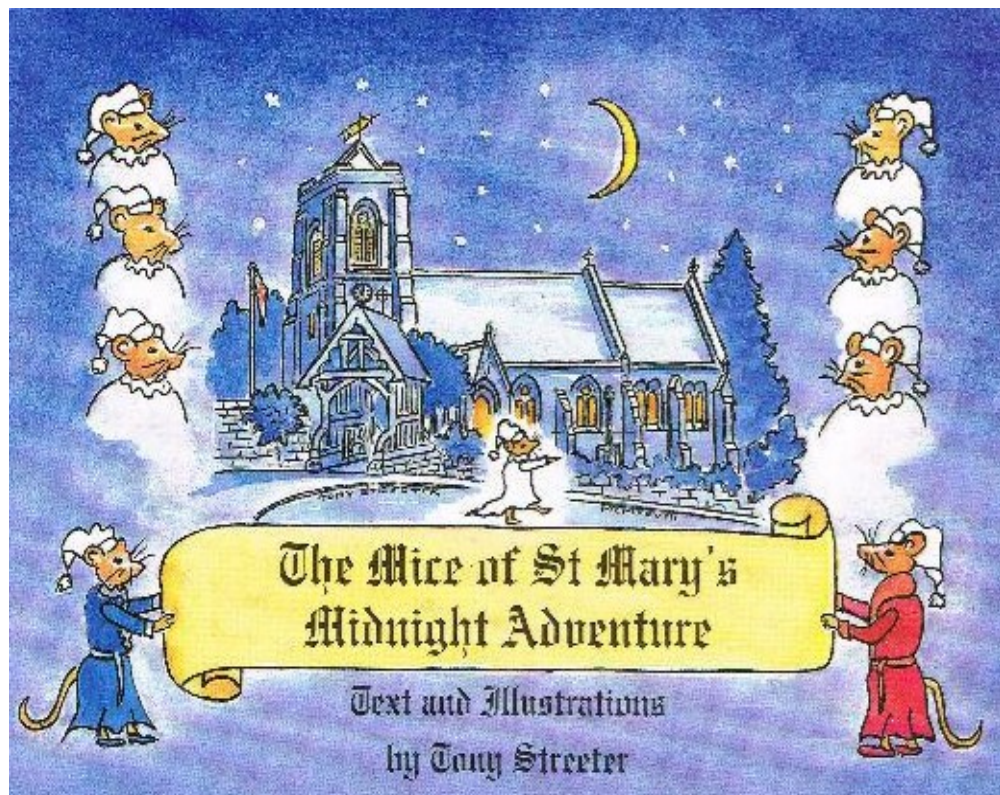


Speldhurst News



**December 2022
January 2023**

£5 per year

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Welcome to December/January

Dear Readers,

For all the book lovers in Speldhurst - I hope you like the cover picture by the very talented late Tony Streeter, from the village. On the subject of books, a new book group is also starting on Monday 5th December then monthly afterwards at the Library in the Village Hall (page 14).

We also have a pantomime on 16th December in the Hall (page 11). Services at the Church starting with Carols on 17th December (page 24) with services all over the Christmas period planned too. Don't forget the amazing selection of goodies at the Shop always great for presents, delicious local produce and a great bottle or two of wine and beer. Not to mention the mince pies!!

Speldhurst rainbows are looking for volunteers so if you have some spare time and would like to become involved do speak to Alex (page 14).

It just remains to say from all of us at the Speldhurst News to wish you and your families a very happy Christmas and New Year 2023!

Best wishes, Sara

On behalf of Speldhurst News Editors:

Maria Turner, Sara Turner, Judith Malim

Please remember that copy for the **February 2023 edition** should be sent **before 10th January 2023** to: speldhurst.news@gmail.com. Word, Publisher or pdf files preferred. Thank you.

SPELDHURST NEWS endeavours to include articles in addition to village, church and chapel news. These are taken in good faith and without prejudice, therefore the committee will not be held responsible for the accuracy of the content, nor will it be held responsible for any work or treatment received from the advertisers. Readers should satisfy themselves of advertisers' abilities before accepting a job quotation or undertaking a course of treatment. All articles & inclusions should be sent as a word document attachment. The editors reserve the right to amend submissions where they feel it is appropriate.

