

The Parish News

February 2024



Priors Marston * Priors Hardwick * Wormleighton

PRIORS HARDWICK WITH PRIORS MARSTON AND WORMLEIGHTON

part of The Bridges Group of Parishes www.thebridgesgroup.org.uk

GROUP ADMINISTRATOR:

Susan Holloway 01926 812383 admin@thebridgesgroup.org.uk

LOCAL CONTACTS:

Priors Marston:

Malcolm Monkhouse 01327 260915 / 07855 855063

malcolm-asserity@hotmail.co.uk

Peter Jackson 01327 260169

jackson.holly@btinternet.com

Priors Hardwick:

Margaret Clarke 01327 262233

margaret@latopus.com

(Licensed by the Bishop of Coventry for Funeral Ministry)

Christopher Hodgson 01327 261941

cjhodgson@btconnect.com

Wormleighton:

Sam Burton

wormleightonhall@btinternet.com

Sheilah Klegerman 01295 770517

sheilahkleg@gmail.com

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PARISH COUNCIL: <http://www.priorsmarston.org/parish-council/>

THE PRIORS HALL: Barbara Harvey 01327 260709

info.thepriorshall@gmail.com (Bookings)

PRIORS SCHOOL: <http://www.thepriorsschool.co.uk/>

ST.LAWRENCE SCHOOL: <http://www.stlawrenceprimaryschool.co.uk/>

WOMENS INSTITUTE: Jane Cowan 07979 550202

Fiona Spencer 01327 263423

FILM NIGHT: Lee Robinson 01327 263268 priorscinema@gmail.com

SPORTS CLUB: Elton James priorssports@gmail.com

TENNIS CLUB: priorstennis@yahoo.co.uk

RESOURCING TO RISK

Consultation
now open

We want to hear from you!

WFRS is consulting on a proposed change to its service delivery model as part of its Resourcing to Risk approach.

Our aim is to optimise the distribution of fire appliances, firefighters and supporting resources so that they better align to risk and demand.

We want hear your views on these proposals.



wfrsr2r@warwickshire.gov.uk



WARWICKSHIRE
FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE

PARISH NEWS DEADLINES: Helen Menezes__01327 261222

hlnmnzs@gmail.com Hillside House, Keys Lane, Priors Marston, Southam, CV47 7SA. **Deadline for inclusion, 15th of the month before** (except for January and August magazines, which are combined with the December and July issues respectively).

PARISH NEWS PDF: You can read the Parish News in PDF format, by sending a request to the editor – hlnmnzs@gmail.com. You can also read the latest edition on the Priors Marston Parish Council website <http://www.priorsmarston.org>

Disclaimer: Please note that views expressed in articles in The Parish News are the views of the authors.

PARISH NEWS DONATIONS

If you wish to contribute to the cost of printing the Parish News, bank details are as follows:-

Account name: Priors Marston PCC, Sort code 30-98-97, Ac. No.80353963.

Please reference your donation as 'Parish News'.

Many thanks to all the volunteers who contribute, proof-read, collect and deliver the magazines.

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PRIORS HARDWICK WEBSITE

You can keep up-to-date with what's going on in and around Priors Hardwick here:- <http://www.priorshardwick.org.uk>

WARWICKSHIRE COUNTY RIGHTS OF WAY IMPROVEMENT

Warwickshire County Council is responsible for around 1700 miles of public rights of way. A public right of way is a path that anyone has the legal right to use. If you wish to contribute to the new Rights of Way Improvement Survey, you can do so **by 10 March 2024 at**

<https://ask.warwickshire.gov.uk/insights-service/49f3c1bc/>

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*** SAVE THE DATE ***

OXFORD WELSH MALE VOICE CHOIR

CONCERT

SATURDAY 18TH MAY 2024

7.30PM ST LEONARD'S CHURCH, PRIORS MARSTON

TICKETS £15 EACH

FURTHER DETAILS NEARER THE TIME

ALL PROCEEDS IN AID OF ST LEONARD'S CHURCH BUILDING FUND



will be at

**Stockton Church
on 11th February
Valentine special!**

2.30pm

Enjoy crafts together!

Pray together!!

Enjoy food together!!!

Come and join in !!!!

**You enjoy the Messy Church activity bags..
Come to the real thing!**

UNDER 25? THEN THE FOLLOWING MAY BE OF INTEREST TO YOU!

The Kay & Bradshaw Educational Foundation

Have you left school, got an apprenticeship, going on to further education, off to Uni?

Maybe we can help you.

