

The Birches

Community Matters Newsletter

Kingsthorpe, Much Birch, Little Birch,
Aconbury & Wormelow March 2025




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Another **MUSIC NIGHT** SATURDAY 29 MAR STARTS AT 6:30PM


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New Portrait of Violette Szabo Unveiled report page 9

Send items for April newsletter to
editorial@birchesnews.org.uk by 8th March



Could the Preaching Cross come back to Much Birch? Volunteers needed to bring it home! Read the story on page 8

Sorry No Pancakes This Year

Pancake evening at Little Birch Village Hall is cancelled due to lack of volunteers and several committee members having other demands on their time. We're really disappointed because we know how popular this event is and we know that the village hall is the heart of our community,

We need more volunteers to keep hosting community events so if you can give up some time without any commitment or you think you'd like to join the committee to help ensure the future of our village hall, please contact me on 07702 760789 or ben.roberts@outlook.com.

Castle Inn Change of Use

We have received a proposal for change to The Castle Inn for alternative use. These changes will be outlined at the next Parish Council Meeting to be held on Wednesday 5th March at 7p.m. at Little Birch Village Hall.

Little Birch Parish Council.

The Annual Lent Lunch will once again be at Little Birch Village Hall from 12.30pm on the 4th. April. Come and join us for a delicious selection of home made soups. All donations will go to the Sight Savers charity, which does great work. Look forward to seeing you .



at Much Birch Community Hall

Borderlines Film Festival

Saturday 1 March - THE OUTRUN 15

Oscar nominee Saoirse Ronan (Little Women) is superb as a young woman grappling with addiction in Nora Fingscheidt's (System Crasher) The Outrun, based on the bestselling memoir by Amy Liptrot.

Friday 7 March - SMALL THINGS LIKE THESE 12A

Ireland, 1985: In the months leading up to Christmas, coalman and family man Bill Furlong (Cillian Murphy) discovers startling secrets kept by the local convent. Deeply conflicted, Bill reaches a breaking point that forces him to confront both his own past and the complicit silence of a small Irish town under the control of the Catholic Church, led locally by Mother Superior Sister Mary (Emily Watson).

Borderlines Tickets £5.50 (£4.50 under 16s)

Refreshments including hot dogs and ice cream available from 7pm

Coming up in April - Thursday 10 April - THELMA

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 visit www.artsalive.co.uk

FLICKS IN THE STICKS

Join us at the
Community Café
@ Much Birch Community Hall

Saturday 8 March 2025

10:00 - 12:30

and every 2nd Saturday of the month

12 April

10 May

14 June

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.

King's Thorn & Little Birch Gardening Club

Date for your Diary

March 26th: AGM and a practical workshop on tool maintenance and how to look after your soil. Do come and join us for any or all of these talks - Members Free and visitors £5 per talk. Any queries contact Lesley Chapman 07834 771838

Parish Walk

Sunday 16th March at 2pm from Much Birch Community Hall. We will walk for 90minutes via Athelstan's Wood, returning to the Hall for tea and cake. All welcome.

Coffee Morning with Book Exchange
Little Birch Village Hall
Thursday 6th & Saturday 15th March
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

Table Tennis Tuesday 4th March

Little Birch Village Hall
7-9pm £3



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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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Why Names are Important

Hi Everyone,

If you study the Bible, and in particular the Old Testament, you will find that naming things is very important. In the second creation story at the start of Genesis, God creates a man and brings before him all the animals and birds to see what he would name them. This is a deliberate theological ploy – humans are superior to animals and birds, so the man names them.

Of course, God struggles to find a companion for the man from the animal kingdom (sorry cat and dog lovers!). He puts the man into a deep sleep and takes a rib to enfold with flesh and create something new.

Except that isn't the complete story because we have mistranslated the Hebrew. It is not a rib, it is a "side". So much more than just a rib! This is why the man, Adam, a play on the Hebrew word for ground (haadamah) – says that is "woman" (issah – in the Hebrew – out of man).

There are also lots of other places that have special names in the Old Testament -think of Jacob dreaming of the ladder between Earth and Heaven and this becomes known as Bethel – the dwelling place of El. El being an ancient

Hebrew word for God.

In the New Testament, there are two big name changes. Simon the fisherman becomes Peter. This time the language is Greek. He is called Cephas or Rock which is translated into Latin as Petra and so into English as Peter. The second in Saul. He oppresses the church, then has his dramatic conversion experience and, after baptism takes the name Paul.

So names are powerful, they reveal an identity rooted in culture and language. Changing names also redefines who we are. Perhaps when we married we took another name or added a name to our existing one. It marked an important change in our life. And, sometimes, if a marriage didn't work out we may have changed our names back again!

What ever our name though, like Peter or Paul, God calls us. It may only be the faintest of whispers but he who formed us in our mother's womb knows us. He wants us to hear his call and to respond. Perhaps not as dramatically as Peter, Paul or Jacob, but respond in a way that brings hope, light and peace to our troubled world.