Diary at a Glance

December

Mon 5th	Full Council Meeting Book Group	p.9 p.14
Mon 12th	Bumps & Babes	p.4
Wed 14th	Praise & Play Christmas Meeting	p.4
Fri 16th	Christmas Panto	p.11
Sat 17th	Carol Service	p.24
Fridays	Quiting Group	p.15

January

Mon 9th	Praise & Play Energy Talk SPC Full Council Meeting	p.4 p.8/9 p.9
Wed 11th	Bumps & Babes	p.4
Mon 23rd	Praise & Play	p.4
Wed 25th	Bumps & Babes	p.4

News & Announcements

What's on in Speldhurst for the Under 5's in December & January

Bumps and Babes, the coffee mornings for new Mums meets just once in December on Monday 12th December from 10.15am. Then twice in January on 11th & 25th. We meet in The Chapel (opposite the village shop) from 10.30am. Do message Jenny if you are interested in joining the group.

Praise and Play have their Christmas meeting on Wednesday 14th December from 9am in St Mary's Church. We'll have the usual playtime together and then tell the Christmas story using our lovely knitted nativity figures. Come the New Year we'll meet on 9th & 23rd January. All families with Under 5's welcome.

For more information contact Jenny Fitzsimmons on 07891 318123 or at jenny50fitz@gmail.com

Audrey Stuart-Black
1922-2022

Audrey died peacefully in hospital on 30th October. She moved to Speldhurst in the summer of 1967, singing in St Mary's Choir for over fifty years, deputising as organist and choir mistress on many occasions. She edited the Speldhurst News for over 20 years and was a past President of the WI, but many will also know her from the times she spent playing nursery rhymes for the playgroup into her 90s. She will be greatly missed by her family and friends.

Audrey's family (Ian, Elspeth and Veronica) would like to thank everyone who sent condolences and cards, and everyone who attended and took part in her funeral service.

We would also like to express our thanks to Richard and his team at the George and Dragon for providing the venue and refreshments after the funeral.

Audrey now rests in peace with her beloved husband, Jimmy, next to the home they shared in St. Mary's Lane.

RICKY FAWCETT

By now most of you will have heard that our good friend Ricky Fawcett died on October 27th in a Tunbridge Wells nursing home. His family were present in his last few hours.

For around 20 years Ricky and Lilian, his delightful wife who died several years ago, brightened life in Speldhurst by running the chapel and making it available to all those, young or old who needed a place to meet for spiritual or practical purposes. They will both be missed especially for the support and love they extended to older people in the village. They came to Speldhurst when Ricky retired from the London City Mission where he spent a lifetime dedicated to the love and support of homeless and other vulnerable people in London. Towards the end of his life Ricky just wanted to be with his Father in Heaven and be reunited with his beloved wife. We are thankful that he has his most earnest desire and for the wonderful example that he and Lilian set of true Christian service.

“Jesus said, I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die.”

Every blessing,
John Perkins



It's Christmas!!!

The shop and post office will be open over the festive period. We are fully stocked with all your seasonal favourites including mince pies, stollen and festive chocolates. Have you baked your Christmas cake yet? We have all the dried fruit, icing and the brandy that you need!



Mince pie anyone? We have mincemeat and baking products if you've been inspired by the recent series of "The Great British Bake Off", or we have them in store ready to go!

We're expecting the usual Christmas rush at the post office, so pop in soon to get your Christmas stamps and we're always ready to take all your parcels. After the big day we'd be delighted to take all of your shopping returns. We now have DPD and Amazon collection too.



Keep a look out for Christmas posting dates and Christmas opening hours on our Facebook page.

We're very sad to be saying goodbye to our wonderful manager Jo-Anne in January; she will be very much missed by us all. As a result we are looking for a new manager, so please contact us if you would like to apply for this important role; we'd love to hear from you. Speldhurstcommunityshop@gmail.com



**The Management Committee, the Staff and
the Volunteers would like to wish everyone a very
'Merry Christmas' and the best of wishes
for a 'Happy New Year'.**

**We are looking for more people to join our group of volunteers.
The shifts are flexible – you can book whichever slot suits you. If
you would be interested, or would just like some more infor-
mation, please contact Jo Eames on 0789632716.**



PARISH COUNCILLOR VACANCY – COULD IT BE YOU?