The Kay & Bradshaw Educational Foundation, or as it is more commonly known, 'Keys Charity', exists to provide financial assistance for the promotion of education, including social and physical training of persons under 25, who have a parent or parents residing in the parish of Priors Marston.

In these uncertain times, students need all the help and support they can get, and Keys Charity can assist with help to purchase course books, tools and equipment for a trade or profession, cost of a field trip or training course, music and arts... in fact anything connected to education.

Over several years, many young people from the village have benefited from its assistance. Our next meeting will be held in March, but we will look at applications as they are received.

If you would like to make an application, please write to Trustees, Malcolm Monkhouse, Dot Brown (priorsdot@gmail.com), Elaine Forsyth, Sue Benson, together with your details and receipts for any books or equipment that you may have purchased.

We are waiting to hear from you.

Dot Brown

Secretary

Priors Education Trust

Winners of PET 100 Draw held at Butchers Arms in December were Dot Brown, Sarah Franklin, John Grindlay and Jane Richards.

Our next Butchers Arms Dinner will be held on **Wednesday 7th February, 6.30 for 7pm.**

This, of course, will be the usual fantastic value at £32.50 for 3 courses including wine, coffee and mints, with a very generous donation from Nuno and Allison of £7 per person to the Priors Education Trust.

If you would like to join us at The Butchers Arms, or become a member of the Priors Education 100 Club please contact David Adams
davidzadams@gmail.com

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Housing Needs Survey for Priors Marston

This survey is being undertaken to assess the housing needs of Priors Marston parish. Please complete this if your household (single, couple, family) are looking for different housing within the parish within the next five years, or if you know anyone with a connection to the parish who would like to live here.

Please only complete the survey either on paper or online, if you HAVE a need for housing in the village.

A limited supply of hard copies of this survey has been given to the Parish Council, and your Parish News Distributor has kindly put one in every other copy of the Parish News delivered in Priors Marston, so, if you have a housing need and no survey document, please ask a neighbour or the Parish Clerk for a spare document or complete the survey online:-

<http://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/PMarston24>

It is vital that the questionnaire is only completed by those in the village who have a housing need

Priors Marston Parish Council

WORLD DAY OF PRAYER

**Prepared by the Christian women of
Palestine**

**Hosted by Napton Church
Friday 1st March**

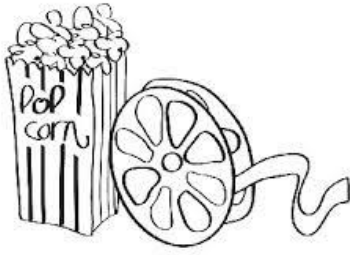
10.30 am



“I beg you, bear with one another in love”

**A short service of prayer, music and
reflection followed by refreshments.**

Everybody is always very welcome!



Film Night at The Priors Hall

Friday 16 February

The Great Escaper

In the summer of 2014, Bernard Jordan made headlines when he staged a “great escape” from his care home to join fellow war veterans on a beach in Normandy, commemorating their fallen comrades at the D-Day Landings 70th anniversary. It was a story that captured the imagination of the world as Bernie embodied the defiant, “can-do” spirit of a generation that was fast disappearing.

Cast includes: Michael Caine, Glenda Jackson and John Standing.

Year of Release: 2023 Certificate 12 Running Time: 1 hr 32 mins

Doors Open at 7:00pm

Film Starts at 7:30pm

- Free tea, coffee and biscuits are served in the interval.
- There is no charge for admission, but there is a collection box for voluntary donations towards our costs.
- Please feel free to bring your own refreshments and a cushion to make for a more comfortable viewing experience.
- If you have any questions or wish to join our mailing list contact The Priors Cinema Team at: priorscinema@gmail.com
- You can also call Lee Robinson Tel: 01327 263268

Welcome to Coffee and Chat!

**The Priors Hall, Priors Marston
Thursday 1st February
10am – 11.30**



**Looking forward to seeing you!
PLEASE bring an item for the foodbank~
If everybody brings one item, we can fill two
boxes**

PRIORS MARSTON & HARDWICK WI

**Wednesday 21st February 2024
7.30p.m.**

Venue: The Priors Hall, Priors Marston

Meeting: Barry Durman

Barry will be giving a talk on Walking the Millennium Way

At our December meeting, we enjoyed a Christmas Social evening with the Guess Who Game and the Left & Right game which is very similar to pass the parcel. We ended with delicious refreshments from our bring a plate supper.

Visitors and new members are always very welcome.
Come and see what happens in your local WI.

