

# Speldhurst News



## September 2023

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# Welcome

Dear Readers,

Welcome back - I hope you have had a good summer.

We have an array of activities happening in our village with the Flower, Vegetable and Craft Show on Saturday 9th September in the village hall. Good luck to all the entrants! Make sure you have the Sunday 5th November in your diaries for the Speldhurst School PTA's magnificent yearly Fireworks and a date for 2024 for the Village Fete - Saturday 15th June.

Praise & Play is now on every Wednesday morning from 9.00am to 10.30 (during term time), for those with pre-school toddlers (see p.4).

If you have any spare time over the 15th-16th September or 22nd-23rd September how about volunteering to help with clearing the churchyard? Your help would be very much appreciated (see p. 5).

Very best wishes

Sara

**On behalf of Speldhurst News Editors:  
Maria Turner, Sara Turner, Judith Malim**

Please remember that copy for the **October 2023 edition** should be sent **before 10th September 2023** to: [speldhurst.news@gmail.com](mailto: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

Mondays	Library	
Tuesdays	Bowls Club Practice	
	Walking Football	p.4
Wednesdays	Praise & Play	p.4

## September

Mon 4th Sept	Bumps & Babes	p.4
	Full Council Meeting	p.17
Wed 6th Sept	Praise & Play	p.4
Sat 9th Sept	Speldhurst Flower Show	
Wed 13th Sept	Praise & Play	p.4
Mon 18th Sept	Bumps & Babes	p.4
Wed 20th Sept	Praise & Play	p.4
Wed 27th Sept	Praise & Play	p.4

## Future Dates

Sat/Sun 28th & 29th Oct	Speldhurst Art Show	
Sun 5th Nov	Speldhurst School PTA's Fireworks and Bonfire event	
Sat 16th Dec	Speldhurst Community Choir Concert	p.15
Sat 15th June 2024	Speldhurst Village Fete	

# News & Announcements

## What's on in Speldhurst for the Under 5's in September

### Great News!

Praise and Play, St Mary's Toddler Group, is going WEEKLY from 6<sup>th</sup> September. We will be in church every Wednesday, during term time, from 9-10.30am. You will no longer need to wonder whether we meet or not!

We'll have a craft, some time to play and a short story and song time as well as giving the little ones a chance to ring the church bell. So do tell everyone you know who may be interested. All are welcome. We look forward to seeing you all again after the summer break.

Bumps and Babes, the group for Mums with babies up to 12 months, meets fortnightly on Monday mornings in each other's homes. After our break in August, we meet again on Monday 4<sup>th</sup> September.

For more information about either of these groups, especially if you are new to the village, contact Jenny Fitzsimmons on 07891 318123 or at [jenny50fitz@gmail.com](mailto:jenny50fitz@gmail.com)

## **Walking Football Kicks Off for 2023**

Speldhurst Walking footballers would welcome men and women of all ages and abilities to join our group. It's all about getting some gentle exercise and having fun. So, whether you have ever played football, or not, do come and join us.

We will be meeting at 7pm at the all weather pitch on Speldhurst rec on Tuesday evenings (weather permitting)

Please do contact Brian on 07940 013135 if you are interested in joining us or if you would like any further information.



Hallo to all Churchyard strimming enthusiasts, past, present and future. Here is my annual call for assistance!.

As most of you already know, part of the churchyard grass is left uncut during the year as a nature conservation area and the grass is only cut once in the Autumn.

Last year, spreading the strimming work over a longer two week period with smaller groups worked well. So the plan is to do the same again this year with two Friday/Saturday sessions the first on 15th & 16th September and the second on 22nd & 23rd September.

I will arrange for Anthony Hare's trailer to be there for the second session for loading up. Previous weeks strimmings will be piled near the Barden Road gate to load the following week.

The grass is very thick this year but at present it is dry and easier to cut so I've already had a go and will be adding in another earlier strimming date nearer the time to get ahead of the game, if that suits some of you.

We have 2 church strimming machines and PPE but if you have any useful additional tools of your own which you can bring along (trimmer, rakes, shears, barrows, gloves, loppers, secateurs) that would be useful.

Refreshments will be provided.

If you are able to help for a few hours, please confirm your availability by phone or email which will then help me to put a rota together.