“Most important for me is to be able to put something back into the community and place I love living in. There is also great satisfaction in seeing something achieved that the community values or wants.”

Could you see yourself as a Parish Councillor? We have a vacancy to fill and there is still time to put yourself forward. We would love to hear from anyone with a passion for helping to improve and enhance the local community in and around Speldhurst. One such resident is Paul Curry, who became a Councillor just over a year ago, and is now our Chair. Paul is very happy to talk to anyone who might be interested in the role about what it involves. Contact our Clerk, Katie Neve, to arrange an informal chat (contact details at the bottom of the next page).

E-NEWSLETTER OUT NOW

Our Autumn E-newsletter – featuring highlights from a productive few months – is out now. You can either read it on our website or sign up for news alerts so that this and future newsletters are delivered straight to your inbox – visit www.speldhurstparishcouncil.gov.uk to sign up. Hard copies can be posted on request.

SAVE THE DATE – ENERGY TALK 9TH JANUARY 2023

Specialist energy advisers from Citizens' Advice will give an energy talk on Monday 9th January 2023 at 2pm, in Langton Green Recreation Ground Pavilion.

The talk will cover topics including reducing energy usage, improving energy efficiency in the home and information about useful services such as the Priority Services Register and the Warm Home Discount scheme.

The talk will last 20 minutes, followed by a Q&A session, and Advisers will stay behind afterwards in case anyone would like a 1:1 chat about their energy bill. Please let us know if you would like to come by contacting asst.clerk@speldhurstparishcouncil.gov.uk, or by telephoning the office.

TO ALL WHO WORK WITH US – A BIG THANK YOU

We'd like to thank our Speedwatch Co-ordinators and volunteers for their commitment to running Speedwatch sessions. Thanks also to those residents who give their time as members of our Highways and Environment Working Groups. Thank you too, to those who keep an eye on the parish footpaths, or just pop in and give us feedback on how we're doing. It's been a busy year and it really does take a whole parish to get things done!

HAPPY CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR WISHES

Looking back on last year's Christmas message, we wrote that it had been a challenging year...and this year has been no less challenging! More than ever, we are grateful to be part of a community that comes together at difficult times and will continue to work for the good of that community. We wish you all a well-deserved break at Christmas and here's to a happy, healthy New Year.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

Full Council Meeting 7.00pm, Monday 5th December, Committee Room, Speldhurst Village Hall

Full Council Meeting 7.30pm, Monday 9th January, Palmer Room, Langton Green Village Hall

NB. We continue to monitor the number of local covid cases and reserve the right to ask you to book a seat in advance. See our website for updates.

COUNCIL OFFICE CHRISTMAS CLOSURE

The council office will close from Friday 23rd December until Monday 2nd January (inclusive), re-opening Tuesday 3rd January. We will check emails and the mobile phone for messages during this time if you need to contact us.

HOW TO CONTACT US

To contact the parish council, call the Clerk, Katie Neve on 01892 862927/07760 769513 or email clerk@speldhurstparishcouncil.gov.uk

For helpful information about SPC, visit www.speldhurstparishcouncil.gov.uk or follow us on Facebook as 'Speldhurst Parish Council'.

News from Cllr Matthew Sankey

When you get this edition of Speldhurst News we will be entering the best time of year. It's Christmas, but as I write this in mid-November and in our household we have a rule that we don't talk about Christmas until I've had my birthday, that's the 27th November if you're asking.

It's been an absolute roller coaster of a year and, I wanted to take this opportunity to thank you all and in particular the groups within our village who make it really special.

For example the Village Fete this year, the mini festival in the evening was fabulous and it was great to share a few drinks with you all and dance in the rain. What a brilliant event, bravo Suzy and Co.

The Vegetable Show was marvellous, and Angie's sloe gin is really really good. Where can I order more please?

The fireworks, what an effort, the PTA go above and beyond with this; it's so good I've managed to drag people from the town to come to ours over the one in Dunorlan Park.

I've got to also give a little nod to the footie team, or as we call them 'The Speldhurst Sparklers' – as I write this, they are top of the league! Come on lads!

Now, in my opinion we need to bring back The Pram Race - and I've got the perfect man for the job. Liam McLaughlin stand up please.

Lastly, Happy Christmas everyone and here's to 2023!

Council news....

