

Pershore Times

A free monthly newspaper for Pershore and surrounding villages



Issue 111

December 2025/January 2026

FREE



'Encounter' by Peter Hodge

Christmas is coming and this makes me very happy. This is a great time of the year to enjoy with family and friends. Children, of course, find this time of the year very special, and Father Christmas is most important. The decorations in the town look very nice and give a feeling of welcome and joy.

The year has been filled with turbulence of one kind and another so maybe it's best to put these matters aside for a while and celebrate Christmas. This is a religious festival and a time to reflect and remember what this time of year is really all about.

We have lots to be thankful for, so let's enjoy ourselves. The New Year will bring challenges and opportunities for all of us. Above all, let's hope that the wars stop! A lot of negotiations are going on so we may start the year in a positive way.

We have had a very good year. We launched the Whittington and Broadway Times, and won a major international award for a book that we designed and produced. We have established our bookbinding section and are in the process of expanding our premises.

We still have lots to do with our newspapers, including merging Villager magazine with the Pershore Times and building on the good start we have made in Broadway. We have also introduced three months of free

advertising for new businesses in all of our newspapers. Very exciting times ahead!

Villager Magazine

We are pleased to announce that Villager magazine will merge with the Pershore Times from February onwards. We look forward to a long association.

Wishing our advertisers, contributors and readers a very Happy Christmas!



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Chain Reaction: The latest adventures of Pershore's Mayoral Chain

As frosts hushed the landscape, civic rhythm steadied to a drumbeat of honour and reflection. Remembrance Sunday saw poppy petals carpet the Abbey, cascading crimson across my links as my keeper, Julie, and others recited names of locals who gave their lives for today's freedoms. Armistice Day first saw us at Pershore station, where, alongside Royal British Legion branch officers, we placed our respective wreaths on the early morning "Poppies to Paddington" service. Ever since Covid restrictions, poppy wreaths are

Town Council News

Mrs Charlie MacIntyre, Town Clerk

carried across Great Western Railway's network to Paddington on Armistice Day, uniting railway staff, veterans, and local communities in commemoration. Pershore's wreaths were laid alongside others at Paddington's war memorial on Platform One, with Her Majesty, The Queen present.

Later, at Pershore cemetery, we witnessed Royal British Legion branch tributes to those who rest from their valour and sacrifice - among them, Canadian airmen far from home yet forever part of Pershore's story. At these moments, time seems to pause, and we are never more humbled or indebted. Remembrance of a different kind found voice in Worcester Cathedral, where the lives of those supported by St Richard's Hospice were celebrated in a Lights of Love service. Afterwards, a candlelit procession led us to St Andrew's

Spire for illumination of a huge Christmas tree, each light of love a beacon of memory and care.

From remembrance, my adventures turned to new beginnings with the opening of Pershore's Men's Sheds. Instead of the usual ribbon cutting, I jingled as a wooden bar - measured twice, of course - yielded to Julie's spirited sawing to open our Men's Shed. This place for crafts to be shared and friendships forged, marks an exciting new chapter in our community story.

I write as we count down to another exciting community chapter with our Christmas light switch-on and Georgian Christmas Fayre. I'll have more on my seasonal adventures next time. For now, I'm dropping hints to Julie to prepare our own Christmas, confident that we'll find everything we need within the shops, hospitality venues



and businesses that make Pershore magical at Christmas and always. With gratitude to those working for us all over Christmas, and whether your beliefs are sacred or secular, may peace and joy be yours.

Schools Armistice Service 2025



Photo credit: Pershore Abbey Community

On Monday 3rd November, the Pershore Benefice schools came together to participate in their annual Armistice Service at Pershore's Commemorative Garden. Led with prayers offered by Canon Claire Lording, poppy wreaths were duly laid on behalf of Pershore High School, Pinvin CofE Academy, Abbey Park Primary School, Holy Redeemer School, Orchard Primary School, the Royal British Legion and the Royal Naval Association. The Exhortation was read by RBL Chairman, Gerald Gregory, during which the Standard was dipped and a minute of silence was held as a mark of respect to the Fallen.

The service concluded with the Kohima Epitaph before a vote of thanks was given to all the children who participated. Speaking afterwards, Canon Claire said: "This is always one of the most poignant services of Remembrance, where our Benefice schools come together to participate. The wreaths will be on display at the Commemorative Garden for the next two weeks so that both residents and visitors can see the level of respect that our young people have. Each year, the pupils of our schools are impeccable and a true credit to their schools, their parents and our community."

Defford Remembrance Service



Today, the Defford Airfield Heritage Group held its annual Remembrance Service beside the memorial in Defford. Particularly remembered here were those scientists and RAF personnel who lost their lives developing Radar during and after World War Two. The attendance was greater than last year, but once again included a large contingent from the Defford cum Besford First School. The children's presence is greatly appreciated and a clear sign that the memory of the fallen will not be forgotten. As the memorial had been

unveiled in 2002 by Sir Bernard Lovell, who had worked at Malvern and RAF Defford, it was also special that his son, Roger, laid a wreath and his daughter, Judy, recited the Kohima Epitaph. We were again fortunate to have Georgia Clements, from Malvern College, play on her trumpet both the Last Post and the Reveille. In between, a lone aircraft flew overhead, as if in salute, and possibly piloted by a member of the DAHG. The proceedings ended with an Air Raid Siren loudly sounding the All Clear.

Tim Hickson

A message from Claire Lording

Dear Friends,
I am reading a book at the moment that I simply can't put down! It's 'The Finest Hotel in Kabul' by Lyse Doucet, who is the BBC's Chief International Correspondent. It tells the history of Afghanistan through the people who have worked and been involved with what was the Inter-Continental Hotel in Kabul, or the Inter-Con, as it has always affectionately been known. It powerfully tells the story of a country that has seen too much suffering, war, and uncertainty, through the lives of ordinary children, women and men. It is so powerful because all of those individual lives really matter. Their stories need to be told. Christmas is all about stories. There will be the stories about how we keep Christmas with our families and friends; stories about church and community events; stories that are personal to us about this time of year. We can remind ourselves of the stories we tell every year, as well as creating new ones.



We also have the chance to hear again the most amazing story of the birth of Jesus. A moment in history that changed the world and has been celebrated across the world for generations. We are invited to remember that God wants to be part of all of our stories so much that God came among us to share in our human lives through Jesus. God says to each of us that our journey through life, our story, is important and simply asks "Can I join you?" Maybe this Christmas we will say "Yes!" I hope that this Christmas will be full of wonderful stories for us all.

Claire

We invite you all to join us in church and online
PERSHORE BENEFICE for CHRISTMAS 2025

JOY

Sunday 14 December

0800 Eucharist (Pershore Abbey)
0930 Café Church (St Andrew's Centre)
1030 Sung Eucharist (Pershore Abbey with LIVESTREAM)*
1030 Morning Praise (St Mary's, Wick)
1700 Light in Our Darkness - a service for people who would like to find some peace and quiet during this busy Christmas time (St Andrew's Centre)

Sunday 21 December

0800 Eucharist (Pershore Abbey)
1030 Sung Eucharist (Pershore Abbey with LIVESTREAM)*
1030 Carol Service (St Nicholas, Pinvin)
1700 Service of Lessons and Carols (Pershore Abbey with LIVESTREAM)*
1800 Carols and Christingles (St James, Birlingham)
1800 Carols with Friends of St Mary's (St Mary's, Wick)

Christmas Eve Wednesday 24 December

1530 Christingle Service (Pershore Abbey)
1600 Christingle Service (St Mary's, Wick)
1700 Christingle and Crib Service (St Nicholas, Pinvin)
2315 Midnight Mass with choir (Pershore Abbey with LIVESTREAM)*

Christmas Day Wednesday 25 December

0800 Eucharist (Pershore Abbey)
0900 Parish Communion (St Mary's, Wick)
1030 Holy Communion (St James, Birlingham)
1030 All Age Eucharist (Pershore Abbey with LIVESTREAM)*

Sunday 28 December

0800 Eucharist (Pershore Abbey)
1030 Benefice Sung Eucharist (Pershore Abbey with LIVESTREAM)*

*Join in with our LIVESTREAM services at the time advertised on the Pershore Abbey Community YouTube Channel or catch up later

01386 552071

www.pershoreabbey.org.uk

Pershore Abbey Women's Fellowship



Merleen with her dog, Zyla

The programme for this past year has been enjoyable, with a delicious New Year meal in January at The Pickled Plum, enjoyed by all members.

February: Mrs Margarita Collins gave a very educated talk on Madresfield Court, Malvern, full of history and intrigue.
March: We had information on the Visually Impaired, different conditions of eyesight, ways of coping through daily life, and many ways not to be isolated, with help from the Talking Newspaper, Pathfinder.
April: St John's gave us all instructions on how to give CPR. Plus information on Defibrillators.
May: Our AGM. Followed by Campden Home Nursing, our charity for this year. We donated a cheque for £100 towards all their charitable work and care.
June: Gillian White told the history of The Hugely Huggable Teddy Bear! How interesting and entertaining that meeting was.
July: A coach trip organised to Hatton Country Park. A Fine day with lovely sunny weather, browsing round the unusual craft shops. Indulging ourselves with lunch and afternoon tea.
September: Canon Claire took prayers and gave thanks to our fellowship with prayers and communion, followed by tea

and cakes.

October: Brought us Hearing Dogs For The Deaf. A Lovely lady, Merleen Watson, brought her dog Zyla. She demonstrated how she reacted to different sounds, e.g., doorbell, telephone, fire alarm, etc. Trained to make Merleen aware.
November: Chris Ludlow brought back happy memories for us all with Old Pershore photos.
December: Looking forward to our meeting with a sing-along,

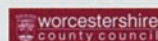
plus mince pies & mulled wine.
2026: Our new year, bringing:-
A Meal in January: The Hedgehog Society - February: Information on Kimonos - March: A New Zealand Cycle Tour - April.
If you would like to meet new people and make new friends. The Fellowship meet in St. Andrew's Hall on the second Tuesday of each month at 2.30pm. Entrance: £3.00 visitors, includes refreshments and a warm welcome.



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Pershore Antique Centre



The life and times of Pershore Antique Centre are lively and varied. Just last Thursday, Pete started his working day with an early eight o'clock appointment in Malvern, looking at a garage full of furniture for a family downsizing. While there, he was also asked to quote to clear their overflowing shed. Prices agreed and payment made, Pete loaded the van with the pieces he'd chosen and made his way to his next appointment – quoting for a full house clearance and clean following a bereavement. Meanwhile, in Pershore, Neil is preparing the shop to open – if the boards and signs are out in Broad Street, you know we are open. A consignment of china and glass needs pricing and putting out on display, then calls are made to collectors who may be interested in the new stock. A call to a customer on the Wish

list, that the item they wanted has come in, and then the shop starts to fill with new customers – “What an Aladdin's cave”, “We never knew you were here”. Always up for a chat, Neil talks with them as they browse the two full rooms. Pete returns for a silver valuation. The day quickly passes, deals are made, and happy customers depart. The Antique Centre is ready and willing to help with your endeavours, whether you're buying or selling. If you wish to give a unique gift this year, but are not sure what it could be, we also offer gift vouchers for the recipient to enjoy the pleasure of choosing their own treasure at a later date. We speak fluent haggles, please don't be shy, our prices are negotiable! We offer a respectful, empathic service for house clearances and are fully licensed for waste removal. Wishing a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to all our friends and customers!

Pete, Neil and Cath x

To contact the Antique Centre, ring 07926 168673 or email: pershoreantiques8297@gmail.com Follow us on Facebook - 'The Pershore Antique Centre'

Wellbeing Hub



A New Year Helping Hand

Are you entitled to the Attendance Allowance? After the expenses of the holiday season, the new year can be a financial challenge. Just keeping the heating on for longer in these darkest months of winter makes a significant dent in the budget. Is there extra help you could get? Many people who chat to us in the Wellbeing Hub don't realise they may be entitled to financial help to continue leading an independent and active life. “I'm less steady on my feet than before,” says Jackie, a retired teacher in her 70s, “but I hope to live independently for a long time yet.”

Jackie is just one of many who have been helped to apply for the Attendance Allowance. This is a non-means-tested benefit for people of pensionable age. If you have a disability, you may already be on it, but it is also intended for those who are becoming “less able”. Are you finding it harder to get in and out of chairs? Or to use the stairs? Or the shower? Or to prepare food?

“It's a British trait to say we can cope when actually things are more difficult than we admit,” says Ann, a volunteer who helps people apply for the Attendance Allowance. “Talking to us can help you sort out what your actual limitations are and what you might be entitled to.” The AA rate is typically about £73.90 a week, though there is a higher rate for those with more demanding needs. What you spend it on is up to you: anything that will make life easier. Some people use it to pay for a cleaner, a gardener or for taxis. Others, to hire a carer to sit with a partner, allowing them to get out for a couple of hours.

How can you find out if you are entitled to it? Pop into the Hub (address below) for an information sheet with instructions on what to do. This includes ringing the DWP on 0800 731 0122 for an application form. If successful, the payment will be back-dated to the day you made the phone call. We advise phoning for a form rather than downloading one from your computer to ensure you receive any back-payment. We can also help you fill in the application form.

Ring us on 01386 555018 as soon as you receive it and give us your name, phone number and the date the form needs to be returned by. We will contact you to make an appointment to help you fill it in.

“The form can be off-putting,” adds Ann, “as it contains so many questions. People we have helped often come in afterwards to thank us for our help. A woman just last week told me she would have given up on her own. It was so daunting!” So please come into the Hub this new year for a chat if you would like to find out more or feel unsure. We are here to offer a helping hand.



Pershore Wellbeing Hub
No. 4, High Street
Tel. 01386 555018
www.pershorewellbeinghub.co.uk

*E Hill and Son Funeral Directors
Defford Road, Pershore WR10 1HZ.*



Collect your official Shoe Box from us and then return to the address above or let us have any items you wish to donate.

You can donate:

Cuddly toys, dolls, toy animals, games, skipping ropes, crayons, pencils, writing / colouring pads, hat, gloves, Sunglasses, t.shirts, socks, hair brush, comb, hair bows and clips, tooth brush.

You cannot donate:

Guns, toy soldiers, sharp objects, lotions, liquids or food items.

*National Collection Week
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A few words from... Dame Harriett Baldwin MP

Calling for Urgent Post Delivery Review

Dame Harriett Baldwin MP has called for an urgent review of the county post delivery service after receiving a series of reports about missing mail. Baldwin has written to the chief executive of Royal Mail asking him to urgently review local concerns and to fix serious network issues that have emerged over the last month. Constituents have reported that they regularly do not see postal deliveries for many days, followed by a single bulk delivery of mail, sometimes just once a week or worse. The Royal Mail was bought by new owners in 2024, but the sale came with a pledge to maintain the obligations to deliver first-class mail six days a week. People living in areas including Upton-upon-Severn and Malvern have reported serious issues with post deliveries to their MP. "In the last few weeks, I have seen a serious increase in the number of people complaining to me about postal deliveries, with people reporting that they have had bulk deliveries of post once a week," explained Dame Harriett. "The Royal Mail is coming into its busiest period,



and traditionally, temporary workers are taken on to deal with the increase in workload, but this seems to me like a problem that has been building over a couple of months. My biggest concern is that people may be missing urgent hospital appointments or test results, which are often still sent out through the post. I've heard reports of events being cancelled because people cannot rely on a first-class mail delivery service. I have asked the chief executive to carry out an urgent review of the postal system which covers my constituency and identify any issues that may be delaying the delivery of mail. This is the time of year when we traditionally take time to thank our local postie, and I want to be reassured that any change in ownership hasn't had an effect on their ability to do their jobs well."

Bridge Club Winners

Pershire Duplicate Bridge Club announced the winners of their 2025 competitions at their recent Annual General Meeting – see below.

The online bridge club has thrived in recent years, having members throughout the UK and beyond and playing twice weekly. The Chair, Alan Boyes, said: "Members like the fact that they can chat to their friends at the table, safe in the knowledge that they will not disturb others – and, of course, they can play for as little as £1-£25 in the warmth and comfort of their own home. My congratulations to all our Competition winners."

Championship Pair:
Barry Quinnell & Phil Hatton
Weir Trophy Teams:
Phill Hatton, Colin Crouch, Sally Martin, Chris Mallinson
Michael Farey:
David Campbell & Bruce Carter
Ladies Pair:

Judy Knights & Jan Garratt
Mens Pair:

Barry Quinnell & Clive Pemberton

Doug Stainton Cup:

Jude Stracey & Gill Mitchell
Wednesday Championship:

John Forbes & Robin Vicary
Friday Championship:

Ronnie Moore & Veronica Enticknap

Slammer Of Year:

To be announced!

If you are interested in joining this friendly Club, please visit their website for more information:

www.bridgewebs.com/pershire



Preparing your property for Winter



Five steps to help prevent insurance claims during the Winter months.

As the temperature drops, conditions worsen, and the winter weather sets in, now is the perfect time to make sure your home or business is ready. A little preparation can go a long way towards preventing costly damage and avoiding the stress of a claim during the winter period.

Check your roof and gutters
Clear away any leaves and debris, check for loose roof tiles, and make sure your gutters and drains are flowing freely. Blockages can quickly lead to leaks and water damage to your property when heavy rain or snow arrives. Note - flat roofs are particularly susceptible to wear and tear.

Protect your pipes

Burst pipes are a very common winter problem, so insulating all pipes that are exposed to the low temperatures is a must.

Service your heating system

Well-maintained boilers and radiators not only run more



efficiently – saving you money – but they also reduce the risk of breakdowns when you need them the most.

Secure outdoor areas

Checking fences, trimming trees, and storing garden furniture safely can reduce damage caused by high winds.

Keep vigilant of burglars

With darker nights, make sure you keep your property secure using window locks. Keep valuables hidden and consider the benefits of PRI lighting, CCTV, and intruder alarms.

While good insurance provides peace of mind, prevention is the best protection.

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The Queen Elizabeth Inn bucks the trend

Located in Elmley Castle, a quintessential Cotswolds village at the foot of Bredon Hill, The Queen Elizabeth Inn is a community-run pub that continues to thrive despite difficult economic conditions.

