in two events, winning Gold and Silver medals, making her a British champion and runner up.

It is a special achievement in such a short time, competing against girls with far more experience. We are all very proud of her. Well done to Kyle and Rachel and brother Harry for all the time, effort and support that they have given Lottie. **John and Jenny Caton**

Millenium Green Celebration

The Millenium Green at Wormelow is 25 years old on Wednesday 1st January 2025 and Rosemary Rigby invites all to bring and plant bulbs from 2pm. This will create spring colour for years to come. Bring a spade or trowel if you can. It may be muddy so wellies would be a good.

Coffee Morning with Book Exchange Little Birch Village Hall Thursday 2nd & Saturday 18th January 10-12 noon

Enjoy a cup of tea or coffee, some cake or biscuits. Make new friends, catch up with old friends. Take a book, leave a book or both. Families & well behaved dogs welcome

Join us at the Community Café @ Much Birch Community Hall

Saturday 11 January 2025

10:00 - 12:30

and every 2nd Saturday of the month

8 February

8 March

12 April

For more information or if you are in need of transport contact Lydia on 01981 540323 or socialfabric@hotmail.com



A local group who want to bring people together, strengthen community links and provide relaxed and fun events for all ages.

Art and Craft Space

Have an Arting or Crafting afternoon (Space) away from the hustle and bustle of life!

Bring your WiP or PhD in whatever Art or Craft you are working on.

Or come and start something new. £3 per session to include refreshments.

For more information contact Sally on 01981 540001 or 07803032928 email sally.nichol@btinternet.com

Parish Walks

Footpath Officers for Much Birch, Little Birch and Aconbury, David Irwin and Chris Fowler would like to wish you all a very Happy New Year

We will be walking on Sunday 29th December from Little Birch Village Hall at 11am through Athelstan wood to the Plough at Little Dewchurch. If you want to order lunch phone the Plough 01432 84042.

In 2025 we will continue to do our best to maintain and improve the local network of footpaths. Look out for details of future Parish Walks. We hope you can join us.

On 17th November, 14 people and one dog met outside Much Birch Community Hall for the Parish walk. It was surprisingly mild for the time of the year as we made our way over the A49, down the sunken path to Wrigglebrook bridge. There had been some rain the day before so the walk up to Athelstan's wood was muddy and slippery in places. We walked round a loop in the wood and discussed the proliferation of leaves— more this year than anyone can remember previously. Then it was back down to Ruff Lane and through some fields that are now free of the Herefords as they have gone back inside. We all arrived back to the hall for tea and cake .

Chris Fowler and David Irwin

Little Birch Parish Facebook Group

Find the latest news, events & business listings all in one place. You are welcome to promote your local business, advertise a local event or post news and information of interest to the village and local area.



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Table Tennis Tuesday 7th January

Little Birch Village Hall 7-9pm £3



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Jobs in the garden for January

Yet another 'interesting' year for gardeners and farmers alike. As has been well documented, our farmers have had tremendous problems harvesting crops to put food on our tables and feed their livestock, and then drill seed for crops next year. Those of us who grow vegetables have complained about the weather but our few square yards pale into insignificance when compared to the farmers' acres. Still there's always next year!

There seem to be very few holly berries this year. We have two mature trees with hardly a berry. We do have a young tree with quite a few berries on spindly branches, so all is not lost. A few branches were cut off during the latter part of November before the birds ate the berries, put in a bucket of water and stowed on the greenhouse staging so the mice don't eat the berries – it's working so far!

Jobs to do

- * Prune young deciduous trees while leafless to improve the structure and with mature trees, thin the branches and, if desired, raise the canopy.
- * Plant bare root trees, shrubs and fruit bushes.
- * Destroy spotted/blotched leaves of pansy/viola as this is probably a fungal disease. Also deadhead flowers.
- * Clear leaves, cut long grass and clear any ivy off areas where you know snowdrops will be growing.
- * Cut back the foliage on Hellebores so flowers aren't obscured by old leaves. This will also help to control Hellebore leaf spot disease.
- * Pinch out tips of Autumn sown sweet peas. Provide protection if adverse weather occurs.
- * Sow summer brassicas – cauliflower, calabrese and cabbage – in a propagator or on a warm window sill. Grow on in a frame or greenhouse.
- * If you grow your own vegetables plan your planting to exercise crop rotation and also order seeds.
- * Plant forced Christmas hyacinths outdoors.
- * Buy seed potatoes and onion sets.

