The Birches

Community Matters Newsletter

Kingsthorne, Much Birch, Little Birch, Aconbury & Wormelow

Christmas Edition

DECEMBER 2026

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Little Birch Church Christmas Fete



Saturday December 5th - 2pm until 4pm - 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 you! 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



Parish Walk - 17 October 2026

An autumnal parish walk took place in mid October and in a break with recent tradition on a Saturday afternoon.

Continued on page 3.



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.

Valentine's Day Walk

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

2.00pm 14th February

from Much Birch Community Hall





The Birches Newsletter is also available online at www.birches.news

Jobs for the garden in December

The mild Autumn has certainly helped a lot of plants that suffered during the hot weather, with vegetables catching up with lost time and putting on much welcomed growth. It has also confused some plants. We have some strawberry plants which are producing fruit, Autumn raspberries that are just producing clusters of flowers and a few berries and a friend who lives at Allensmore informs me that he is still picking kidney (runner) beans. A number of flowering plants are blooming at present, of which some you would normally associate with mid to late Summer. All the hedges have been cut and a November grass cut has been performed – the grass is still growing well so I am expecting to have to mow again before Christmas.

On that note, may I wish you a merry Christmas and a happy gardening new year.

What can we do in December:

- Dahlias and Agapanthus left in the ground to over winter will need a thick mulch of compost and/or chipped bark.
- Move Orchids to an East facing window. Other indoor plants may benefit from being put in a lighter position but away from radiators.
- All tender potted plants should be in a greenhouse or shed by now.
- If not already done bubble wrap the inside of the greenhouse at the beginning of the month.
- Prune climbing roses.
- Protect Figs with fleece.
- Garlic can still be planted
- Rhubarb can be split. Leave the crowns on the surface so that they get frosted and then plant out in early Spring.
- Plant blueberries into large tubs containing ericaceous compost and added drainage material. Blueberries need a ph of around 4.5.
- Prune established black currants removing one third of oldest branches at base
- Salad crops can be sown in a greenhouse but will be slow growing due to the low light levels. Watch out for slugs.
- If you have nest boxes, clean out any previous nests or thatch and put a small amount of hay, straw or wood shavings in the bottom before securely re-hanging them.
- In mild dry weather, and only if necessary, cut the lawn with blades high leaving 35 – 50 mm of grass.
- Vent the greenhouse on warmer days to reduce condensation.
- Check stored potatoes, and also apples – dispose of any rotten potatoes and put rotting apples out for the birds.
- Put out a variety of food for birds – seeds, fat balls, stale cheese and pieces of apple and pears.

Derek Scrivens

Gardening Club News

On October 21st we had an interesting talk on Hergest Croft given by Rowan Griffiths, the Head Gardener. Rowan told us about the history of the gardens as well as giving some tips on growing trees.

As we go to press we're looking forward to the talk on 25th November on The Hidden Gardens of Herefordshire by Alun and Jill Whitehead.

Next event:
Our Members' Winter Social will take place on December 9th at the Harewood End Inn and on January 27th there will be a Quiz Night open to everyone (for a small entry fee) at Little Birch Village Hall.

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**

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Join us at the

Community Café

@ Much Birch Community Hall

Saturday 12 December 2026

10:00 - 12:30

and every 2nd Saturday of the month

9 January
13 February
13 March

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 10 December - SAVE THE CINEMA 12

Inspired by the life of Liz Evans, a hairdresser and linchpin to the local Carmarthen community. Her mission is to stop The Lyric Cinema being demolished. A phone call later and one of Hollywood's elite agrees to offer a very special treat for Carmarthen, but does this help save the cinema?

Tickets £5 (£4 under 18s)

Refreshments including hot dogs and ice cream available from 7pm

Coming up next month...
Thursday 21 January - THE CHRISTOPHERS 15

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

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.

Parish walk, continued from page 1

A good turn out of about 25 walkers including a number of welcome new faces, gathered at Little Birch Village hall along with a selection of dogs large and small.

The dry and relatively warm weather provided excellent walking conditions.

As usual, Chris, our volunteer footpath officer, had planned an interesting walk, taking in a variety of footpaths, green lanes and byways, a few of which were new to some walkers.

We began by heading south and across the fields to Castle Nibole, though some of the party skirted around via the lanes to avoid one of the few stiles remaining in the parish. We headed down Holy Thorn Lane and viewed the lane's name sake - and discussed its history. The thorn is reputed to blossom at midnight on 12th Night - and Chris is planning a late night walk in the New Year to verify whether this is true (however the current tree is a modern replacement for the "original" descendant of the Glastonbury Thorn!).

The walk then continued via green lanes around Little Birch and then back northwards to Aconbury Woods. When we reached the boundary path along the north and west of the woodland there were wide ranging views across Hereford and much further afield, with the Clee Hills, Hay Bluff and peaks of the Black Mountains being identified by various walkers.

Then we carried on back through the woods which were just beginning to display some autumn colour, to the village hall for well earned tea and cake. We were reminded about the new village footpath maps which are displayed at both Much Birch and Little Birch village halls, where you can also find a QR code to download your own digital version of the maps to help guide you around our local paths.

William Heaps

The next parish walk will be on 5th January
See details below:



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

An article from Revd. Mark:
Who has all the money?

One of the recurring themes during 2026, as we get towards the end of the year, is the cost of living. We have all noticed that prices have gone up and incomes haven't seemed to keep pace. And yet, as a whole, the world seems wealthier than ever. There seem to be more expensive cars around and more flaunting of wealth by those who have it. Whilst the rest of the population seems to struggle to enjoy the lifestyle the adverts on TV and social media promise.