Contact:	Jane Cowen	07979 550202
	Fiona Spencer	01327 263423

FROM YOUR DISTRICT COUNCILLORS FOR BISHOP'S ITCHINGTON, FENNY COMPTON AND NAPTON WARD

STRATFORD ON AVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

The New Council Plan

The New Council Plan was approved at Full Council on 11 December 2023. Our aims and areas of focus will be as follows:

- Residents and Communities
- Health and Wellbeing
- Climate Change
- Housing
- Delivery of Service
- Local Economy

There is more detail on each of these areas on the Council's website here: [Council Plan 2023 - 2027 | Stratford-on-Avon District Council](#)

Budget

The administration is in the process of setting a budget for the year 2024/5 and we are pleased to announce that no cuts to services are anticipated. Central government advises local authorities of their settlement figures on an annual basis (rather than three or five years) which makes long-term planning difficult. The final figure from central government was reported to SDC on 22 December. Due to these tight timescales, Cabinet has been working on the budget for some months prior to the central government figures being announced. The preliminary figures were finalised following the Christmas break. By the time of printing, the budget will already be out for public consultation and we welcome your comments.

Cost of Living Support

We should like to remind residents that there is wide-ranging help and support available from the District Council if they are worried about the cost of living, which affects health and wellbeing. The support is not solely limited to financial help and residents may be signposted to many different resources. There is a link here to the support available: [Cost of Living Support | Stratford-on-Avon District Council](#) or residents may telephone Customer Services on 01789 267575.

Fire and Rescue

Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service are consulting on a proposed change to its service and are inviting comments from residents. A link to the consultation is here:

[Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Resourcing to Risk Consultation Opens – Warwickshire County Council](#)

The explanation in the consultation papers is a bit difficult to follow but there is a public presentation at Southam Grange Hall on 27 February at 6.30pm for which you can book tickets here:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/resourcing-to-risk-information-session-southam-tickets-774349338717?aff=ebdsoporgprofile>

HS2

The cancellation of the northern part of the route has all sorts of implications, but mostly emphasises what a waste the whole project represents, as some of us predicted. The Transport Select Committee has heard that the cost of Phase 1 of HS2, linking London and Birmingham, is now likely to be as high as £66.6bn. The Government's decision to scrap the northern leg of HS2, would also mean that fewer seats will be available on trains to Manchester compared with current services, as trains will have to be shorter, while HS2 trains will also have to slow down on conventional tracks as they cannot tilt on bends, increasing journey times. Here in north Warwickshire, the effects on land take arrangements for connecting spur lines trains has not yet been worked out.

Community Safety

There have been reports of people purporting to sell household items in a number of villages prior to Christmas. We are also aware that a number of properties were broken into over the 2 and 3 January and other break-ins were reported in Southam. All matters have been reported to the Police. We appreciate that this is very upsetting for residents and we attach advice from Southam SNT if you have an unexpected caller.

We wish all residents a happy and healthy 2024.

Cllr Natalie Gist

Natalie.Gist@stratford-dc.gov.uk

Cllr Nigel Rock

Nigel.Rock@stratford-dc.gov.uk

Southam SNT tips if someone unexpected knocks on your door

- Lock your back door before answering the front door
- Never agree to have work done by somebody who knocks on your door
- Use a spy hole, chain or window to have a look at the caller before answering the door and keep the chain on. If you do not recognise the caller speak through the closed and locked door
- Always ask for proof of identity. Take it from the person (through the letterbox) and read it carefully before deciding what to do
- Never use a 'phone number provided by the caller as it could be a false number to an accomplice
- Avoid going outside so they can show you what needs doing as they will probably have an accomplice who will enter the house while you are distracted and steal from you
- Never pay for work before it is completed. Always agree a final price in writing and get an invoice and a receipt as proof of payment
- Do not accept any offer to drive you to the bank to withdraw money or give them your bank details
- Tell them you are not interested and ask them to leave. If they refuse call the police and dial 999 if you feel at risk or are being threatened or pressured
- Never give bank details to a caller, even those claiming to be from charities. Police will have a list of charitable organisations visiting your area which can be checked by calling 101. We recommend that you contact the charity directly if you wish to make a regular donation through your bank or building society
- If you have any doubt, keep them out and remember that you do not have to open the door. Report any suspicious activity to the police on 101 or 999.