* If you intend to show large onions (over 9 oz) sow seeds at the beginning of the month in a seed tray or cell tray. Put on a warm window sill if you don't have a heated propagator. When germinated and the seedlings have reached the 'crook' stage prick out and plant into individual pots, providing as much light as you can.

* Begin forcing rhubarb by placing a large inverted receptacle over the crowns.

Do the monthly check of stored apples, pears, potatoes and onions, removing any rotten fruits.

Keep bird feeders stocked with fresh food, birdbaths clean and with fresh water, and clean out and re-hang nest boxes.

* Recycling in the garden – plastic yoghurt and cream pots, margarine tubs and fruit punnets all make good growing containers. Cardboard tubes – from toilet rolls and kitchen towels – can be placed on their ends in boxes or large plastic catering size mushroom trays and filled with compost. These are ideal for sowing beans and sweet peas.

Margaret and I hope you have a lovely Christmas and a happy New Year.

Derek Scrivens





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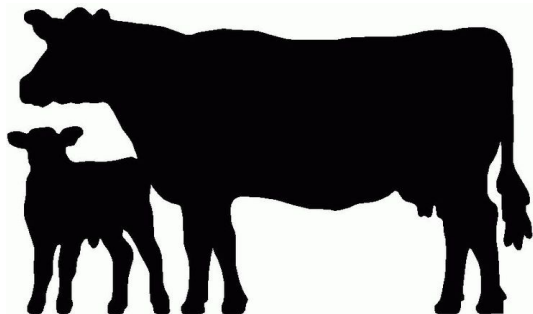
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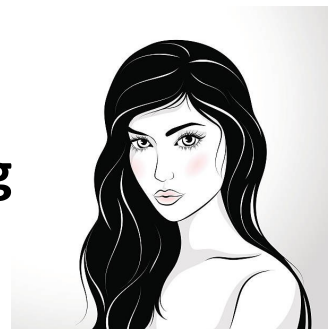
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Items for **February** newsletter to
editorial@birchesnews.org.uk or paper
copy to Elisabeth Taylor 0785 4 629193 by
8th January

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The Birches Newsletter is also available online at
www.birches.news and www.muchbirchparish.org.uk

Much Birch Parish Council

At Much Birch Parish Council Meeting in Much Birch Community Hall on the 6th December there was further discussion about the condition of the local roads and byways in the parish. The parish council are engaged in trying to get the situation reviewed and will be looking at possible drainage schemes to help make good use of possible grant funding for drainage improvements.

The parish council are looking to co-opt a new councillor for the Much Birch Parish Council. Please contact your local councillors or the clerk, for more details or come along to the next parish council meeting to find out more.

The dates for the forthcoming meetings, in the year 2025, are advised as follows: January 9th, February 6th, March 6th, April 3rd, May 8th, June 5th, July 3rd, (no meeting in August), September 4th, October 2nd, November 6th, December 4th.

The next Ordinary Much Birch Parish Council Meeting will be on Thursday 9th January 2025 from 7.30pm at Much Birch Community Hall. All are welcome to attend.

Much Birch Parish Councillors

CLlr Alison Cook (Chair) Jasmine Cottage, Wrigglebrook Lane, Kingsthorpe HR2 8AW, email thecooks@wyenet.co.uk 01981 540703

CLlr Roisin Burge The Old Hall, Barrack Hill, Little Birch HR28AX email roisiburge@hotmail.com 01981 540840

CLlr David Irwin, 5 The Old Mushroom Farm, Much Birch, Hereford, HR2 8HY email David.Irwin13@btinternet.com Tel: 07766 135068

CLlr Chris Pickering-Grey 4 Court Farm Barns, Much Birch HR2 8HT chris@pickering-grey.uk 07712 813218

CLlr Michael Agyeman Little Willow, Wrigglebrook Lane, email magyeman92@gmail.com

Parish Clerk Mrs Alison Wright Longfield House, Gooses Foot, Kingsthorpe HR2 9NE email muchbirchclerk@gmail.com 01981 250860

Minutes of meetings www.muchbirchparish.org.uk. You can also find us on X (formerly known as Twitter) at <https://twitter.com/MuchBirchPC> and Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Much.Birch.Parish>

The Jolly Gardener

TheJollyGardener2502@gmail.com

Kyle - 07850921889



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Little Birch Parish Councillors