Your efforts in past years have been very much appreciated and make a big difference to our churchyard tidiness whilst also helping to reduce maintenance costs.

I very much look forward to hearing from you and seeing you for as much time as you can spare.

John Fitsimmons for St Mary's Church  
[jejmfitzsimmmons@hotmail.com](mailto:jejmfitzsimmmons@hotmail.com) / 07814 412984



**Can you shop with us or spare some time to help ensure the success (and continuation) of this invaluable village hub?**

**We have many opportunities available so if you've got a few hours you can spare, we'd love to hear from you.**

**To volunteer, just pop in or email us  
[speldhurstcommunityshop@gmail.com](mailto:speldhurstcommunityshop@gmail.com)**

**Or could you use the shop a little more, and help to secure our shop for us all – now and in the future?**

**Come in and you'll find:**

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Newspapers and magazines - Dry cleaning and laundry  
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**And don't forget we also have our own Post Office counter  
available for you 6 days a week.**



®

**ANY QUESTIONS? Pop in or  
call us on 01892 863158**



# The Speldhurst Flower, Vegetable & Craft Show

## Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> September from 2.30pm

### Speldhurst Village Hall

Whether you are a gardening enthusiast, keen crafter, dab hand in the kitchen or budding photographer there is something for everyone of all ages at the Flower, Vegetable and Craft Show.

Check out our Facebook page Speldhurst Flower, Vegetable & Craft Show or our website page <http://speldhurst.org/contacts/34>



Alan Ford

## **Speldhurst – Tonbridge School Transport**

Following the termination of the 288 bus service from Speldhurst to Tonbridge, KCC have decided to make no effort to arrange an alternative. So, children at Judd, Weald of Kent, Hillview, Hayesbrook, TGS and the other Tonbridge schools have been left to make their own arrangements.

There are so many reasons for having a school bus; personal independence, lower traffic rates, reduced pollution and allowing parents increased opportunities to work! Etc.etc.

So, a few of us are very keen to explore whether there is a community-based solution to this problem – such as a minibus service. We would love to hear from you if you have children affected or have some expertise/ideas to contribute.

This problem is going to grow as parents juggle getting their children who attend schools in Tonbridge and Tunbridge Wells to school on time. And we believe that the lack of available transport should not restrict the choice of schools available.

Last year a school bus pass cost £450; a group of us pooling our funds may be able to find an alternative.

Please get in touch:

Judith Malim 07966024860 [judith.malim@gmail.com](mailto:judith.malim@gmail.com)

Alex Pendaries 07779 322841 [alexclack@mac.com](mailto:alexclack@mac.com)





## SPELDHURST VILLAGE FETE 2023

### A Thank you .....

On behalf of the whole Fete Committee, I would like to say thank you to all the wonderful people of Speldhurst turning up to make great Fete for all. Everybody worked really hard to bring the joy to a beautiful sunny day (with just a minor shower to cool us all down in the middle!)

It was a particular pleasure to see the return of the inflatables, and of 'Fido at the Fete' (thankyou Fiona), as well as newer developments such as opening up the Bowles Green, and 'Pub-on-the-Rec', replacing Nick's Bar.

So many volunteers stepped up to do a stint on our regular games and attractions, with even more activities creatively provided by our young entrepreneurs (a big well done to them). Big thank yous to the Tea Ladies and their incredible homemade cakes, and to the varied vendors who set up shops and stalls across the field. Special mention should also go to Helga for running the Bric-a-brac (and also cutting all the BBQ onions the night before!).

Special thanks also to the host of generous local businesses providing prizes for the Grand Draw, and to Matt Sankey filling the highly coveted 'Wheelbarrow-of-Wine'.

No Fete is without its' technical difficulties, and this year all our card machines failed us – We would have all been stuffed if it wasn't for heroic Jo at the Village Shop for keeping open extra-long so that people could take out cash, and for Claire Fox for loaning her account for the day.

Speaking of all that behind-the-scenes stuff – Thank you too Martin and the 'Grumpy Old Men' for their labour setting up and packing down (quickest year yet!), and to the other brilliant people that came Friday and Sunday to make the day a great success.

Not just the day, but the wonderfully warm night was made all the better by Kiran's Curries, Moby dicks Fish and Chips and Pizza Cucina, 3 great bands and a horde of Ukulele players (who did the best to try and break the stage with



their stomping!) - All the great music was down to the Dan Fee the electrics guy and Soundman James Boyd.