I've taken up an additional roll, on the Finance & Governance board – this role sees me interrogate the cabinet on everything to do with finance, governance & transparency. Here I have replaced a member of the cabinet, as I reported last month, why are the cabinet advisory boards made up of cabinet members there to mark their own home work – not anymore.

Your Borough Councillors

	Contact Details	Re-Election Date
Cllr Matthew Sankey (Alliance)	07881 674 310 matthew.sankey@tunbridgewells.gov.uk	May 2024
Cllr Lucy Willis (Alliance)	07958 634 185 lucy.willis@tunbridgewells.gov.uk	May 2023
Cllr Harry Allen (Conservative)	07523 005 178 harry.allen@tunbridgewells.gov.uk	May 2024

SPELDHURST VILLAGE HALL

PRESENTS

A Christmas Panto!



16th December, 4 – 5:30pm

It's the end of year school inspection and Dip and Dab have arrived in your village hall to do some urgent restoration. Only problem is you're expecting a Pantomime show! Join our comedy duo for a Christmas adventure with a twist. With tonnes of audience participation, hilarious tasks and endless fun! Can these two unlikely characters get their jobs done whilst keeping you singing, dancing and laughing along? Oh yes they can!

**Tickets are available now from
www.speldhurstvillagehall.co.uk or contact Sam on
speldhurstvillagehall@gmail.com**

SPELDHURST CHAPEL PROJECT



Earlier this year we held a meeting in the Village Hall to consider the future of the Chapel on the corner of Northfields and Barden Road which is facing closure. Around 85 people attended the meeting and there was unanimous support for preserving the chapel as a village asset and creating a wonderful new amenity at the heart of our community. Since then we have formed a working group to explore alternatives and come up with proposals for repurposing the site and to organise funding.

Outline plans consist of moving Speldhurst Community Shop and Post Office to the site and incorporating a community room to enable the numerous village activities previously held in the chapel and new ones to continue. A local architect has waived his fees and produced drawings which will enable us to do this by extending the chapel down one side whilst keeping to the overall profile and character of the building. Costs of doing the work and purchasing the site are estimated at £500,000.

The project will be managed and run by a Community Benefit Society [CBS]. This is a legal entity which can issue shares and conducts its business for the sole purpose of benefiting the community. Those familiar with the working of the shop may remember that three years ago it was a CBS that was used successfully for saving and managing the Community Shop.

In addition we have applied to government and other grant making bodies for contributions. Most notable we have submitted a request to the Community Ownership Fund for £250,000. This fund has been set up by the government as part of its policy of “levelling up” and is aimed at “safeguarding the small, but much-loved local assets on which we cannot put a price”. A successful outcome is dependent on meeting a series of stringent criteria relating to the importance of the asset to local people and our ability, though the community share offer mentioned above, to match fund the grant.

Without our intervention it is highly likely that the chapel will be put on the market for sale. We have a one-off opportunity to secure the long term future of the shop by providing it with a permanent home and of ensuring that the traditional and other chapel activities remain as part of our social fabric, shared heritage and quality of village life. Success in achieving this will depend on our ability as a village community to respond generously to the community share offer.

We will continue to provide monthly updates in the village magazine and commit to organising a further open meeting in the New Year.

The Chapel Project Working Group can be contacted on

speldhurstchapelproject@gmail.com

Edward Pinnell & John Perkins

PENSHURST CHORAL SOCIETY



Carol Concert

Saturday 10 December 2022 at 6.30pm
St John the Baptist Church, Penshurst TN11 8BL



SCAN QR CODE TO BOOK: LIMITED TICKETS AVAILABLE

Adults £15 Children £5 Family Ticket £35

www.penshurstchoralsociety.co.uk/concerts

New Book Group

If you like reading come along to a new book group that will be starting in Speldhurst Library once a month on a Monday at 2.30 pm. If you would like to join please come along on Monday 5th December. All welcome.

Jane Bamgbola (jbamgbol@icloud.com)

Ann Lovering



“

Such a lovely friendly unit - by volunteering I got to play every Tuesday.



Come join our Rainbow



No pressure! You can do as much or as little as a volunteer as you want - Alex will always support you.