CLlr Steve Coles CLlr Tom Palfrey
CLlr Chris Atkinson CLlr Nick Deacon
Neil Barrington, clerk lbpcclerk@gmail.com

Website www.littlebirchparishcouncil.org

Footpath Officers

If you have any queries about footpaths contact:

Little Birch and Aconbury

Chris Fowler chrisfowler1@hotmail.co.uk
07931 292998

Much Birch including Kingsthorpe:

David Irwin david.irwin13@btinternet.com
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We run a **FREE 24 hour Support Line 7 days a week** for farmers and their families within Herefordshire who are feeling distressed and need someone to talk to anonymously.

Counselling:

We provide **fully funded counselling to anyone in the Herefordshire farming community** who may be in emotional distress.

Training:

We offer **FREE mental health awareness training** to anyone living or working in or with the farming community in Herefordshire.

Social Events:

We run a series of **FREE social events throughout the year** to break the isolation often felt by the farming community in Herefordshire.

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Befriending volunteers offer companionship and support to people who are isolated and lonely – they may visit you at home and/or phone for a regular chat. A befriender can offer conversation and a listening ear to those that need it.

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Hi Everyone,

On January 5th we will be celebrating the Feast of the Epiphany in our churches. We are actually a day early because it should be January 6th as that marks the end of the 12 days of Christmas. The problem is that the celebration gets a bit overlooked. Possibly because we have built ourselves up so much for Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year's Eve, that it feels like we have run out of steam. And I think that that is a shame.

The Epiphany celebrations in the church's calendar remind us of the visit of the Magi to see the infant Jesus. However, this is often conflated in the Nativity story with them following directly after the shepherds, a careful reading reveals a wonderful story of patience, determination and God speaking to people through dreams.

The Magi, a mix of astronomers, astrologers and philosophers, came from the East – possibly from Persia – which was right on the edge of the Roman Empire, the end of civilisation as far as Roman citizens were concerned.

We don't know their number – we only suspect that there were three because Magi is plural and there were three gifts!

But they come seeking a ruler, a king, as they saw a portent in the sky – a star. They go where they think a king would live – Herod's palace, only to be pointed in a different direction. They head off to Bethlehem and find Mary and Jesus, but not Joseph. And the word used to describe Jesus is παιδιον (translated as paidon or child) rather than baby (βροψος or brephos). They present their gifts to Mary and the child and then head back, not to Herod as he has asked, but to their homeland.

And what of the gifts, the gold, frankincense and myrrh? These are signs to the reader and the hearer. Gold for kingship, frankincense for worship and myrrh for death. Already, right at the beginning of Matthew's Gospel, he is pointing us to where the story will go.

So celebrate Epiphany, don't let it pass you by. There is lots in the story to ponder. And using the gifts we have been given, we can transform our bit of the world as well.

Revd Mark

Services for January

Sunday 5th January (Epiphany)	9.15 a.m. at Much Dewchurch – Holy Communion 11.00 a.m. at Little Birch – Holy Communion
Sunday 12th January (Baptism of Christ)	9.15 a.m. at Much Birch – Holy Communion 11.00 a.m. at Little Birch – Morning Worship
Sunday 17th January (2nd Sunday of Epiphany)	9.15 a.m. at Much Birch – Morning Worship 11.00 a.m. at Little Birch – Holy Communion in Traditional Language-
Sunday 24th January (3rd Sunday of Epiphany)	9.15 a.m. at Llandinabo – Holy Communion in Traditional Language

Photography Group

We are a friendly local group who are keen and enjoy our imaging skills. We invite anyone who has an interest in taking photos to come and join us. You will be made very welcome. For more information please contact Sally Nichol.
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A holiday with a Difference

Eric Joseph

On 1st October we set off on nine days travelling the "Tracks and Trails of Kenya", visiting the Maasai Mara, Amboselli national parks. At around 3am we were packed and waiting for our ride to Heathrow airport.

At Nairobi airport we met our guide, Lennox and the eighteen others on our trip. It was dark - apparently it gets dark close to 18.30 and light around 6.30 every day. Our experience started with a drive through Nairobi to our hotel, terrific traffic and road works all the way. Construction going on everywhere. 45 minutes later we arrive at the Tamarind Tree Hotel. The adventure starts now!