The Bridges Group Church Services February 2024

BCP – Book of Common Prayer CW – Common Worship

THE BRIDGES GROUP	4 th Feb 2 nd before Lent Green	11 th Feb 1 st before Lent Green	14 th Feb ASH WEDNESDAY Purple	18 th Feb Lent 1 Purple	25 th Feb Lent 2 Purple
PRIORS HARDWICK	Morning Worship 9.00am	Evensong 5.00pm	TBA	Holy Communion BCP 9.00am	
PRIORS MARSTON	Morning Worship 10.30am	Holy Communion CW 10.30am	TBA	Morning Worship 10.30am	'4 TH Sunday'
WORMLEIGHTON			TBA		Morning Worship 10.30am
NAPTON	Holy Communion CW 10.30am	Morning Worship 10.30am	TBA	Holy Communion CW 10.30am	Evensong 5.00pm
STOCKTON	Morning Worship Lay Led 10.30am	Holy Communion In the Methodist Tradition 10.30am	TBA	Messy Church 4.00pm Venue tbc	Morning Worship 10.30am tbc
LOWER SHUCKBURGH			TBA		Holy Communion BCP 9.00am



ST. LEONARD'S CHURCH, PRIORS MARSTON Flower Rota

Please contact Kate Morgan on 260617 if you would like to help with flowers.

28th Jan/4th February

Ivana Evans

11th February

Kate Morgan

If you would like to help with cleaning, we meet on the first

Saturday of every month at 10.00am in St Leonard's, to clean the church, enjoy coffee, biscuits and a chat!

ST. MARY'S CHURCH, PRIORS HARDWICK Cleaning/Flower Rota

4th/11th February

Lucie Penruddock/Miriam Price

18th/25th February

Cathy Jenkins/Lent

The Bridges Group of Parishes

Notices

Programme for Children and Youth

Create & Play: Tuesday mornings from 9.30 - 10.45am (term-times) in Stockton Church - for further details, contact: Deborah Dutton on 01926 819016 or

deborahduttoncreative@gmail.com

Babies & Toddlers Group: Monday mornings from 9.30 – 11.00am (term-times) in Napton Village Hall - for further details, contact: Helen Eadon on 07811 010440

Messy Church – now on 3rd Sundays of the month at 4.00pm, venues to be confirmed.

Mid-week programme for Adults - Home Bible Study Groups

The following groups meet for Bible study, prayer and fellowship. If you would like to join, please contact a Group leader:

Every Wednesday at 8pm in Stockton	Wendy	01926 812694
	Rachel	07915 056184
1 st & 3 rd Thursdays at 2.30pm in Stockton	Jan	01926 817991
Every Thursday at 8.00pm in Napton	Julia	01926 811476
Weekly (day varies) at 7.30pm in Napton	Angie	01926 812225

Social get-togethers

Knit & Natter: Mondays at 2.00pm in Stockton Church	Jan	01926 817991
Knit & Natter: Mondays at 2.00pm in Napton	Jayne	01926 813227

Parish enquiries

For initial enquiries about baptisms, weddings, funerals and graveyard matters etc., please contact Susan, our Group Administrator, on 01926 812383 or email: admin@thebridgesgroup.org.uk. Please note that Susan works part-time, but she will get back to you as quickly as she can.

See elsewhere in the magazine for details of other church activities & events or visit our website: www.thebridgesgroup.org.uk

FROM THE CHURCH OF ST MARY THE VIRGIN

Our Services

We have an A2 laminated, full-colour map of Israel in the time of Jesus and have had it suspended from the pulpit throughout Advent and until Epiphany, so we could trace the journeys undertaken by the Holy Family.

CHRISTMAS SERVICES

Sunday 3rd December – the first Sunday in Advent at our 9.00am service for families, we remembered Mary & Joseph setting out from Nazareth for the journey to Bethlehem. We used Bob Hartman's poems and the congregation joined in the refrains – as well as 3 hymns. We also had a pony with her rider, thinking of Mary! About 30 attended.

Tuesday 19th December – was our torchlight carol singing at the Lychgate, accompanied by organ music from the Hymnal. Our group of handbell ringers opened the proceedings and played again later. There was mulled wine to end with. Again, about 30 present – but not all the same people as came to the Family service!

Christmas Eve, 24th December, our annual, traditional Carol Service at 6.00pm gets bigger every year! The Handbell ringers introduced the service with three carols, and then the readings and congregational carols proceeded uninterrupted until the talk and final prayers. This time, 157 people were present including 20 children. The singing was amazing!!! The collection amounted to about £500, which we are donating to the British Red Cross appeal for Israel and occupied Palestinian territory.

