

Speldhurst News



November 2022

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Welcome to November

Dear Readers,

Welcome to your November edition of Speldhurst News. As you can see on the page opposite there are many events happening in our village this month. In addition to much loved annual dates like Bonfire Night, there are a host of activities and workshops being held in the Village Hall to help you to get into the Christmas spirit, including wreath making and the Pantomime.

It is wonderful to see our Village Shop welcoming new volunteers, you can read about their experiences so far on pages 6-7.

Also new this month is a Thursday afternoon café for parents. This is to be held weekly in the Chapel along with monthly workshops to help provide support to parents. More details are on page 10.

As well as looking forward, Speldhurst News has been considering the archive of past magazines. A recent browse from a decade or so ago revealed for how long many of our writers have been providing monthly contributions, thank you. Speldhurst Parish Council are also building their archive and would love to receive your photos, more details on page 12.

Finally, with many new families moving to the village if you have new neighbours please let us know if they would like a 'hello and welcome' in our next edition.

Best wishes, Judith

On behalf of Speldhurst News Editors:

Maria Turner, Sara Turner, Judith Malim

Please remember that copy for the **December/ January edition** should be sent **before 10th November** 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

November

Wed 2nd	Praise & Play Highways Meeting	p.4 p.12
Thurs 3rd	Parent Drop-in café	p.10
Sat 5th	Penshurst Farmers Market Blackham Village Market	p.18 p.19
Sun 6th	Speldhurst Bonfire Night	
Mon 7th	Full Council Meeting	p.13
Mon 14th	Bumps & Babes	p.4
Wed 16th	Praise & Play	p.4
Thurs 24th	Create your own Christmas Tree	p.5
Sat 26th	Christmas market	p.5
Sun 27th	Posada Figures Journey	p.4
Mon 28th	Bumps & Babes	p.4
Tues 29th	Supporting Your Anxious Child	p.10
Wed 30th	Praise & Play Operation Christmas Child	p.4 p.9
Fri eves	Community Choir Practice Quilting Group	p.8 p.15

December

Fri 2nd	Christmas Bauble Workshop	p.5
Sat 10th	Christmas Wreath Workshop	p.5
Fri 16th	Christmas Pantomime	p.5
Sat 17th	Carol Service	p.8

News & Announcements

What's on in Speldhurst for the Under 5's in November

Bumps and Babes, the group for Mums with under 2's, meets fortnightly on Monday mornings in The Chapel. We'll be meeting on 14th and 28th of November this month, so do get in touch with Jenny if you have a new babe or you are new to the village and would like to join the group.

Praise and Play, the toddler group for all under 5's and their parents/ carers, meets in St Mary's Church fortnightly on Wednesdays from 9am so you can turn up straight from school drop off or come a bit later if that's better for you. This month we meet three times, on Wednesdays 2nd, 16th & 30th November. We'll have a craft, some time to play and a short story and song time.

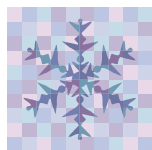
So, whatever the age of your Under 5's, do come and join us.

Posada Figures, this month, also, the Posada figures begin their journey around the village and the sign up list is open to our U5's families first. The tradition of Posada started in Mexico - a re-enactment of Mary and Joseph's journey to Bethlehem, seeking shelter (posada means 'inn'). Our Posada figures will be travelling from home to home from Sunday 27th November, before arriving in church on Christmas Eve.

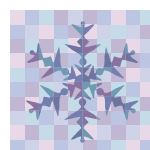
For more information about either of these groups, especially if you are new to the village, contact Jenny Fitzsimmons on 01892 541200, 07891 318123 or at jenny50fitz@gmail.com

Hello and Welcome!

To Nicola, Ben, Bertie and Wilf who have moved to 'Wechylstone'



SPELDHURST VILLAGE HALL



This year we have a whole host of events to get you into the Christmas spirit

Create Your Own Sweetie Christmas Tree

24th November, 7:30 – 9:30pm

Create a gorgeous tree of edible treats to keep for yourself or give to someone special. £17.50 per person to include all materials. Please contact Julie Pinnell jkp3306@gmail.com to reserve your place.