Finally I want to pay tribute to the brilliant Fete Committee, consisting of many new members, busy beavering away through the year to prepare for the weekend: Tilly, Piers, Rachel, Andrew, Mark, Nick, Erika and Nick, Devi and Clare. And the fantastic Suzy who almost singlehandedly puts on the best party of the year in the evening entertainment!

Final figures are still be totalled up and we will publish our accounts of the funds raised for the Rec and Village Hall in the Autumn.

See you all next year on Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> June 2024!

Mike Harrowing  
Chair of the Fete Committee



## **MEN ON WEDNESDAY [MOW]**

Men on Wednesday [MOW] does what it says on the tin. We are an informal group of blokes who get together each Wednesday in Speldhurst Chapel for wide ranging discussions. We draw our membership mainly from Speldhurst, Langton Green but anyone from the surrounding area is welcome.

Men of all ages and backgrounds come but because we meet in normal working hours, we tend to attract those who are retired. Content of meetings vary from an open forum where we all chip in, to the occasional guest speaker and sometimes we even get cerebral and reflect on the latest Reith lectures.

Anyone interested in giving us a try can contact [revjohnp@outlook.com](mailto:revjohnp@outlook.com)



## **The Village Hall Needs You!**

### **HANDYMAN / CARETAKER REQUIRED**

Our wonderful Caretaker is retiring later this year and we are looking for someone to join us at our thriving village hall.

The position involves minor maintenance work. Heavier/major work will be carried out by contractors and you will not be asked to carry out heavy lifting/complicated electrical work etc.

This position would suit someone who is retired and likes DIY. It is a paid position and hours can be agreed.

If you are interested in helping your local community in this way, please contact Sam for a chat.

Sam Van Niekerk on 07894 903979 or [speldhurstvillagehall@gmail.com](mailto:speldhurstvillagehall@gmail.com)

## NATURE WATCH



This month it is a plant which has centre stage - Hogweed. It might not smell of roses but it is loved by many insects and beetles. The plant is one of the members of the Carrot family. It is about waist high with clusters of white flowers which make a flat top [see photo] and has hollow stems. Not to be confused with Hemlock which is very poisonous.

The plant gets its name historically from when its leaves were collected from fields and fed to pigs as they are nutritious and there are plenty of them around. It has now been proved that this tradition helped pigs gain weight fast. It isn't just livestock that Hogweed benefits. Hogweed supports a wide variety of pollinators, and it also supports the insects that provide biological pest control. Sometimes, it is the same insect species providing both! Some insects, such as Hoverflies, provide different benefits at different points in their life cycles. Adult Hoverflies are wonderful pollinators, and they lay their eggs near aphids. Their larvae will then hatch out and start to eat the aphids, providing pest control. Parasitic wasps lay their eggs on other insects such as caterpillars to feed their young so help to control the damage to cabbages etc. Soldier Beetles use the flowers to feed and find their mate and with their orangey colour stand out and can be numerous. It does not have bright colour flowers, but it is the smell that insects find irresistible. Once it has set seed a small moth called a Parsnip moth will lay eggs in them and the caterpillars eat the seeds and stick the seeds together to make somewhere to hide from birds.



Alan Ford



01892 863158

### Back to School!

After a long and not very hot summer it's back to school time here at the shop!

We have everything you need for your last minute pencil case essentials and maybe a bar of chocolate for Mum?



### Ice Cream Freezer

We are ever hopeful of an Indian Summer so we have a shiny new ice cream freezer full of all of your favourite summer treats. We have donated the old one to the Fete. Their freezer was all feted out and decided to pack up this year, so the old shop freezer has gone to a very worth new home.



### Dairy Free alternatives

Did you know that we have a lovely range of dairy free alternatives for your morning cereal or coffee? If we don't stock the one you love, let us know!

We are always happy to hear from you if there is something you would like us to stock in the shop.

### Shop Committee - Treasurer

We are looking for a new treasurer to join us on the management committee. If you have experience of book keeping we would be delighted to hear from you. Please email [speldhurstcommunityshop@gmail.com](mailto:speldhurstcommunityshop@gmail.com)

### Duke of Edinburgh - volunteering

We have a well-established set up for DofE volunteering at the shop. Please contact Jo Eames on the number below if you would like to do your volunteer service with us.