The pub, which takes its name from the visit of Elizabeth I to the village in 1575, is run by a community group that took over the lease twelve years ago with the goal of being a centre of social activities for Elmley Castle and the surrounding villages, as well as a destination venue for all. The pub is popular with walkers and cyclists alike, and is family and dog friendly, catering for everyone. Working alongside a great team of paid staff, volunteers help with day-to-day management, maintenance,

gardening, marketing and work front-of-house. The pub focuses on providing good quality, homemade meals made from locally sourced and produced ingredients, as well as locally reared meat and game when in season. On offer is a wide range of dishes, from traditional pub food, daily specials and breakfasts to regular Theme Nights. They also showcase a great selection of local real ales, wines and spirits. "Bessies" café is open all day, serving fabulous homemade cakes and a wide choice of teas and coffees. The "Queens", as it is locally known, has been recognised for its excellence, being awarded Visit Worcestershire Pub of the Year twice (and a finalist for the next round) as well as the Good Food



Award for seven years running. Engagement with the community is at their heart, with monthly pub quizzes and backgammon nights, hosting of local groups such as the Rotary Club, charity events and craft workshops. Their latest venture is to offer the experience of being a "Pub Landlord for the Day", which is bringing in visitors from far and wide.

Christmas is a very special time for the Queen Elizabeth, starting

with the Christmas Lights Switch-on, attended by hundreds of people from the villages and the surrounding area. Their Festive Menu is available for lunch and dinner throughout December, with special menus on offer for Boxing Day and New Year's Eve.

Book early, as it gets very busy! Enquiries from volunteers or anyone looking for work are also welcome!

Mike Freddie Gordon: *Have you seen this man?*



Mike has just completed 1 million steps (aka 500 miles) for #prostatecancerawareness. Difficult to miss when he is in one of his crazy outfits, Freddie has been raising funds for #PCUK and #PCResearch charities, during November while walking awesome autumnal paths and trails around Wonderful Wick, and the historical sites and retail therapy of Plumtastic Pershore. He says: "All men (over 50)

should apply for a PSA blood test, even without symptoms. I was fortunate that my cancer was caught while it was curable, initially detected in a free NHS annual Health check. Treatments are improving all the time - I had robot-assisted surgery, but some opt for radiotherapy or hormone therapy. Many cases can simply be monitored with watchful waiting. But none of that works without a simple test!"

He is hugely grateful to all the staff at Abbotswood Surgery and the NHS Worcester - Redditch - Kidderminster Trust Hospitals for prompt and expert testing (June), diagnosis (August) and surgery (October)! And he now awaits the surgery review on 12th December. Say a prayer! Or please contribute to Just Giving pages via the QR codes

below. Thanks a million! Ding Dong Merrily!



For Prostate
Cancer
Research



For Prostate
Cancer
UK

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Videoscopy £25

One ear - including consultation £40

Two ears - including consultation £60

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Pershire Flower Club



Emma Remington, from Northampton, ran a business called 'Event and Wedding Flowers'. Her demonstration was called 'Christmas Carols' and her first design was entitled 'In the Bleak Midwinter'. All her flowers were white, and the foliage she used had a silvery look, including stems of pampas grass around which she had tied garden wire in order to make them bend to the desired shape. Next, it was 'Deck the Halls' which consisted of two designs arranged on a plank and using red flowers and tall white candles. This was a perfect arrangement for a mantelpiece or a side table. Then there was the 'Star of Bethlehem' – a star which Emma had created with a tail of wool, decorated with small starry spangles. For this design, she used yellow chrysanthemums and other yellow flowers, all of which were attached to a garden parasol stand! For 'We Three Kings', Emma had created three upright cardboard tubular shapes wrapped with stems of bracken.

Into a small dish containing oasis, she arranged her design, including gold palm leaves and then produced two similar arrangements. These three were placed on the tubular stands. Next, for 'Jingle Bells', was a very dramatic handtie, starting off with long stems of hawthorn with red berries, to which she added some beautiful flowers, all adding to the flowing movement of the handtie, including stems of a red gerbera and a red anthurium. After tying up and trimming the stems of this bunch of beauty, she wrapped it in white tissue paper and cellophane and then, by magic, an identical handtie was brought forward and the two were placed on a wooden sleigh with a woven wicker reindeer. After Emma had completed each design and while she was preparing for the next, we listened to appropriate music and carols, which all added to the seasonal atmosphere. For her final design, entitled 'The First Noel', Emma used a reusable and compostable container. To this, she added mostly white flowers, including a magnificent white cymbidium orchid. It was a really enjoyable evening, and we hope those who came (who were not already members of the Club) will consider joining us.

Our next demonstration is on Wednesday 18th February at 7.30 pm at Bishampton Village Hall.

For further details, please ring 01386 462703

The Georgian Christmas Fayre returns



Father Christmas visiting the fayre in 2024 (photo by Stuart Purfield)

The Pershire Place Board, Pershire Town Council and Wychavon District Council were delighted to host the third annual Pershire Georgian Christmas Fayre on Friday 28th and Saturday 29th November. This much-loved event marked the start of the local festive season. Building on the success of last year's event, which saw thousands flood into the town centre to enjoy entertainment, shopping and festivities, organisers aimed to deliver an even more magical experience for 2025. The weekend began with a choral procession leaving Pershire Abbey, leading visitors down to Broad Street for the Christmas lights switch-on at 6pm. The procession is always one of the most atmospheric moments of the Fayre, setting the tone for two days of celebration. Visitors enjoyed late-night shopping on Friday as Pershire's independent businesses opened their doors for festive browsing. Over 70 market

stalls lined Broad Street across the weekend, offering artisan gifts, seasonal crafts, festive food and unique Christmas finds. People warmed up with local festive favourites, from mulled drinks and hot chocolate to delicious street food supplied by local vendors. The Fayre featured street performers, live music, and a vintage fairground, bringing entertainment to Broad Street, Church Walk and the surrounding area. Santa's Grotto was a weekend highlight for families, offering photo opportunities with Father Christmas. "Pershire's Georgian Christmas Fayre is a true celebration of our town's community spirit," said Darren Eden, chair of the Pershire Georgian Christmas Fayre Delivery Group. "With the support of our local councils, and the hard work of volunteers, traders and performers, we're proud to bring residents and visitors together for a joyful start to the festive season."

Drakes Broughton, Wadborough and Pirton - Housing needs survey

By the time this goes to print, Wychavon District Council has committed to sending the survey form to every household in the Drakes Broughton, Wadborough and Pirton parishes. With the 2026 - 2041 Neighbourhood Plan for the Parishes nearing completion, the survey is an important part of the approval process, and the data collected helps Wychavon understand our actual current and future housing needs. It also guides the direction of the plan and its relevance to the

wider district and regional development plans. This is your opportunity to provide your input and have a say! The survey is for households in the parishes and is not for developers, landowners or even the councils – this is a survey of the actual needs, opinions and feelings around housing for the residents of the parishes. If you have concerns about the availability of suitable housing in the parishes, this is your chance to make your feelings known. If you have family who

would like to move back to the parishes, this lets you inform Wychavon of their needs too. If you think there is too much housing, or too little, this is the time to say! The survey will close towards the end of January, so it's really important that you fill yours out and return it. Wychavon will review

Alistair Clarke

the data and the range/strength of views, and we need as many returned surveys as possible, as this is a key measure. The higher the percentage of returned surveys, the stronger our position – so please get filling out and returning that form as soon as possible after receiving it!



**Drakes Broughton and
Wadborough with Pirton
Neighbourhood Plan**



December and January Events at community run The Queen Elizabeth Inn

VISIT WORCESTERSHIRE PUB OF THE YEAR 2022/23 GOOD FOOD AWARD 2024/25

Who knew that a rural community pub could be so exciting !!

The Queen Elizabeth Inn Elmley Castle

**Christmas Bookings
still available !**



See website for menu. Lunch/Dinner
2 courses - £27.95, 3 courses - £35.95

CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR OPENING

Christmas Eve – Festive Menu available from 12.00- 16.00. Open for drinks only thereafter. **Christmas Day** – Open for drinks only 11.00-14.00. **Boxing Day** – Book now for our special Boxing Day lunch from 12.00-16.00. Limited availability so call early to avoid disappointment. Open for drinks until 20.00. **27th to 30th**

December – We will be open and operating as normal. **New Years Eve** – Celebrate with our New Years Eve Dinner and Party. Please book for dinner. Lunchtime menu as normal. **New Years Day** – breakfast 10.00-11.30 and our normal lunch menu from 12.00-16.00.



Queen Elizabeth Inn Elmley Castle
PUB QUIZZES
Tuesday December 9th
and January 13th
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December 2025/January 2026, Issue 14

Christmas Pudding and its friends

Tim Hickson



Looking back in history, I find it interesting to find the path things that we like to eat have had to travel to reach us. In Croome Court, for example, there is a cabinet of porcelain, two of whose items we like to show to visiting children. One of these is a small pot with a spout and a wooden handle bought from Paris by the 6th Earl. Chocolate was brought from South America by the Spanish in the 17th century. It became a luxury drink popularised by the French aristocracy in the 18th century. Roast beans were ground and dissolved in hot water. Then milk, sugar and sometimes spices were added before it was stirred with a stick to become frothy. As the ingredients became cheaper, its popularity spread, and nearly a

hundred years later, in 1847, Mr Fry, in Bristol, thought he might try selling solid chocolate bars. That worked so well that, two years later, Mr Cadbury joined in, then Mr Rowntree. The other item in the porcelain collection at Croome is the Flight and Barr (the forerunners of Royal Worcester) ice cream pail, one of a pair bought by the 7th Earl in about 1810. The outer bowl would have contained crushed ice from the Ice House (mixed with salt to lower its freezing temperature). Then the inner bowl would have been nestled into the ice and filled with ice cream. In those days, it would have been just that, frozen cream, stirred to break up the ice crystals, and if you wanted any flavouring, you added it

yourself from the jam pots alongside. Ice creams seem to have been invented by the Italians in the 17th century using snow from the mountains. We know King Charles I had some at a banquet.

So now we come to specific Christmas fare, Plum Puddings. To quote from Annie Grey's 'At Christmas We Feast': *'Before Christmas pudding, there was plum pudding, and before plum pudding, there was plum pottage. All three share a rich, spicy set of flavours, laden with dried fruits and thickened with breadcrumbs. Two are virtually unheard of today, and the third is under threat. Twenty-first century polls suggest that the popularity of Christmas pudding is age-related, and that the more youthful revellers amongst us do not fully comprehend its dark, delicious glories.'*

Back in medieval times, food was cooked in a pot, and every ingredient, including meat, was just chucked in. Hence the word 'pottage'. However, it seems that adding fruit to meat was as popular in Britain as it is now in North Africa. The word 'plum' did not necessarily mean plum but was a word used to cover the dried products of the grape. Thus, currents, raisins and sultanas would be included. Later, orange and lemon peel preserved in sugar, what we call 'candied peel',



A Flight and Barr ice cream pail

which had been invented by the Arabs centuries before, might be added too. Then, the method of cooking was changed.

Instead of cooking things in a pot, a greased cloth was used. Then, when the ends were tied together, you had a ball which gave us the traditional spherical shape of our Christmas Pudding.

However, that changed to the use of moulds, which gave a rounded shape, but with a flat base, which made the next stage safer. By the middle of the 19th century, the custom of bringing the pudding to the table ablaze with brandy was well established. Then, by the 1890s, housewives began to put inside the pudding a thimble, a ring, a piece of money or a button, each of which was supposed to foretell the destinies of the recipient. That changed to putting sixpences in, when they were made of silver, as a bit of fun. I remember those as a child.

Not quite Rudolph



It's almost Christmas, and Rudolph the reindeer is appearing on festive jumpers and decorations all over the land. Reindeer aren't native to the UK,

but while you might find a reindeer to pet at nativity scenes, December is a good time to spot wild deer. In Worcestershire, the dainty roe deer, with its

reddish coat and striking white rump, can sometimes be seen. One of only two native deer species, they are solitary in summer but in winter, they come together in small groups, making them easier to spot. Roe deer are very shy and, if disturbed, will bound across the landscape, white rumps flashing, at impressive speed and jumping hedges with ease. In the early mornings, you may see them quietly grazing in meadows along the Avon.

Look for Muntjac deer too. These small, stocky deer were introduced to the UK and have quickly spread. Although solitary and secretive, they are noisy, so

Karen Rose



you may well hear them before you see them. Their nickname is the 'barking deer', as they call repeatedly and loudly to mark their territories, especially at dusk and dawn. So while Rudolph is the star of the show at the moment, why not step aside from the bustle of the festive season and see if you can spot a real-life woodland wonder – minus the glowing nose!?

Karen Rose is a biodiversity officer for Wychavon District Council.

Farming

Mike Page

Rain has continued, off and on, in more recent weeks such that moisture levels in soils have now risen to the point where most soils are 'workable' and can be (or have been) cultivated and drilled with seed conventionally or 'direct drilled' with a modern drill designed to place seed directly into undisturbed (or minimally disturbed) soil.

In many cases, arable crops have germinated already and are showing through. We have had two relatively poor harvest years in succession, resulting from exactly opposite extreme weather conditions: 2023-24 because of excessive rainfall, and 2024-25 because of drought. Yields this harvest have ranged widely across the country, from as high (in a few cases) as over ten tonnes/ha (four tonnes/acre – a very good crop), down to less than two tonnes/ha (less than one tonne/acre – a disaster not even covering growing costs). As a result, the need to import basic foods and feedstuffs (animal foods) will be particularly high over the coming months, bringing about a decided downturn in UK trade figures. Such a downturn might persuade the Government that policies designed to support continuing full home agricultural production should be high on their agenda. It has become known that many farm practices developed since the early days of mechanisation are actually (in the long-term) detrimental to soil and general environmental well-being: fields being cleared of all crops

and crop residues had become the norm, with many fields left entirely bare of any crop or vegetation of any sort until the planting of the next crop, even if that was not to happen until the following Spring. Nowadays, with many crops, the residue (straw/etc) is likely to be chopped up by the harvesting machinery and spread back out on the field to either rot down into the soil or be cultivated into the soil. Either way, a great part of the organic matter of the whole growing crop is returned to the soil, mirroring what happens in any natural environment and leading to soil improvement, as soil is the result of the interaction over many years between inorganic minerals (rock) breakdown and organic substances (vegetation) breakdown. As well as being of great benefit to the soil, this also has considerable climate benefit: across the world, many millions of tonnes of carbon dioxide are being sequestered rather than released back into the atmosphere; this is, in a sense, a win-win situation. There is also an expanding practice amongst farmers of planting 'Cover Crops', which can be deep-rooted or nitrogen-fixing plants designed to generally improve the soil both physically and biologically. Having served those purposes, they are replaced later in the Autumn or perhaps the following Spring with the crop intended for harvest. Modern seed drills have been developed, which allow seed



Recently emerging wheat, planted after a crop of beans harvested this year. The new growing wheat crop will benefit from the Nitrogen 'fixed' from the atmosphere by the beans. Beans are particularly advantageous to farming as they not only provide Nitrogen for themselves, but leave surplus Nitrogen in the soil for the following crop.

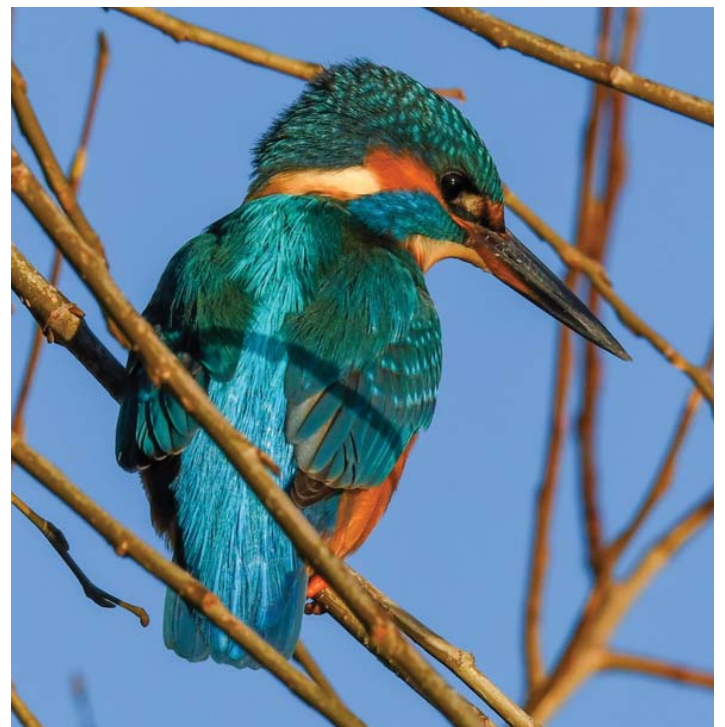
for the following harvest crop to be planted through the still growing Cover Crop, rather than the old-fashioned, time-consuming and expensive method of ploughing under all residues from any previous crop, and generating a new seedbed. Interesting (for me!) to watch crops being planted using machines developed to cope with field conditions that would have been an absolute no-go years ago with the machinery available then; all we are doing is attempting to replicate the way in which nature might do things for itself. In some cases, the Cover Crop being replaced will die off of its own accord. In other cases, it will need to be killed off by being sprayed. In either case, its organic matter will be returned to the soil – another win-win situation. And lastly, not to forget the

livestock. Recent rain has permitted grasslands to recover from the drought conditions of previous months, and continuing warm conditions for the time of year have resulted in some new growth. As a result, both sheep and cattle can continue to thrive outside with the grazing that remains available, supplemented by some long fodder harvested back in the summer. With relatively low yields of grass harvested in the summer resulting from the drought, it did look like the availability of fodder to last the coming winter might be a serious problem, but if mild autumn/early winter conditions continue, providing some grazing, then the fodder needed to last the winter will be much less. The optimist in me (which I have spoken of before!) is hoping for a reasonably favourable and short winter this time. We will see!

Photos for the Editor

Dear Editor,
I don't know if these are of any interest for your Pershore Times magazine. They are all taken by me on the Avon in Pershore in the last few days.

Regards
Mark Everett





Surprises

Surprises, surprises
In all shapes and sizes.
The best is a good one
It really is such fun
To have.
A nice friendly greeting
Or maybe a meeting.
By chance it might be
With someone you see
Not often.
A gift or a present
Is really so pleasant.
A note from a friend
You were meaning to send
One yourself.

Susan Catford

Monthly Reflection

On the day John the baptist appeared, he was a bit of a weirdo, dressed in camel's hair, eating locusts and wild honey, living in the desert, and he gave a strange message: people were to prepare for someone coming after him, someone more important than him. The person coming was Jesus, and John tells us that if you can't be number one in anything, make sure you are the best second best you possibly can be.