Unit time Tuesday 4.45 - 5.45
Speldhurst Village Hall



RACHEL
Rainbows volunteer

”

Call Alex, aka Blue Butterfly Unit Leader for an informal chat on: 07828 705509



BLACKHAM VILLAGE CAFÉ AND MARKET

(first Saturday of every month except January)



CHRISTMAS MARKET

SATURDAY 3 December 2022

10am – 12.30pm

BLACKHAM VILLAGE HALL



Meet your friends at Café, enjoy filter coffee, tea, or a *glass of mulled wine and a mince pie*

Lots of lovely goodies on sale to get your Christmas shopping off to a great start – local produce and hand-made gifts – as well as our usual great baked goodies – *bread, pasties, mince pies, Christmas Puddings, handmade pottery, bee products, flowers and lots lots more!*

We look forward to seeing you!!

Blackham Village Hall is a registered charity whose sole purpose is to promote and maintain the hall for the enjoyment of and benefit of the community



Speldhurst Village Website

Our website includes a calendar of village events, a photo gallery, some village history, a selection of local walks and cycle routes, past editions of Speldhurst News and more.

Why not take a look at: speldhurst.org?



Speldhurst CEP School News

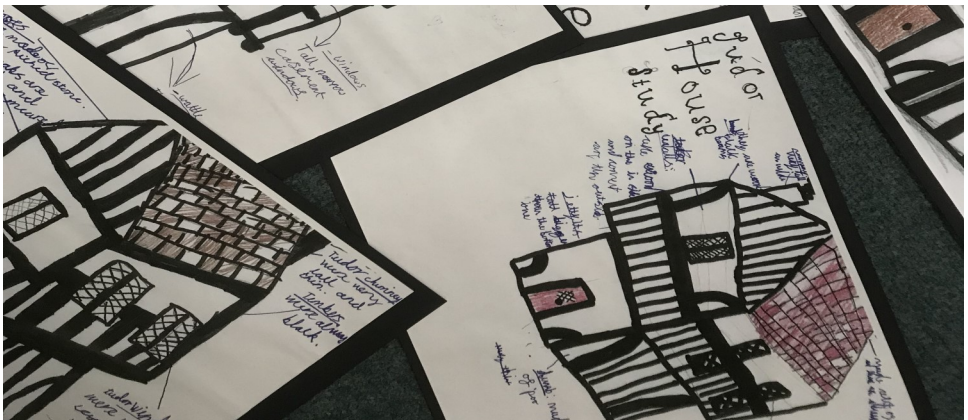


What do Mummified carrots, a Victorian rap and an investigation into the social injustices of Tudor England have in common? The answer: they're all part of history learning at Speldhurst Primary School.

Year 4 pupils in Empire Class who are learning about Ancient Egypt, had first-hand experience of mummification – using a mixture of salt and bicarbonate of soda to mummify a carrot. (the added bonus of a Chemistry lesson) Each pupil then buried their mummified vegetable before acting out the role of tomb robbers, digging their carrot up to find the treasure buried with it. The 'mummies' were then laid to rest in a fantastic tomb and sarcophagus which each of the children made for homework.

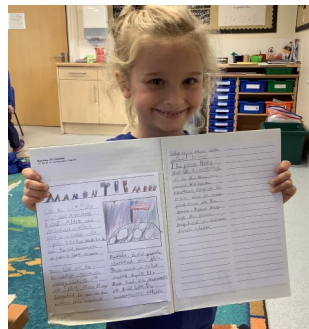


Meanwhile the Year 5 pupils in Crispin Class were doing their own research nearer to home many thousands of years later, learning how all was not well in the England of Henry VIII. Whilst the King and his court lived in sumptuous palaces, others led much less privileged lives. This photo shows the impressive fold-out information boards which the children created from their investigations – and although the wattle and daub houses may now have been renovated into desirable 21st century residences, they were nothing like that in Tudor times. The black and white cottages, which the pupils illustrate so beautifully, were in fact the crowded homes of a peasant population living in terrible conditions and poverty.



Now if you are eating turkey this Christmas, it is worth remembering that it was Henry VIII who introduced the bird to England, roasting it on a spit at Hampton Court, to replace 'peacock' on the banquet menu. Domestic turkeys come from the Wild Turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo*), a species that is native only to the Americas where it was domesticated by the indigenous peoples – and if it hadn't been for explorers like Christopher Columbus there would have been no festive turkey here.