### Thank you to our new volunteers!

However, we are always looking for more volunteers no experience needed! Even if you have an hour to help stock some shelves that would be great. Please pop into the shop or call Jo Eames on 07896 932716 if you're interested.



We are really excited to be hosting a free Open Day at Bore Place on Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> October from 12-4.

On the day there will be a BBQ, drinks, homemade cakes, an opportunity to see the calves, the chance to visit our new milking parlour experience and see the cows being milked, children's activities, the chance to meet our producers (Blackwoods cheese, Happy Belly fermented goods, our organic veg grower, Metske), open gardens, as well as the opening of our new Farm Gate. The Farm Gate will be selling produce from our producers and will be run by young people attending projects at Bore Place, with all money made being fed back into our educational programmes.

The open day is aimed at our local community and will be free to attend (donations welcome).

More information and to preregister will be available at [What's On \(boreplace.org\)](http://www.boreplace.org) .

Bore Place Road, Chiddingstone, Kent, TN8 7AR  
Direct Dial 01732 755280  
Reception 01732 463255  
[www.boreplace.org](http://www.boreplace.org)

Home of the Commonwork Trust (reg. charity 1160725 & company 09254227)  
& Commonwork Organic Farms Ltd (reg. company 1977080)

ST. MARY'S CHURCH

# 2023 COMMUNITY CHOIR CONCERT

DATE: 16TH DECEMBER

Rehearsals: Every Friday starting 10th  
November at 7:30pm in St Mary's

If you have a passion for singing, join us! No  
experience required and no auditions.

Contact: Heather Hughes [hhughes8dw@icloud.com](mailto:hhughes8dw@icloud.com)







## NEWS FROM SPELDHURST PARISH COUNCIL



### PARISH CONSULTATION - SPELDHURST CHAPEL PROJECT

At the time of writing, your responses to our consultation on the future of Speldhurst Community Shop and Post Office are coming in thick and fast. Thank you to all have taken the time to respond; this is an important decision that the whole parish community needs to be involved in making.

Parish councillors will use your responses as the basis for their discussion at their meeting on Monday 4<sup>th</sup> September. They will then vote on whether to proceed to the next stage in applying for a Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) loan to finance the purchase of Speldhurst Chapel.

### WHAT WILL HAPPEN NEXT?

To find out more about what will happen if councillors vote to progress to the next step of applying for a loan, please visit

[www.speldhurstparishcouncil.gov.uk](http://www.speldhurstparishcouncil.gov.uk)



### **GATWICK AIRPORT'S APPLICATION TO CONVERT ITS EMERGENCY RUNWAY**

Our Air Traffic Committee met on 20<sup>th</sup> July to discuss Gatwick Airport's application to the Planning Inspectorate to convert its emergency runway into a full-use runway. By applying in this way, Gatwick have avoided a full public consultation. If their application is successful, there will be two runways operating simultaneously at Gatwick with plans to service up to 74m passengers a year.

There will be a window of time for interested parties to comment on the application on the Planning Inspectorate website. The parish council will submit a response objecting to the application.

If you are concerned about the implications of another full-use runway at Gatwick, you can register to comment at <https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/projects/south-east/gatwick-airport-northern-runway/#>

### **DEREK ROBINSON – THANK YOU**

On the subject of Air Traffic, we would like to say a big thank you to Derek Robinson, who has been a stalwart of the Air Traffic Committee for the last decade. He has contributed unstintingly to our efforts to block Gatwick Airport's attempts at expansion, and now that he is stepping down his sage advice and counsel will be much missed. Thank you, Derek, for your efforts on behalf of our community!

### **PUBLIC MEETINGS – EVERYONE WELCOME**

Full Council Meeting 7.30pm, 4<sup>th</sup> September, Committee Room, Speldhurst Village Hall.

#### **TO CONTACT THE PARISH COUNCIL**

Call the Clerk, Katie Neve on 01892 862927/07760 769513 or email [clerk@speldhurstparishcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@speldhurstparishcouncil.gov.uk)

For helpful information about us, visit [www.speldhurstparishcouncil.gov.uk](http://www.speldhurstparishcouncil.gov.uk) or follow us on Facebook as 'Speldhurst Parish Council'



# Speldhurst CEP School News



Welcome back – I hope you've had a good summer break despite the indifferent British weather. Over the holidays, you may have seen work at School to build a new classroom with an office for the Special Needs Co-ordinator. This is to give dedicated space for supporting children with special needs and other pupils who need a bit of extra help.