7th Jan- Epiphany 9.00am: An all-age service, to which we welcomed three Kings in costume, bearing the traditional gifts and a Queen on another pony, who brought a gown for the baby! We studied, on a much wider map, the route the Three Kings probably took to get to Bethlehem – about 600 miles. Then we looked at where Mary, Joseph and Jesus went after the kings had left – down to Egypt to avoid Herod who was out to kill the baby Jesus. Our final activity was the Chocolate Nativity – a whole string of surprises for those present, to represent all the surprises at the first Christmas. Once more about 30 present.

So that was our 'suite' of Christmas services. There were some of the younger people who attended all four!! It was noticed!!!!

Our services for February will be back to our normal routine! (Sigh of relief!) The Christmas 'season' will end at Candlemas – Friday 2nd February, so the liturgical hangings will change to green. But only for a couple of weeks. Easter is early this year – Sunday 31st March, leaving only two Sundays before Ash Wednesday, 14th February, which begins the 40 days of Lent during which the frontals will be purple.

The Church Building

The new area at the back of the church is now cleared and we were able to use it for the Carol Service. There is still some plastering to be completed, which is due at the end of January. Very many thanks to all who contributed to this amazing transformation!

The heater on the back wall has been repaired, so this should be quite a cosy area in the near future.

The faulty joints in the guttering have now been repaired as well!

The Churchyard- We have now made arrangements for a new green shed to be placed near the bins under the Yew tree. A stone flag base will be provided. The shed will be used mainly to store the mower.

The Christmas 'season' will end at Candlemas – Friday 2nd February. This is the time when all Christmas wreaths etc should be removed from the churchyard, please!

Our next PCC meeting will have taken place on Monday 22nd January, so more news on that later!!

Donations in the Phone box

Donations of food have been most generous and also of toiletries. These are very gratefully received at the food bank as they make a lovely surprise for the recipients. So if by any chance you enjoy a hotel stay but don't use the little packages, please give a thought to the Food Bank!!

Used Stamps

Again, very many thanks for so many donations recently. I shall soon have enough to send off another envelope full to RNIB. In fact the cost of 2nd class postage didn't change so many people, it seems, continued to send their cards.

Margaret Clarke for the PCC.

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FEBRUARY LOCAL HISTORY QUIZ

Which of our parishes –

1. Experienced a brutal murder in 1872?
2. Had 4 slaves in 1086 and has declined since 1871?

Answers in the March issue.

Do we have a local history group in any of the parishes? We should have, as the villages are overflowing with history.

Howard Tissiman

PRIORS HARDWICK VILLAGE MEETING

The next Village Meeting will be held
at 7.30pm in the Church on Thursday 18th April 2024

FOOD BANK

Non-perishable and 'in date' items may be left
in the telephone box in Priors Hardwick.

Toiletries are also welcome.

Donations are taken to the Food Bank at Southam,
which is open on Mondays (except Bank Holidays)
between 11.00am and 1.00pm.

The Food Bank is run and regulated by
THE TRUSSELL TRUST
which provides emergency food and support
to people in crisis.

LIBRARY SERVICE

The mobile library service to the village has been discontinued. However, the
volunteer-operated personal delivery
library service for the housebound does still operate.

Contact details are:

01926 851031 and: <https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/libraries>

USED POSTAGE STAMPS

The Royal National Institute of Blind People

We have now received the boxes for collection of used stamps and these are
in the church at Priors Marston and in the phone box at Priors Hardwick. They
are clearly labelled. Please leave your stamps singly or 'in bulk.' The box in
Priors Hardwick is emptied every day.



THE PRIORS HALL

PRIORS HALL COMMITTEE

We are still seeking new members for the Priors Hall committee, which helps to keep the hall up and running for use by residents of Priors Marston and Priors Hardwick. The committee meets five or six times a year to look after the finances and upkeep of the hall. Currently, Lee Robinson chairs the committee, Jane Richards is the Treasurer, Barbara Harvey is the Bookings Secretary and Helen Menezes is the Minutes Secretary.

We are conscious that this is a very small group and would like to include more people from the villages. If you are interested and know any of the four of us already, feel free to get in touch to discuss. Otherwise, please email Lee Robinson at priorscinema@gmail.com

The Priors Hall serves Priors Hardwick and Priors Marston. It is available for meetings and functions. Please contact Barbara Harvey, 01327 260709, info.thepriorshall@gmail.com, to book, or for more information. The hire rate is £20.00 per hour, with a village rate of £15.00 per hour. Hiring for longer periods is possible, subject to availability - the rates depend on precisely what is required. Two local businesses are based in offices at the Hall, as well as hairdressing and post office.

Current activities include:-

Lacey's His and Hers Hairdressing: Tuesday to Saturday, by appointment, 01327 263330 and 07733 102564.

