The Birches

Community Matters Newsletter

NOVEMBER 2026

Kingsthorne, Much Birch, Little Birch, Aconbury & Wormelow

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Parish Walk

On Sunday 20th September ten people and two dogs met at the village hall for the most recent Parish walk. It was a glorious late summer day with blue skies and hardly a cloud to be seen as so often happens in late September. Continued on page 12.

It's been a challenging year for farmers in our area.
Read more about how the weather has affected farming at **Merrivale** on page 5.

Jobs for the garden in November

The mild autumn has so far given some vegetables that suffered in the drought, an opportunity to put on some growth, carrots, beet, cabbages and cauliflower in particular are looking much improved. Swedes and Brussels Sprouts are looking decidedly sad though. Speaking to various people I find that fruit crops have been erratic this year. Some have bumper soft fruit crops others have minimal crops. Likewise trees have in some cases had heavy crops of apples and pears whilst others have none. We look forward to next year! Here are the current jobs:

- Plant Tulip bulbs.
- Rake up leaves or use your mower. Either compost them or if you have a large quantity compress into empty compost bag(s), tie up the top and puncture the bag. Set aside for a year or so and you will have some good leaf mould.
- Take care not to over water plants outside, in the greenhouse and indoors. Look over house plants and move to a lighter position.
- Check greenhouse heaters, if used. An electric fan heater has the advantage of keeping the air moving which can help to reduce fungal disease.
- Bubble wrap the interior of the greenhouse at the end of this month to insulate – despite climate change we can still get some very cold nights.
- Empty fuel from mowers and other power tools (if you think you aren't going to use them again until Spring).
- Plant bare root roses and plant winter bedding.
- Lay new lawn turf.
- Prune grapevine after leaf fall (by the end of December).
- Earth up carrots , parsnips and beet (mini version of potatoes) if over wintering in the garden.
- Plant new rhubarb crowns and divisions of existing.
- Plant garlic as it benefits from chilling.
- Strawberries also need a cold period so make a new bed and plant your own well rooted runners or mail order plants.
- Net sprouts, kale, cabbage and cauliflower to keep pigeons off.
- Check stored fruit throwing out rotting items on the ground outside for the birds. Also check for and discard rotting potatoes.
- Plant bare-root raspberries now until March. Dig a wide trench, add plenty of compost or manure and include some slow release fertilizer. Spread the roots out horizontally when planting canes, cover, tread in lightly and water. Cut canes to within a few cms. of the soil surface.
- If you still have a few tomatoes on their vines, pick them, no matter what colour and ripen them indoors or make chutney with the green ones.
- Clean out nest boxes and rehang. Put a bit of straw or hay in the bottom of the box.
- Check bonfires have no hibernating wildlife in them before lighting.
- We are being encouraged not to be too tidy in our gardens these days so leave a pile of sticks, stones or other debris here and there – it does not have to be a 'mountain' – for small creatures to hibernate.
- Clean bird baths and feeders and replenish.
- Remove fallen leaves from ponds and thin oxygenating plants. It may be advantageous to remove pump if there is one, overhaul it and store in the shed.

Derek Scrivens

Gardening Club News

Trip to Ledbury Flower Farm
On Wednesday September 23rd several members travelled to Ledbury Flower Farm. Rozanne gave us a very informative and interesting tour of her flower farm, explaining how she grows her flowers from seed. We learnt how she coped with her heavy clay soil, the increasingly hot weather and how she ensured flowers were available for her to cut from early Spring to Late Autumn. After the tour we went to her studio. Here we saw many bunches of dried flowers awaiting workshops and customer orders .We enjoyed a chat over a drink and eating her delicious home made cakes.

By the time you read this, in October we will also have had a talk on the history of Hergest Croft gardens.

Next event:
On November 25 there will be a talk in LB Village Hall at 7.30pm on The Hidden Gardens of Herefordshire by Alun and Jill Whitehead.

Our monthly events are free to members: £5 for non-members. Refreshments served from 7.00pm.
Usually the talk starts at 7.30pm.