Christmas Market

26th November, 2 - 4pm

Get your festive shopping done early this year at our market filled with unique gifts and crafts

Christmas Bauble Workshop

2nd December, 7:30 – 9:30pm

At this workshop you will learn how to hand letter and gild, using gold or silver metallic leaf, a pair of painted ceramic baubles for you to take home and proudly add to your Christmas Tree. £35 per person to include all materials. Please reserve your place via www.lettersink.co.uk/shop

Christmas Wreath Workshop

10th December, 10am – 12:30pm

Join Vicky from The Tunbridge Wells Flower Company to create a fully mossed festive wreath. Stuffed full of natural foliage and beautiful adornments. All materials and refreshments supplied. £50 per person, email thetunbridgewellsflowerco@gmail.com

Christmas Panto!

16th December, 4 – 5:30pm

It's the end of year school inspection and Dip and Dab have arrived in your school 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

For further information contact Sam on speldhurstvillagehall@gmail.com



As our name suggests, Speldhurst's Shop has been set up by the community, for the community. We rely on a group of volunteers who help Jo-Anne keep the shop running. We spoke to two of our brilliant volunteers, Cheryl Fenton and Irene Hammond, about why they enjoy working at our beloved village shop.



Why did you want to volunteer?

CF: I had recently retired from full time work so had more time. I was keen to contribute to keeping the shop going. Having lived in the village for 23 years, I really appreciated having the shop nearby with its amazing range of products. I really wanted to give back and make sure it continued to be available to young and old – and me!

IH: I've always been fascinated by the Post Office since I was a child. It was the perfect opportunity to find out how it works and learn a new skill whilst doing so.

What do you enjoy most about volunteering?

CF: Keeping in touch with neighbours. We recently moved from the centre of the village to the outskirts and have far less day-to-day contact with people in the village. Volunteering in the shop has meant I've maintained that social contact and have got to know a lot of people so much better – including which paper they read!

IH: Working at the Post Office really keeps your mind engaged! I learn something new every time. It's a lovely, relaxed environment to work in and the other volunteers are great fun.



What is the most unusual item you've discovered at the shop?

CF: Some of the cheeses come to mind. We have such a wonderful selection: great for a special occasion or to impress at a dinner party - especially since there is advice on which of our wines will pair nicely with them.

What is the most unusual item you've posted at the Post Office?

IH: During the first lockdown, a customer posted toilet rolls to their brother in London who couldn't find any to buy in his local shops!

Do you have a funniest moment volunteering?

CF: Usually when I press the wrong button on the till and the price of a basic item comes up as in excess of £1,000. Customers always join in with a chuckle when I enquire if they would like to pay that amount and any mistake like that is simply rectified with one click on the till.

Which items do you buy the most of from the shop?

IH: The fresh fruit and vegetables are really good quality. The wines are very good too!

CF: Vegetables, cheeses, ingredients I run out of halfway through cooking and make a dash for the shop for ever thankful that it is there!

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 information, please contact Jo Eames on 0789632716.

Community Choir for Carols



St Mary's would like to invite you to join a community choir for a carol service this Christmas

We are looking forward to a candle-lit celebration of Christmas for the village community this year. The community choir will be leading the carol singing and adding some items that they sing to the people who come. There will be a simple dress code for the service itself (we won't be wearing church choir robes). The music will be in four-part harmony; paper copies and digital versions will be provided for you. Becky Leeves will be leading the choir. Practices will be in St Mary's from 7.30 – 9.00 on Friday evenings in November and December. The first practice will be 11th November. The carol service will be on Saturday 17th December.

Adults and secondary school children are very welcome. There are no auditions – just come along.

If you would like to know more please talk to me, contact information below. Becky or any member of the St Mary's singers would be glad to answer your questions too.

To register your interest (so we make enough copies), please email or text me.

Mary Wren

marywren@me.com

07970040930

01892860327



Operation Christmas Child – 2022

I will be launching our campaign this year on the **30th October** at the 10.00am service in St Mary's church, sharing stories of my experience distributing boxes in Malawi, plus answering questions and hosting a 'packing party' afterwards. Please come and find out what a huge impact these boxes have. If you can't make it on the 30th, you can still get involved. Leaflets are available from the Speldhurst Shop and Post Office, where completed boxes can also be dropped off from the 14th – 19th November.



Thank you for your support.
Julie Pinnell
(for more information please contact me on jkp3306@gmail.com,
[01892 863300](tel:01892863300) or [07917 606542](tel:07917606542))



**Parents drop in café / support group
and monthly evening workshops
Every **Thursday** (term time) from 2-3:30
pm
Starting on 3rd November 2022 at
the Chapel, Speldhurst (opposite the
shop)**

Run by Amanda Morris (who is a BACP accredited Senior Counsellor) and Julie Pinnell (a local parent), both with a passion to support parents, grandparents and carers as they navigate the trials of life looking after children today. We aim to create a safe, confidential space where you can enjoy some free refreshments while you listen, share and learn.