Post Office: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 10.00 am - 1.00 pm and 2.00 - 4.00 pm, 01327 261743.

Table Tennis: Tuesdays at 7.30pm. All welcome. No equipment or skill needed. Just £2. Come along and have some fun.

Play Group: Wednesday mornings. eleonorwakeford@outlook.com

Women's Institute: Meet on the third Wednesday of the month, 7.30 pm.

Coffee & Chat: Meet on the first Thursday of the month, 10.00 - 11.30 am.

Film Nights: Film nights are on the third Friday of the month, from September to May, at 7.30 pm. priorscinema@gmail.com Lee Robinson, 01327 263268.

Pilates: Contact kerry@indiewithlove.co.uk

Badminton, darts, short mat bowls and table tennis equipment are available for use. The hall committee is always pleased to hear from people with ideas for new activities and events.

Air Ambulance: A clothing bank is situated in the car park of The Priors Hall, for donations.

PRIORS MARSTON PARISH COUNCIL

VILLAGE COMMUNICATION

If you would like to be added to the village email list, to keep up to date with village news, or are new to Priors Marston and would like a copy of the Parish Plan, please email the Clerk, emma@priorsmarston.org

The Parish Council also has a Facebook page - please find us @Priors Marston parish council.

www.priorsmarston.org



priorsmarstonparishcouncil

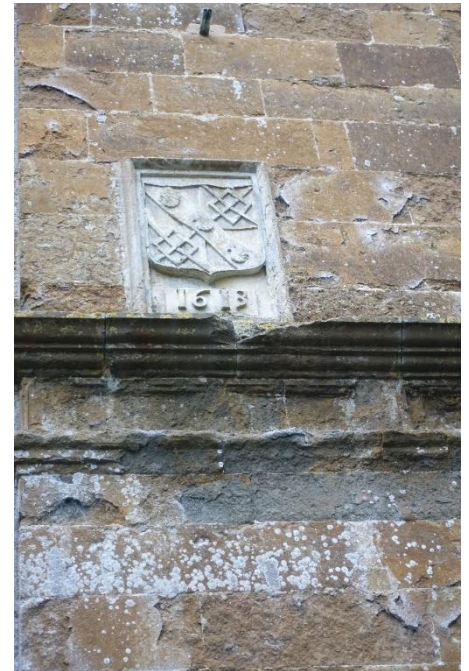
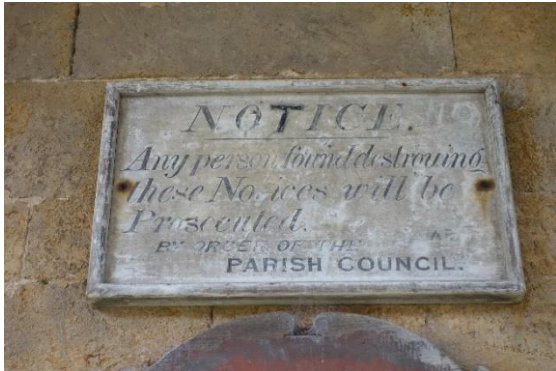
THREE PARISHES QUIZ -Answers from Dec/Jan Issue

Which of our three parishes has:

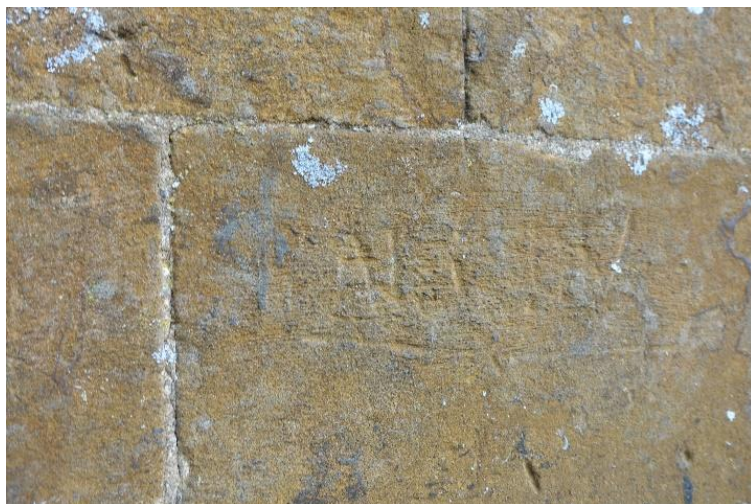
1. An authoritarian Parish Council
2. A library with no books
3. A building dating from 1613 when James 1 was ruling Britain and
4. A good amount of historic graffiti?