Next morning we set off in a convoy of four Toyota Land Cruisers. Doe and I are in a group of five. We have a long drive to the Maasai Mara, but first we have to cross the Rift Valley. I love my geography and first heard of the Rift Valley in school. Now we are driving through it! The Rift Valley runs for 4300 miles from the Red Sea down into Africa. To cross it we have to drop 2500 feet. There is a constant line of traffic— mainly lorries, massively overlaid. You see, the next country along is Uganda. It's land locked, so everything comes by lorry from the port of Mombassa.

The road down to the valley is pretty good, but the traffic is crawling, watching the brakes as they go down while masses of lorries are crawling back up the hill, so passing was quite a problem. We made it and then it took us four and a half hours to cross and come up the other side, passing through lots of small towns with shacks, shops and garages of sorts, men changing lorry tyres for ones that looked no different to the ones coming off! Hotels that looked like shacks - a busy world.

As we drove through the mainly flat, arid country we saw lots of sheep, goats and cattle being herded by the Maasai across ground scattered with bushes and was that grass back there? It was very apparent that all the hard graft was done by the women. These people's lives seemed hard to us, especially as they live in tin sheds, which, when it's thirty plus degrees, must be baking. No thanks!

We arrive at the gates to the Maasai Mara and here we have our first contact with the Maasai. We are surrounded by people trying to sell their gifts and crafts— cheap stuff, but a living to these people. The coin here is the shilling, and 500 shilling was just £3. And what was our holiday costing?

Wednesday So this is it, the Maasai Mara. The road ahead is gravel and hard core. Our guide informs us that it's an hour and a half to our destination, the "Mara Serena Lodge" where we'll stay for two nights. As we go deeper into the reserve there are animals everywhere, herds of zebra, buffalo and wildebeest starting on their trek back to the Serengeti. Outside, just yards below our balcony, are baboons, warthogs and few impala.

The park consists of huge areas of low, rolling grassland with masses of animals as far as the eye can see. There appears to be no conflict as all the animals graze peacefully,

There is a big fever tree with lots of birds flitting about. We were told that we should hear lions roaring at night.

On our first Safari across the Mara river we see the many crossing places which the wildebeest use on their migration. There is a big herd of hippo just basking in the shallows. A massive Nile crocodile was asleep and a couple of huge lizards slipped into the water.

A little while later, there was great excitement as lions had been seen and we are off to investigate. But there are other trucks there before us. Apparently there is a park rule that there should be no more than three trucks at a viewing. I think this is very loosely followed because there were about twenty trucks at this spot, but in fairness they did move away after taking their photos.

Our first lions! One was stretched out. The other was on lookout and we are just about twenty yards away. It's time to head back to base before it gets dark. Our hotel is in the middle of the reserve. There are lots of guests and Safari trucks. We park up and it's off to dinner, then we all drifted back to our cabins, unpack, shower and go to bed. It has been a long day since leaving home yesterday. Eight and a half hours flight and loads of excitement this afternoon and no sleep!

It's time for our late afternoon safari, and there, within half a mile from camp we see a pair of lions, one of each, just lying close to each other, while across the road there are other lions watching. They eventually come out of the bush, all eleven of them, ten females and one big male. They walk across the road, between the trucks towards the big male and the female. Our driver reckons that the pair are on honeymoon. The females sidle close to them while the big male wanders off on his own.

It's rather nice that apart from us four trucks we hardly see other vehicles unless there is something special. There are lots of zebra and buffalo to be seen. The elephants are having a whale of a time deep in the bog. A small flock of Flamingo were feeding and in the reeds close by there was a waterbuck and herons. The sun is going down fast so we head for home with Kilimanjaro in all its glory clear again and in the fore.

Thursday A late start today - 08.30. At breakfast we learn that our three companions have gone on an early morning balloon flight and we will pick them up somewhere out there. This morning we have the pleasure of Lenox "the boss man" and Joseph, our driver, as we head out on a Safari—just Doe and I. There are lots of Malibu storks and some beautiful birds. Ironically we are more about animals than birds. We see lots of the same as we head off to pick up the trio at their breakfast spot.

There are a lot of acacia tree standing alone on the wide grassland and we see many groups under these trees having picnics. That is exactly where we found our group, under an acacia tree. Lots of animals roamed along the ridges which made it an ideal spot. Shortly after picking them up we spotted a group of vultures enjoying what was left of someone's earlier kill.