David Bray, Pershore Abbey



The flip side - What about emigration?

In today's political discourse, the word 'immigration' and its many associations evoke strong feelings and contentious debate. There can also be a great deal of confusion across the board. Interestingly, the Office for National Statistics reported earlier this year that long-term net migration in this country has dropped by 50%. Their website defines 'long-term' as 'people chang[ing] their usual place of residence for a period of 12 months or more'. The number of people coming into this country minus the number of people leaving it is approximately 431,000 in the year ending December 2024. In 2023, the number was 860,000.

This decrease has been linked to a reduction in the numbers of people who are coming into this country, likely because of changes to visa application rules late last year. The provisional estimate for the number of people who immigrated last year is 948,000 (766,000 non-EU nationals; 122,000 EU nationals; 60,000

British nationals). Work and study are the largest drives behind immigration of non-EU nationals.

There is so much focus at the moment on how many people are entering our country, but the number of people leaving it is also surprising.

The number of people emigrating from this country in the 18 months leading up to December 2024 also saw an increase of approximately 11%, increasing from roughly 466,000 people in 2023 to 517,000 people a year later. The Census 2021 website compared 2024's emigration numbers with those of June 2017.

Old study and work visas are expiring, and fewer people are arriving on new ones. The impact of recent budgets and tougher attitudes towards non-doms may also affect these figures, and will likely continue to have an visible impact for data for next year and beyond.



Do you ever get stung?



Most social insects have methods of defending their nests against attackers. In the case of honeybees, there are different levels of response dependent on their perception of the level of threat. At the lowest level, the bees will fly around the head, face and eyes, emitting a high-pitched buzz. This can be alarming, but if the attacker withdraws, the bees usually return home, although they will stay 'on alert' and will rapidly resume patrols if need be. Sometimes they persist and will chase the attacker up to two hundred metres before backing off. Beekeepers call this 'following behaviour' and try to eliminate it by breeding queens from non-following colonies.

Frantic waving of the arms or trying to swat the bees is likely to raise the response to the next level, as would 'opening a colony clumsily or banging on the hive'. The bees are now intent on stinging, and they have an uncanny knack of finding gaps in clothing or areas of thin clothing through which they can sting. They emit a distinctive aroma like pear drops or ripe bananas, and this recruits other bees to join the fight.

The sting is barbed and not easily removed from human skin, so that when the bee is flicked off, the tip of its abdomen is torn away, leaving the sting in situ, while the venom sac still pumps venom in. The bee will often continue to attack, but cannot sting again and will die in a few hours. The aroma left at the site of the sting encourages other bees to sting at the same site, which increases the efficiency of this defensive behaviour. Factors which may cause a colony to jump straight to the stinging phase include impending thunder, colony starvation, queenlessness, vibration from machinery like

mowers, robbing by wasps or other bees, or by beekeepers! The immediate effect of the sting is a sharp pain. As soon as possible, the poison sac should be scraped away with a fingernail. This will minimise the amount of venom injected, but a raised white lump is likely at the injection site, and over the next minute or two, while hunting for home remedies, the pain will subside. (Neither vinegar nor bicarbonate of soda will have much effect, but locally applied heat can ease the pain.) For most people, there follow several hours with few symptoms, but then the affected part may feel hot with swelling, reddening and itchiness, and this may be very uncomfortable on ankles, wrists and elbows. Stings on the head may cause fluid to collect around the eyes so that they close. These effects can last for a couple of days and can be minimised by the use of anti-histamines. These local symptoms can be very mild or quite severe, but they are normal reactions. A few people react quite differently. Within a minute of

Martyn Cracknell

being stung, they may begin to have symptoms in parts of the body quite remote from the location of the sting. Intense itching in the palms of the hands and in the toes, itchy spots all over the body, hot, itchy and red areas in the groin, the armpits and the throat and tongue. This is an allergic reaction, and this can also be mild or severe. If severe, it is an emergency requiring urgent attention, or the patient may die. The condition is called anaphylactic shock and involves a sudden drop in blood pressure, leading to collapse and loss of consciousness. If a beekeeper develops an allergy to stings, they may have to give up the hobby. There is a programme of desensitisation, involving regular injections of measured doses of venom, but it takes two or three years.

So the answer is yes, I do get stung. I don't like it, so I try to be very careful when I am opening the hives and try not to squash any bees. Also, I only open the hives when there is a good reason to disturb them.



Local Conflicts: Part Two

Tim Hickson



'The Battle of Lewes, East Sussex, 14th May 1264'
by James Hardy (1801-1879) (Image credit: Lewes Town Council)

In the 1260s, during the reign of the very unpopular King Henry III, Simon de Montfort, 6th Earl of Leicester, led the barons' revolt against Henry. At the Battle of Lewes, de Montfort won and captured the King and his son, Edward. Later, de Montfort, with his captives, had moved to Hereford, where Edward escaped and headed east. The King's son raised an army to fight de Montfort and rescue his father. Simon de Montfort also headed east with his Welsh allies. They crossed the Severn, possibly at Clevelode, and he spent the night at Kempsey before heading on, probably crossing the Avon at Pershore to reach Evesham.

There, he planned to meet his son, also Simon, who had gathered a force at Kenilworth. However, Edward attacked young Simon and prevented him from taking his forces to join his father at Evesham. Then Edward headed south with twice the force that de Montfort had brought. So, when, on 4th August 1265, that battle commenced, Simon de Montfort was outnumbered, overcome, killed and mutilated. This de Montfort is celebrated for initiating the idea of the nation being ruled by a parliament containing representatives of the people. However, he also encouraged hatred of the bankers of the day, the Jews, and, amongst



'The Battle of Worcester, 3rd September 1651'
by Thomas Woodward (1801-1852) (Image credit: Worcester City Museums)

other appalling acts, massacred the 700 Jews living in Worcester. At that time, Christians were not permitted to lend money for usury. The Jews' religion did not forbid it, so they developed that business because of the demand. If a king wanted to fight a war, he had to pay the soldiers, so he either raised the money by taxation or he borrowed it. It is human nature, however, to dislike people to whom we owe money, and in those days, an effective way not to have to pay it back was to kill the Jews. Once that started, there were massacres in many towns. Less than two centuries later, there was the English Civil War between King Charles I and Parliament. Skirmishes started the war, and the major one was on the edge of Worcester at Powick Bridge on 23rd September 1642. Here, Royalist troops on the north side surprised and repelled the Parliamentary cavalry trying to cross. Much later, in 1651, the Royalist troops in Upton had destroyed the central arch of the stone bridge across the Severn (just as had been done at Pershore

across the Avon). But, at Upton, they put down planks so they could still cross the river. Then, because they left it unguarded, a small band of Parliamentary soldiers got across, followed by a larger force that had found a ford. This allowed a substantial Parliamentary force to move north on the west bank of the Severn to Powick and so to Worcester. Worcester was held by Charles I's son, also Charles, many of whose troops were Scots. On 3rd September, the Parliamentary army, now commanded by Cromwell, was able to win the Battle of Worcester, and so the war ended.

In recent times, a conflict that seems to me to threaten the idea of Democracy has been taking place over land near Tiddesley Wood. Here, developers wanting to build large numbers of houses alongside this ancient, scientifically important woodland have been given permission to do so. This, in spite of the opposition by the local people, by the local Councils and by our Member of Parliament. Clearly, here there is another local conflict.



Simon de Montfort (1208-1265)



Tiddesley Wood



Scented shrubs for a winter garden

Winter gardens often get overlooked, seen as dormant spaces waiting for spring's revival. But with the right planting, your garden can be a sensory delight even in the coldest months.

Scented shrubs are the secret to creating a winter border that not only looks beautiful but also smells divine, which really lifts the spirits on grey days.

Winter-scented shrubs offer:

- Fragrance when little else is blooming
- Structure and evergreen interest
- Pollinator-friendly blooms for early insects

Here are my top four shrubs:

Daphne odora

The Queen of Winter Fragrance, this evergreen shrub produces clusters of pink or white flowers from late January into March, each one bursting with a sweet, citrusy scent that can fill the garden.

- Best for: Part-shade, sheltered spots with well-drained soil
- Height: Up to 1.5m



- Tip: Avoid moving it once planted - daphnes dislike disturbance
- Pair it with hellebores or snowdrops for a soft, romantic look. Its glossy leaves and compact habit make it ideal for borders near entrances or patios.

Sarcococca confusa

Often called 'sweet box' or 'Christmas box', it is a compact evergreen shrub with tiny creamy-white flowers that bloom from December to February.

Though the flowers are insignificant, the scent is intensely sweet and lovely.

- Best for: Shady areas, underplanting larger shrubs or trees
 - Height: 60cm to 2m, depending on variety
 - Varieties to try: 'Purple Stem' for added colour, or 'Dragon Gate' with red berries.
- Its low-maintenance nature and tolerance for shade make it perfect for tricky corners or north-facing borders.



Lonicera fragrantissima (Winter Honeysuckle)

Unlike its climbing cousins, this bushy honeysuckle shrub offers creamy-white flowers with a lemony scent from January onwards. It's easy to grow and is tolerant of most conditions.

- Best for: Informal borders or near seating areas
 - Height: 1.5–2m
 - Bonus: Attracts early pollinators.
- Its relaxed habit makes it ideal for cottage-style gardens and wildlife-friendly spaces.

Edgeworthia chrysantha (Paper Bush)

A close relative of daphne, Edgeworthia produces clusters of tubular yellow flowers with a rich, sweet scent in late winter, around February to April. It's deciduous and has bare stems and silvery buds, which add winter sculptural interest.

- Best for: Sheltered, sunny spots with moist, well-drained soil
- Height: 1.5–2m



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- Tip: Mulch well in autumn to protect roots. They can tolerate temperatures down to -5°C, but in colder areas it is best to plant them against a sunny, south-facing wall.

Edgeworthia is a showstopper and ideal for gardeners who love something a little different.

Designing Your Winter Scent Border

- Layer heights: Use taller shrubs like witch hazel at the back, with compact varieties like sweet box at the front.
- Mix evergreen and deciduous: For year-round structure and seasonal interest.
- Add underplanting: Hellebores, snowdrops, seasonal bedding plants, such as pansies and cyclamen, complement scented shrubs beautifully.

December gardening tips

Early in the month

Overgrown deciduous hedges can be cut back hard while they are still dormant. Put netting over winter greens to keep pigeons off. Alternatively, stretch hazard warning tape across the crop in a zig-zag formation, fixing it to bamboo canes. New deciduous hedges can be planted now. It is best to cut the new plants back hard after planting. Avoid getting greenhouse plants too wet, as they are much better kept on the dry side over the winter.

Feed flowering houseplants weekly using a liquid fertiliser. Avoid walking on frozen lawns, as this damages the grass, leaving brown footprints until the spring. Float a rubber ball, or a chunk of polystyrene, in your pool to prevent it from freezing over completely, or buy a pool heater. Put your sawn-off Christmas tree in a stand which holds water, as this aids needle retention.

Mid December

Feed garden birds and make sure that water is also readily available. Frost and wind can loosen newly-planted shrubs and trees. Check and re-firm them. Alpines and other seeds needing a cool period in order to germinate can be sown now. Whitloof chicory roots can be dug up, potted and brought into the warmth and darkness in order to produce "chicons". Geranium seeds can be sown now, if you have suitable conditions to grow them in. Go through the greenhouse every week and dispose of dead leaves and flowers. Repair fences while climbing plants are still dormant. Plant new trees and shrubs when weather conditions are favourable. Try to hoe off weeds whenever you see them, as this will pay dividends later. Grow some sprouting seeds in jam jars for an easy, nutritious addition to meals. Cut some berried holly

Reg Moule BBC Hereford & Worcester

for house decoration and keep it in a bucket in a cold greenhouse to prevent birds from taking the berries. Take root cuttings from herbaceous plants like phlox, oriental poppies, and Japanese anemones. Ventilate the greenhouse on sunny days to reduce the risk of fungal infections.

Later in December

Winter is a good time to plan next year's crops and ornamental displays. Prune free-standing apple and pear trees. Prune greenhouse grapes when all the leaves have fallen, cutting back the side shoots to one bud long. Christmas pot plants – remember Cyclamen and Azaleas like it cool, Poinsettias need more warmth. Clean pots, seed trays and service tools ready for the new season's work. Cover a sheltered area of your vegetable garden with clear polythene to warm it up for early spring sowings. Sow onions suitable



for exhibition, like Robinson's Mammoth or Kelsae, in a heated greenhouse. Winter wash dormant fruit trees, using Vitax Winter Tree Wash, or Growing Success Winter Tree Wash, for a clean start next spring. Start winter digging on the vegetable garden but keep off very wet soil – it ruins the structure. If snow is expected, encircle vulnerable conifers with hoops of wire to hold branches in place that could, otherwise, be bent outwards by heavy falls.



Ailsa's Kitchen

Ailsa Craddock

We live in the country where, like it or not, there is a lot of shooting this time of the year. If given any game birds, remember to respect them as free range, organic pieces of meat who have at least flown and been part of the countryside for most of their lives. Cook the meat to the best of your ability and use all of it.

Pheasant Casserole with apples

25g butter

2 tablespoon sunflower oil

Salt and pepper

6 pheasant breasts, skinned
(use the carcass to make stock with some carrots, onions and water)

2 onions, thinly sliced

150ml apple juice (cloudy is best)

300 ml game stock – see above

but you can also use a cube
2 dessert apples, peeled and cut into wedges

2 tablespoon double cream

1 tablespoon lemon juice

Heat half the butter and all the oil in a non-stick frying pan until very hot. Season the pheasant breasts and fry them in the hot pan until golden. Set aside. Heat the remaining butter in the unwashed pan and fry the onions until tender – about 10 minutes. Sprinkle in the flour and gradually blend in the apple juice and stock. Bring to the boil stirring and add apples

and breasts. Cover and simmer over a low heat for about 12 minutes until the pheasant is just cooked through. Do not over cook! Stir in the double cream and lemon juice and serve with mashed or baked potatoes and a green vegetable.

Pheasant Stroganoff

Another quick and delicious way of using pheasant breasts!

4 pheasant breasts, sliced

1 shallot, finely chopped

2 grated cloves of garlic

6 – 8 chopped mushrooms

200ml double cream

2 teaspoons paprika

4 cornichons, finely chopped

1 tablespoon capers, finely chopped

1 teaspoon grained mustard

Juice of 1 lemon

Salt and pepper

Handful of parsley, finely chopped

Pasta or rice to serve

Fry the pheasant strips on a high heat until they have a



good colour. Put aside. Gently fry the shallot and garlic until soft, add mushrooms, then the cream, mustard and paprika and put the pheasant strips back in. Turn up the heat until they are simmering and the pheasant almost cooked through (you

want it to be little pink or it will taste dry). Add the cornichons, capers and lemon juice, seasoning and parsley.

Above:

Pheasant Casserole with apples

Below:

Pheasant Stroganoff



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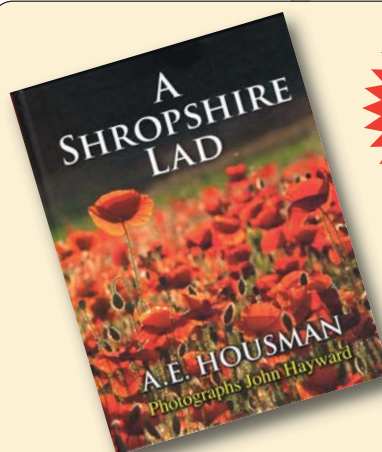
'I am as light as a feather, I am as happy as an angel, I am as merry as a schoolboy.

I am as giddy as a drunken man.

A merry Christmas to everybody!

A happy New Year to all the world!

Charles Dickens, 'A Christmas Carol' (1843)



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Village Life

Life in the village has now definitely moved into winter mode after the battering from Storm Claudia. Mercifully, I believe there was very little damage in our neighbourhood, though a very well-established creeper outside my house was dislodged by the change of wind direction and fell unceremoniously across the dining room window and onto the driveway. This has left me with a marathon pruning session and the unenviable disposal task, including numerous trips to the greenbin at the Lower Moor recycling centre. Thank goodness for the extra oomph provided by ratchet-action loppers for dealing with chunky ivy and pyracantha stems! Counting blessings, I'll spend less time up a ladder in future pruning the higher growth - hardly an annual highlight! Thankfully, we have been spared the flooding that has hit parts of Herefordshire and Monmouthshire so badly after the storm. What heartbreaking news coverage of shattered homes and businesses, many suffering repeat events. We have more than our fair share

of flood exposures in this part of the world, so let's hope there aren't any further episodes this winter. Bizarrely, at the same time, we're being told that we're probably heading for a drought next year unless we soon have significantly more rain - 'Topsy-Turvy' hardly covers it! Our thoughts and prayers are with those hit by flooding, with the hope that they recover in time for Christmas and have no more episodes to deal with. Fickle weather still seems to be the theme. Just days after Claudia passed through, we had a few glorious sunny days, though with more than just a hint of chill in the air, and as I write this, we're forecast sleet among days of heavy rain. Having cleared frost from the windscreen for the first time, it seems we're definitely heading for a wintry spell. White Christmas, anyone? Activities in the village have certainly moved indoors, even as chainsaws and hedge cutters make their presence felt. I've mentioned our village hub/pub before, and there has been no lack of fun on offer. 'Sip and Paint' afternoons

are held, and I took the brave step out of my comfort zone and into the unknown to join one of these sessions during November. Relaxing and mindful - well, eventually, but only after the panic of not knowing what on earth I was doing subsided. Huge relief when the finished product looked pretty good among the other efforts, and I've signed up for the next session in the hope the initial blind panic won't be repeated. We've also had a baby shower for an arrival due just after Christmas, a birthday party (for the landlady), and international rugby screenings. The golf society has continued to play in defiance of the weather, though I suspect this is largely accounted for by the post-round refreshments and curry supper! Now, by the time you're likely to be reading this, we'll be cantering towards Christmas. I always love seeing the annual display of lights that adorn many of our houses in the village. We may not have street lights, but through December we've no need for them. We'll also have a Christmas sing-along



around the village Christmas tree with a chance to enjoy mince pies and maybe a warming glass of mulled wine - but mostly we'll be enjoying meeting up with friends and neighbours to share the festivities and spread good will. Now, any chance of snow to give us the ultimate Christmas cheer? Merry Christmas, everyone!