Answer: Wormleighton

1. Parish Council sign threatening 'Anyone destroying these notices will be prosecuted – By order of the Parish Council' above the parish notice board.
- 2 County Library' sign on a now empty building.
- 3.The Tower – Plaques on the opposite side of the building to the main road



4. Graffiti on the Tower and on the library



Wormleighton is a lovely village, have a walk round and see what else can be found.

NATURE NOTES ON A SUNNY DAY . . .

. . . having had a run of terribly warm, wet and windy weather - including rain which once again flooded the lowest room in the house - we are at last experiencing some cold, sunny weather which is much more 'normal' for the early weeks of the year. I recently invested in a small wildlife camera in order to check whether 'our' hedgehog had hibernated yet, or was still up and about and eating the food we were providing - and 'yes' it was still visiting, but so were the neighbours' cats, which was annoying. Other wildlife which is currently confused is the report of a female Blackbird already sitting on her first clutch of eggs, and Red Admiral and Brimstone butterflies on the wing!!

Once again, I am reminding everyone that the annual RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch takes place on the last weekend of January – 26th – 28th. All the details can be found here:

<https://www.rspb.org.uk/whats-happening/big-garden-birdwatch>

All it takes is one hour of your time and it is a wonderful contribution to the wildlife monitoring which has now been taking place across the country for 45 years and has helped increase our understanding of the challenges faced by wildlife. On their website are links to all sorts of films, quizzes and resources for adults and children alike which might be interesting and useful on a cold, wet and windy day stuck in the house. **If you are reading this after the end of January, please do the survey anyway. They would rather have your records slightly late than not at all.**

As ever, please feel free to keep in touch on any local wildlife matters.

Helen Franklin, The Latch, Holly Bush Lane, Priors Marston

helen_franklin@talk21.com Mob – 07794 909699



GARDEN JOTTINGS FROM BRIDGE NURSERY

Your local Hardy Plant Specialists

FLOWERS FOR FEBRUARY

Most of us will be looking forward to the spring - we've had enough of the winter wet and cold, so anything which will make us feel cheerful will be welcome. Snowdrops, hellebores and early daffodils will be most commonly seen. Primroses and violets look wonderful grown together and multiply easily. Slightly more unusual are some of the winter flowering shrubs. Viburnum botnantense 'Dawn', V. tinus and Lonicera fragrantissima are all likely to flower right through the winter. Hazel catkins are developing at this time of year and look good in a vase with daffodils. To see a much wider range, take yourself to any of the botanic gardens where there will be an abundance of winter colour.

Now is a good time to buy seed potatoes and onion sets., Sow sweet peas and broad beans in cell trays and put out of reach of hungry mice., Towards the end of the month, you can start to cut down any ornamental grasses and other herbaceous plants... and prune dogwoods by removing two thirds of all stems to the ground.

Christine Dakin

Bridge Nursery, Tomlow Road, Napton, www.bridge-nursery.co.uk ¼ mile from Crossroads Garage – look for our Tourist Sign

WEATHER JOTTINGS DECEMBER 2023

December 2023 had the rather unusual characteristic of beginning rather cold and then becoming very gradually warmer as it progressed. There were frosts on the first two mornings, with daytime temperatures which only rose a couple of degrees above freezing all day! By the second weekend of the month, the maximum daytime temperature had risen to 9°C and after another two weeks it had risen to 13°C. (There was, however, a frost on Wednesday 6th). By the end of the month, the temperature had fallen back to 10°C and 2024 began even a bit cooler!

December 2023 will go down in history mainly for its exceptionally high temperatures, the highest of which here was Sunday 24th with 13°C. However, according to the MET Office, the record for December in England is 17.7°C in Chivenor, Devon on 21st December 1985 and in Penkridge, Staffordshire on 11th December 1994. This year, 15+°C was reported in the South-east.

Total rainfall for December 2023 came to 121mm – only the 5th time December has recorded 100mm or more this century – whilst October has recorded 100mm+ on 9 occasions. The wettest December was in 2012 with 128mm and the driest was in 2010 with 19mm – and two other Decembers with totals in the 20mm's. But December 2023 now comes ahead of 14 other Decembers which recorded fewer than 121mm.

Following the two frosts at the beginning of the month there came a spell of 4 days which yielded 23mm – almost an inch of rain. It began on Sunday 3rd with snow, which turned quickly to rain as warmer weather arrived, with 7.5mm overnight and a dull damp day on Monday 4th. After a bright day, following a frost on Wednesday 6th, there came a very wet and windy day on Thursday 7th with 10mm of rain – Storm Elin which was followed quickly by Storm Fergus on 9th and 10th bringing more wind and rain totalling 16mm but a rise in temperature to 9°C.