Speldhurst has a strong commitment to ensuring that every pupil achieves their full potential, and this new build will provide much-needed space for one to one, special groups and other interventions.

Getting the project off the ground wasn't easy however. Planners and building regulations upped the requirements for almost everything from insulation to screening to a ramp, pushing costs up by 50% before work even began. But our resourceful caretaker Martin Steibelt and a team of volunteers stepped in to save the day, doing the groundwork which included digging drainage and laying cables to bring building costs down. Very many thanks to Martin and his 'Grumpies' (as he calls them) as well as parent helpers and his project management skills supported by another 'Martin', villager Martin Baker who has a life-time's experience of the building industry.



A big thank you also to the PTA and Parish Council for their financial support – which also extends to another building project – a kitchen to replace the old servery at the back of the School Hall. For years the meals have been brought in by outside caterers, ready prepared and cooked, to be dished out to hungry pupils from the servery by the lovely dinner ladies. There's no question the meals are tasty and healthy (as a Governor, I've tried them) but it's now felt there is the need for a fully-functioning kitchen. The work started in the May half-term



with the demolition of the old servery and now new walls are going up to replace the old building with the kitchen which will hopefully be finished by the October half term.

As I have mentioned previously, healthy body, healthy mind is very much part of the school's ethos – and so Sports

day is always an important date in the calendar. The event was blessed by possibly one of the last beautiful days of our disappointing summer, only few days before the rain came on St Swithun's day. I never believed the superstition that a downpour on the St Swithun's day predicts 40 days of precipitation -but this year it seems to be true! Fortunately, on Sports Day there wasn't a cloud in the sky and the children impressed all parents and staff, giving their best efforts and supporting each other. There are four school houses – and this year it was Hever who won. Many congratulations.



The sun also shone on Year 4 in Empire class when they took a trip to visit Sevenoaks Wildlife Reserve. As you'll see from the photos, the

children had great fun in the river, discovering what creatures live there and measuring the depth and width at various points. They also went pond dipping, and had a game of pooh sticks.



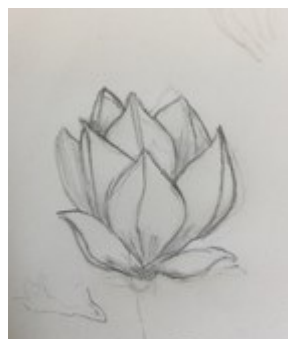
On another school trip younger Year 1 pupils enjoyed a class visit to Kent Life to experience what it was like for Victorian school children. They swapped their exercise books and i-pads for slate and chalk and their lovely Miss Bird for a terrifyingly strict teacher with a blackboard and more formal teaching rather than today's interactive whiteboard and a more child-centred approach. They were surprised to learn as part of last term's Victorian topic how school life has changed since the 1800s when Queen Victoria was on the throne.



Meanwhile back in the 21st century, Year 3 pupils in Bramley Class had lots of fun with their botanical focus on art. The children made their own looms to experiment with botanical weaving using a range of plants and flowers to create their own natural masterpieces. They were particularly inspired by the wonderful sketches of botanical illustrator, Katie Scott,



recreating with sympathy and accuracy some of her drawings (As seen on the right and left).





It is always sad at the end of the summer term to say goodbye to our Year 6 pupils in Russet Class as they move onto secondary education. Their final production was certainly something to remember and lived up to its name – The Greatest Show. About a travelling show at the dawn of moving pictures, the production had baddies galore, lots of lively songs and even a scene which recreated a silent movie.

The children worked incredibly hard over six weeks with co-directors Mr Howe and Mrs Neighbour, learning lines, singing the songs, and putting wonderful costumes together with special performances for parents, as well as KS1 and KS2.

We will really miss you Year 6 – All the best and good luck for your future Educational journey.

Sara Andrew  
Communications Governor.