Columbus was highlighted as one of history's 'movers and shakers' which Year 2 children have been finding out about in Galaxy Gala class – along with space explorers such as Neil Armstrong. The pupils wrote fantastic news reports about the first moon landing.



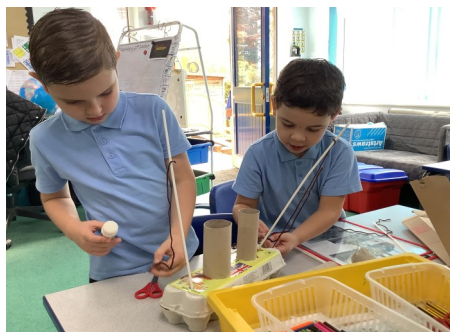
And this brings us to the 21st century and some of the youngest in our school in Jazz class. As part of Black History month, the Year 1 children learnt about the lives of those who arrived on the Empire Windrush through the story of Mona Baptiste. The Trinidad and Tobago-born singer was one of many who arrived on the ships like 'The Empire Windrush' to help rebuild the country after the Second World War. Like all stories from the Windrush generation, her story far away from home in a cold and often unwelcoming country, links to one of the school's values of perseverance and has resonances today. You can view one of her iconic jazz classics Stormy Weather on You Tube.

So what about that Victorian Rap. Strictly speaking it was a reworking with great enthusiasm of a rap about the ten top Victorian movers and shakers. There are a lot to choose from – but amongst the top ten are Charles Dickens, Charles Darwin, Florence Nightingale, anti-slavery campaigner William Wilberforce – and Rowland Hill, who many (including myself) may not have heard of but he's up there as founder of the postal service with Robert Peel (the police force) and engineers Isambard Kingdom Brunel and Robert Stephenson.



Year 6 also had the most amazing 'History Off the Page' day with the re-enactment of a class in Victorian times. Dressing up helped the children get into character and they were treated to an array of typical by-gone lesson activities. All of the children agreed it is a fantastic way to learn about the past.

On any day and at any time, the school is always buzzing with many kinds of activities from designing and building ships with junk modelling to hands-on scientific investigations and discussions of the different materials which make up our world.



And in the school hall Bramley class Year 3 pupils are enjoying their new PE course which includes orienteering, continuing to develop teamwork, communication and listening skills. There has been a lot of laughter in these lessons as activities involved crossing a river of lava and being detectives to crack a code!



Whilst outside the start of Forest School gave the chance for children to learn and develop through a variety of activities in the fresh air from leaf painting and mud kitchens to making nature wands. As I write this on a sunny morning following several days of persistent, often heavy rain, I am wondering if it will snow for Christmas. Have a wonderful seasonal break everyone.

Sara Andrew - Communications Governor



*Put the dates in your diary! This December there will be **two** markets at Penshurst for all the best festive local food, drink and crafts*



**Saturday
3rd Dec
2022
9.30am - 12
noon**

**Saturday
17th Dec
2022
9.30am -
2.00pm**

**Penshurst
Place Visitor
Car Park**



After the success of our special Christmas market last year once again we are hosting two farmers' markets in December. The regular one will be on the first Saturday of the month when you can get ahead with all the advance shopping for storecupboard essentials, items to prepare ahead and freeze, and gifts.

Then a special Christmas Farmers' Market will take place on the 17th staying open till 2.00pm to allow even more time for those last minute festive treats. This market will feature as usual all the best of local Kent, Surrey and Sussex produce and also showcase seasonal guest stallholders with a range of beautiful locally-made Christmas gifts and crafts.

Alongside free-range meat and game, seafood, fruit and veg and award winning cheeses, there will be seasonal specialities on offer such as Christmas puddings and mince pies, hand-made chocolates, festive cakes and pastries plus crafted gifts including handmade and candles, knitted alpaca hats, Christmas decorations and more.

Carol singers, Christmas trees, mistletoe and a visit from Father Christmas will all add to the festive occasion. Parking is plentiful, free and close by. Dogs and families welcome as always.

Find us on Facebook

Find us on Twitter and Instagram

www.kfma.org.uk/penshurst

Nature Watch

I have been to a meeting on comparing duck numbers that migrate to us in the winter over the last 25 years. Two ducks, the Smew and the Goldeneye were seen in Kent in good numbers. Last year only one Smew was seen in Kent. The more common ducks Mallard, Tufted and Pochard are still coming from Europe but in much smaller numbers.