Curiosity: A Shift That Can Change Everything

Emily Papimik

Curiosity is one of the simplest yet most powerful shifts we can make in any moment. It changes how we see, how we feel, and how we respond. When something feels uncomfortable - an emotion, a physical sensation, or a thought - our natural tendency is to judge or resist it. We tighten, we analyse, or we try to make it go away. But when we replace judgment with curiosity, everything softens. Curiosity invites us to notice rather than fix. Instead of

asking, "What's wrong with me?", we begin to ask, "What's happening for me right now?" That simple reframe turns self-criticism into self-understanding. By becoming curious, we also slow time down. Curiosity creates a small pause between stimulus and response - the space where choice lives. Within that space, we can breathe, observe, and choose to respond with more awareness, compassion, and care. Curiosity also encourages openness. It helps us lean

towards experience instead of away from it - even when that experience feels challenging. It invites discovery, movement, and growth, where before there might have been fear or resistance. When we bring curiosity to our inner world, we start to experience life with more lightness. We stop needing to have all the answers and begin to explore instead. Next time you notice discomfort, pause and ask yourself: What might this be showing me? You may find



that curiosity itself is a form of healing. One gentle question at a time.

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Romy's Uni Life

Romy Kemp *Liverpool University*



Getting Cold

The temperature in Liverpool has suddenly dropped. I always forget how bitter and windy it can be here, as it is a little warmer back in Worcestershire. I really hope it snows this year. I don't recall there being snow in Liverpool last year, but there was in my first year, so I'm hoping for some this Christmas.

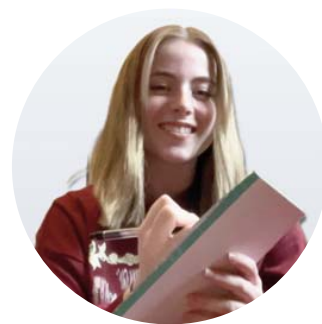


Even my thickest coats don't stop the cold from getting in, so I've decided that scarves might be the way to go: tuck them in and vacuum all the warmth in. I wear scarves every year, but I've decided to buy more, as well as a hat.

My birthday was on the 17th November, so I went home for the weekend to spend time with my family and friends. My dad made me a cake and my mum set up the house all celebratory. I just turned 21 and it was nice to get a massive 21 balloon! The cake was delicious and I took half of it back to university with me: I thought it seemed fair for my family to keep the other half at home. I saw my friend whilst I was at home. It was nice to catch up. We talk every week, but it's different to meet up in person. It is always great to go home so that I can see my pets, and I've already bought my dog a toy for Christmas, but I tend to struggle a bit more as to what to get my bird for Christmas. I'll make them both some sort of fruit salad. I will definitely get my bird a toy too, I just don't know which one because he is easily spooked. I've been trying to get a head

start on my Christmas shopping and I'd say I'm about 50% done with it. Liverpool has been pretty successful for buying presents, which is quite unusual because I never seem to find much. Sometimes it is hard to know what to get people when you're away from home for months at a time, but eventually you get used to it. By connecting the dots and sometimes even asking what people want, it saves everyone some time. It is shocking how much people change when you're at university, but then again, you are changing so much too.

Assignments this month have really been taking over my life. I've never had such difficulty writing an essay. I'm hoping that all my hard work is rewarded with an amazing grade because that essay nearly crushed me.



I really enjoy all of the university work that I do, but third year has been really tough compared to last year. All the reading that I do is super interesting, and I have really been captivated by my modules this semester, but it has been hard to stay on top of it all, as well as everything else that has to be done.



Hazards of Christmas



Christmas is an exciting time of year for us all with many changes throughout the home. This can bring challenges in terms of keeping our pets safe through the festive season. Below are some of the top hazards of Christmas to be aware of for our pets.

- **Chocolate** – this is toxic to dogs and cats. Take particular care with darker varieties of chocolate as these are stronger in the toxic component
- **Raisins** – contained in so many Christmas treats but sadly toxic for dogs and cats
- **Tinsel and ribbons** – particularly tempting for cats to play with. If consumed this can cause life threatening blockages
- **Bones** – cooked bones are brittle and can splinter. This can cause problems with the digestive tract. Stick to lean cooked meat as a special treat for your pets.
- **Christmas plants** – such as holly, ivy and mistletoe can all cause vomiting so are best kept out of reach
- **Sweeteners** – most are non-toxic but xylitol causes a very low blood sugar in dogs which can be life threatening. Look out for and avoid xylitol containing products
- **Rock salt (grit)** – This is best rinsed off pets feet if they walk in it to avoid over consumption
- **Anti-freeze** – Ethylene glycol is highly toxic to cats and tastes sweet so they are attracted to it. Be very careful when using this and avoid spills

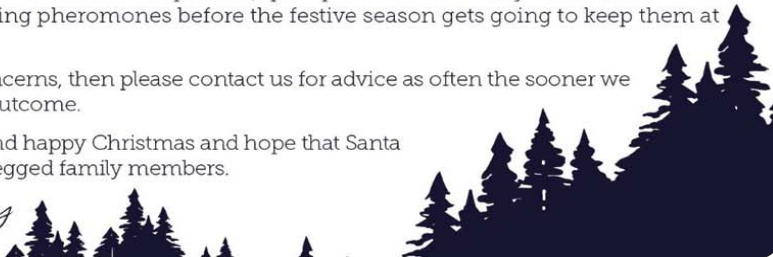
With so many decorations going up and visitors coming and going Christmas can also be a stressful time for pets. Remember to keep a safe, quiet place available they can retreat to and think about using calming pheromones before the festive season gets going to keep them at their happiest.

If you ever have any concerns, then please contact us for advice as often the sooner we can help the better the outcome.

We wish you all a safe and happy Christmas and hope that Santa Paws visits all the four-legged family members.

Merry Christmas *Amy*

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Gregory's World!

Maine-iacs

"Okay, guys, are you ready for an inside scoop?"

That's Noel. He was our tour guide at the Ben and Jerry's Factory in Waterbury, Vermont. It was 5pm and our group consisted entirely of adults, but he had a cartoonish grin on his face and was talking to us as if we were in an episode of *Barney & Friends*. He cupped a hand to his ear.

"I can't hear you!"

"... Yeah ..." Tough crowd.

"Then let's get a mooooo-ve on!"

He threw his head back and actually moaned. "I'm sorry, I really am milking this one, aren't I? No photos for this part of the tour, I'm afraid – we don't want spies from Häagen-Dazs discovering our secrets."

Noel's grin was present, but the lights in his eyes weren't. I suppose that's what happens when you live your life exposed to manic visiting school groups and hallucinogenic levels of cookie dough. I hoped he was alright in there.

After tasting a few 'freebies' along the tour (a pot of cookie dough pieces and an exclusive 'ultraviolet' ice cream flavour), I braced myself for the gift shop. I ordered an 'Americone Dream' and asked for a large, forgetting for a second which country I was in. The girl handed me what

was basically an entire tub of Ben and Jerry's, tipped into a waffle cone the size of an Olympic torch. Dinner sorted. We ate our massive ice creams overlooking the mountains of Vermont, deep green and glazed with gold.

Then it was time for another inside scoop: the flavour graveyard. We could basically see it from where we were, but the Americone must've been getting to me, because I suggested we drive to it. (I am ashamed to this day.) The graveyard was an interesting touch. Mock tombstones displayed B&J's flavours that were either never successful or had to call it a day. 'Vermonty Python' and 'Cool Britannia' sounded appetising, but 'Wavy Gravy' and 'Schweddy Balls'? Not so much. For the record, though unbeknownst to me and Natdog at the time, we actually visited the factory at the end of an era. Exactly one week later, after forty-seven years in the business, Jerry left the company. Who knows? Now, there's probably a mock tombstone in the graveyard just for him.

From there, we got back inside our Volkswagen Atlas, 'Marylou', and back onto the open road towards New Hampshire, a mountainous state of rocky gorges and covered bridges, blueberry

Gregory Sidaway

muffins and pumpkin pies.

In Maine, the place names read like a best-of compilation of Europe: 'East Sweden', 'Norway', 'South Paris', 'Oxford'. Maine's speed limit signs are the only ones I really had to stick to. The roads climbed and plummeted past pine and pool. It was like driving along the tail of a tarmac serpent that was trying to flick us off. Only in America can you drive along a byway deep in the wild, and then be suddenly sprung upon by a huge grocery store with a sign outside advertising: 'GUNS – WEDDING DRESSES – COLD BEERS'. I mean, what an afternoon me and Natdog could have had in there!

Strangely enough, B&J's wasn't our only ice creamy immersion into New England culture. On our last night, we headed to Portsmouth, New Hampshire, to take in a scenic waterfront, only to find it had already been taken by a blockade of expensive restaurants. We were passing Annabelle's Natural Ice Cream when their sign caught my eye. It listed 'Graham' as one of their flavours. Graham happens to be my Grandad's name (and my middle name), and I was baffled and fascinated by what on earth Annabelle's thought a 'Graham' tasted of. Here's an inside scoop! The sign actually referred to the popular U.S. flavour 'Graham



Central Station', named after the graham cracker – a cinnamon or honey-based sweet treat.

On the shop wall was a chalkboard with 'Where have you come from?' written at the top. There were mostly U.S. place names on the board. I spotted 'Worcester, MA', so I took the chalk and, underneath it, scribbled: 'Worcester, UK'. It felt a bit like signing off. There. We'd done it. The America I experienced was loud and beautiful, unapologetic and proud, and to live a fortnight on its open roads was nothing less than a dream.

Towards the end of our trip, Natdog made a very good point. This country was so big, so overwhelmingly busy or mesmerisingly empty, that to explore it for too long would soon become a lonely experience if you didn't have a buddy to share the driving, the laughs and the brownies with. I'd always been okay though. I was very lucky to have my buddy, fellow reader – but don't tell him that.

Evie's Teenage Focus



As the year draws to an end, I'm reminded of why I hate the lead-up to our Winter Holidays.

Please allow me to

let you in on the secret as to why. Put yourself in my shoes, imagine you're a University student, I'm sure many of you have been there. Every day is getting colder, you've pulled out your thick winter coat, scarf and gloves from wherever you store them, ready for your 8:30 am walk up to campus. There's a crisp bite in the air, the sun's only just come up, but by the time you make it all the way to the top of that dreaded hill, as well as the five flights of stairs to get to your first lecture hall, you

are now at least somewhat warm. You get through your first lecture and



seminar by 12 o'clock. You nip to the university Café, get a coffee, get a snack and hunker down somewhere warm with some friends - and I'm being completely transparent with you here, it's only an hour break we get - we are not doing any work in this hour. Sorry, Mum. But no, we don't do work; we have a bit of a gossip, have a little natter, before making our way to our second module lecture of the day. Luckily, it is my favourite module of the semester, and so it goes by quickly and easily, and before you know it, it's 4 o'clock and we are bundling back up to leave. Yet here is where my problem lies. We walk out of our building in herds, rushing to get to wherever we need to be next. Some are going home, some are going to the shops to get their bits and bobs. Or, like me, a lone person, I stand gaping at the now darkening sky. I go to my lectures in the dark, and now, as I leave,

I am once again left in the dark. This could be construed as a dark and ironic metaphor, but I'm currently choosing to ignore that. My day has started and ended, and all I have achieved is writing notes and adding an additional comment in a lecture theatre. Now, whilst I do recognise this as an accomplishment during the colder winter months, my day is still nowhere near being over. This is where problem two starts to become an issue. With the lead-up to the winter break, assignments come in hard and fast. I learnt it last year and it has remained true. The sun goes up. I have my lectures. The sun goes down. And somehow I still need to write and complete another five assignments. Luckily, they are not all writing assignments this year. Whilst I do have a 2000 and 3000 (luckily broken into two parts) word essay to complete, I do have two other formats to hand in. One is a video assignment, and the other

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is to design a website based on the first part of our assignment, which we handed in last month. But either way, I'm powering through, and the finish line is in sight. Soon, I'll be home with family and no assignments looming over me!

On another note, I'm wishing all who celebrate a very Merry Christmas, and I'll write to you all in the New Year! Until next year! Toodles!





Christmas Short Story Competition Winner! 'A Christmas Walk'

By Zoey Baker

Zoey Baker's entry takes the winning spot for its goosebump-inducing atmosphere and evocative descriptions of a walk through the snow, as well as its clever twist of perspective at the end.

Merry Christmas to all!

This is new. At this time of year, a walk usually consists of crispy leaves underfoot, or more likely, a sliver of ice over puddles. But this evening, I crunch and crackle, the white puffs of snow flattening as I leave home for the first time today. The air is still, great waves of nothing until I listen carefully enough to pick out a few signs of life. It must be teatime by now.

Though the sky is dark, small specks of stars glitter in a sea of navy blue. I can hear a buzz, not a fly but an electric fizz of fairy lights cascading down from the guttering of a house, flashing blue then red then green and round they go again. Staring at

them makes my eyes go blurry, so I carry on with my walk. A door creaks open and the scampering of feet can be heard, but not seen, behind a wooden fence. A dog darts to a slim gap at the bottom of the gate, rough, wet nose poking out to sniff out food, or other dogs, or me? I freeze, confident that it can't get to me but bracing myself for the inevitable barking. It doesn't come. He quickly loses interest, hurrying away whilst his owner stands shivering in the cold, a mug of freshly roasted coffee steaming in his hands. He gives me a quizzical look as I walk past. I cross the road at the end of the street, intending to turn

back the way I came. It will be a short stroll tonight. As my family readies the house for Christmas Day, the presents will be being tucked underneath the tree, ready for opening in the morning, the turkey will be defrosting in the fridge, and the children will probably be arguing over which festive film to put on tonight before bed. My tummy makes a grumbling sound at the thought of tomorrow's dinner. The best part of the day, in my opinion. A child squeals in excitement to my right. Her mother calls for them to come back inside the house, it's freezing! The little girl has one wellington boot on, her red coat haphazardly thrown over her shoulders, bobble hat askew on her head. Her mother is smiling as she watches her daughter pick up the snow and

throw it in the air, creating a small snowfall. She's standing at the door when I arrive, rattling my bowl of biscuits. I've made it back home. "There you are! Get back inside, it's too cold to be out here tonight." I hop up onto the front doorstep, curling around her leg as she reaches down to scratch my neck. "They've left a space for you on the sofa, kitty. The film will be starting soon," she says, and I do as I'm told. It's a beautiful night outside, but I'd much rather be in the warmth of my family this Christmas.



A letter (intercepted) from a Mum to Santa



Dear Santa,
I think I have been a good Mum all year and ask you to consider my following Christmas wish list as a reward for my efforts.

I'm sitting here, in my garage, next to the tumble dryer, writing my request on an old cereal packet with my son's red crayon. It's a long list, so it may be best delivered over the next fifteen to sixteen years or so.

1) I'd like my waist back. I lost it in the last pregnancy. It was considered a good one.

2) Can I have a pair of legs that don't ache? In any colour - but not purple, I already have these.
3) Reduced Bingo Wings, but no diminution in the strength of my arms, so I can pick up a screaming toddler in the sweetie aisle at the supermarket.
4) I could use a talking 'Daughter Doll' that says, "Yes, Mummy!" to boost my parental confidence, two kids that don't fight, along with a potty-trained toddler, and a pair of jeans for me that will zip up all the way without the use of power tools.
5) I would also find a recording of Tibetan monks chanting, "Don't eat in the living room." and "Stop hitting your sister." My voice seems just out of their range and can only be heard by the dog (who's deaf).

6) Please don't forget the Travelling Play-Doh Kit. We are having New Year at the in-laws. It comes in fluorescent colours and is guaranteed to crumble up on any carpet, making the in-laws' house seem just like mine. This is essential.
7) If it's too late for all these products, I'd settle for enough time to brush my teeth and comb my hair in the same morning or at least on the same day. I'd also like to eat all my food warmer than room temperature. Hot coffee, turned cold, I'm almost used to, but it would be nice.
8) Thinking of food, can you supply me with a tasty alternative to Brussel Sprouts that my kids would take to? Alternatively, perhaps you could declare Ketchup to be a vegetable.

It will clear my guilt complex immensely.

Well, Santa, the tumble dryer is coming to the end of its cycle, and my son has spotted my feet under the garage door. I think he wants his red crayon back. Have a safe journey. Yours always, Mum
P.S. One more thing: you can cancel all my requests if you can keep my children young enough to still believe in Father Christmas.

Editor's comment: Santa, take note. Mums certainly do deserve all they desire. Thank goodness for Mums, especially at Christmas time. Merry Christmas!

Richard Catford

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Adventure Woods at Christmas

A Children's Story

Poppy's Rescue

by Peter Moore

(Broadway Author)

Chapter One

Christmas was arriving again at Adventure Woods, which had seen some exciting events and some unwanted happenings. The weather was cold and frosty, but so far, there was no snow, unlike last year. Some animals were getting excited for the upcoming time of year. But, as you know with some of our furry friends, their detective skills are sometimes needed and this Christmas, this will be their most important job. As you read on, our friends will meet up with a special Elf who works for Santa. But this Elf has lost an incredibly special present for a sick little girl who has asked for this present for a long time. Did the Elf lose the present, or was it stolen? Read on and find out if it is a happy conclusion.

On this frosty night, Badger, Foxy, and Ron the owl were sitting in their special place by the ice-covered lake just on the edge of the woods. "I am bored," said Badger.

"How can you be bored? It makes a change for us to have some peace and quiet. All we seem to have done lately is rescue other animals out of situations," said Foxy.

"I know, but I would like some kind of adventure. It keeps you and your mind active. Another small adventure would be nice," replied Badger. "I agree with Badger. Since our last rescue, life has been a little too quiet. All this time with Doris (Ron's sister) is hurting my ears as she does not stop talking," said Ron.

"I don't really have that problem now my mother is back. Vivien (Mrs Fox) is always talking to her," said Foxy.

"How about Hilda (Mrs Badger)? Is she a chatterbox?" asked Ron.

"No, not really," replied Badger.

"If you're bored, Badger, why don't we go down to the village and see what the humans are up to?" asked Ron.

"What a great idea! You up for it, Foxy?"

"Why not? I think we deserve a bit of fun."

The three friends made their way to the village, but they had to pass the hunting stables and the hunts dogs, so they had to



pass as quietly as possible. On the way, Ron spotted something sitting up against a fence post in the field. Foxy walked over to it and sniffed it and then gave it a poke with his paws.

"Must be a children's toy," said Foxy.