Amanda has successfully facilitated different parents' groups for several years, covering all aspects of life as a parent – including neurodiversity, anxiety, challenging behaviour and more. She has created several parent support networks and one comment frequently heard is "I felt really understood and it is so reassuring to be with other parents going through similar challenges".

The weekly drop-in sessions are free and will cover different aspects of parenthood and the trials both we and our children face. Together we will learn and share strategies to help support and educate our children, whilst gaining support from the group.

**Evening workshops will run on the
last **Tuesday** of each month from 8 –
9:30pm**

The first workshop will be on the 29th November entitled
‘Supporting your anxious child’

For more information, please contact Amanda - clear-
mind@outlook.com

News from TWB Cllr Matthew Sankey

It seems to me like every week my colleagues and I unearth something that, to me at least, seems to be totally bonkers. The most recent was the discovery that the surplus revenue, so “profit”, from parking fines is handed directly to Kent County Council with very little say of how they should spend it. I can’t quite get my head around this, so we manage the parking wardens; the spaces, we process the fines, we chase up the bad debt and if there is any money left, we hand it to someone else to spend as they see fit. I’m not suggesting we use parking fines as a way to increase revenue, but we desperately need to be able to have a say in how to spend this surplus to improve our borough, it is after all taken directly out of our pockets.

More Parking Issues

As reported last month, Cabinet have decided to cancel their original plan to revoke the free parking in Paddock wood and Southborough. There is clearly a lot of emotion around the subject, and I have suggested that we bring forward the borough’s parking strategy review from a 2024 start to immediately. I have also suggested that the Town Centre is separated from the rural strategy as there are clearly different needs and issues.

And some more...

With thanks to the Parish Council, we are to have some new yellow lines in the village after residents sent me their suggestions. The junction of Cobham’s/Braden Rd and the junction of Ferbies/Langton Rd.

We are really lucky to have a great Parish Council here in Speldhurst, they are well organised and seriously pro-active, making my job so much easier, so my thanks to them for getting this through their Highways Improvement Plan so quickly.

Cllr Matthew Sankey

REWILDING UPDATE & PHOTO REQUEST



Many thanks to Alan Ford for photographing Pocket Park in Roopers during the summer months as we rewilded part of the land. Pocket Park sits on ancient grassland, which helped it to rewild successfully with little input from us. We documented all sorts of emerging plant and wildlife during the course of the growing season, which included more than 3 different species of Butterfly, and 15 types of wild flower – including a Common Spotted Orchid.

We will put all we have learned to good use next year, so we can really boost biodiversity at Pocket Park. Plans are now afoot to rewild other areas of council- owned land in the parish, and we would also be happy to talk to residents who are considering rewilding an area of their garden.

Did you take any photos of plant or wildlife this summer? We would love you to share them with us so we can add them to our archive.

HIGHWAYS MEETING 2ND NOVEMBER

Our Highways working group will meet for the final time this year on 2nd November. This year, we have really progressed our working relationship with KCC Highways, who are now helping us tackle traffic calming measures in Speldhurst parish. Do get in touch if you would like to join us (contact details below), and find out where we are in addressing our list of traffic hotspots

PARISH COUNCILLOR VACANCIES – IT’S NOT TOO LATE

If you are reading this before the 31st October, there is still time to put yourself forward to become a Parish Councillor. We have two vacancies to fill and would love to hear from anyone with a passion for helping to improve and enhance the local community in and around Speldhurst. One such Speldhurst 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.

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.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

Full Council Meeting 7.30pm, Monday 7th November, 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.*

HOW TO CONTACT US

To contact the parish council, call the Clerk, Katie Neve on 01892 86292 / 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’.

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

TONBRIDGE MUSIC CLUB

Coffee Concert: Four Hands, One Piano Jong-Gyung Park and Anthony Zerpa-Falcón

11am on Sunday, 20 November 2022
Music Suite, Somerhill, Tonbridge TN11 0NJ

Well known to local audiences, Jong-Gyung and Anthony kick off this Season's popular Coffee Concert series in the beautiful surroundings of Somerhill, with the ideal programme for a relaxed Sunday morning. Music will include familiar, popular classics by Beethoven, Debussy, Gershwin and Poulenc.