Looking forward to seeing you at our meetings
Lesley - Chair of KT & LB Gardening Club

Contact email: **ktlbgardeningclub@gmail.com**

Follow us on:
Facebook.com/kingsthornandlittlebirchgardeningclub
Instagram.com/Kings_thorn_little_birch_gc

Join us at the

Community Café

@ Much Birch Community Hall

Saturday 14 November 2026

10:00 - 12:30

and every 2nd Saturday of the month

12 December
9 January
13 February

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.

arts alive FLICKS IN THE STICKS at Much Birch Community Hall

Thursday 19 November - TUNER 15

Blending romance, drama, and heist-thriller suspense, TUNER follows Niki, a gifted piano tuner whose extraordinary hearing makes him valuable to criminals as well as concert pianists. As his safecracking work pulls him deeper into danger, Niki forms an unexpected connection with Ruthie, a young composition student. But the closer he gets to her, the greater the risk that his double life will cost him everything.

Tickets £5 (£4 under 18s)

Refreshments including hot dogs and ice cream available from 7pm

Coming up next month...

Thursday 10 December - SAVE THE CINEMA 12

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

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FLICKS IN THE STICKS

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Email:
wearefarmingminds@gmail.com

Call our Support Line:
0808 802 0070
Or text:
07786 203 130

Local Information

Little Birch Parish Councillors

- Cllr Steve Coles
- Cllr Tom Palfrey
- Cllr Chris Atkinson
- Cllr Nick Deacon
- Cllr Kate Dillon

Molly Walters (Parish Council Clerk)
✉ lbpcclerk@gmail.com

🌐 www.littlebirchparishcouncil.org

Footpath Officers

For any queries about footpaths contact:

Little Birch & Aconbury
Chris Fowler
☎ 07931 292998
Email chrisfowler1@hotmail.co.uk

Much Birch and Kingsthorne:
David Irwin
☎ 07766 135068
Email david.irwin13@btinternet.com

Photography Group

We're a friendly local group with a common interest in photography.
Come and join us:
Contact Sally Nichol for more information
☎ 07803 032928
sally.nichol@btinternet.com

Table Tennis

Come and join us to play
on the 1st Tuesday of the month!
Little Birch Village Hall 7pm to 9pm
Only £3 which includes refreshments!

Contact
Patricia Kelly
☎ 07890 480576

Little Birch Village Hall Committee

- Lesley Chapman (Chair)
- John Ellis-Braithwaite (Treasurer)
- Cathy Ellis-Braithwaite (Secretary)
- Sarah Jones (Hall bookings)
- Kate Dillon (Parish Council Rep)
- Jane Bolam (Drama group)
- Tonya Barnett (Drama Group)
- Paulette Traynor (Committee member)

The Birches Newsletter Editor:
John Ellis-Braithwaite
Email editorial@birchesnews.org.uk

Local Social Media Groups

Find out more in these groups:

Facebook

Much Birch Parish Group
Little Birch Parish Group
King's Thorn & Little Birch Gardening Club

Instagram

King's Thorn Little Birch Gardening Club

Art and Craft Space

Have an art and craft afternoon away from the hustle and bustle of life every Thursday
at Little Birch Village Hall!
2pm to 4pm

Bring your WIP or PhD in whatever art and craft you are working on – or start something new!
Only £3 which includes refreshments!
Contact Sally Nichol
☎ 07803 032928
sally.nichol@btinternet.com

Everyone's got a Podcast!

Hi Everyone,
It seems that everyone and their dog have a podcast! You can't move for people telling you about where they have recently been a guest, or some snappily titled podcast that they are on or some tie-in to a TV series, football club, or bit of politics that boasts some audio coverage.

Sometime I want to say – STOP. I don't have enough time to listen to all the things I would like to listen too, but then something will peak my interest and I will happily subscribe to another podcast on my phone in the vague hope, usually unmet, that I can find a car journey or a run to listen to what they have to say.

Podcasts have become ubiquitous, and have, to some extent, no lost their impact. There was a time when all you could listen to were real-crime ones. People coming up with extraordinary stories about true crime, and then sometime quite outlandish explanations as to how they had solved it! It reminds me of the "Penny Dreadful" craze from the late Victorian era. As people became more literate, there was a great thirst for the latest from the Old Bailey or other criminal courts. People wanted to hear about the unjust things that were done and that justice was served, whether by hanging, transportation to Australia or imprisonment. We have to remember that Charles Dickens' early years were marred by his father being in Debtors' Prison at Newgate, London. So, may be, out of all these podcasts, some great radio and TV talent will emerge!

Podcasts give us a window into other people's worlds. And that is a wonderful thing as it allows us to sympathise with them and to ponder, what would we do, if we were in such a situation?

