

# Valley ITCHEN News

Issue 84 December 2020

For Avington, Easton, Itchen Abbas and Martyn Worthy



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# WELCOME to the Valley News



Again we have a full edition but it is so sad that What's On is depleted. How things have changed in a year. No panto or Christmas parties. It's been the most difficult edition to edit with many last minute changes and contributions. Maybe I should have written about the freeze-drying of vaccines (my area of technology). Vaccines I hope will be the life changing boost we all need. We are hugely fortunate to be living here. It's also sad to mark the end of an era with Sarah Bullen at Avington. What a fabulous contribution she and Charlie made here.

Our elected officials continue to provide a host of useful information, much food for thought. We have struggled through Remembrance and it's so good to see the Poppy Appeal went well. It is a time when so many charities need our help and for us to volunteer.

We have an Itchen Insight from one of the great characters of the Valley. And further on I am able to report on one of our true heroes in Patrick Appleby. I was touched by Penelope Kellie's article on kindness, which is much needed during this pandemic. Maybe there's a link to the Rector's comments about Jesus and how we celebrate Christmas. Alex works so hard to try and keep some sense of normality for church.

If you are bored, we have information on a poem competition and following box-sets on line. I'm told there are movies other than *The Crown*. There's also more about the river and Cowdown. It all adds to the debate but

some might also think there is more to know and understand. Kindness again comes to mind in all that we do or say on such issues. I've also included some news from a few small businesses. I strongly feel they all need our support, likewise our pubs. I've been delighted at the take-away meals from the Plough.

Well this is my last issue as we are planning a move back to Winchester. I leave this community with great sadness but like others of my age, realise we need to be closer to shops and other resources. We have a wonderful team here at IVN and it's been a privilege to be part of that. Next month Charlotte Appleby will edit.

*Tony Gaster*

## Itchen Valley News

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## What's On

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A year ago this section was full of activity but now with lots of uncertainty due to the pandemic, we are in a different era. We all look forward to happier times. Ed

### Charity Christmas Hampers

Perfect as a unique Christmas present or to treat yourself – these delicious

selections of local, home-made goodies will fill you with Christmas cheer and support Itchen Abbas Primary School. These gorgeous hampers are stuffed with one of Jill the Jam's sought after Christmas puddings and a selection of home-made preserves including mincemeat, damson jam, quince jelly, and spiced apple chutney. The larger hampers include a larger pudding plus two extra preserves.



Yours for a minimum donation of £20 a basket or £30 a hamper please. All funds raised go to Itchen Abbas Parents Association. Please contact Nikki Young on [youngnikki@outlook.com](mailto:youngnikki@outlook.com)

## Farewell to Sarah Bullen

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Before this brave lady embarks on a month's campervan (more RV) tour of the UK, leaving her home of 65 years, she kindly agreed to answer a few questions for the IVN. Thank you Sarah. Gracious as ever.

### How long have you lived in Avington?

I was born here, so 65 years.

### What's your favourite thing about the Park?

The staggering beauty of every part of it and the feeling of peace and being settled that it brings.

### How did your parents end up living at Avington?

My mother lived in Cheshire and was looking for house to be near my grandmother in Winchester, whilst my dad was in Burma. She had put a deposit on a house in Easton near the Chestnut horse pub. However, when she drove over the hill to Avington, she fell in love with the Park and cabled her husband in Burma to say that the new house she wanted now had 50 bedrooms rather than the 5 they had agreed on in Easton!

### What's your funniest memory?

Every party we have ever had was funny.

However a couple of things spring to mind:

A very smart Dutchman was organising a car rally, he insisted on visiting the site and came to see it the day after we had had a series of 18th and 21st birthdays for my nieces. He arrived at the front door and as we spoke his eyes widened as the motley crew of 70, who had stayed the night after the party on the floor in the Zophany room, traipsed past in various stages of undress to get bacon butties for





breakfast in the tea rooms .....