To be continued in February

Diary Dates January 2025

Bulb planting 1st Jan Millenium Green	p2
Coffee & Books Thurs 2nd LBVH	p2
LBPC Wed 4th LBVH	p6
Table Tennis Tues 7th LBVH	P3
MBPC Thurs 9th MBCH	p6
Community Café Sat 11th MBCH	p2
Coffee & Books Sat 18th LBVH	p2
Flicks MBCH Thurs 23rd	p2
Art&Craft	p2
Parish Walk 29th	p3
Church Services	p8
Cinderella LBVH 1st Feb	p1

Advertising Rates

11 editions per year (no August newsletter)	
1/16 page	£4.20 per issue or £42 per year
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Allensmore Locks Garage

Backney on the garage wall at Market Gardens Cottage

Bridstow on the outside of the village hall

Garway on the wall outside the Garway Moon pub

Harewood End at Harewood End Inn on outside of the pub at the back in the beer garden.

Little Birch on the outside of the village hall

Llanwarne on the wall by steps leading up to the village hall

Much Birch on the outside of the church hall

Much Birch Axe & Cleaver on the side of the pub

Much Dewchurch outside Steiner School, first building after the church

Peterstow at the Yew Tree pub

Sellack on the outside of the parish hall (key code needed)

St Weonards old BT phone box off the A466 between the church and Forge Cottage

Wormelow at the Cricket Club & Carrot & Wine shop

Wilton on wall at the BP garage on the roundabout

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More Information: Tel Arwen on 07503 199 972

Kenya October 2024 (continued)

Once again the jungle telegraph (Iphones anyway) talks. In the distance we can see a huge gathering of trucks and off we go to join them. Rumour has it there are cheetahs over there. There are at least forty trucks surrounding about ten acres of ground, we squeeze in and there they are—five cheetahs, two adults and three teenagers, beautiful. They seem oblivious of us.

Oops!! There's great excitement. One of the adults is off like rocket, chasing a warthog, misses that and comes back with a rabbit which the cubs chased to the mother to grab her kill. She plays with them and then eventually gives her catch away. This is amazing, but more than that, this kill is in an area surrounded by trucks, they perform as though we are not there,

We settle down now watching and expecting much more to happen. Behind us there is quite a large herd of Impala. (They are commonly called "fast food" because of the white M pattern on the rear, implying McDonalds) or perhaps they are Thompson's gazelle. Whatever they are, they have been spotted. All the cheetahs are up and looking alert. Now we are between the cheetahs and the impala.

Amazingly the Cheetahs are using the trucks as cover, moving between them, just feet away. The impala must be about three hundred yards away. Suddenly action and the chase is on. The speed is phenomenal, In fact the next I saw was that she had made her kill and had brought it back into the circle of trucks, about thirty feet in front of us and the five of them set to enjoying their meal.

How were we so lucky, on our second day, to experience, so close, something so unusual that even Joseph, our guide, had never seen in twenty years. We stayed there with the top elevated, watching the impala being devoured. They were so close, so fast and so beautiful.

We were late back, so a quick lunch and out again. More hippo, lots of giraffe, gazelles are every where, some ostriches, more cheetahs and a hyena slinking away. Lots of birds, a hamerkop (like a stalk), lots of rollers(colourful), kingfishers (a few varieties), hornbills and a few eagles.

In the evening we were out again, but this time we go down the other side of the plateau. The terrain is different, a lot more trees and scrub. Now there elephants, lots of them. We stop in amazement as they just appear out of the tall trees, more and more, big tuskers and very young calves. They cross the road. We stop to let them pass, dozens of them and more Thompson gazelle and also some water buck.

There are so many different birds here, lots of kingfishers, herons and water birds, also a few giraffes. It's amazing how different this is. It seems more peaceful. We haven't seen any predators. Perhaps that's why. It's getting dark so we head back to base. Tonight the Maasai people are doing a dance for us.

lizards, and flowering shrubs.

We have already seen lots of Elephants in the wet areas with water half way up their bodies, At 16.30 we set off on our first safari. We are all very excited because from here it's possible to see Kilimanjaro, the highest mountain in Africa,(5895m). Which actually is in the next country Tanzania.

Our three truck companions seem to be sticking together, we chat to Anne and Philip from Gloucester, they too have done a lot of travelling, but the stars of this trip

Our first Safari in Amboselli, Out at 0630 and our first animal was a Hyena busily feeding on somebody's left overs. There are lots of animals and birds wherever we look but I must feature on the main ones. Next is a herd of Elephants with a few calves, and it's only 07.15 am.