This is also the case for the wild Swans, Whooper and Bewick numbers are much reduced. This is caused by warmer winters; the birds do not need to leave Europe for food. To balance this we are seeing birds that normally come to us in the summer are now spending the winter here, again food can still be found in our milder winters. These include Swallows, Chiffchaff and Blackcaps. One bird to look out for this winter is the Waxwing. Large numbers are travelling across northern Europe so let's hope they come across the North Sea to feed on our berries.

An article from last month's allotment news by Rob caught my eye re bird's not eating caterpillars. The brassica-loving caterpillars of the large white are brightly coloured to warn predators that they are poisonous and distasteful having accumulated mustard oils from the cabbages and sprouts they have eaten, so birds will not touch them This applies to all brightly coloured caterpillars that feed in the open, but they have hidden enemies within. A parasitic wasp lays an egg into the caterpillars which hatches and eats it from the inside. This means although we have lots of caterpillars this year does not mean lots more butterflies next year. Also various fungal infections will kill more of the caterpillars over the winter. Nature is red in tooth and claw.

Alan Ford





TONBRIDGE MUSIC CLUB
All That Jazz with the Ben Cox Band
Friday, 9 December at 7pm
Juddians Rugby Club,
The Slade, Tonbridge TN9 1HR

By popular demand, following a standing ovation at TMC's first-ever jazz event last year, The Ben Cox Band returns to perform a relaxed evening of great jazz classics that are fresh, bold and exciting, by songwriters such as James Taylor, Paul Simon and Neil Young. This evening should help you get into the Christmas mood!

Ben studied Jazz at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama and was a founding member of successful vocal group, Vive, which won the Voice Festival UK choir competition in 2013 along with the Ward Swingle Award. Heading up the 'The Ben Cox Band', he tours around the UK, regularly playing major jazz festivals, including London, Cheltenham and Scarborough as well 'sold out' performances at prestigious venues like Ronnie Scott's and the Pizza Express Jazz Club. In 2015 Ben released his debut original album 'This Waiting Game' to critical acclaim. It was named by the Daily Telegraph as one of the best jazz albums of 2015 and was quickly followed up with his second album 'Round and Round' in 2016.

Ben is currently recording and touring his latest project 'Hourglass: The Music of James Taylor'. Also a fan of folk music, Ben plays the Irish whistle and flute – writing melodies and songs, and is currently touring with London-based folk band, Counter's Creek. He is a passionate and experienced educator. He gives workshops to schools and educational establishments across the country. At present, he is the musical director of four choirs in and around London and is the music lead at St George's Catholic Primary School in Enfield.

Tickets for the Jazz Evening cost £25, and for under-18s and students, £5. A finger buffet is included in the price. There will be a pay bar for drinks. Tickets can be bought at www.tmc.org.uk, where further information is available about all the Club's activities and how to become a member. Alternatively, you can call 01732 364204. (Please note that tickets will not be sold on the door.) If you are booking tickets as part of a group who wish to sit together, please email kathryn@tmc.org.uk



~ Allotment News ~



Tips of the Year

I've been thinking about this pretty much all year, wondering what tips would prove to be successful. But what a year it's been! Damp in the spring and then dry, dry, dry throughout the memorable summer.

Consequently it became challenging just to keep up with the need to water the plants on the allotment throughout the several heatwaves and extreme heat events. So whilst this was great for outdoor living, many of the vegetables on the allotments suffered.

Whilst there is no universal replacement for effort, care and attention, there are a few things that I have been trying or have seen implemented that I have been found to work.

Chicken Manure Pellets in the Watering Can: I hadn't considered this until I saw it mentioned in the book 'Digger's Diary – Tales from the Allotment' by Victor Osborne.

Chicken manure pellets are quite expensive and perhaps somewhat strong for direct adding to the soil. So an interesting and effective option is to add a small handful to each watering can, dissolve the pellets and then use this as a liquid fertiliser.

I almost exclusively used this technique on my peppers and chillies this year, and I have had the best crop ever. Fantastically sized fruits and lots of them!

The only trouble I had was that the pellets don't dissolve readily. As they are dried, I thought they might dissolve readily, but they don't.