This is not a new problem. The Old Testament records this as well. Back in the 8th Century in Israel, prophets like Isaiah and Jeremiah called out those who flaunted their wealth and power at the expense of the poor and marginalised. They pointed out that their time would come and all their wealth and power would crumble, and that the poor, the widow, the orphan and those living in exile would be blessed by God.

As we come to Christmas, there are more pressures on us to spend, to make this the perfect Christmas. But that first Christmas, as we remember in the Nativity story, was not one of palaces and comfort; it was one of draughty stables and a manger being repurposed as a cot. So a little perspective is not a bad thing.



Have yourself a lovely but affordable Christmas. And if it isn't as perfect as the adverts, don't worry. Life rarely reaches to picture perfect, just enjoy your family, your friends and the gift of God to us all.

Revd Mark

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Church Services in Decembe



Sunday 6th December – 2nd Sunday of Advent
9.15 a.m. at Much Dewchurch – Holy Communion
11.00 a.m. at Little Birch – Holy Communion

Sunday 13th – 3rd Sunday of Advent
9.15 a.m. at Much Birch – Holy Communion
11.00 a.m. at Little Birch – Morning Worship
3.00 p.m. at Little Dewchurch – Carols and Christingle

Sunday 20th December- 4th Sunday of Advent
9.15 a.m. at Much Birch – Morning Worship
4.00 p.m. at Little Birch – Carols and Christingles

Monday 21st December
5.00 p.m. Carols in the Old Churchyard, Llanwarne
Thursday 24th – Christmas Eve
3.00 p.m. at Much Birch Church – Crib Service for all the family
5.00 p.m. at Llanwarne Church – Christingle Service
11.30 pm at Dewsall Church – Midnight Mass

Friday 25th – Christmas Day
9.15 a.m. at Much Dewchurch – Holy Communion
11.00 a.m. at Little Birch – Holy Communion

Sunday 27th – 1st Sunday after Christmas
10.30 a.m. – at Llandinabo Church - Joint Benefices Communion Service

Christingle Service at St. Mary's Little Birch



Our annual Christingle service will take place at St. Mary's Church on Sunday December 20th. at 4pm. This is a candlelit service full of joy and the singing of carols. The children will all receive a decorated Christingle orange to light on Christmas day. All of the collection proceeds at the service go to support the Children's Society. This is a wonderful way to start the Christmas celebrations and we look forward to seeing you all.

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 05/11/26

The parish council held their November Parish Council Meeting on Thursday 5th November 2026. The meeting discussed the recent road surfacing works in the parish and heard about plans for seasonal drainage works to be undertaken.

The parish council also began discussing their forecast budget and the proposed precept request for 2027 – 2028. A decision on these items would be made at the December parish council meeting.

The next ordinary Parish Council Meeting of the Much Birch Parish Council will be held on Thursday 3rd December 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.

Arts Alive
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Enquiries: 01981 540221

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:

All are in Much Birch Community Hall from 7.30pm. December 3rd, January 7th, February 4th, March 4th, April 1st, May 7th, June 3rd, July 1st, No meeting in August, September 2nd, October 7th, November 4th and December 2nd.

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.

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Coffee & Books at LB Village Hall

Thursday 3rd December 10:00 – 12:00
Saturday 19th December 10:00 - 12:00

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Book of the month for December

The book I would like to talk about this month is "A Respectable Trade".. by Philippa Gregory.. Don't be misled by the pretty lady dressed in 18th century costume on the front cover. You will need a strong stomach to read the graphic descriptions of the conditions on the slave ships which the author reveals in this story.

The book is set in Bristol which is local-ish and many people will know the areas she describes. Her characters have the attitudes and opinions of the day and so it is an eye-opener to see their points of view. Very few people are portrayed as wholly wicked or entirely innocent.

Another theme of the novel is the situation of women at that time. They have very few choices in life. The heroine makes a decision which is pragmatic but turns out to have profound consequences for her happiness.

Yes, it is a love story, but an unusual one. The author keeps us guessing right to the end.

I have made it sound rather serious, which it is, but a really good read, the sort of book which is hard to put down. You keep reading to find out what happens, so I can thoroughly recommend it.

Jennifer

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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
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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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Late Autumn in the Parish: Quiet Preparations

By late November, the woods around Aconbury and Athelstan's Wood have largely shed their autumn gold, revealing the crisp, architectural lines of bare oak, hazel, and hornbeam. What remains of the season's colour clings stubbornly to the hedgerows—glossy scarlet holly berries, deep purple sloes, and the rusty orange hips of wild dog-rose that provide vital winter larders for fieldfares and redwings arriving from Scandinavia.

Out in the lanes and pastures, a different kind of quiet sets in. On misty mornings, frost silvers the grass and highlights the intricate, dew-laden webs slung between bramble stems. Beneath the fallen leaves, hedgehogs are tucking themselves away into dry log piles and ditch banks, while queen bumblebees have already burrowed into north-facing soil to wait out the cold.

For gardeners, late November marks the traditional close of the planting year. With the soil still holding the last of its autumn warmth, it is an ideal window to plant bare-root hedging, tidy back spent perennials—leaving a few hollow stems for overwintering insects—and gather fallen leaves for next year's leaf mould. Shorter days may draw us indoors earlier, yet the parish countryside is far from asleep, quietly storing its energy for the turn of the year.





You can book on the course using the QR code →

https://forms.gle/XDT1mh7PKAfjuW9b9

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 a**lso at the Tump Inn
- **Wilton** on wall at the BP garage on the roundabout



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 January edition is
Friday 11th December 2026
You can contact the Editor at the following email address:
editorial@birchesnews.org.uk

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