# **THE SPELDHURST VILLAGE HALL**

**DISCOUNTED RATES  
FOR RESIDENTS**

## **TAKING BOOKINGS**

Parties  
Christenings  
Family Gatherings

**FOR ENQUIRIES VISIT**

[Speldhurstvillagehall.co.uk](http://Speldhurstvillagehall.co.uk)





## BLACKHAM VILLAGE QUIZ NIGHT

Blackham Village Hall  
Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2023 - 7.00pm

**Tickets £12 per person to include**  
**A two course meal**  
**Teams of 6**

*Tickets available  
from Penny Hawes 01892 740574*

**BOOK EARLY TO AVOID DISAPPOINTMENT**



## BLACKHAM VILLAGE CAFÉ AND MARKET

(First Saturday of every month except January)



**SATURDAY 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2023**  
**10.00am – 12.30pm**  
**BLACKHAM VILLAGE HALL**



Lots of lovely produce for sale: homemade pasties, cakes, scones,  
free range eggs, bread, bird food and lots lots more.

Also a café serving fresh made coffee/tea with a piece of homemade cake  
or scone, come and meet your friends for a catch up.

*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](http://speldhurst.org)?

## Your Borough Councillors

	Contact Details	Re-Election Date
Cllr Matthew Sankey (Alliance)	07881 674 310 <a href="mailto:matthew.sankey@tunbridgewells.gov.uk">matthew.sankey@tunbridgewells.gov.uk</a>	May 2024
Cllr Paul Curry (Alliance)	07515 938 765 <a href="mailto:Paul.curry@tunbridgewells.gov.uk">Paul.curry@tunbridgewells.gov.uk</a>	May 2024
Cllr Harry Allen (Conservative)	07523 005 178 <a href="mailto:harry.allen@tunbridgewells.gov.uk">harry.allen@tunbridgewells.gov.uk</a>	May 2024



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



**Saturday 2nd  
September  
2023**

**9.30 am  
to  
12.00 pm**

**Penshurst  
Place Visitor  
Car Park**



The nights are drawing in, schools are back and it's a busy month at Penshurst Farmers Market with several regulars back after a summer break. With up to 30 stalls, we cover everything from meat and game to fish and seafood fresh from Hastings, stone-ground flours to local vegetables. There are hand-made chutneys and jams, Groombridge honey, cakes, breads and bakes, award-winning cheeses, local craft gin, sparkling wine and more.

Special treats this month include new season's Kent plums in varieties perfect for eating and cooking with and the first of this year's fresh cobnuts. Buy locally-grown plants and small trees for the garden from plantsman Andrew to get into the garden before the winter arrives.

**Parking is plentiful, free and close by. Dogs and families welcome.**

**- Our next market will be on Saturday October 7th -**

*Find us on Facebook*

*Find us on Instagram & Twitter*

[www.kfma.org.uk/penshurst](http://www.kfma.org.uk/penshurst)



## ~ Allotment & Gardening News ~



If you want to live and thrive, let a spider run alive.

Ubiquitous is a word that perfectly fits spiders. There are plenty to be seen in our borders and on our lawns as we potter about our gardens. And enough of them are even in our homes. They are indeed everywhere and there are lots of them. A study of an undisturbed grass field in Sussex found 5.5 million spiders per hectare. That's 550 per meter squared. Otherwise known as a lot of spids. Its hard to imagine that number and I can't say I've ever noticed that many in my garden or on the allotment. I'd be bound to notice as the ground would literally be crawling with them.

Spiders are one of the world's most species-rich and widespread groups of predators. The first species of spider was scientifically described over 200 years ago in 1757. The World Spider Catalogue (WSC) - the organisation that officially lists spiders - has announced it has recorded it's 50,000th eight-legged arachnid. Yet it is estimated that there could be another 50,000 spider species still waiting to be found!

The orb - or garden - spider is the most common spider in our gardens. It spins a web so fine that a band of it circulating the equator would weigh less than 0.25kg (0.5lb).

Garden spiders are greyish-brown with a white cross on their back and spin their famous spiral webs! They sit in the middle of the web waiting to feel the vibrations of a struggling insect in the sticky threads of its web. They then rush out and wrap their prey tightly in silk to stop them from moving – finishing the job with a venomous bite!

This may sound scary – but they are completely harmless to humans!

A study by the University of Basel in Switzerland in 2017 found spiders have an enormous ecological impact as natural enemies of insects. They calculated that “the global spider population (with a weight of around 25 million tons) wipes out an estimated 400-800 million tons of prey every year”.