After a further 10mm of rain on 12th and 13th, we had the longest dry spell of the month – five days with temperatures just getting into double figures. Then 11mm of rain on Tuesday 19th began a succession of roughly alternate wet and dry days until Storm Gerrit on 27th December with very strong winds and half an inch (12.5mm) of rain. After a dry day on Thursday 28th, the last three days again produced heavy rain, especially overnight on 30th giving rise to brief flooding across the road at Church End. I had to resort to my Wellies!

Those three named storms, although severe and seriously damaging in more exposed areas of the country, caused little disruption here.

Total rainfall for the year came to 718mm which after a rather 'slow' start proved a more respectable total among the 24 years under consideration.

The wettest month was December with its 121mm followed by July with 116mm and October with 103mm. The driest month was February with 6mm (!) but it was followed by March with 92mm.

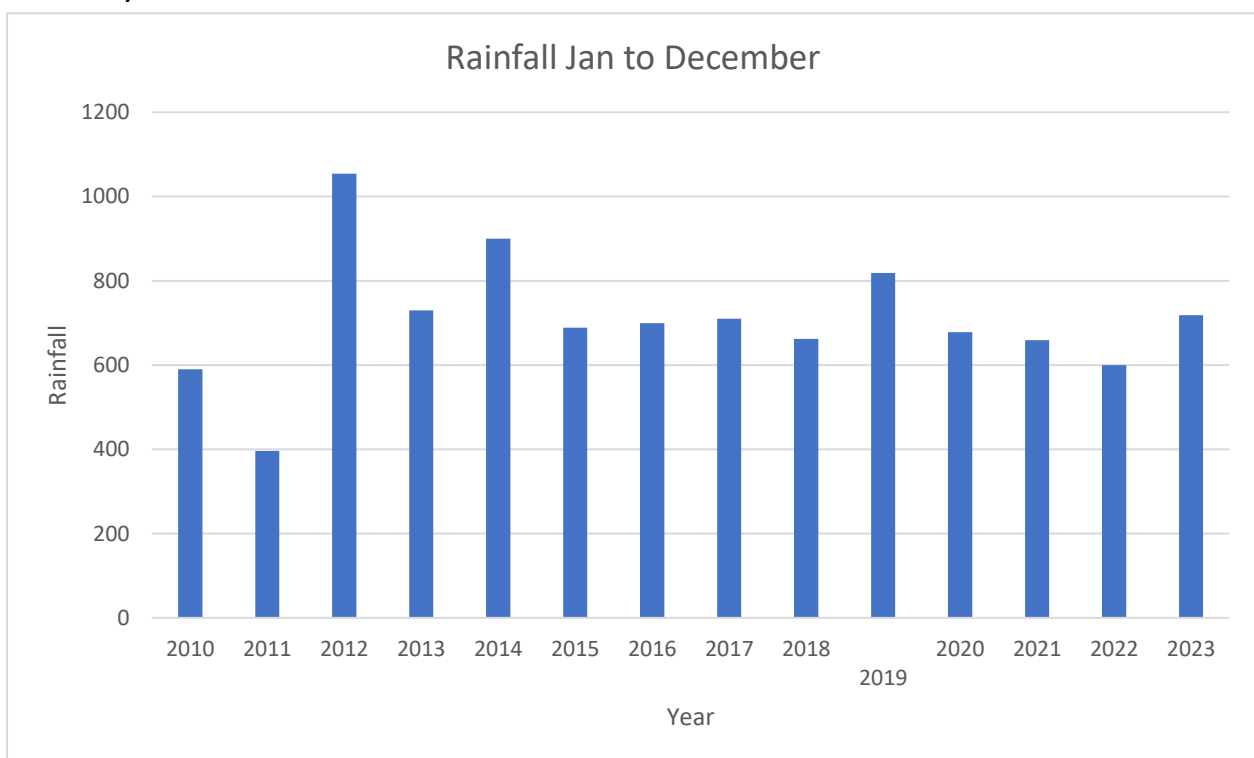
From wettest to driest, this century so far, average rainfall for the months came out as follows:

November - 79.3mm; October - 79.0mm; August - 71.3mm;

December - 66.5mm; January - 64.6mm; July - 64.5mm; May - 58.7mm;

June - 56.6mm; September - 54.0mm; March - 49.5mm; April - 47.0mm;

February - 46.5mm!



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