"Who are you calling a toy? You're a big furry fox!" yelled an little doll-like creature who was wearing green trousers and a striped jumper. The three friends jumped back in amazement. "It talks!" cried Foxy.

"Yes, I talk. I am a very special Elf, actually. I am Chief Elf who is very close to Santa."

"Santa?" asked Badger.

"Santa is really called Father Christmas, who makes magical things happen all over the world," replied the Elf.

"He sounds like an amazing person," said Badger.

"He is, but my furry friends, I have a big problem."

"Problems seem to be our thing," said Ron.

"So, what type of problem do you have?" asked Foxy.

"There is a sick little girl in the village who all she wants is a small puppy from Santa. The problem is that Poppy the puppy has gone missing. She was last seen near the village," said the Elf.

"How could she go missing? Was she not kept somewhere safe?" questioned Ron.

"One of the other elves left a door open, so she must have walked out and got lost. It is Christmas Eve tomorrow. We need to find her before Santa delivers his presents," said the Elf, who was starting to get upset.

"Mr Elf, we will find Poppy and that sick little girl will have her new puppy. It is Christmas, and wishes can come true. Foxy, Ron, it looks like we have another rescue," said Badger.

"Here we go again, why can't we be like normal animals and have a quiet life?" said Foxy.

"Come on, Foxy, you know you love danger and excitement in our adventures," Ron butted in.

"We need a plan, and I think I have one," said Badger.

"All ready? That was quick thinking of you," replied Foxy.

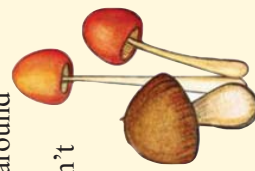
"We need as much help as we can get. We need eyes everywhere.

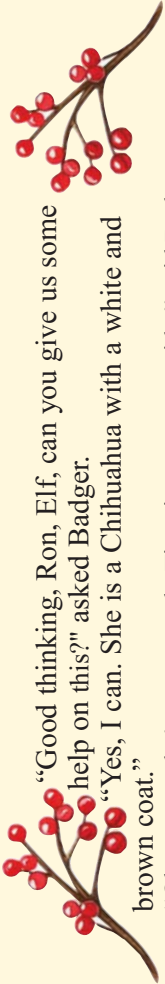
Ron, can you get your feathered friends to keep a lookout all around the area?" asked Badger.

"Yes, of course, but there is one important issue which we don't know," said Ron.

"What is that?" asked Badger.

"What type of puppy are we looking for and what colour is she? This would be very helpful," replied Ron.





"Good thinking, Ron, Elf, can you give us some help on this?" asked Badger.

"Yes, I can. She is a Chihuahua with a white and brown coat."

"Okay, guys, let's get to work. Time is not on our side," said Badger.

Chapter Two

Ron made his way back to his home to find Doris, his sister, who is an owl.

"Doris, are you at home?" Ron called out.

"Hello, Ron, you sound out of breath. Is everything okay?" she asked.

"Not really, Doris, but listen very carefully."

As Ron explained to Doris, she looked very intent to take in all the information he gave her.

"I will go and round up the Fox and Badger families and meet you by the paddock."

"On your way, can you alert as many other owls as possible and birds to keep their eyes peeled? The more help, the better. I am going back to Badger and Foxy."

With that, Ron and Doris flew off in their different directions.

Meanwhile, back at the paddock, Elf asked: "What's the plan, Badger?"

"I think we should go down into the village and see if we can discover any clues as to where Poppy may have gone."

"I think we should stay here for a few more minutes until more help comes along," interrupted Foxy.

"Why? I think we should go now," said Elf.

"I am with Foxy on this, Elf. We need more than just us three, and Ron is not back yet. Give it a little while longer," replied Badger.

Within a few minutes, Ron had come back. A brief time after that, in the distance, you could see the Fox family running as fast as they could, with the Badger family bringing up the rear, lumbering along. Bonnie and Junior ran up to their father and greeted him with a nuzzle as they always do.

"Hello, kids. Hope you have been keeping out of trouble."

"Yes, Dad, we have both been on our best behaviour," said Bonnie.

"Excuse me, but can we now please get on? We are running out of time," requested the Elf.

The Fox and Badger families looked at each other in shock.

"Don't ask. We will explain everything later," said Foxy.

Badger cleared his throat before he started.

"For those who have turned up, which is now the deer, otters, and rabbits, I thank you. The plan is that Elf, Foxy, Owl, and I will go into the village from the right. Fox and Badger families will go left



into the village. I would like the rest of you (which must be quite a few) to watch the woods and form a semicircle around the village, so we should have eyes in most places. We also have eyes in the sky from our feathered friends."

"I would like to have my mother with us as she is the most experienced hunter among us, if that is okay with you, Vivien?" asked Foxy.

"That is fine with me, Foxy."

"Up for the challenge, Mum?"

"Yes, son, I am. Let's go hunting and get a little girl her present," Mum said.

With the plan in motion, everyone knew their role and went on their way to find Poppy. On the way, Badger and his group stopped near the church. They could hear music coming from outside. As they stopped to listen, they could see a large crowd of people standing around in a large group, wrapped up in coats and scarves, and the children had bobble hats and gloves on, as it was a very chilly night. With every word spoken or sung, you could see their steaming breath rising into the clear night sky.

"That music sounds wonderful and quite relaxing," said Foxy.

"They are called Christmas Carols, and the people who sing them are Carol singers," replied Elf.

Foxy was getting a little closer, having a good look around. The church was lit up by an exceptionally large Christmas tree, which made the old church stand tall and proud. And so, it should! It had stood in the village for around five hundred years.

"So, Elf, are all these people called Carol, or is it just the females?" asked Foxy.

Elf looked at Badger in a weird way. "Is he serious or joking?"

"Oh, he is serious, Foxy has a strange sense of humour which we have got used to," replied Badger.

"Come on! Let's go! This is our chance to have a good scout around while some of the humans are busy," said Gwen (mother fox).

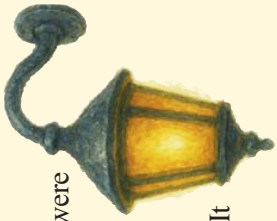
Bonnie and Junior persuaded their mother to let them go off on their own to look.

"Okay, you two. Any sign of trouble, you come back to me," said their mum.

"Yes, Mother, we promise," said Junior.

As the two foxes walked through the village, managing to stay out of eyesight, they were amazed at how beautiful it looked. The main high street had shops and cafes that were bustling with people going about





shopping and getting something to eat and drink. Children were laughing with their parents or in small groups with their friends. The high street was lined with tall trees on either side of the road, bright lights hanging from the branches. The shops and cafes had lights and decorations in their windows, and over all of this was a light covering of frost. It would have been better if it were snowing.

"This looks so wonderful. Junior, if only it were like this every day," said Bonnie.

"I agree, but I don't think life is that easy," remarked Junior.

As the foxes walked down a dimly lit alley at the back of the main village pub, they could hear a faint whimpering coming from behind some dustbins. They carefully approached the bins, but suddenly a door at the back of the pub opened and the foxes came face to face with a very noisy man.

"Get out of here, you annoying foxes. Go and scavenge elsewhere!" yelled the man at the top of his voice.

This made Bonnie and Junior run back towards the place where they last saw their mother.

"Hey, you two, what's the rush for?" asked their mother.

"A man from inside the building came out and spooked us," replied Bonnie. "But, Mother, we heard a whimpering from behind the dust bins down an alley, could you come and look?"

"Where is the alley?" asked Mrs Badger.

"It is behind the restaurant," Bonnie said.

"Okay, let's go," replied their mother.

The foxes and Mrs Badger made the journey back to the restaurant to see if they could find anything behind the bins. Mrs Fox and Mrs Badger walked down the dimly lit alley, being careful not to be seen. Mrs Badger walked to the dust bins as she also heard the whimpering. She looked behind, and what she saw was a small puppy shaking with the cold and being very scared. She looked at the puppy, and it looked like the description of Poppy ...

"Hello, little one, don't be afraid. I'm Hilda. I'm here with Vivien."

"Hello, my name is Poppy, and I am lost and afraid."

"How did you get here?" asked Vivien. "I do not know. I was in a big building. The elves there were nice and caring, but I found an open door, so I walked out. When I turned round to go back, the door was shut, so I just walked, and I ended up here."

"I think we know where you are going to be, and you will be very happy there," remarked Vivien.



Chapter Three

Bonnie and Junior were pleased to see their mother and Mrs Badger coming along with Poppy in between them.

"Oh, Mum, she is so cute," exclaimed Bonnie.

"Yes, she is, but very tired and hungry, so I think we should take her to the old rickety barn by the paddock. No one goes there, so we should be safe. Could you two find your father and Badger and tell them where we will be?"

"Yes, we will go now, but I am not sure where to find him," said Junior. Before anyone could say anything else, Ron and Doris came flying down out of the night sky.

"Hello, you two! How glad we are to see you," said Hilda.

"Snowy owl, who lives not far from here, had you all in his eyesight most of the night, so he came and found me, and we both came to see what we could do," said Ron.

"Thank him when you see him, please, Ron," said Vivien.

"So, what is the plan? The village is still remarkably busy, so we must keep to the shadows as much as possible," said Junior.

"Shame we have to go to the village," replied Bonnie.

"I know, but we must get Poppy to the barn. Ron, can you go back to the others and tell them to meet us at the rickety barn?" asked Vivien. "I will do that now, and you all take care. See you soon!" replied Ron as he flew off.

Chapter Four

After a long walk to the barn, everyone was feeling tired but kept on going. Poppy was hitching a ride on Junior's back as her little legs could not keep up. They all got safely to the barn, where Poppy was taken inside to rest and have some food, which had been stored away a couple of nights ago. After a brief time, Badger, Foxy (who was carrying Elf on his back) and Ron turned up at the barn. Word had gone out that the puppy was found, and most of the animals who had joined in the hunt for Poppy were outside waiting to see her.

"Well, for such a small puppy, you have given us the run-around, young lady," said Badger as he greeted her with a Badger-like hug.

"Thank you, Mr Badger, and to your families who found me."

"Poppy, I think it is time we went outside to thank everyone who helped find you, then we must be on our way, as it is Christmas Eve tomorrow," said Elf.

With all the animals waiting outside, Elf and Poppy came through the barn door. Elf stood on a wooden crate and cleared his throat.

"Poppy and I would like to thank everyone for your help tonight. If it were not for you, Poppy may not have been found. A special thank



you must go to Bonnie and Junior, who heard a whimpering, then went and told their mother and Mrs Badger, who then found Poppy. I have the letter from the little girl who wrote to Santa asking for a puppy for Christmas.

Dear Santa,

My name is Samantha, and I am seven years old. I am young, but I have always believed that you are an incredibly special person, and you live in Lapland making toys for every child, rich or poor, sick or healthy. I am extremely sick, as I was born with a heart condition which stops me from playing like other children. Hopefully, one day, I can run around and be a child like my friends. My Mummy and Daddy are very tired from looking after me, and I love them very much, so could you bring them a special present to say thank you? Then, if you could, can I have a little cute girl puppy (girls are prettier) so I can play and cuddle her?

I love you, Santa.

From Samantha xx

After the Elf read the letter, most of the animals went back into the woods to their homes. Badger, Fox, and the Owl families stayed at the hut.

"Thank you again, my furry friends. It is time for us to go. How can I repay you for all your help?" asked the Elf.

"Can we meet Santa?" asked Bonnie and Junior in unison.

"I will see what I can do, as you have been so helpful. Meet me here tomorrow night just before midnight," replied Elf.

As Christmas Eve passed, it was all quiet in Adventure Woods. When nighttime came, the three families met up at the rickety barn.

"It is very quiet and no sign of the Elf," remarked Badger.

"Perhaps he will not be here. It is a busy night for him," replied Ron.

"Do not be glum, my friends. I am here. I promised I would do what I could, and I have. Look skywards and watch."

And, as if by magic, flying in front of a full glowing Moon were reindeer pulling Santa's sleigh. They followed the sleigh down until it landed near the barn. Elf walked off to the sleigh, where a big man in a red suit and a long white beard sat.

"He looks so big," said Foxy, hiding behind the corner of the barn.

"Do not be afraid, my friends. You and your families and the other animals have helped save Christmas for a little girl," said Santa.

"You are real," said Bonnie.

"Yes, I am real if you believe in me."



"Where is Poppy?" asked Vivien.
"She is here!" called the Elf. "She has been bathed and groomed, and she has her own collar with a bow and her name on it."

Everyone crowded around the sleigh to see her. Poppy walked off the sleigh to say goodbye to her new friends and promised she would see them again in the future.

"If you go to the village where Poppy will be living, you can see her with her new family, where she will be loved forever," said Santa.

Santa got back in his sleigh, turned and waved and, as if by magic, he took off into the night sky again. The party of animals made their way to Poppy's new home but kept to the shadows so as not to be seen.

Daybreak was making its entrance with a glowing sun in the sky and big, fluffy snowflakes starting to fall.

This would be a Christmas day to remember!

"Shall we go?" asked Foxy.

"No, let's stay a little longer and see Poppy go inside," replied Badger.

"Look, there is a small cage with a big red bow on it on the

doorstep," said Vivien.

The door of the house opened. A man came out and read the card.

"Happy Christmas, Samantha. This little puppy is called Poppy, and she is looking for a new loving family to take care of her.

Merry Christmas - Love Santa."

Before the front door was closed, the little girl came to the door and picked Poppy up and gave her a huge hug. The smile on the girl's face could not be put into words. The magic of Christmas is real if you dream.

After that emotional event, the three best friends went off to their favourite place by the lake.

"Badger, I think we should keep this detective stuff going," said Foxy.

"I agree it gives you a good feeling inside when you help others," said Ron.

"I have been thinking of an ad we could do," said Foxy.

"Oh yeah, this should be interesting," remarked Badger.

"If you need help and no one can help, then don't call us as we do not have a phone, just ask for the Badger detective club who live in Adventure Woods," laughed a very funny Foxy.

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Christmas Jigsaws

Angela Johns

This is such a busy time of year for most and some of it has to be done in the dark. It won't be long until the shortest day of the year and we can be glad that the days will start to get incrementally longer.

Never mind that it will take a while until we can see the difference, we can still know that it is happening as we get on with our normal routine. It's not until it crosses with a regular moment in our day that we realise it. When it seems that the days are forever short and dark, one day we wake up at the usual time and it is a noticeably lighter morning. The Earth has been making its way around the Sun, whether we take notice or not.

But we are not there yet. If we wish it to rush towards us, we use up our time and attention, and so miss out on what is happening right now. What is happening for you right now? Is it planning and shopping? Is it fitting in the socials? Is it winding down for some well-earned time off? Maybe it's business as usual. Maybe you are taking each day at a time until you are on the other side of it (in which case I am sending you much love and healing).

I am doing a little of all the above, as well as that great winter evening pastime of doing a jigsaw. The challenge, the back ache, the satisfaction. There are so many sky pieces that you can't imagine you will work out where all those non-edge pieces will go! Then the odd two will click together, followed by several more. My sons will walk by, pick up a piece and slot it in. My partner



will say not to do any more without him! Any visitors that call in want to help. Gradually, over several days, the fuller picture emerges as the "one more piece before bed" turns into many. The busyness of the season sprinkled with quiet times of focus.

Thanks so much for reading this past year. I am always touched to hear when something has resonated with one of you. I wish you all good things in precious moments over the coming weeks. See you in 2026!

Angela is a qualified Emotional Therapeutic Counsellor registered with the FETC and NCPS.

Also a Reflexologist and Reiki Practitioner, she is passionate about her therapies and spends quality time with her clients to facilitate their wellbeing. You can find her at angelajohns.co.uk



Celebrating Christmas

Carol Draper

As I write this, the hype about what may or may not happen in the budget increases daily. When you read this article, the budget will have occurred, analyses will have happened, and decisions will have been taken about how badly or not we will all have been affected. I don't have a crystal ball, so that is all I am going to say.

On a lighter note, Christmas is coming, so no matter what Rachel pronounces, if you are an employer, what could you do to add a bit of sparkle for your employees that won't cost them in tax?

If you are holding and paying for a Christmas Party for your employees, to avoid it being treated as a benefit in kind and taxable on your employees, it needs to be an annual event and open to all your workers, even if they don't all attend.

There is also a financial limit. The total cost of the party, including room hire, food, drink, accommodation, transport and VAT, paid for by the employer should not exceed £150 per attendee.

If the total cost of any Christmas Party exceeds £150 per head, the value of the party is treated as a benefit in kind, and employees who attend will



be taxed on the total cost per head.

If you would rather give a present, then you can spend up to £50 including VAT, and as long as the present is not given as a reward for work completed and cannot readily be converted into cash, it is not taxable. Such gifts, known as trivial benefits, can be given at other points in the year too, for example, to celebrate birthdays, anniversaries or other holidays. If you want to give a Christmas Bonus, then irrespective of value or whether it is paid in cash, it is taxable and should be included in the payroll. Cheapest of all is showing your appreciation and saying thank you to your staff.

Have a very Merry Christmas!

*Carol Draper FCCA
Clifton-Crick Sharp and Co*

'A Psalm of Life'

Let us, then, be up and doing,
With a heart for any fate;
Still achieving, still pursuing,
Learn to labour and to wait.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

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Jazz News

Peter Farrall



'A great day in Harlem', taken in 1958

"It was a very good year," sang Francis Albert Sinatra. He didn't specify the year, but 2025 was a very good year for jazz in Pershore. Every monthly club session was full to capacity with fans enjoying a wide selection of jazz by the best of bands and artists from Britain and abroad. A generous helping of Dixieland and Traditional jazz with due deference to the earlier New Orleans bands, interspersed with "mainstream" (which is really a synonym for no specific style – just darned good jazz!), including a jazz/classical fusion and a fun-making band from Italy. Not forgetting another fabulous edition of "Pershore Jazz on a Summer's Day" at Number 8 in August.

The year is not quite finished because we have the Christmas special finale, featuring the Harlem Jazz Orchestra, on 10th

December. They will treat us to the music which came out of New York in the 1920s and 30s during the period known as the Harlem Renaissance, when Harlem shrugged off its seedy, run-down atmosphere and became the place to go in the vibrant new Jazz Age. A host of the leading jazz names of the time and indeed, later years, took up residence in the district, which is illustrated in the famous photograph in a 1958 edition of Esquire showing fifty-seven of the most celebrated musicians in jazz all together in front of a brownstone tenement, including the great Count Basie, who is sitting on the kerb with some of the local kids. Probably the best-known venue was the Cotton Club, which, disgracefully, admitted a white audience only until 1935. The Duke Ellington Orchestra was the resident band here for four years, and we can



The Harlem Jazz orchestra

hear music from this and other great bands of the period at December's Pershore Jazz Club session, played by the leading British musicians in the style. Two of the musicians from the Harlem Jazz Orchestra, Zoltan Sagi and Graham Woodhouse,

will be back in Pershore in January with the Hot Tamales, a hot spicy New Orleans band.