When I was a selector for the young riders European team and the team won a gold medal, we always had a party here for riders, families, grooms etc. We would take them in Charlie's tank at speed across the grounds and through the bogs and challenge them not to scream !

Ten years ago I was asked to do a photo shoot of the Park, Charlie and I included. I did not want to be in the shoot but was persuaded. Ludicrous photos of taking tea in the conservatory ensued. I heard nothing from the agency. Four months later I was at a funeral and someone said 'am I smart enough to talk to you ? 'Why' I asked. "Well, you graced a five page spread in Hello! last week". I had not realised that was the magazine or that they had run it as a filler piece .

### **What is the best historical fact about Avington Park?**

Avington Park is in the Domesday Book and we have uncovered brick

work that's 500 years old. The house evolved solely to have parties. The facade extension was built by the Duke of Buckingham for King Charles II in the 17th Century. The front façade is basically an extension that if you look closely does not sit straight on the rest of the house. On one side it's about three feet out!

### **What's the most lavish wedding ?**

Well there were three marquees, nightclub, tea room, nearly a million pounds was spent and the weirdest was a fairground where the bride took all the wedding pics in the hall of mirrors.

### **Where are you moving you to?**

Near Andover in the Walleps, bit of a project bought to have fun with Charlie.

### **What's happening with the horses?**

Horses are all coming with me.

### **Biggest changes you have noticed?**

Well actually it's one of no change. The Valley has not been spoilt, Ovington, Yavington, Avington valley is pretty much as it has always been.

### **Biggest achievement whilst living here?**

Buying the view back and the lake and the field. Draining the lake and lake source pump, and that we managed to keep Avington as a family home.

It's very hard to run a listed house that





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has to earn its living without employing a full time person to fill in all the forms. With the new red tape and bureaucracy, it's not possible to run a house like this as a home.

**I know you love adopting dogs.**

**How many have you had at Avington ?**

10 adopted

19 in total

All buried here except the last 3 who are coming with me

**What do you think the future is for Avington Park?**

I have loved living in the valley and am very sad to leave but the time has come. I hope it stays as a family home as we all loved growing up here.

*Sarah Bullen was talking to Fi McIntosh*

## From the Parish Council.

As predicted we are back in a second lockdown. Some things are the same as the first but there are some differences. One difference this time is that our playgrounds remain open. The Covid 19 rules though still remain and it is most important that not only in playgrounds but everywhere, we keep to them. We must also, as before, look out for one another, be aware of who may be isolated and help where you can. Remember the Winchester City Council Helpline Number for Covid 19 is: 0333 370 4000.

2 December may bring an end to the present lockdown but may not. If it does, there are still likely to be rules, restrictions and advice. Please follow them, we need to avoid the mistakes of last summer.

Work on the river between Cow



Down and the bridge at Itchen Abbas, on the SSSI on the north bank and in the adjacent field has created a great deal of interest and comment. Firstly, please remember that the river, the SSSI and the adjacent field are all privately owned. Any decisions are the responsibility of the owners, their tenants and those who advise and carry out work for them. In the case of the SSSI and river which is both an SSSI and a Special Area of Conservation, there are legal requirements to see they are properly maintained.

The Parish Council's role not only in this case but in general, as part of its remit as a locally elected body, is to engage with residents and groups on a wide range of issues, to represent the Parish and the people who live in it, to respond to their enquiries and investigate their concerns. We therefore, realising the significant interest and the feeling for more information, requested a Fact Finding meeting with the owners and their expert advisers. This meeting was held (by Zoom) with a small number of Councillors asking the initial questions with all present following with their input. In the words of one of the Councillors who took part in the meeting "it was really valuable, really informative and helped my knowledge and I wished that everyone in the Itchen Valley could have heard why the restoration project is so important and why we need to protect the SSSI."

When the record of this meeting was agreed by all who attended, it was circulated to all the Parish Council and discussed at our November Full Council Meeting with several members of the public attending.