The first time I tried this, I found that the pellets were still in the bottom of the emptied watering can, mostly still intact and looking a tad yukky. The 'solution' was to leave the pellets to soak for a day and to stir the liquid before using this chicken pellet manure 'soup' to feed some of my plants.

Mulching: This is undoubtedly one of the best techniques in gardening for a number of reasons. So I was delighted when I had an opportunity to trial sheep's wool as mulch.

I must say I found this to be most successful, and here are a few characteristics that make sheep's wool work well as mulch:

It's good at suppressing weeds, has good water retention and is 100% natural. It will bio-degrade over time, hold the heat of the day and warm the soil. The lanolin acts as a natural slug deterrent and the fleece will be great for the local bird population to build their nests in the spring. Finally, it will rot and put nitrogen back into the ground.

No-Digging: If we admit it, we would all like our gardening to be as easy as possible. Well...one way to achieve that is not to do any digging, here is an argument why:

Digging actually kills the soil life that is so crucial in maintaining a productive and healthy ecosystem. There are billions of microbes in the underground soil that support the life above and send necessary minerals to our plants.

While digging the soil might initially bring a surge of oxygen to the soil, when done every year, digging kills off essential fungal networks and beneficial life forms that we are only beginning to discover now.

Since healthy soil is the most important aspect of the garden we need to stop digging it!

Robert Kyte

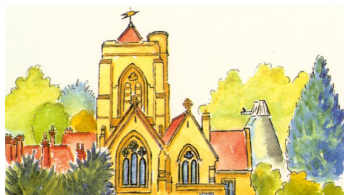
If you are interested in acquiring an allotment, please contact Mark Oddy on 01892 862746.

If there is any topic you would like to address relating to matters gardening or horticultural, please send an email to kytehouse@stepex.co.uk.

If you would like to submit something for this article, please also email it to kytehouse@stepex.co.uk.



December 2022



5th December

10 am Confirmation Service

12th December

10 am Morning Worship

10 am Online Worship available via
<http://youtube.com/StMarysSpeldhurst>

SATURDAY 17th December

6 pm Carol Service

19th December

10 am All-Age Communion Service



SATURDAY 24th December

2 & 3 pm Crib Services (2 sittings)

11.30 pm Midnight Communion



25th December - Christmas Day

10 am Christmas Celebration

10 am Online Worship available via
<http://youtube.com/StMarysSpeldhurst>



1st January

10 am All-Age Communion Service

6 pm Said Evensong

Other services in January had not been finalised at the time of going to print. Please see our website nearer the time.

**The Church Office can be contacted on 861187 or
speldhurst.church@btopenworld.com**

Normal office hours: 9 am to 12.30 pm

See our website: www.speldhurstchurch.org

St Mary's Facebook page: facebook.com/StMarysSpeldhurst/

A Letter from St Mary's



December 2022

Dear Friends,

Every Christmas is different, but I suspect that this one will feel like no other. It comes at the end of a year in which we have seen a war start in Europe, three British Prime Ministers, the death of our longest serving monarch and an ongoing economic shock. Please don't despair! My intention is not to depress us all but to be real about the world that we live in and to discover light and hope at this time.

Given the uncertainty and disruption that we are all experiencing can I suggest that this Christmas we take the opportunity to do things differently. To start with, let's be real about the situation that we are in. If life is tough, pretending that it's otherwise is a pretty sure way to end up in despair. It's ok to say that life is grim. The Christmas story is actually quite a dark one that involves pregnancy outside marriage at a time when that was taboo, a young woman giving birth away from her home and doing so in a stable of all places.

If you are fortunate not to be under pressure, then the account of the visit of the wise men shows us the importance and joy of giving. Maybe we can invite others to join us for a meal this month or just leave an anonymous gift on someone's doorstep. And then there were angels singing praise. Joining with others to focus on someone beyond ourselves can be a life-giving experience. Do join us this Christmas time. You will find service details elsewhere in this magazine.

I wish you all joy at Christmas 2022.

Douglas

PS I can be contacted at douglas.wren12@gmail.com or on 01892 862821 or at The Rectory, Southfields, Speldhurst, Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN3 0PD

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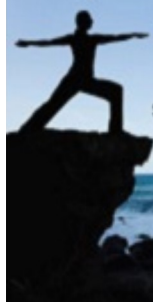
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