All at Pershore Jazz wish you a Merry Christmas and Happy and Prosperous New Year! Keep Jazzin'!

Harlem Jazz Orchestra Wednesday 10th December

Function Room, Pershore Football Club

Doors open at 7pm, Music at 8 pm

Admission £15 (to include a raffle ticket).

Advance booking and payment only

The Hot Tamales Wednesday 28th January

Admission £12.50 to include a raffle ticket.

Book in advance and pay on arrival

Visit www.pershorejazz.org.uk Tel: 01527 66692
find us on Facebook.



Music Matters

Christmas means different things to everyone, but there's nothing quite like a Christmas song to bring everyone together. So put on your favourite festive jumper, pour a glass of eggnog and enjoy some rocking, swinging, jazzy and soulful Christmas crackers.

For your playlist

Christmas Can-Can
by Straight No Chaser

A fun song about all the good things Christmas brings us. Shopping, Christmas trees covered in lights, Christmas jumpers and more.

Sure, Christmas starts earlier every year, but let's spread some fun and joy to everyone by doing the Christmas Can-Can!

Bells, Bows, Gifts Trees

by Todrick Hall

A hip hop Christmas song, why not? This one moves along, celebrating everything festive. "I don't dance, I prance / I don't sled, I slay" He hits all the important Christmas icons.

Christmas Unicorn

by Sufjan Stevens

Yup, even Sufjan has made a Christmas song, and this one's about a Unicorn in a gold uniform. Our unicorn may not be perfect, but he knows there are others out there like him, and he wants to find you. Maybe we should all be a Christmas Unicorn, just for one day a year.

Christmas photo

by John Williamson

Christmas in Australia is a bit different to how we enjoy it, but from the sounds of this song,

Steve Ide

it's just as much fun. Full of family, festive routines, cricket and people missing from the photo.

Frosti

by Bjork

Okay, so this one is cheating a bit, not really a Christmas song, but she does come from Iceland (nearly Santa's home) and it's called Frosti, so that counts too. There aren't any lyrics, and it's a duet of two music boxes, one to enjoy during the wind down on Christmas evening.

Up on the house top
by The Jackson Five

This one is sure to get your Christmas party rocking to a happy Motown beat.

What does Michael want for Christmas?

"Love and peace for everyone" and why not?



Whatever you listen to or however you choose to celebrate Christmas, have a wonderful festive season!

From the boundary



Out of the jaws of victory came defeat in the first test in Australia. It was blatantly pathetic. Whilst I agree that an aggressive style is good, playing as if it were a T20 is ridiculous. Formula One is becoming interesting. It clearly shows that Verstappen is the best driver in the world, especially when his teammate hardly scores a point. It clearly shows that with an inferior car, he can win (this Lewis Hamilton has never done). Ferrari needs to sign one of the new breed of young drivers to the team, and it will save them money. English football seems to be on the up, successfully qualifying for the World Cup. Our local team, Aston Villa, are also doing well. In Rugby, the autumn internationals show that England may be becoming a

serious force. Ireland and Scotland have lost ground in my view, with Wales slightly on the up. I was at Cardiff for the New Zealand game on Saturday, and whilst it was not New Zealand's strongest side, I thought Wales had some signs of light. We will see what happens against South Africa. On the home political front, chaos still reigns. The Budget, which is leaked from day to day and changed as we go along, has created turmoil in the market with the pound falling. The Media claim that the government will call an election in two years. I cannot see that happening given their huge majority. Turkeys don't vote for Christmas. The Conservatives are showing no signs of becoming a force again and may make a further slide.

Reform may be ahead in the polls, but Farage will need to show that he has quality within his ranks by appointing spokesmen from within his ranks. To his credit, I think he has realised that. Also, Danny Kruger moving to Reform is a great asset. He is undoubtedly a man of quality. I think the country is in for a rough ride next year. I now turn to matters of Law. In a judgement last Thursday, Mrs Justice Eady made a deferred quashing order concerning Ruben Barnard. Barnard is twenty-two with no previous convictions. He has been accused of 1) Putting a person in fear of violence by Harassment, 2) Five counts of assault by beating, 3) Criminal damage. The quashing order determined that unless the defendant was brought to Trial

Peter Jewell



before 4th December, all these accusations could be dealt with in the Magistrates court. The defendant appeared on 5th March, and bail was refused on the grounds that there were substantial grounds for believing that the defendant would interfere with witnesses. On the current custody time limit, the defendant should at the latest have the case heard by the 3rd October. On September 30th, the CPS applied successfully for the time limit to be extended to March 2026. The Solicitors brought the matter before Judge Del Fabbro at Snaresbrook Crown Court and submitted that the underfunding of the legal system has caused the delay and, of course, Justice Delayed is justice denied. The Judge made various excuses and set the trial date for 2nd March 2026. In my judgement, prospective quashing orders would give the quietus to what has been called the "metaphysic of nullity", the constraining theory that any legal error makes a decision or instrument not merely voidable but void ab initio. The defendant has been on remand for twelve months, and the likely sentence may not even be custodial, given his lack of previous convictions, of course, even if he were found guilty. Suffice to say HMCTS are in a mess, especially the Probate office and the office of the Public Guardian, who operate from a box number because they all work from home! Because cases are listed badly, the court do not operate effectively.

Thoughts from the Snug . .

"Here's a Christmas myth exposed!" said one lady member of the Snug as she read from her mobile phone. "Both male and female reindeer grow antlers in the Summer. However, male reindeer shed their antlers at the beginning of winter in early November. Female reindeer retain theirs until they give birth in the Spring. So" she added, "almost every image we see of Christmas reindeer has to be female! Logic! Donner, Blitzen and Rudolph! All female!" Indifferent nods of the heads from the men in the Snug, but a round of applause from the three ladies in the group when

one says, "We should have known it. Only a female would be able to drag an obese man, dressed in red velvet, all around the world, not get lost, and achieve it all in one night!" "Yeah," said another. "That resonates with my experience of dragging Hubby around shopping this Christmas. If I could borrow the reindeer, I would." A short silence followed, broken by one chap who, trying to counter the cutting remarks, said, "Perhaps we should adopt the Christmas tradition of 'Drachenfute!' Puzzled expressions all around. "It's a present a German gives

Christmas Traditions



to his wife to apologise for his mistakes: like being out late, or stopping off for a beer on his way home. Drachenfute translates as 'Dragon Fodder'."

A longer silence followed, but bouncing shoulders, displaying quiet mirth, were observed. Touche. Merry Christmas!

Buddy Bach

Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor,
I would like to record my thanks to all those who came together at Gordon's Gig in Pershore Abbey on 18th October to celebrate the life and musical legacy of Gordon Hartley-Bennett. The Concert was a sell-out and raised £3200 for local charities. The local Parkinson's Disease Support Group will receive £1600 (some of which they will forward to Parkinson's UK). The remaining £1600 will be split evenly between Pershore Plus Volunteer Centre, Pershore Wellbeing Hub, Pershore Riverside Centre and Wick Care Farm. Almost 60 of Gordon's

musical friends played at the Concert, and many of the audience were ex-students, now in their mid-thirties to early fifties, and their parents. The finale, led by Alcester Victoria Silver Band, was a piece called "Twiggybank" (music that Gordon had written for Perscoran Brass in its heyday). It was emotional to see many ex-Perscoran members from the audience join the band on stage for a rousing end to the night. Thanks are also due to the comperes, Pershore Rotary, for dealing with all monies and stewarding, and friends of Gordon who helped organise the Concert.

Sue Hartley-Bennett

Dear Editor,
What do I do with thirty years of the Fossils Cricket Team's history? Have any of your readers any ideas or help on the above? Having started the Fossils in 1995 and kept all the scorebooks, photos, newspaper reports, magazine articles, trophies, letters and other information on the

Fossils' first thirty years, at the age of 84, I am now wondering what to do with it all. I can't just bin it all, can I? Your readers' suggestions would be most welcome before it's too late.

Regards,

John Reynolds

Founder and President of the Fossils Cricket Team

Dear Editor,
Another year has flown by and we find ourselves fast approaching what those of us in the retail industry call "Silly Season". This is when people effectively lose their marbles in the manufactured pursuit of a "Perfect Christmas". There is no such thing. At least, not in a commercial sense. Why the obsession with buying "stuff" only to receive more "stuff" that eventually you will have to get rid of? There are even programmes on television telling you how to "declutter". How about not accumulating clutter in the first place? In reality, most of your clutter is irrelevant to everyone except possibly you, and then it is unimportant in the grand scheme of things. When you eventually shuffle off this mortal coil you can't take your "stuff" with you!

We have been taken for fools. Our consumer-driven society, now actively backed by the ever encroaching influence of social media, preys on the natural ego of human beings. The permanent need for self validation and the fear of missing out has created a society of individuals who know the price of everything but the value of very little.

I urge you to stop participating in "Silly Season". If you are not actively "religious", perhaps the question should be: "Why are you celebrating Christmas at all?" Maybe the answer is to enjoy the season without the hype? Go to a carol service at your local church - you will be surprised how uplifting it is. Spend time with family and friends, enjoy good food (although maybe don't buy so much you end up throwing vast quantities away?), have a drink if you like, buy your close ones a small gift as a token of your appreciation for them and not to show how ostentatious you are.

I cannot take credit for them, but, for me, the lyrics of 'Let it be Christmas everywhere' by Alan Jackson sum up how I feel about Christmas perfectly. I urge you to read them, listen to the song (it's on YouTube!) if you can, and enjoy the simple pleasures of the season.

Merry Christmas!
Julie Reynolds
(Worcester)



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Letters cont.

Dear Editor,
It is always a pleasure to pick up a copy of the monthly Pershore Times and yesterday was no exception. You can imagine my delight in reading the article on page 2 by Willow Pinchin about "Worcestershire's Men: 1918". As a military historian by inclination and hobby, I am always very pleased to encourage others who share those interests and I hope she is enjoying her MA studies in "History: First World War" at Wolverhampton University. My purpose in writing to you, understanding GDPR, is to ask you to forward this email to Willow Pinchin. Education is a

core function of all museums and I would be delighted if our Museum in Worcester can help her with her studies and interests.

In Dancox House, we have a wide collection of effects as well as copious amounts of letters, diaries and photos that she may like to access as part of her studies.

Very best wishes

*Lieutenant Colonel (Retd)
Mark Jackson OBE
Chair, Board of Trustees
Mercian Regiment Museum
(Worcestershire)*

Dear Editor,
I was delighted to read your advert offering three months free advertising to start-up companies from 1st December edition of the Pershore Times. Supporting small businesses is key to the economy. I am poised to launch my Celebrancy business within Pershore, where I live, and the surrounding areas. I appreciate the opportunity you offer,

Louise Brand



'Tis the season



For as long as people have lived in these islands, we have celebrated Midwinter. First, we called it by its pagan name, Beltane, and now we call it Christmas. By any name, though, it is an excuse to break up the tedium of long, dreary nights and mark the turn of the year, for after the Winter Solstice, the nights will again begin to get shorter and shorter until Summer arrives. So now is a time for feasting, possibly also for travel and certainly for the giving of presents. Here's a very brief Worcestershire take on all three. Firstly, for feasting, we sampled the Swan at Broadway and were delighted. It fitted perfectly into my perception of what a British pub should be like at Christmas – warm, welcoming and nicely presented. The Festive Set Menu, which had plenty of choices, began with superb starters, followed by superior main courses (I had the nicest pork tomahawk) and culminating in superlative desserts – my wife felt that her crème brûlée (see picture) was so pretty it was almost a pity to eat it. The cooking of Chef

Marcel was ably complemented by the impeccable table service provided by Karl.

The Festive Set Menu is from £39.95 for three courses.

*Email
enquiry@theswanbroadway.co.uk
or phone 01386 852278*

As regards 'travel', many of us are seeking to avoid the hassle of flying by taking 'no fly' cruises, and I recently heard from Ambassador Cruise Line, who operate out of London's Tilbury docks with their ship, the 'Ambience', and also from a range of UK ports with their second ship, the 'Ambition'. The company say that they offer "the warmest welcome at sea" and, certainly, their prices seem nicely affordable. I particularly like their Christmas Market Voyage, with the Ambience sailing from Tilbury on 14th of this month, returning on the 20th and visiting Hamburg (I don't know it, but if it was good enough for the Beatles it's good enough for me ...), then Amsterdam (really good for seasonal shopping?) and finally, Bruges (romantic and charming at any season), allowing guests to savour not just the distinctive charm of each destination, but also to enjoy sailing along the northern European coastline between ports. *Prices start from just £449 per person sharing an inside cabin. For details, see www.ambassadorcruiseline.com* That takes me to my, perhaps, idiosyncratic suggestions for Christmas presents. Having trawled the Web, I've come up with one a day ... Sunday: Pocket walking guides. I chose Oxfordshire because it's

got a lovely walk from Charlbury Station (on the Cotswold Line from Parkway, Pershore or Honeybourne stations). *£6.99 and free postage from pocketmountains.co.uk.*

Monday: Get those brain cells working! Try the new smart games – IQ Deluxe. For adults facing a real challenge. (And, no, I'm not telling you how I got on!) *£12.99 from www.smarttoysandgamesuk.com.*

Tuesday: time for some food. I tried Toast'ems, warm, sweet toaster-ready treats. *Available from Amazon and also Iceland.* Wednesday: time for drinkies! Really like the new Christmas pudding rum from Tiptree (yes, that's right – the jam people). It's a rich, warming rum that also captures the essence of Christmas pudding and comes in a rather nice bottle.

Get it from *www.tiptree.com/collections/english-rum/products/christmas-pudding-rum-liqueur* Thursday: I found a fudge Christmas cracker that's a bit of a showstopper, made by a small start-up company.

Brian Johnson-Thomas

These stocking fillers are available via John Lewis stores.

Friday: another Christmas cracker, this time from Fever Tree (the mixers people). It includes a fever tree mojito mixer and also a spiced rum, not to mention a festive hat and, of course, a joke! *Costs £10 – again from John Lewis.*

Saturday: a satay and spice set from Makan Malaysia. Well, I thought that I could make a mean nasi goreng until I tried these ... really opens up new horizons in the kitchen.

Available online from makanmalaysia.co.uk/pantry.

This just leaves me space to quickly mention Gloucester and its Christmas activities. For some reason, we tend to forget that this city's so accessible to us but their Christmas markets run until the 21st and are located across Gloucester quays and the historic docks, with over 120 traders offering craft, gifts and food from across the southwest. There's also an outdoor ice rink until 4th January.

See www.gloucesterquays.co.uk





Christmas Crossword

Across

- 7 Provided with protective covering (8)
- 8 Speck (4)
- 9 Gather (5)
- 10 Boat race (7)
- 12 Type of variable electrical control (6)
- 13 Embarrass (5)
- 15 Stimulus (3)
- 16 Expiry (5)
- 18 Yield post (6)
- 20 Wool fat (7)
- 23 Crowbar (5)
- 25 Hardens (4)
- 26 Pertaining to a school (8)

Down

- 1 Quivered (8)
- 2 Israeli intelligence agency (6)
- 3 Illustrative craft (3)
- 4 Verge (4)
- 5 Largest desert (6)
- 6 Wood (4)
- 11 Mischievous (4)
- 13 Relating to aircraft (4)
- 14 Sanitary (8)
- 17 Excite (6)
- 19 Scandinavian kingdom (6)
- 21 Second son of Adam and Eve (4)
- 22 Formerly Mesopotamia (4)
- 24 Grass (3)

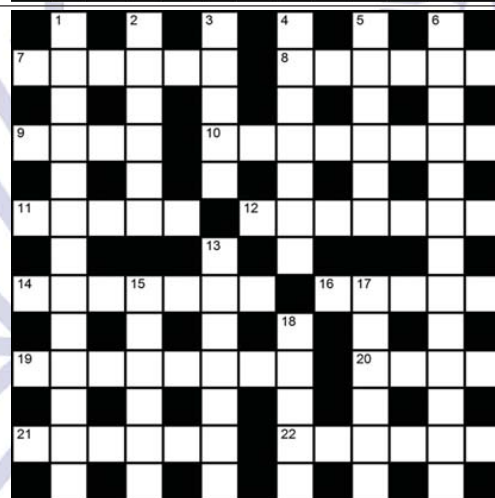


Across

- 7 2nd smallest continent (6)
- 8 Microphone inventor (6)
- 9 Probability (4)
- 10 Fragile (8)
- 11 Join (5)
- 12 Couple (7)
- 14 Long established (3-4)
- 16 Mature (5)
- 19 Yes (3,5)
- 20 Profane expression (4)
- 21 Reduce (6)
- 22 Vestige (6)

Down

- 1 Painful abdominal complaint (8,5)
- 2 Maiden Castle county (6)
- 3 Is inclined (5)
- 4 Colours developing in Autumn (7)
- 5 Performing animal show (6)
- 6 Reflection (13)
- 13 Conceive (7)
- 15 Shove (6)
- 17 Gadget (6)
- 18 Hiding place (5)

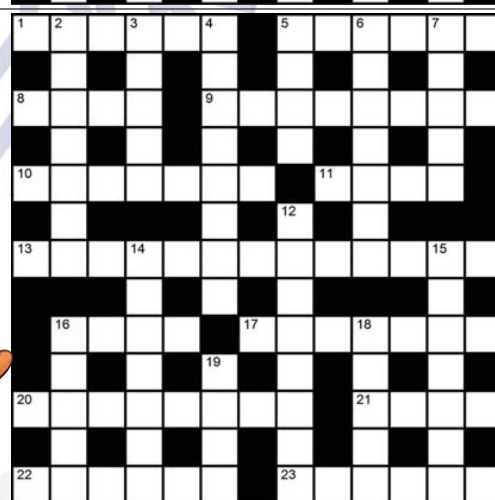


Across

- 1 South North American republic (6)
- 5 Warning (3-3)
- 8 Version still being developed (4)
- 9 Boss (8)
- 10 Packages (7)
- 11 Literary work (4)
- 13 Donkey (5,2,6)
- 16 Close (4)
- 17 Commander in chief of a fleet (7)
- 20 Parasol (8)
- 21 Wicked (4)
- 22 Gorge (6)
- 23 Loftier (6)

Down

- 2 Lift up (7)
- 3 Hebrew patriarch (5)
- 4 Fail to notice (8)
- 5 Class (4)
- 6 Flourish (7)
- 7 Eats (5)
- 12 Submissive to authority (8)
- 14 Soft and moist (7)
- 15 Scrutinise (7)
- 16 Sweatbox (5)
- 18 Standard of perfection (5)
- 19 Futile (4)



Christmas Magic Squares

Fill in the grids, so each column, row and diagonal add up to the same number!