So, there might be too many podcasts to listen to but cast your net wide, have a listen and become one who listens to a story, hears a tale and thinks "What would I have done?" This is something we hear from the Bible, the stories of ordinary people called by an extraordinary God to do great things for his Kingdom. From Old Testament prophets to Jesus and Paul, to those who lived out the life of faith in more recent times like Francis of Assisi, William and Catherine Booth and Nelson Mandela.

Revd Mark

Little Birch Church Christmas Fete

This year we will be holding a Christmas fete on **Saturday December 5th from 2pm until 4pm at Little Birch Village Hall**. There will be tea and cakes, a bottle stall, a variety of games and the grand raffle. Father Christmas is taking time out from his busy schedule to visit the children of the parishes and it will be an afternoon to get together and have some fun. We look forward to seeing as many of you as possible!

We would be very grateful to receive donations of cakes, bottles for the bottle stall and books for the book stall. Please take to John Caton in advance.

Church Services in November

Sunday 1st November – All Saints

9.15 a.m. at Much Dewchurch
Holy Communion11.00 a.m. at Little Birch – Holy Communion
3.00 p.m. at Much Birch – All Souls Service followed by refreshments in the Hall

Sunday 8th November – Remembrance Sunday
9.15 a.m. at Much Birch – Remembrance with Holy Communion, followed by the placing of crosses at the two Commonwealth War Graves
11.50 a.m. at Little Birch – Remembrance Service with the laying of the wreath at Little Birch War Memorial

Sunday 15th November – 2nd Sunday before Advent
9.15 a.m. at Much Birch – Morning Worship
11.00 a.m. at Little Birch – Holy Communion in Traditional Language

Sunday 22nd November – Christ the King
9.15 a.m. at Llandinabo – Holy Communion in Traditional Language

Sunday 29th November – Advent Sunday
10.00 at Much Birch Community Hall – Coffee and Croissants Followed by
10.30 a.m. at Much Birch Community Hall – Holy Communion with the lighting of the Advent Candle

Much Birch Old Charities

This village Charity was created over 100 years ago to be of benefit to those living in the Parish of Much Birch who are currently experiencing financial difficulties. The objective of this charity is to help children, young people or the elderly with one-off grants.

In order to request an application form to apply please contact:
Rev Mark Johnson – email: revmark100@yahoo.co.uk
Tel: 01981 540390

Much Birch Parish Council
Details of meeting held on 01/10/26

PARISH MEETING – at the Much Birch Parish Council Meeting held in the Much Birch Community Hall on the 1st October 2026 from 7.30 pm.

The parish council held their October Parish Council Meeting on Thursday 1st October 2026. The meeting discussed the planning consultation number 262634 for Glendene, Wrigglebrook Pitch where there was a proposed variation to planning consultation number 221261. The parish council resolved to support the variation proposals in application 262634.

The next ordinary Parish Council Meeting of the Much Birch Parish Council will be held on Thursday 5th November 2026 from 7.30pm at the Much Birch Community Hall. All are welcome to attend.

Details of forthcoming meetings are in the column to the right.

Much Birch Parish Council

Councillors

Cllr Alison Cook (Chair) Jasmine Cottage, Wrigglebrook Lane, Kingsthorne, Hereford, HR2 8AW, email: thecooks@wyenet.co.uk Tel. 01981 540703
Cllr Roisin Burge The Old Hall, Barrack Hill, Little Birch HR2 8AX email: roisinburge@hotmail.com Tel. 01981 540724
Cllr Chris Pickering-Grey 4 Court Farm Barns, Much Birch HR2 8HT email:chris@pickering-grey.uk Tel. 07712 813218
Cllr Michael Agyeman Little Willow, Wrigglebrook, Kingsthorne, Hereford, HR2 8AU email: magyeman92@gmail.com Tel. 01981 540840
Cllr David Irwin email: David.Irwin13@btinternet.com Tel. 07766 135068
Cllr Steve Turner The Underhills, Hollybush Lane, Much Birch, Hereford, HR2 8HX, Tel. 07768 206296 email:turnersofcrossways@btinternet.com

Parish Council Clerk: Mrs Alison Wright email: muchbirchclerk@gmail.com
Much Birch Footpath Officer:
email: MBfootpaths@btinternet.com
Tel. 07766 135068

Dates for the forthcoming meetings:
05/11/26, 03/12/26
All are in Much Birch Community Hall from 7.30pm.