Jong-Gyung Park is one of the leading pianists of her generation. Her orchestral debut was with the Boston Symphony Orchestra at the age of 13 and since then she has played with orchestras around the world. Her more recent concert activities include both solo and chamber music recitals. She also gives masterclasses in both North & South America as well as Asia. She began studying the piano at the age of three in Korea, where she was born and went on to study in Tokyo, the United States, Italy and Munich. She has won numerous international awards.



Anthony Zerpa-Falcón's career in music was launched when he was a runner-up in the BBC Young Musician of the Year Finals. He subsequently won a scholarship to study at the Guildhall School of Music where he won all the major prizes for keyboard. He then competed in several international piano competitions in Spain and Italy and went on to study at the International Piano Foundation in Como, Italy. After winning several prestigious music competitions, he performed widely in the UK before returning to Madrid where he performed throughout Spain and Portugal.

On returning to the UK, alongside his career at the keyboard, Anthony took up the position of Musical Director at the Penshurst Choral Society. His work in education has included three years as Director of Music at the Mead Preparatory School. He teaches piano in Tunbridge Wells and at the Knole Academy in Sevenoaks.

Tickets for this concert cost £15 for adults and £5 for under-18s and students. They are available by calling 01732 364204, or via the TMC website, www.tmc.org.uk, where you will also find further information about the Club and its programme for the 2022/23 Season.

We look forward to meeting you!

Speldhurst Library is open

Come and visit us at the Village Hall
on Monday afternoons
between 2pm and 5pm



Allotment Availability

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.

Quirky Quilters



Quilting group at
Speldhurst Village Hall
every Friday at 10-1pm
Come and join us
Contact: darbreeze@hotmail.com



Speldhurst CEP School News



Speldhurst School is known for its community atmosphere and Christian Vision, 'Growing into all God wants us to be'. And these aren't just empty words. Every day in the classroom through the lessons, friendships and small acts of kindness and support, these words are lived out.

The school has a buddy scheme where older pupils support younger children in all kinds of ways such as helping at meal times and looking out for them in the playground. A recent PHSE lesson in Empire Class before half term gave Year 4 pupils a chance to think about their friendships and why our friends are so important to us.

On National Poetry day they also wrote their own poems and read them to the rest of the class.



At a recent cross-country event at Mascalls in Paddock wood, Speldhurst pupils also demonstrated this ethos of friendship and support when they helped a fellow runner who was getting into difficulties on his first time out. Even though the pupils had completed the course themselves – indeed one had won a medal - the boy's friends spontaneously rallied round him to re-run the final parts of the race to get him across the finish line. Not perhaps in the best time but a fine example of solidarity and friendship. A real Jonny and Alistair Brownlee moment



Meanwhile back at school during a gymnastic lesson, Year 6 Russet class pupils also demonstrated their trust in each other, as well as their physical skill, in some daring balances. Look out dance group Diversity – here they come!

This term in class Year 2 children in Galaxy Gala class looked back in time, learning about some of some of contemporary history's greatest 'movers and shakers'. They dressed up as historical figures who have made a big impact on the world such as suffragette Emmeline Pankhurst, the first men on the moon, British leaders Winston Church and our late Queen Elizabeth.

They dressed up as historical figures who have made a big impact on the world such as suffragette Emmeline Pankhurst, the first men on the moon, British leaders Winston Church and our late Queen Elizabeth. Here is their gallery.



Also dressing up to discover more about a period in history were Year 5 in Crispin Class. They had a 'tudor-tastic' time when they 'visited' the court of King Henry VIII, joining in with dances, singing and learning how peasants were punished for the smallest of crimes and how to joust and even fight like a Tudor. Severed heads, the dreaded pox and ship's rats aside, they had a marvellous day.



Fortunately, we have had some fabulous autumn weather this term – and in Pippin reception class, the youngest children in the school have enjoyed outside learning including a nature walk where they collected leaves of all different shapes, sizes and colours to create a whole class art-work. Does this remind you – even a little bit - of a Jackson Pollock?!

Sara Andrew, Communications Governor.



FARMERS' MARKET AT PENSHURST

*Don't miss the Farmers' Market this November
for all the best locally produced food & drink*



**Saturday,
5th
November
2022**

**9.30 am
to
12.00 pm**

**Penshurst
Place Visitor
Car Park**



The clocks have gone back, the days are ever shorter but the market at Penshurst promises to be as busy as ever this November.