2		
7		
6		8

		2
	5	
8		4

Did You Know?

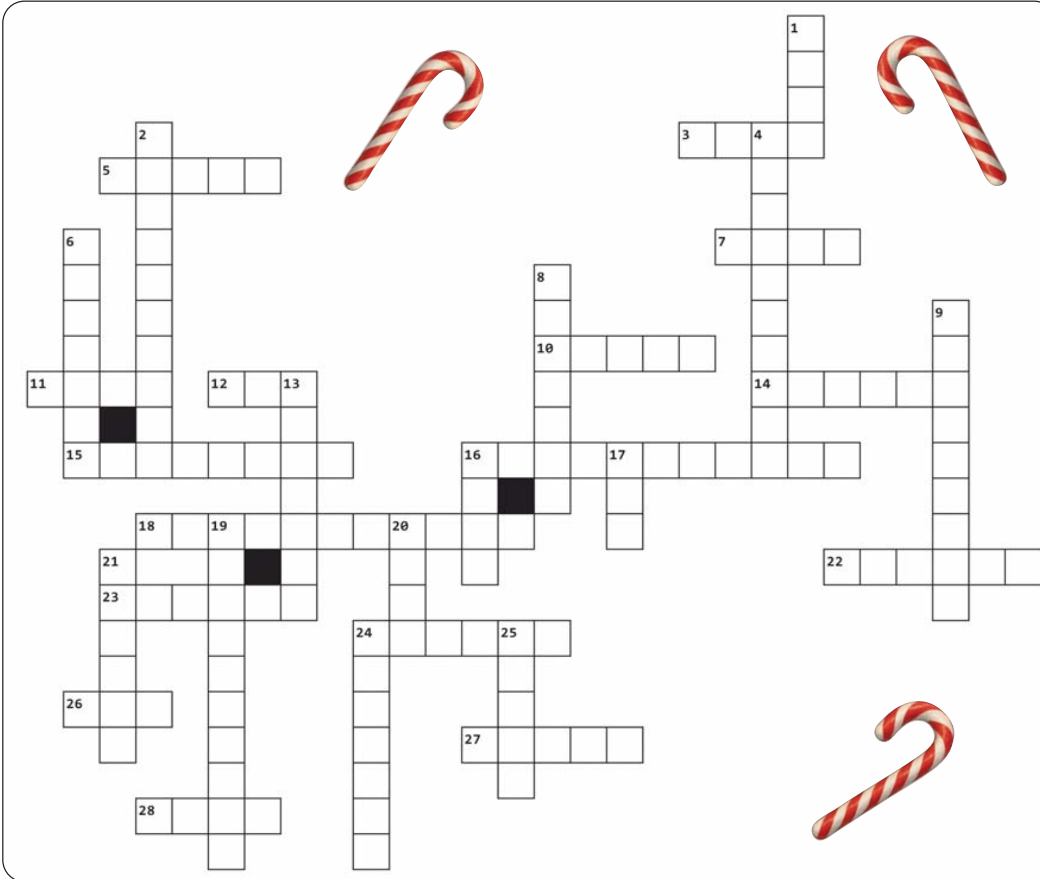
'Jingle Bells' was the first song played on an instrument in space. On 16th December 1965, it was broadcast during NASA's Gemini 6A space flight, played by Wally Schirra and Thomas Stafford.

Word of the Month 'Erubescence'

Definition:
becoming a reddish colour or blushing



Christmas Crossword



Down

- 1) Traditional Christmas dessert often filled with dried fruits
- 2) Famous Christmas ballet
- 4) Traditional Christmas plant with red leaves
- 6) British Christmas food
- 8) Christmas' country of origin
- 9) "Bah Humbug"
- 13) Reindeer with a glowing nose
- 16) Santa's mode of transportation
- 17) Christmas movie featuring the character "Buddy"
- 19) Festive candle holder with multiple branches
- 20) Christmas tree topper
- 21) Traditional Christmas drink
- 24) Christmas market country of origin
- 25) Christmas carol group

Across

- 3) Christmas gift wrapper
- 5) Popular Christmas cookie
- 7) Seasonal winter precipitation
- 10) Traditional Christmas color
- 11) Another name for Father Christmas
- 12) Christmas tree material
- 14) Popular Christmas tree decoration that sparkles
- 15) Festive wreath often hung on doors
- 16) Christmas gift-giving tradition in some European countries on 6th December

Across (cont.)

- 18) Kevin from 'Home Alone'
- 22) Christmas season
- 23) Who - Famous Christmas cartoon character
- 24) Christmas character who tries to steal Christmas
- 26) Holiday season greeting
- 27) Christmas song with "Silent" in the title
- 28) Christmas Eve visitor

Famous Writers Wordsearch



AA MILNE
AESOP
ANN B. ROSS
BUCHAN
BUNYAN
BYRON
CAMUS
DANTE
DIDEROT
GRIMM
HARDY
HOMER
KAFKA
KEATS
LUCIAN
MARLOW
PASTERNAK
PLATO
PROUST
SARTRE
SHELLEY
WAUGH

Christmas Maths Brainteaser

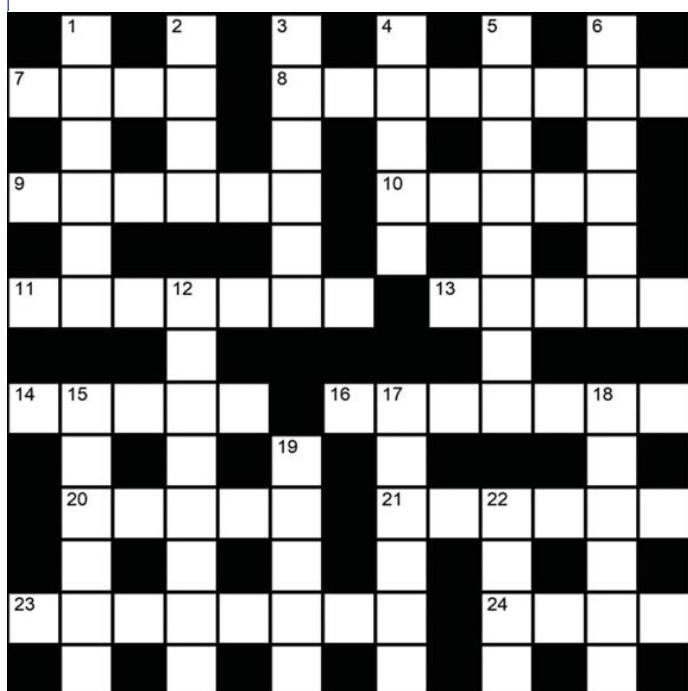


Answers:
Ornament - 6
Mitten - 2
Tree - 7

How does Good King Wenceslas like his pizzas?
Deep pan, crisp and even!

Christmas Coffee Break

Anagram Crossword



Across

- 7 Abet (4)
8 Corseted (8)
9 Devote (6)
10 Pinot (3,2)
11 Chasing (7)
13 Stars (5)
14 Rites (5)
16 Natives (7)
20 Hires (5)
21 Disuse (6)
23 Ancients (8)
24 Meat (4)

Down

- 1 Create (6)
2 Afro (4)
3 Define (4,2)
4 Croat (5)
5 Stir wine (6,2)
6 Are men? (6)
12 Starship (8)
15 Nan hid (2,4)
17 Biased (6)
18 Not see (4,2)
19 On sea (2,3)
22 O E Ms (4)



Sudoku

Each row and column must contain the numbers from one to nine, without repetitions.

					9	1		7
9			8		1		3	4
	4			5			8	
5	1			9			2	3
		8				7		
2	7			8			1	6
	6			2			4	
8	9		7		4			2
1		4	6					

4				6		9	7	
		6	7				1	8
				3	8	2		4
		9	5		4			
6								9
			3		6	8		
3		1	6	8				
2	9				3	6		
	6	4		1				3

				9	5		1	
						2	5	3
	6			4				
2						9		
	4		7		3		8	
		3						1
				1			4	
7	5	4						
	1		2	8				

Musical Instruments Wordsearch

P	I	P	E	O	R	E	B	E	C	S
P	D	F	J	T	T	V	S	P	W	S
S	I	N	S	U	K	I	A	S	Z	E
F	A	C	L	B	T	O	N	E	G	M
B	N	A	R	A	M	L	E	N	T	I
T	L	E	R	W	N	A	E	O	A	H
G	A	A	A	A	T	H	V	B	B	C
N	Q	H	G	N	S	H	E	J	O	O
O	S	R	V	E	V	O	M	U	R	D
G	O	O	M	E	R	I	H	A	R	P
B	E	L	L	Y	R	E	L	G	U	B

ANVIL
BANJO
BELL
BONES
BUGLE
CHIMES
CRWTH
DRUM
FIFE
GONG
HARP
LUTE
LYRE

MOOG
OBOE
ORGAN
PIPE
REBEC
REGAL
SHAWM
SHENG
SITAR
TABOR
TUBA
VEENA
VIOLA

Christmas Maths Brainteaser



Answers:
Lampposts - 15
Snowmen - 4
Trees - 3

Quiz!

- 1) What is the name of Santa's reindeer named after the German word for 'thunder'?
- 2) Which actor stars as Scrooge in the 1951 film adaptation of 'A Christmas Carol'?
- 3) Which monarch delivered the first Christmas Broadcast to the BBC in 1932?
- 4) What is the title of the comedic Christmas song by Benny Hill that describes a festive chase scene?
- 5) What is the original meaning of the French word 'Noel'?
- 6) In 'Blackadder's Christmas Carol', who plays Ebenezer Blackadder?
- 7) Which country traditionally eats KFC for Christmas dinner?
- 8) In 'Gavin & Stacey', which character is obsessed with Christmas and often goes overboard with festivities?
- 9) In the song 'The Twelve Days of Christmas', how many presents are given in total?
- 10) Which famous scientist was born on Christmas Day, 1642?
- 11) What is the original title of the 1823 poem commonly known as "'Twas the Night Before Christmas"?
- 12) Which states in the U.S. have a town called Santa Claus?
- 13) The movie 'Miracle on 34th Street' is based on which real-life department store?
- 14) The first artificial Christmas tree was made from what?

Bonus Round!

- 1) In which century was the use of an 'X-' instead of 'Christ-' for the word 'Christmas' first recorded?
- 2) Which BBC show holds the record for the highest number of Christmas specials?
- 3) What popular holiday song was written during the Cuban missile crisis as a plea for peace?
- 4) Which environmentalist U.S. president discouraged Christmas trees at the White House?

Answers: 1) Donner 2) Alistair Sim 3) George V 4) Ernie (The Fastest Milkman in the West) 5) Birth 6) Rowan Atkinson 7) Japan 8) Pam Shipman 9) 364 10) Isaac Newton 11) A Visit from St. Nicholas 12) Indiana, Arizona, and Georgia 13) Macy's 14) Goose feathers

1) 11th century - The first known use of "Xmas" is from the Anglo-Saxon chronicle (1011), where a scribe wrote "Xp̄es mæsse" to save on paper.

2) Blue Peter - The show had 59 consecutive specials between 1958 and 2016

3) Do You Hear What I Hear? - Music by Gloria Shayne Baker, lyrics by Noel Regency, written in n October 1962.

4) President Theodore Roosevelt - Roosevelt was a conservationist and wanted to set an example by not displaying any Christmas trees in the White House during his tenure. In 1902, his son, Archie, hid a small fir tree in his closet and decorated it.

What athlete is the warmest during the winter?

A long jumper!

Why don't you ever see Father Christmas in hospital?

He has private elf care!

November Answers



Poets' Corner

'Twas the night before Christmas,
when all through the house
Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse;
The stockings were hung by the chimney with care,
In hopes that St. Nicholas soon would be there;
The children were nestled all snug in their beds;
While visions of sugar-plums danced in their heads;
And mamma in her 'kerchief, and I in my cap,
Had just settled our brains for a long winter's nap,
When out on the lawn there arose such a clatter,
I sprang from my bed to see what was the matter.
Away to the window I flew like a flash,
Tore open the shutters and threw up the sash.
The moon on the breast of the new-fallen snow,
Gave a lustre of midday to objects below,
When what to my wondering eyes did appear,
But a miniature sleigh and eight tiny rein-deer,
With a little old driver so lively and quick,
I knew in a moment he must be St. Nick.
More rapid than eagles his coursers they came,
And he whistled, and shouted, and called them by name:
"Now, Dasher! now, Dancer! now Prancer and Vixen!
On, Comet! on, Cupid! on, Donder and Blitzen!
To the top of the porch! to the top of the wall!
Now dash away! dash away! dash away all!"

Clement Clarke Moore 1779 - 1863

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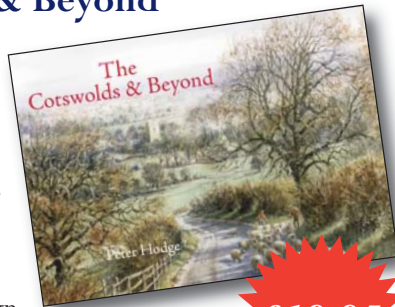


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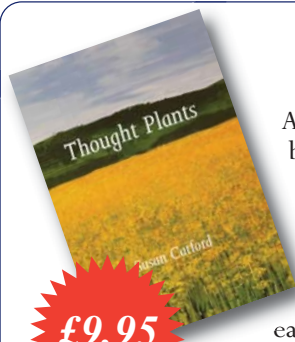


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*Copy Deadline for
February Issue - 16th January 2026*

Rotary News

Richard Lees

It's that time of year again when we remember those we have loved and lost, and we celebrate their lives through our Tree of Remembrance Appeal. In return for a donation to our chosen charities, Pershire Times readers, families and friends are warmly invited to 'Remember a Loved One' by using the QR code below or by completing the online form at www.pershoretreeofremembrance.com

The names of those remembered will be displayed at Number 8 Arts Centre and at the Acorns Hospice shop in Pershire High Street, and in our online Book of Remembrance. Funds raised this year will be donated to Acorns Children's Hospice, St Richard's Hospice and the Midlands Air Ambulance. These three charities rely on fundraising and our donations to provide their vital services. Did you know that: Acorns Children's Hospice cared for over 740 children in the past year and needed £35,000 every day to do that? Or that it costs around £12m a year to run St Richard's Hospice, where £109.36 could pay for a 'Hospice at Home Healthcare Assistant' for a day, providing compassionate care for patients in their own home? Or that it costs Midlands Air Ambulance £16m a year to maintain the three aircraft and the provision of a lifesaving service? A service that has carried out over 80,000 missions since 1991! These charities won't survive without our help. Can you help us keep these vital services running while remembering a loved one this Christmas? Collections will take place in December outside Asda and the Co-op, with festive music and carols performed by local choirs

and bands outside Asda. We are delighted to have songs and music from Vocal High, the Feel-Good Chorus, Pershire Brass, Pershire Abbey Choir, Evesham Concert Band, #LovePershore, Pershire Community Choir, Dampiers Round, Drakes Broughton Folk Band and the u3a Ukulele Band. The familiar sound of carols in Chapman Court last year added to the spirit of Christmas, with many shoppers stopping to listen or sing along.

Why not join us on Friday 19th December for an enchanting evening as Vocal High returns to Pershire Abbey with their Candlelit Winter Warmer concert? *Tickets at £12.00 each are available from The Style & Colour Co, 36 High Street, Pershire, or online at www.vocalhigh.com.*

The concert begins at 7.30pm and features guest musicians. Let this magical night of music light up your Christmas season. A retiral collection will be donated to our three Appeal charities.

On behalf of all the members of Pershire Rotary, we wish all Pershire Times readers a very happy and peaceful Christmas, in the hope that the New Year brings greater unity and positive changes that address the many complex global challenges.

Anyone interested in joining or supporting Pershire Rotary can find more information at www.pershorerotary.club, via Facebook, or by emailing secretary@pershorerotary.club



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structured daily practices rooted in neuroscience and real-world coaching. NeuroPatterns™ blends neurotherapy, behavioural science, and coaching to help you recognise and replace limiting patterns. The results are often life-changing. People report feeling calmer, more confident, and more in control of their lives. Every person deserves to live with clarity and purpose. The 28 Day Change Programme is designed to make that transformation accessible and achievable, one small step at a time.

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George Dowty: 50 years on!



On 7th December, we have the 50th Anniversary of the death of local lad, Sir George Dowty. The blue plaque in Pershore's High Street shows where he was born and brought up, and the Cemetery is where he is buried with his twin brother and his parents. In between, he created Dowty engineering, giving employment to many thousands of people making aircraft undercarriages, life-saving pit props and other hydraulic devices. Amongst many activities, he was

Chairman of Worcester County Cricket Club, Chairman of the Governors of Worcester Royal Grammar School, President of the Royal Aeronautical Society, Deputy Lieutenant of Gloucestershire as well as a supporter of many charities. He was a man whose life greatly benefitted the nation as well as the local community. On that day, the Dowty flag will be flying in many places locally.

Tim Hickson



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Name of applicant/club

BARIE BRIEN "THE FLYBRIDGE BAR & RESTAURANT"

Postal address of premises/club premises or description

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The applicant proposes to carry out the following licensable activities or qualifying club activities on or from the above premises/club premises:

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SUNDAY 1200 TO 1400.

Representations by interested parties or responsible authorities should be made in writing to Worcestershire Regulatory Services, Wyre Forest House, Finepoint Way, Kidderminster, DY11 7WF or enquiries@worcestershire.gov.uk by:

4th JANUARY 2026

The record of the application is available for inspection by appointment.

Please call us on 01905 822799 for an appointment.

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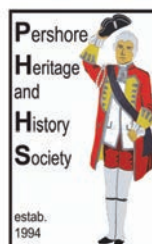


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Pershore Heritage & History Society

Monday - Closed
Tuesday - 10:30am - 1:00pm
Wednesday - 10:30am - 1:00pm
Thursday - 10:30am - 1:00pm
Friday - 10:30am - 1:00pm
Saturday - 10:30am - 12:30pm

Can you help?