Full minutes of the meetings can be found on the Parish Council website: **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

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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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Contact Sarah Jones on 07947 222 650
Email: littlebirchvh@gmail.com
Website: www.birches.news/lbvh

SHORT MAT BOWLING AT LITTLE DEWCHURCH

We will start playing our indoor short mat bowls at Little Dewchurch Village Hall again on Thursday September 3rd at 7 pm. and every Thursday thereafter. Sessions are 2 hours long with a break for tea and biscuits and cost £5. The first three weeks are free to see if potential new members enjoy the game.

Bowls is a nice, friendly game, a way of gently exercising and there are no age limits, young and old can all play well.

For further information contact John Caton, 01981540415 or just come on the night, everybody is welcome.

Coffee & Books at LB Village Hall

Held in the morning of the first Thursday and third Saturday of the month at 10am

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Book of the month for November

Coincidentally, after writing about Ian Rankin's creation, Inspector Rebus, last month, I've discovered that that Ian Rankin was knighted in 2022 and has just published a new novel "The Heights" which is set in London and has a new main character, D. S. Gillian Gish.

I haven't had a chance to read it yet (maybe I should put it on my Christmas List), but it sounds really interesting as there is a contrast between the very rich people who live in the apartment building called "The Heights" and the detective sergeant who has been called upon to solve the crime which has been committed where they live.

Gillian is from Tottenham and cares for her mother when she is not working. Now I don't know anything about Tottenham but I am assuming that the people who live there are not very rich. So I look forward to reading all about it.

Jennifer

WREATH MAKING COURSE

with Janet Gwinnett

Saturday 12 December 2026

Venue: Little Birch Village Hall

TWO SITTINGS:
9am - 12pm or
1pm - 4pm

COST: £30 PER PERSON
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Places are awarded on a first-come, first-served basis upon receiving full payment.

Future Dates of Parish Walks

The Holy Thorn Walk

We thought we would check out the remarkable Little Birch legend that claims that the Holy Thorn tree blooms miraculously at midnight on the old Christmas Eve.

So we are going to organise a walk to check this out, on

5th January 2027

Further details to follow.

The Holy Thorn, Little Birch

Valentine's Day Walk

It would be a lovely way to spend the afternoon together.

2.00pm 14th February
from Much Birch Community Hall

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Masons of Merrivale

It's hard to believe that just two months ago there were fires everywhere and the fields were very brown. We started the spring with optimism thinking that hopefully things could not be as bad as last year. How wrong we were.

The cows went out to graze on March 17th, normal timing. Everywhere stayed green until mid-June, then the heat & drought arrived. The cows continued to go out each day, although there was very little to eat on the grass paddocks; we just had to make sure they had plenty of shade.

They were fed before going out and again when coming in around 3pm. How they survived during the intense heat was amazing. In February we installed large fans in both cubicle sheds in response to last year's heat. What a good investment that was, as it helped to keep the cows cooler and regulate their temperature when they came back in. Any cow really struggling was hosed down to reduce distress.

It's wonderful to see them out grazing now on lush green grass in pleasant weather. As last year, it's amazing how grass that looks so dead can actually recover. The weather is still looking favourable through October, which is a blessing as it means we can continue to graze the cows and young stock.

We made two cuts of grass silage instead of four and one of whole crop. The whole crop is undersown with grass in the spring and, as per last year, had to be redrilled this autumn. We have just taken a final silage cut, much later than usual. This has enabled us to take a massive sigh of relief as it will help boost our very depleted silage stocks. Just as last year, we will have to buy in feed to see us through the winter. This is particularly difficult for an Organic Farm as we must buy all our feed from other certified Organic Farms & suppliers. We are now building a network of other farms that have excess forage, but this all takes additional time, effort, and money.

We combined the winter wheat on 20th July, a month earlier than usual, to provide feed to add to the cows' ration. The yield wasn't as bad as we thought it might be, given the dry weather. This wheat ground has been drilled with rye & vetches, a new trial for us to produce a green crop for silage or feeding in early spring. We have also planted a paddock with stubble turnips to provide winter grazing.

Having had two consecutive dry years, and talks of another in 2027 thanks to the El Niño effect, we have to look at how we adapt going forward. Much of this is considering new crops or forage mixes that can cope with the drier climate, but also increasing the area that we farm where possible. Just like any other business, we have to ensure we are continually evolving to remain viable.