We have a wide range of stalls offering the finest local, seasonal produce all grown, caught or cooked within 35 miles of the market.

Whether it's award-winning bread, fish and seafood, grass-fed beef and lamb, vegetables, cheeses, preserves, home baked cakes or craft cider you're looking for, you'll find all of it and more here at the market. Plus this month and next you can order your Christmas turkey from Kent Turkeys to pick up from the car park here at Penshurst Place on Thursday 22nd December.

Get your knives and garden tools sharpened by our Knife Ninja, buy locally grown plants and flowers and pick up a coffee from the Penshurst Place cafe. Parking is plentiful, free and close by. Dogs and families welcome.

****December dates for your diary****

After the success of our first special Christmas market last year, we will once again be running two markets in December, our regular market on Saturday 3rd, and a bigger festive one with guest food and craft stalls on Saturday 17th staying open till 2.00pm.

Find us on Facebook

Find us on Twitter and Instagram

WWW.kfma.org.uk/penshurst



BLACKHAM VILLAGE CAFÉ AND MARKET

SATURDAY 5th November 2022

10.00am – 12.30pm

BLACKHAM VILLAGE HALL

Lots of lovely produce for sale:

homemade pasties, cakes, scones

free range eggs, bread, bird food, flowers

artisan cheeses, preserves,

handmade pottery, pre-loved clothing and lots, lots more

Also enjoy a delicious tea/coffee with a piece of homemade cake or scone.

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 Walking Footballers

Due to nights drawing in the walking football will now be on hold until next spring.

Please call Brian Shilling if you would like any further information: 07940 013135



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?

November 2022



6th November

10 am Communion

13th November

8 am Holy Communion (Book of Common Prayer)

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

10.15 am Remembrance Service
finishing at the War Memorial at 11 am

20th November

10 am Communion

27th November

10 am All-Age Toy Service with Baptism

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

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/



Baptisms

4th September Nico Anthony Lance Wimble

Weddings

16th September Joseph Barnes and Anna Parsons

17th September Conrad Charlton and Lydia Neil

17th September Jack Taylor and Emily Turner

Interment of Ashes

20th May Elizabeth Wallace

8th October Revd Basil Marshall

Churchyard Strimming Thanks

A very big thankyou to those of you who helped with the churchyard grass cutting during the last few weeks of September.

This year we had to juggle the schedule again with the weather, so I'm sorry if some of you who had volunteered missed out, but be assured that further opportunities will arise next year!

Our first scheduled Friday when most people had volunteered turned out to be a rain stopped play event, but a pre-emptive strike the day before and a busy session on the Saturday meant that by the following Friday we just had to load all the grass cuttings on the trailer.

Grateful thanks also must go to the bacon bap, cake and coffee ladies who did a marvellous job on refreshments.

You all did a great job and our village churchyard is looking much tidier as a result of your efforts.

If any newbies fancy having a go next year, let me know and I'll add your contact details to my list.

John Fitzsimmons for St Mary's Church

iejmfitzsimmons@hotmail.com



~ Allotment News ~



Human vs Caterpillar

When it comes to public enemy no.1 the mantle has slithered from el Gastropoda to il Pieris Brassicae aka the caterpillar of the white cabbage butterfly. All butterflies, however beautiful, have a caterpillar stage in their life cycle that involves the ingestion of plant material. And that is the problem!!

Most caterpillars have evolved to eat wild or native plants in the UK such as nettles because there are more of them than our overbred and alien garden plants. That said there is one type of caterpillar that most of us gardeners dread; the cabbage white.

There are two types of cabbage white - there is a large white (Pieris Brassicae) and a small white (Pieris Rapae). To make matters worse there is also a cabbage moth (Mamestra Brassicae). Almost seems that our brassicas don't stand a chance.

The major issue is that when the eggs hatch, the emerging caterpillars have a voracious appetite. And wow, do they eat. They feed and feed and feed until they are ready to pupate.

This year, caterpillars have been bountiful. There have been loads of them. A veritable infestation. All munching away at considerable speed. I can almost hear the grinding of tiny molars nibbling away at my Brussels. And what damage they have done.

I have a book titled: Bugs, Slugs & Other Invaders - 50 ways to beat garden enemies.

Lots of invaders addressed. However, there is only 1 mention of dealing with caterpillars which basically involves:

- a) Somehow managing to persuade a group of children to collect the caterpillars and
- b) Chucking the collected creepies into the compost bin - where there is lots of decaying vegetation to keep them occupied.