If you can or know anyone who could spare a couple of hours once a week, once a fortnight or even once a month, we would love to hear from you. Please contact:

John Payne, email: johnphilippayne@rocketmail.com or
Sue Price, email: susanmariaprice@yahoo.co.uk

34 High Street, Pershore WR10 1DS - Tel: 01386 751101
(above the Town Hall & Tourist Information Centre)

Community Cupboard Christmas news!

Pershire Community Cupboard is once again receiving generous support from local business OCM this Christmas, helping to bring festive cheer to families and individuals in need across the region. Last year, the Community Cupboard provided food parcels and supermarket vouchers to 160 families, up from 115 the year before. With demand expected to remain high again this winter, OCM's donation will play a vital role in helping the charity meet growing needs within the community. This year, the local company's contribution will help provide some of the 160 boxes of biscuits and 320 Cadbury selection boxes for families receiving support this Christmas. These items will accompany the supermarket vouchers purchased by the

Cupboard, all helping to ease financial pressures for some local families during what can be a difficult time of year. Richard Tisdall from Pershire Community Cupboard said: "We are so grateful for OCM's continued generosity and commitment to our local community. Their support makes a real difference, not only helping us to reach more families but also bringing some festive joy to those who may be struggling." OCM, a Pershire-based company that provides responsible IT collection and recycling services, has supported the Community Cupboard for several years as part of its ongoing commitment to giving back to the local area. Pershire Community Cupboard would like to extend



L-R: Ali Tisdall from Pershire Community Cupboard with Paul Mills and Gemma Bott from OCM, alongside colleague Alison Adcock, Pershire Community Cupboard, with donated goodies for local families this Christmas.

sincere thanks to OCM and to all donors who have contributed to this year's campaign. Every contribution helps to provide some festive cheer to families

in Pershire at Christmas time. For more information or to offer support, visit the Pershire Community Cupboard page on Facebook.

Louise Celebrant - New Business!



There is an alternative to traditional ceremonies. I am Louise, an Independent Celebrant dedicated to marking life's milestones with a celebration as individual as you are. Whether that's a Wedding, Vow Renewal,

or a Naming Ceremony, I'm here to bring your vision to life. Welcome to your unique Celebration. *Weddings and Commitment Ceremonies* Mark the joining of hearts and souls with a ceremony bespoke to you. You can include Handfasting, Unity candles and Ring warming to symbolise the immeasurable love and joy that your union will bring. Preparation begins with a personalised discussion to explore what you envisage; no wish is too big or too small. The Venue can be almost anywhere, and I can assist with writing heartfelt, personal

vows. Your special day will be solely yours.

Vow Renewals

A fleeting glance led to a shared life, collecting moments. Celebrate and acknowledge the years you have shared and the joys that have unfolded, through life's ups and downs.

Naming Ceremonies

A baby, a new life created from love. Welcome your little one into the world with a Naming Ceremony; a name carries so much meaning. I can write commitments with your chosen guardians that will guide and nurture your little one in a time-honoured tradition. Let's celebrate together as your little



one joins their community filled with love, joy, and kindness.

Ready to begin building the Celebration of your dreams? Contact me today to start planning your perfect event. *Let's make your special day unforgettable.*

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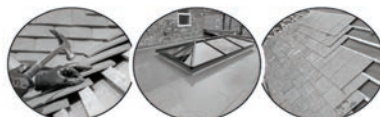
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Tenure: Freehold EPC: C Council Tax: F



Bridge Street, Pershore -

Asking Price: £445,000

A BEAUTIFULLY PRESENTED GRADE II LISTED
THREE BEDROOM TOWNHOUSE

Kitchen; dining room; lounge and three double bedrooms;
and family bathroom; garden with studio.

Tenure: Freehold EPC: N/A Council Tax: D



Willow Close, Pershore - Asking Price: £425,000

NEWLY RENOVATED SEMI-DETACHED BUNGALOW

Entrance porch; lounge/dining room, recently fitted kitchen;
two double bedrooms; shower room. Laid to lawn garden
with patio and decking and zoned areas taking advantage of
the sun and the views to Pershore and beyond.

Tenure: Freehold EPC: C Council Tax: C



Westcott Way, Pershore - Asking Price: £360,000

A THREE BEDROOM DETACHED HOME

Entrance hall; cloakroom; dual aspect living room with French
doors to the garden; kitchen/dining room; separate utility
room; master bedroom with en-suite. Enclosed rear garden.

Detached garage and driveway.

Tenure: Freehold EPC: B Council Tax: D

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Owletts End, Pinvin - Asking Price: £325,000

AN EXTENDED, FULLY RENOVATED/REFURBISHED,
THREE BEDROOM SEMI-DETACHED

Open plan lounge, dining/family room; kitchen; three
bedrooms; family bathroom and ground floor w.c. The south
facing rear garden and driveway. No onward chain

Tenure: Freehold with Possessory Title EPC: C Council Tax: B



Newlands, Pershore - Asking Price: £225,000

GRADE II LISTED GEORGIAN MID-TERRACED COTTAGE

Cosy lounge with exposed brick inglenook fireplace; kitchen
with French doors to the rear garden; on the first floor there
are two bedrooms and family shower room. Garden with
mature planting. No onward chain.

Tenure: Freehold EPC: D Council Tax: B

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'We believe God's promises will come true'

(7th December at 10am, God willing)

and why

'We believe there is only one, true living God'

(4th January at 10am, God willing)

and why

'We believe Jesus is the son of God and son of man'

(1st February at 10am, God willing)

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We believe there is only one true, living God. Only a living God could create living things. Early on, the Bible tells how the earth's abundant life forms came about. The inspired writers experienced and wrote often of 'the living God'. Not confined by an idol's frame of wood or stone, God is present everywhere and can be the centre of our lives. The apostle Paul wrote to Christians who had previously been idol-worshippers: '...you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God.' (1 Thessalonians 1v9) As to his truth, God declared of himself: 'The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abounding in goodness and truth.' (Exodus 34v6) Though many things may have truth, this is a declaration of being truth. Jesus, God's son, who shared His father's characteristics,

confirmed this by saying: 'I am the way, the truth, and the life ...' (John 14v6) Acceptance of God's truth has proved the finest way to live. The principles of the Ten Commandments form the model for the society God intended. After the instruction to worship God, these practical truths are self-evident: honesty in daily life, care for the elderly, faithfulness in relationships, not hankering after others' possessions nor taking life. God's spiritual lessons are equally true: love and concern for others should be the motivating factor in life. Christianity grew out of the Jewish religion: the one God of Israel revealed himself in Jesus, who showed these principles by example. God's nature is unchangeable, and his message for humankind is consistent. For more information, visit www.pershore.bible

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Evesham Festival of Words has gained a reputation for our professionalism, friendliness, quality, and for the variety of events we put on throughout the year. We don't shy away from sometimes difficult topics. This was very clear from one of our November events – a talk by Committee member, Galen Bartholomew, entitled 'Lest We Forget – Timeless Lessons of Auschwitz, thanks to Primo Levi', included in our 2025 programme to mark the 80th Anniversary of the Liberation of Auschwitz. The way Galen wove together the horrific historical facts with the observations and comments of Primo Levi, himself an Auschwitz survivor, was very powerful and deeply moving. Not an easy talk to deliver or to

listen to, but it is so important that we don't forget. Galen would be happy to give this talk to other organisations.

If anyone is interested, contact: info@eveshamfestivalofwords.org

December sees the annual Evesham Christmas Tree Festival in All Saints Church. We will be having a tree and our usual Secret Santa book gifts.

The Festival runs from Sunday 7th – Friday 26th December.

Do pop in!

2026 Festival events will be added to our website in the near future. Joint events with Holland House, Crophorne, taking place in March, April and May, are open for booking via the Holland House website: www.hollandhouse.org

Merry Christmas to everyone, and we look forward to welcoming you to our programme of events next year.

Sue Ablett, Chair Evesham Festival of Words

Spot & Shop - November Winners

- | | |
|---------------------|-------------------------|
| 1) Kelsey Coward | 5) Lorraine Middleburgh |
| 2) Katherine Harvey | 6) Jodie O'Sullivan |
| 3) J. Burrows | 7) A. Dufty |
| 4) Nicola Smith | |

Last month's answer:

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COMPETITION TIME!

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at The Queen Elizabeth, Elmley

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at Revills Farm Shop, Defford

5th £10 Voucher

at Craftypyro, Bakers Arcade, Pershore

6th Reg Moule Gardening Book

7th Pat's Pantry -

Jar of home-made marmalade/jam

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In memoriam

BETTERIDGE Paul Charles (Bet)

Of Pershore. Passed away on 9th November 2025, aged 56 years. Paul will be sadly missed by all his family and friends. Funeral service was held at The Vale Crematorium, Fladbury on Thursday 4th December at 12 noon. Donations in memory of Paul are invited for Pershore and Upton District Nurses, these may be left at the service.

EAVES Nee Calder Beverley Mary

Of Pershore. Passed away peacefully on 22nd October 2025, aged 65 years. Bev will be sadly missed by all her family and friends. A funeral service was held at the Vale Crematorium, Fladbury, on Friday 21st November at 1pm. Donations in memory of Bev are invited for the Dogs Trust. These may be made online.

In Memoriam notices are free of charge
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What's on Dec/Jan 25-26

Sat 6th December

Customer Appreciation Fizz & Canapes Bar Special
Paul's of Pershore, 6:30pm

Sun 7th December

Think & Drink Charity Quiz
Claude Choules, 7:00pm

Tues 9th December

Ian's Acoustic Jam Night
Pershore Naval Social Club, 7:00pm – 10:30pm

Wed 10th December

Craft and Chat
St Andrews Centre 2pm – 3:30pm
Pershore Jazz - Harlem Jazz Orchestra
Pershore Football Club, 7:00pm

Fri 12th December

Friday Film Club
Pershore Library, 2pm – 4:30pm
Pershore Town Choir, Christmas Celebration Concert
(with Avonbank Brass Band, and Organist James Macdwall-Scott)
Pershore Abbey, 7:30pm

Sat 13th December

The Merry Christmas Concert
(Worcester Male Voice Choir)
Pershore Abbey, 7:00pm
Port, Stilton & Friends Masterclass
Paul's of Pershore, 7:00pm

Sun 14th December

Pianoscapes Concert #82
St Andrews Centre, 2:00pm

Tues 16th December

u3a Monthly Meeting – Music, Musicals and a Merry Christmas
Number 8, 2:00pm

Wed 17th December

Millers Acoustic Oddities
The Millers Arms, 7:30pm

Thurs 18th December

Mulled Wine and Carols
Paul's of Pershore, 6:30pm

Fri 19th December

Candlelit Winter Warmer from Vocal High
Pershore Abbey, 7:00pm

Sat 20th December

Children's Film Club
Pershore Library, 10:30am – 2pm
Pershore Choral Society Christmas Concert
Pershore Abbey, 7:00pm

Festive Favourites: Top wines of 2025, Wine Tasting
Paul's of Pershore, 7:00pm

Sun 21st December

Boozy Bingo Night
Claude Choules, arrive 6:00pm

Sat 27th December

Leftovers Pairing Party, Wine Tasting
Paul's of Pershore, 6:00pm

Fri 2nd January

Children's Film Club
Pershore Library, 2pm – 4pm

Sat 3rd January

Low & No-Dry January Wine Tasting
Paul's of Pershore, 6:30pm

Sun 4th January

Think & Drink Charity Quiz
Claude Choules, 7:00pm

Mon 5th January

Griff and Friends Jam Session
Pershore Town Football Club, 7:30pm – 10:30pm

Wed 7th January

Board Gaming Night
Picked Plum Pub, 7:00pm

Fri 9th January

Friday Film Club
Pershore Library, 2pm – 4:30pm

Hans Zimmer

Candlelight Experience
Pershore Abbey, 7:00pm

Sat 10th January

Alpine Wines & Fondue, Wine Tasting
Paul's of Pershore, 8:30pm

Tues 13th January

Ian's Acoustic Jam Night
Pershore Naval Social Club, 7:00pm – 10:30pm

Sun 18th January

Boozy Bingo Night
Claude Choules, arrive 6:00pm

Tues 20th January

u3a Monthly Meeting- AGM & Talk from the Midlands Air Ambulance Service
Number 8, 2:00pm

Wed 21st January

Millers Acoustic Oddities
The Millers Arms, 7:30pm

Sun 25th January

Pianoscapes Concert #83
St Andrews Centre, 2:00pm

Wed 28th January

Pershore Jazz The Hot Tamales
Pershore Football Club, 7pm

Fri 30th January

Friday Film Club
Pershore Library, 2pm- 4:30pm

For more information, come and see us at the Visitor Information Centre
34 High Street, Pershore
or visit online at:
www.visitpershore.co.uk

Cinema Listings

The House of Mirth (12A)

Mon 1st Dec – 11.00am
Tickets: £9.00

I Swear (15)

Tue 2nd Dec – 7.30pm;
Wed 3rd Dec – 2.00pm;
Sat 3rd Jan – 7.30pm
Tickets: £9.00

Springsteen: Deliver Me

From Nowhere (12A)
Mon 15th Dec – 11.00am (ST) & 7.30pm;
Fri 19th Dec – 7.30pm
Tickets: £9.00

A Paw Patrol Christmas (cert. tbc)

Mon 22nd Dec – 11.00am;
Wed 31st Dec – 11.00am (RS)
Tickets: Adult £9.00, Child: £5

Wicked: For Good (U)

Wed 24th Dec – 11.00am;
Sat 27th Dec – 2.00pm;
Wed 31st Dec – 7.30pm;
Sat 3rd Jan – 1.30pm
Tickets: £9.00

The Choral (12A)

Mon 5th Jan – 11.00am;
Fri 9th Jan – 7.30pm;
Mon 12th Jan – 11.00am
Tickets: £9.00

After The Hunt (15)

Tue 6th Jan – 7.30pm;
Thu 8th Jan – 7.30pm
Tickets: £9.00

Blue Moon (PG)

Tue 13th Jan – 7.30pm;
Tue 3rd Feb – 7.30pm
Tickets: £9.00

Good Fortune (15)

Fri 16th Jan – 7.30pm;
Fri 30th Jan – 7.30pm
Tickets: £9.00

Anemone (15)

Sat 17th Jan – 7.30pm;
Tue 20th Jan – 7.30pm
Tickets: £9.00

The Golden Spurtle (PG)

Mon 19th Jan – 11.00am;
Sat 24th Jan – 7.30pm;
Thu 29th Jan – 7.30pm;
Tue 10th Feb – 2.00pm
Tickets: £9.00

Ella McCay (cert tbc)

Mon 26th Jan – 11.00am;
Tue 27th Jan – 7.30pm;
Sat 31st Jan – 7.30pm
Tickets: £9.00

Number 8 Box Office: 01386 555488 / Email: enquiries@number8.org
www.number8.org

Event Listings

Orchestra of the Swan – 'Wintertide'

Thurs 4th Dec – 7.30pm
Tickets: £17, Child: £11

PODS Presents:

Step Into Christmas

Mon 8th – Sat 13th Dec 7.30pm + 2.30pm Saturday Matinee
Mon £14 (Child £11),
Tue – Thu £16 (£13),
Fri & Sat Eve £18 (£15)
Sat Matinee £16 (£13)

Festive Folk

Thurs 18 Dec - 7.30pm
Tickets: £16

Christmas with the Flowers Band 2025

Sat 20th Dec – 2.00pm
Tickets: £20, Seniors: £17.50, 16 & under: £5

GreenMatthews'

Winter Revels

Tues 23rd Dec - 7.30pm
Tickets: £18, Child £12

Stella's Imaginarium

Tues 30th Dec - 11.30am & 2.30pm
Tickets: Adult £15, Child £8.50, Family of 4* £40, Family of 5* £46
(*Family tickets to include minimum x2 children attending)

Worcester Philharmonic Orchestra

Sat 10th Jan - 2.30pm
Tickets: £17, Child (16 & under) £5

Swing That Music! with

Down for the Count All-Stars

Fri 23rd Jan – 7.30pm
Tickets: £28

The Foyer

Sip & Sketch

Thurs 11th Dec; Thurs 22nd Jan;
Thurs 26th Feb, 1pm – 4pm
Free Admission

Quiz Night

Fri 19th Dec; Fri 30th Jan;
Fri 27th Feb; Fri 20th Mar,
8pm, £2 per person

Readers' Group

1st & 3rd Tuesday each month

Foyer Folk: TangleJack

Sat 17th Jan – 8.00pm, £12

Regular Events

Every Sunday - Weekly Quiz

Picked Plum Pub, 7.00pm

Every Wednesday & Thursday - Pasta & Wine Night

The Star Inn (booking required)

Every Friday - Sew, Knit and Natter

Pershore Baptist Church, 10:00am – 2:00pm



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Rugby Club fundraiser for Birmingham Children's Hospital



Sick children at Birmingham Children's Hospital are one step closer to escaping into the world of cinema thanks to £1442.92 raised by Pershore Rugby for the BCH charity's MediCinema appeal. Fundraising events in aid of the appeal were held at Pershore Rugby this year, including a hugely successful Charity Touch Rugby tournament in June, when mixed teams of men and women from the Welsh borders, Forest of Dean and West Midlands Police, as well as from Pershore Rugby competed and enjoyed the food, fun and games on offer. A John Deere UTV vehicle was kindly loaned for the day by Evesham-based TAG, and was filled with balloons, for participants to guess the number to win a prize hamper. Further monies were raised at

the final evening of the club's Summer of Touch Mixed Series and also by donations from the local Prison Service. Ben Andrews, Vice Chair for Pershore Rugby, said: "This is the second year that Pershore Rugby have chosen a charity to support, and it has been brilliant how local businesses and Touch teams have rallied to help raise all this money for Birmingham Children's Hospital Charity. The MediCinema that it will go towards will help children have some enjoyment whilst they are having a long stay in hospital." "What an incredible amount Pershore Rugby has raised, a huge thank you for this," added Jay Spragg, Regional Fundraiser for Birmingham Children's Hospital Charity. "Thank you to everyone involved for their support!"

*Above) Mixed teams competed at Pershore Rugby to raise money for BCH.
Below) L-R: Ben Andrews, Andrew Breaker, and Clare Kinahan.*



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