This weather also brings new disease challenges. We are clear of TB at the moment, touch wood, having just passed our 6-monthly test (phew!), but have vaccinated for Blue Tongue for the second year running. This is a midge-borne disease that has spread from the continent in recent years and is now rife in the country, causing devastation in sheep and cattle. It is looking like we will have to continue vaccinating for this annually now.

The vegetables have obviously done badly, although have perked up a bit since it rained. The winter plantings were delayed by a couple of months, so we want to see if they actually produce a crop. However hard it appears to have been, I'm more than grateful to live where we do in such a safe and beautiful environment and have plenty to eat.

I wish you all the very best in these peculiar times. / Sue

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PILATES with Alison Allan

Seniors Pilates is at Little Dewchurch Village Hall
Mondays 11.15am to 12.15pm

Join Alison Allan for Pilates – sessions are taught as small group classes and as individual 1:1 sessions.
Pilates is a great way to keep your body feeling agile and energised, The movements focus on posture, alignment, core strength balance and flexibility.

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tmw Tai Chi Movements for Wellbeing

tmw is at Little Dewchurch Village Hall
Thursdays 10.45am to 11.45pm

Join Alison Allan for Tai Chi movements for well being. A beautifully flowing and carefully selected sequence of movements designed to enhance and promote our physical and emotional wellbeing. The movements, which have origins in Tai Chi, Chi Kung and meditation are simplified and can be performed standing or seated making it accessible to everyone.

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Email alison@perfectbalance.life

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Remembrance Service at Millennium Green, Wormelow on 6th November

On **Friday 6th November** children from Much Birch School will be taking part in the **Remembrance Service at the Millennium Green in Wormelow,** joining the Mayor of Hereford, Rosemary Rigby, Revd. Mark and other distinguished guests.

The service begins at **10.30 am** and will be followed by planting of bulbs on the Green. Everyone is welcome and refreshments will be provided after the service.

The life that I have is all that I have
And the life that I have is yours
The love that I have
of the life that I have
Is yours and yours and yours

A sleep I shall have, a rest I shall have
And death will be but a pause
For the years I shall have
in the long green grass
Are yours and yours and yours.

Leo Marks

Defibrillator Locations

IN A LIFE THREATENING EMERGENCY CALL 999

AEDs are available to use locally in case of sudden cardiac arrest. A defibrillator is an easy to use, medical device that analyses the heart's rhythm and if needed, delivers an electrical shock (defibrillation) to help the heart establish an effective rhythm.

- **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
- **Wormelow** also at the Tump Inn
- **Wilton** on wall at the BP garage on the roundabout

Parish walk held in September

Continued from page 1.

On this occasion the parish walk route was organised over the recently ploughed fields around Bigglestone farm and onto the back road walking through New Mills Farm. We climbed up to Athelstan's wood and admired the view across the rolling green countryside that is so typical of Herefordshire. It was a relief to walk in the wood under the huge old Wellingtonias and saw how the Duchy are replacing older trees with more broadleaf ones. We then joined the Herefordshire Trail to join Ruff lane and pass around St Mary's Church in Little Birch. We returned on the old sunken lane or Holloway over the dried out Wrigglebrook and up the other side. There was talk of how these old ancient trees that line the track must have seen so much change in this path with its sandstone paving.

Back at the Village Hall we had tea and cake while chatting about the route we had just done, which was a new one for many of the walkers. We continue to try and organise walks every month rotating from Much Birch to Little Birch. Everyone is very welcome to join us. Our next is on Saturday 17th October from Little Birch Village Hall.

David Irwin
MB PFO

Explore our Parish Footpaths and history:
To discover something new about our wonderful area you can scan the QR code for a map of footpaths of Aconbury, Little Birch and Much Birch, together with fascinating information about 18 local historical sites and places of interest.

Do you have something of interest to the community which you would like to appear in the next edition of The Birches?

The deadline for the December edition is
Friday 20th November 2026
You can contact the Editor at the following email address:
editorial@birchesnews.org.uk

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Email 📧: editorial@birchesnews.org.uk

Bonfire and Fireworks SafetyTips from RoSPA to help you enjoy your celebrations

- Plan your firework display to make it safe & enjoyable.
- Keep fireworks in a closed box and use one at a time.
- Read and follow the instructions on each firework
- Use a torch if necessary.
- Light the firework at arm's length with a taper and stand well back.
- Light the firework at arm's length with a taper and stand well back.
- Keep naked flames and cigarettes away from fireworks.
- Never return to a firework once lit.
- Don't put fireworks in pockets and never throw them.