I'm not sure about this option. Whilst it is a humane way of dealing with the dreaded caterpillars – which however, won't address the overall population as the caterpillars will produce more butterflies next year – the key issues seem to be:

1. The sheer number of caterpillars. I haven't counted. But I've been astonished and somewhat overwhelmed by the quantity.
2. Finding and enticing children to collect the caterpillars. There seem to be so many other ways of being entertained these days.
3. Chucking the collected caterpillars in the compost bin where they would be competing with the slugs we placed there using the same technique for them.

Whilst much is debated about predators for our mollusc mates –dealt with in the September issue, what about our caterpillar creepy chums? What munches on them?

You would have thought it would be an absolute feast for birds. Robins - they ought to be all over them at the moment. Blackbirds are normally dashing around gobbling up whatever moves. But where are they now?

Loads of caterpillars. Not a bird to be seen. It's difficult to comprehend why – when the caterpillars in their black and yellow stripy pyjamas are easy to be seen – we aren't also spotting birds rapidly gobbling up the harvest.

A solution put forward by Charles Dowding is to plant brassicas in the autumn for spring consumption. Then they are growing when the butterflies are not laying eggs and caterpillars are not around.

A good idea and I am planning to do just that but with spring cabbage. I currently have some plants still in cells (and not eaten by slugs) in readiness to plant out in the not too distant future.

But how is it possible to have Brussels for Christmas without growing them through the summer? And how can anyone enjoy Christmas Day lunch without Brussels? (Or swede for that matter - another member of the brassica family particularly welcomed by Mr Caterpillar.)

Amongst other reasons, It's why I wanted an allotment.

Rob Kyte

Nature Watch

The results of the Big Butterfly Count 2022 are in and the Gatekeeper was the species most seen! This is welcome news as the Gatekeeper experienced its second worst Big Butterfly Count result in summer 2021, and it's the first time since 2017 that this species has had the top spot overall.

It was also good news for the Blues, with increases in Common Blue and Holly Blue, and garden favourite the Comma also made a comeback. However, the general decline continues, with fewer butterflies spotted overall. The largest count I had in the garden was 16 Large White and I counted over 150 caterpillars of the above on my cabbage and sprout plants. The best count for Gatekeepers was 5. Let's hope next summer is a better one for Butterflies and wildlife as a whole.

If you are going to feed birds over the winter, putting out different foods and the way they are presented attracts different birds. Fat balls for Long Tailed Tits, Starlings, Blue and Great Tits. Peanuts in a feeder are loved by Greater Spotted Woodpeckers, and Siskin if you are lucky. Mixed seed on a table will give House sparrows, Dunnock and Chaffinches a chance. Striped and Black Sunflower seeds in a feeder are good for Greenfinches, Nut Hatch, Blue, Great and Coal Tits.

On the ground other birds will pick up the fallen pieces such as Blackbirds and Robins. When we feed the birds we must not forget to keep the feeders clean. Take them apart and wash in hot water with a bit of washing up liquid added. Also the ground under the feeders wants to be cleaned regularly too. This will prevent any disease problems occurring. The question has been asked if we should feed all year round or only in the winter. I feed all year, it is better for House Sparrows, If they can find a good food supply they will have at least 2 nesting attempts.

Alan Ford



A Letter from St Mary's



November 2022

Dear Friends,

Recently I attended a consultation run by our Borough Council on the cost of living. Some sobering facts were presented; let me give you a flavour by looking at inflation.

We are used to hearing one figure but that is actually the *average* inflation rate. A few items actually get cheaper (some seasonal food for instance) while other prices rise dramatically. Generally, essentials such as food and fuel have the highest rate of inflation. People experience inflation differently: if a high percentage of your income is spent on the essentials, then you will feel the pinch more than those for whom they play a smaller role. It is estimated that if you are in the poorest section of society you will experience inflation at 17.6% in the year ahead in comparison with the richest for whom it will be 10.9%. This ties in with the experience of Nourish, our town's food bank, where the two largest groups of recipients are the over 65s and low-income families with two wages earners.

What's this got to do with Jesus of Nazareth? Well, quite a lot. At the beginning of his public ministry, he read out what we would call a manifesto: 'The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.' The wellbeing of everyone, but especially those in need, is at the heart of his ministry, then and now through those who choose to live for him.

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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