There on the corner there are three very big birds, they are " Bustards", and like everything else we see they are not concerned that we in their space.

Then we see Lion, a big male and three females, then another herd of elephants, Thompsons Gazelles, zebra, impala and on the limbs of a long dead tree there are ten vultures waiting for something to die or be killed.

And it's only 08.33am.

We were out for two exciting hours and then headed back for breakfast

There are massive wet, boggy areas here. There are lots of water birds, we even see a pelican amongst a herd of hippo's

One of the famous things about this reserve are the column's of spiralling dust devils that we see quite regularly. As we approached this reserve I could see these columns rising high in the distance. I thought how strange to see so many fires in the distance, now I know what they were, dust devils, dirt twisters or even whirlwinds a peculiarity to this park.

Our next trip out took us to a Maasai village, a bit difficult to find initially because the whole village had a man made hedge of thorn bushes (I think from the fever tree) and blended in with the surrounding area. We were met by the village chief who spoke of how they lived. Then all the tribe marched out singing their welcome, then formed up in front of us singing their greeting and doing their high jumping routine.

We were then invited into the village to see how they all lived. In the centre of the village was the coral, where the cattle were kept over night away from any lions.

We entered a hut to see how they lived, but actually it was like midnight in there. They were all so friendly. But actually I don't think we saw any women while in the village, where did they go to.

The cattle would be kept in the coral every night, consequently the dung pile would grow higher and higher. It was at that point they would dismantle the whole village and move to a new site

Before we left them we were encouraged to look around their market where each family, at least the women had all their touristy type goods on display. Actually it was cheaper and in better condition to buy at the hotel. I think most of us made a purchase.

Back for lunch and a few hours till we went out again. We all took this time to mix and mingle again. just beyond the fence there is a lot going on, there are quite a lot of monkeys close by, lots of birds and lizards. Then a large herd of

Friday 4th October

Early start, bags must be outside our door by 07.30. But most are up and having breakfast and on the road at 08.00 back across the reserve, the Rift Valley and back to our first hotel

"The Tamarind Tree" at Nairobi. The weather is still in the 30's

It's amazing how soon we become used to the animals we see, no more oh's and Ahs, it's just, seen that, done that, that's another one, as we speed out of the reserve.

We had a long way to go. Doe and I had a bit of competition between our selves. " who could take the best picture of the lone acacia tree". Result is still pending, there were lots of them.

Arriving at the exit from the reserve we have the same crush of trinket sellers, we used the toilets at the gate, not impressed.

We are still in Maasai country as we drive across the rift valley, once again I am surprised at the numbers of cattle, sheep and goats that are being herded by Maasai people across such poor ground, most of the cattle look so fit and healthy. The biggest surprise was the amount of litter in the villages and towns we drive through, so much.

Interestingly they sell water from tankers here, I saw two tankers sucking water up from a dirty shallow river, I hope that was not sold as drinking water.

One area we travelled through was very cultivated and there were stalls along the road selling all sorts of fruit and vegetables.

At one place they were drying maize on huge sheets or tarpaulins, I did see a few small combine harvesters which seem to have come from the arc, but they were doing the job.

The other strange thing to see was what could be carried on motor bikes, this one chap actually had a three seater settee across the back of his bike taking up half the road, others carried the full family, two or three sacks of grain was quite common.

The towns were very busy, with huts as shops for every thing, hotels, churches, chemists etc.

Every where the biggest businesses seemed to be lorry repairs and tyre changes. But the litter was terrible at times just filling the gutters. And, yet, we had seen the occasional man with a sack on his back picking up what I thought was old plastic bottles.

In some areas that had been ploughed we could see about four or five men breaking freshly ploughed ground with mattocks, and yet it had been ploughed with a tractor? Why not use the tractor.

The other oddity was to see so many men sleeping along the roads and in the villages, why aren't they working, yet every where we see women carrying heavy loads or doing hard manual work!!!

Along the road there were occasional communal stores that sold mainly the craft of the area, mainly animals supposedly all hand crafted locally.

Every one was so friendly, but pushy in a gentle sort of way. 15

Doe (as she does) got chatting to one of the ladies, in no time they were laughing together and suddenly they were