At the end of that discussion it was agreed to send a letter to the owners expressing the Parish Council's views,

concerns and proposal for ways in which we might be able to help. In brief these are: we see the need to protect and restore the river and the SSSI and support the long term goals to improve them but also recognise concerns within the community. We are offering to work with the owners and their associates to help with communications and education, by signage, information boards, promoting talks and guided walks, we will try to increase the number of bins available for collection of litter and encourage car parking at Couch Green. We understand the need to protect the public from trees near the river bank that are in a dangerous condition. However, there is concern over the present fencing plan and we would like reconsideration of a more equitable solution to the current proposal.

A general observation to make regarding the above and other events in the past, such as when some of the bus shelters were replaced, is the way a small number of people have spoken in an aggressive manner and verbally attacked those who are carrying out the work. This is wrong and not helpful. The workers are carrying out the tasks they have been given. They are in a vulnerable position, are not the ones who have made the decisions and are unlikely to be able or have the time to give a full explanation. Therefore, when talking to them, please be polite and friendly, do not waste their time and if you need to find out more, please ask one of your Councillors. We may not have all the answers immediately but if not, we do our best to find them out for you. Please ask us directly by email, telephone or even a letter. As has been said so often and written even more often before, the Parish Council is not permitted to post

answers to your questions on the Itchen List.

Meanwhile other Parish Council work continues. Budgets for next year are in preparation. Plans are being discussed by our Environment Committee. Please see the separate article on page 13 regarding allotments.

Once again we had warnings of travellers heading this way and closed the car park at Couch Green. It has now been reopened. The barriers there are in need of repair and on the other side of the bus shelter the notice board fell over. Its posts had rotted. Given a bit of time and a spell of dry weather it will be put back up. That may be an in-house DIY job.

One frustration has been to see the road drains near the Village Hall in Itchen Abbas cleared and then to see them blocked again by debris from a burst water main in Northington Road, not for the first time either. Debris that did not find its way to block the drains ended up all over the road.

And so life and events in the Valley go on. From all the Parish Council we wish you a Happy Christmas and look forward to an interesting New Year. We may have to plan for the worst but let's hope for the best.

*Patrick Appleby*

## From our MP

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We have all got used to the rather odd world of Zoom (other sites are available) this year, and I dare say many things will remain 'virtual' in the future, but I can boldly declare I have at last found a cast iron benefit. *UK Parliament* Week usually sees Westminster full of school children learning about our Houses of Parliament and meeting up with their MPs including me. That obviously couldn't happen this year but



I was able to dip into so many constituency schools, as if to teleport Star Trek style, and chat with many more pupils than would otherwise be possible. Thank you to Itchen Abbas, Hiltngbury and Prince's Mead for being among them.

This, and the many local events I have been able to reach while required to be in Westminster mid-week, have led me to create **Visit Westminster Virtually** which I think you're going to like very much.

The events promise a glimpse behind normally closed doors and will include a Q&A session with me so if you run a local organisation and want to plan something, do find out more via [www.stevebrine.com/visitingwestminster](http://www.stevebrine.com/visitingwestminster)

Westminster continues to be a hive of activity and I have been speaking of late on the Agriculture Bill (food standards), the self-employed, support for families during school holidays, the events industry and of course all things Covid you can think of – and many you cannot.

To hone in on **support for families**, we now have a properly worked out, funded plan to stand with some of the most vulnerable families in our communities, which is rightly so much more than a half-term voucher. Councils will receive £170 million – Hampshire will get £1.9m – through the “Covid Winter Grant Scheme”



which is ring-fenced directly to help the hardest-hit families and individuals, as well as provide food for children who need it over Christmas, February half-term and Easter 2021 school holidays. This builds on the £63 million provided to councils earlier this year to assist those struggling to afford food and essentials.