Revd Mark

Services for Sundays in March

Sunday 2nd March (Sunday next before Lent)	9.15 a.m. at Much Dewchurch – Holy Communion 11.00 a.m. at Little Birch – Holy Communion
Wednesday 5th March (Ash Wednesday)	10.30 a.m. at Much Birch – Holy Communion with the imposition of Ashes
Sunday 9th March (1st Sunday of Lent)	9.15 a.m. at Much Birch – Holy Communion (in the Community Hall) 11.00 a.m. at Little Birch – Morning Worship
Sunday 16th March (2nd Sunday of Lent)	9.15 a.m. at Much Birch – Morning Worship (in the Community Hall) 11.00 a.m. at Little Birch – Holy Communion in Traditional Language
Sunday 23rd March (3rd Sunday of Lent)	9.15 a.m. at Llandinabo – Holy Communion in Traditional Language
Sunday 30th March (Mothering Sunday)	10.00 a.m. at Much Birch in the Community Hall – Coffee and Croissant 10.30 a.m. at Much Birch in the Community

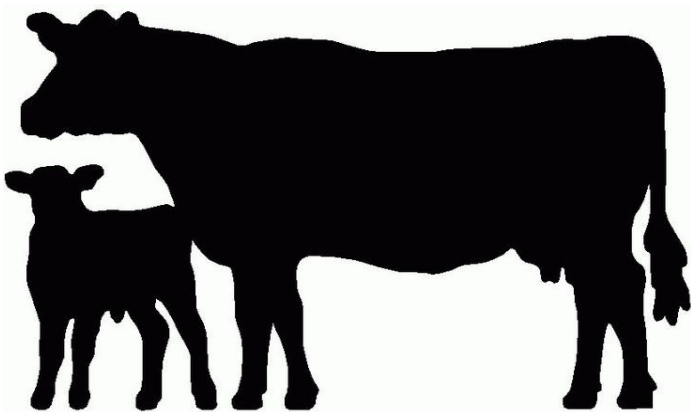
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Much Birch Parish Council

At the Much Birch Parish Council Meeting held in Much Birch Community Hall on the 6th February 2025 from 7.30 pm there was discussion about one new local planning consultation and comments were put forward: Planning Re-consultation - **230231** - Land south of Wormelow Shop, Wormelow, Herefordshire, HR2 8EJ. The parish council resolved that their original objection to the application still stood, and they reiterated some of the reasons why, including drainage concerns and access at the site. There were some changes advised to Planning Consultation - **243018** - Land at Helenswood Farm, Kingsthorpe – an extension to the deadline for comments was requested so that the revised application could be discussed at the March parish council meeting.

The parish council also discussed arranging a parish tour with the lengthsman to look at drainage issues. Dates for the forthcoming meetings in the year 2025, are advised as follows:

March 6th, April 3rd, May 8th, June 5th, July 3rd, no meeting in August, September 4th, October 2nd, November 6th, December 4th.

Much Birch Parish Councillors

Cllr Alison Cook (Chair) Jasmine Cottage, Wrigglebrook Lane, Kingsthorpe HR2 8AW, email

thecoops@wyenet.co.uk 01981 540703

Cllr Roisin Burge The Old Hall, Barrack Hill, Little Birch HR28AX email roisinburge@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

Cllr Steve Turner The Underhills, Hollybush Lane, Much Birch, Hereford, HR2 8HX, email turnersofcrossways@btinternet.com

Parish Clerk Mrs Alison Wright Longfield House, Gooses Foot, Kingstone 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

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 join us. You will be made very welcome.

For more information please contact Sally Nichol. tel.

07803 032928 01981 540001 sal-

The Birches Newsletter is also available online at

www.birches.news and www.muchbirchparish.org.uk

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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Jobs for the Garden in March

After a very soggy year last year we hope that this year will be kinder. It is getting difficult to plan activities in the garden, whether the passion is floral and/or vegetables. There was an article in the Hereford Times recently where Monty Don was experiencing floods in his garden occurring more frequently, demonstrating that even the professionals are not immune from weather problems. We have been fortunate in this area with the gales not wreaking too much havoc.

A few trees have fallen – an eight meter hawthorn tree fortunately just missed our porch. There was no loss of glass in the greenhouses. Our small peach tree, which is in a large tub in the greenhouse had a mass of flowers on it by the end of January so I have had to pollinate it with a fluffed up cotton bud. The unpredictability goes on.