Whilst that's a lot of prey, I can't say I have seen a spider on my allotment giving attention to blackfly, whitefly, greenfly or any such nasty that sucks the life out of our beans and brassicas.

One predator that that we seldom talk about are slow-worms – which are often mistaken for snakes. In fact, slow-worms are a legless lizard and I've happily seen a number recently on the allotments (I like them).

Slow-worms are mostly active during the day and are known to eat a variety of prey items including insects, spiders, earthworms, and slugs. They are undoubtedly a valuable species on the allotments as they help to control pest populations.

Slow-worms are just one example of bio-diversity. It's great to do all we can to encourage biodiversity. But I feel a contradiction. The trouble with bio-diversity is that as it encourages wild life, there is other wild life that likes to eat it.

So whilst I may be helping with a log pile, wild garden area and 'soon to be' pond made from a field trough, what I'm thinking is... 'If I manage to attract frogs and toads to the pond, what chance is there that the badgers won't eat them?'

But that is a conundrum for another day.

If you are interested in these topics / types of discussions, there is a Facebook page where we go into a lot of this type of stuff. It is called Speldhurst Allotmenters & Gardeners and the web address is: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/305824050847755>. Hope to see you there.

And finally:

1. If you are interested in acquiring an allotment and doing your bit to grow your own food and save our planet, please contact Mark Oddy on 01892 862746.
2. 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](mailto:kytehouse@stepex.co.uk).

If you would like to submit something for this article, please also email it to [kytehouse@stepex.co.uk](mailto:kytehouse@stepex.co.uk).

Rob Kyte

# A Letter from St Mary's



September 2023

Dear Friends,

Walking the dog may be good for the owner's health (and the dog's as well) but it also allows one to meet other village residents and discuss matters of mutual interest. Recently one of the most common subjects raised was the departure of Douglas Wren to pastures new in Cornwall and the current interregnum or absence of a resident vicar in the parish. When I have suggested that Douglas would not be replaced quickly and we might have to wait many months, most people were very surprised.

A village without a vicar – how will we survive? It is funny how the permanence of a vicar is almost a given thing in village life. Although we currently have no resident vicar we still have a lovely spiritual home in the church of St Mary's, Speldhurst together with our sister churches St Martin's in Ashurst and St John's in Groombridge. They are all lovely places to worship and sit and contemplate life and faith. St Mary's also has the lovely Burne-Jones windows to add to our reflections. Perhaps if we are feeling low or very uncertain about life at the present moment and need spiritual reassurance we could go to our local church and sit and pray not only for ourselves but also for those needing our love and care. Personal prayer in the peace and quiet of the walls of the church can be very helpful for those in need, whether it be prayers of a personal nature or prayers for our nation and planet.

During this interregnum we do also have the opportunity to work together as a community, caring for each other's' needs. This, together with the power of quiet personal prayer, can be so beneficial to us all and for the benefit of others. We just need to take time in our busy lives to clear our minds and let our priorities come to the fore.

David Lamey

# September 2023



## 3rd September

10 am All-Age Communion *followed by* Bring and Share lunch

## 10th September

10 am Morning Worship

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

## 17th September

8 am Holy Communion (Book of Common Prayer)

10 am Communion

## 24th September

10 am All-Age Harvest Thanksgiving

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

6 pm Evensong



## Wedding

29th July Thomas Paul and Eilish Daughtery

## Funeral

16th June Edith Firth

## Funeral and Burial in Churchyard

16th June Barbara Mary Hayden

## Interment of Ashes

4th July Enid Russell Di Castiglione

22nd July Stuart Hamilton Floyd

The Church Office can be contacted on 861187 or  
[speldhurst.church@btopenworld.com](mailto:speldhurst.church@btopenworld.com)

Normal office hours: 9 am to 12.30 pm

See our website: [www.speldhurstchurch.org](http://www.speldhurstchurch.org)

St Mary's Facebook page:

[facebook.com/StMarysSpeldhurst/](https://facebook.com/StMarysSpeldhurst/)

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Library	Olive West	863234
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	speldhurstainbows@gmail.com	
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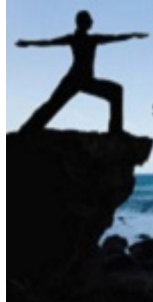
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