Here are a few ideas for March

- *Apply a general purpose granular fertilizer to hungry plants such as roses and clematis and fork in lightly.
- *Lift & divide clumps of snowdrops as foliage yellows.
- *Pot up dormant dahlia tubers and canna rhizomes. Protect from cold but in good light – water sparingly.
- *Lift and divide Summer flowering perennials, particularly if the centre of the clump has become hard and woody with no signs of growth – this needs chopping out and burning or composting.
- *Dead head daffodils. Leave foliage to die off naturally.
- *Sprout or 'chit' seed potatoes in doors, placing the potatoes in trays or egg boxes with the 'rose' end (small indentations from where sprouts will emerge) uppermost.
- *Sow tomatoes in pots in a propagator/on window sill.
- *When the soil feels warm to the touch and is not saturated, parsnip seeds can be sown.
- *When the soil has dried out sufficiently to walk on, if not already done, prepare trenches for runner beans, peas and sweet peas. Put a good layer of manure or compost plus grass cuttings and vegetable peelings in the bottom and leave open to the elements until nearer planting time.
- *If you have potted up strawberry plants, grown from runners last year, they can be planted this month.
- *Mixed salad leaves and beetroot can be sown in cell or seed trays, even if you do not have a dedicated vegetable patch. Plant the seedlings in the flower border to add some interesting colour and then eat them when they mature.
- *This month is the start of the breeding season for

Much Birch Charities

A reminder that for those who live in the ecclesial parish of St. Mary and St. Thomas a Becket, Much Birch. There is a charitable fund which is designed to help those who are struggling with a large bill, sudden emergency or are heading off to university. The Much Birch Charities exist thanks to the generosity of previous residents of the parish who set up a fund that has been invested, the surplus of which can go to those in the parish who are in need. We are looking to distribute some of this money by the end of March 2025. To apply, please contact Revd Mark Johnson, in confidence for a grant application form via email (revmark100@yahoo.co.uk) or by phone.

Volunteers Needed to Help Bring Preaching Cross back to Much Birch

Toward the end of last year I visited the Hereford Archive and Record Centre with Rev Mark Johnson (pictured here with Tim Hoverd, Archaeological Projects Officer with Herefordshire Council), to see the fabulous remnant of the Medieval preaching crosshead which was unearthed in the late 1990s when a grave was dug at St Mary and St Thomas a Becket church in Much Birch. This is such a rare treasure and it would be wonderful to have it displayed in the church which is on the original pilgrim route (now the A49) to Hereford Cathedral, but volunteers are needed to help find funding and take this project on. Please get in touch if you have time or expertise to lend to what could be a really exciting cultural project for the area.

Also, Herefordshire will have its first Histories Festival in May 2025 – be in touch with ideas for events you could host! Best wishes, Cllr Toni Fagan



branches of shrubs or wire fences, and leave strands of vegetation thatch which may be lying around the ground. Do not leave man made fibres around. If you do not have nesting boxes, try putting any redundant metal, wooden or plastic containers at various heights in hedges, such that rain water cannot collect in them. One local man places 5 or 6 inch pots in his hedge and a pair of Robins nest in one most years. Keep bird tables and water baths clean. **Derek Scrivens**

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A new portrait of Violette Szabo, painted by Janet Fitzpatrick and commemorating Violette's courage, was unveiled by Rosemary Rigby at the Pilgrim Hotel in January.

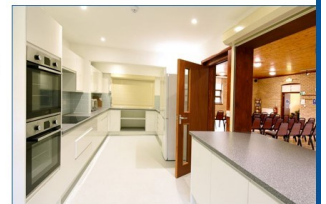


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For further information please contact the **Secretary Sylvia Jones** on **01981 540980** or email : mbchsec@gmail.com or visit the website: www.muchbirchcommunityhall.org

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Diary Dates March 2025

Borderlines 1st	p2
Lent Lunch 4th	p2
Table Tennis Tues 4th LBVH	p2
LBPC Wed 5th LBVH	p6
Coffee & Books Thurs 6th LBVH	p2
MBPC Thurs 6th MBCH	p6
Community Café Sat 8th MBCH	p2
Flicks 13th MBCH	p2
Coffee & Books Sat 15th LBVH	p2
Parish Walk Sun 16th	p2
Church Services	p4
Music Night LBVH 29th LBVH	p1
Art & Craft LBVH	Thurs pm

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11 editions per year (no August newsletter)

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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

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Wilton on wall at the BP garage on the roundabout



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Kenya October 2024 (continued)

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.

So many different birds here, lots of Kingfishers, herons and water birds, a few Giraffe. It's amazing how different this, it seems more peaceful, but we haven't seen any predators perhaps that's why.

It's getting dark so we head back to base. We seem to have had just meal times to chat and find out about our friends but tonight the Maasai people are doing a dance for us. Our three truck companions seem to be sticking together, we chat to Anne and Philip from Gloucester, they to have done a lot of travelling, but the stars of this trip must be the three nurses who trained together years ago and even thought they work in different parts of the country they meet regularly. This is their first Safari, and to see the joy and excitement on their faces at what they see

Is really great. Actually Anne and Philip, Doe and I were sort of first to meet Lennox at the airport. So we chatted.

The Dance, I suppose was typical of the warriors stomping and then doing their jumping thing.

We eventually got to bed about 23.00 after packing our cases ready for 08.00 start to our next resort

Sunday 6th

Our first Safari in Amboselli, Out at 0630 and our first animal was a Hyena busily feeding on somebody's left overs. There¹² 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

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 columns 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 blends 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