It is good news but I continue, with the help of many head teachers locally, to reach out to the families impacted in my constituency, as their voice is all too often absent from the debate. I will be in touch (if I haven't already) via your school but would be pleased to hear from you if, for instance, you don't yet have school age children. You will be eligible also for the record! Finally, the Winter edition of my constituency newspaper **The Winchester Post** is out now. It contains my call on the local NHS not to give up on our hospital, a full Westminster Report and dozens of local stories that I hope you find interesting. Delivery is a challenge this Winter for obvious reasons but we'll



get there and you can download it at [www.stevebrine.com/publications](http://www.stevebrine.com/publications). There is no question Christmas will be different this year but, wherever you are and whomever you are with, I wish you every blessing of the season.

Steve Brine  
MP for Winchester & Itchen Valley

## Every Poppy Counts

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May I take this opportunity to thank all the residents, children and businesses in the Valley who supported this year's Poppy Appeal. Although there have been challenges in collecting donations, I am delighted to report that the Valley has contributed a total of £3,351.24 to the 2020 Poppy Appeal (£2,270.81 in 2019).

The children of Itchen Abbas Primary School and Princes Mead School are to be particularly congratulated for the substantial sums they have donated this year. In addition, the Royal British Legion local branch initiative for donating via JustGiving has been a significant new addition to fund raising, totalling £1,068.75 towards this year's total.

Your regular Poppy Appeal Collectors and others have been tireless in

ensuring that donations this year in the Valley should not be adversely affected and the results have shown the excellent work that everyone has done to achieve this magnificent result.

Gavin Edgerley Harris  
Your local Poppy Appeal Organiser

## The Royal British Legion. Itchen Valley Branch

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Are you moved by Remembrance Sunday?

Early November is the time of year when we think of Remembrance Day and perhaps wonder what the Royal British Legion does apart from produce poppies. As many will know, it is a charity that provides financial, social and emotional support to members and veterans of the Armed Forces, their families and dependants. Through Remembrance it honours those who have served, and continue to serve, in defence of our democratic freedoms and way of life.

2020 has been an exceptionally difficult year for the Legion and fundraising has suffered. Everyone in the Valley will, for instance, have noted the absence of the door to door poppy sellers because of Covid19.

Yet the work of the RBL continues. Many veterans, some still relatively young, continue to suffer from the physical and mental scars of conflict and benefit enormously from the support and help provided.

I wonder if you are among the many who are moved by this annual service of remembrance. Young or old, you may wonder if there is anything you can do to help. Donations help of course and are always welcome, but there is something else to think about:





Remembrance Sunday at Itchen Abbas

become a member yourself. There is a perception that only current or former members of the Armed Forces can join, but membership is open to all. And rightly so. Membership unites everyone no matter what their faith, culture or background.

Membership starts at £17 a year and applications can be made by going on line and adding a reference to the Itchen Valley Branch No.1878 ([www.britishlegion.org.uk](http://www.britishlegion.org.uk). Things to do. Become a member). The website lists some of the ways help can be provided. By joining you are actively supporting all generations of the Armed Forces community and reminding people why remembering is still so important. Because if we don't, we will once again forget the sacrifices made by so many people to preserve our freedoms and way of life.

*John Lang*

*Rear Admiral*

*President*

*Itchen Valley Branch of the Royal British Legion.*



## Itchen Insight – Philip Windsor-Aubrey

**Name:** Philip Windsor-Aubrey

**Age:** Very ancient  
Leo

**Occupations:** Sword and Pen. During lockdown I did a lot of woodwork, making home items including chopping boards, wine coasters and pepper grinders. Thanks to all who bought them and helped me to contribute £950 to St Swithun's Martyr Worthy.

**How many years in Valley:** 35

**Life:** A full, varied and happy one with The Durham Light Infantry and later as a regional newspaper publisher, with lots of sport throughout - not to mention a lovely wife!

**Valley Moment:** Being party to changing the proposed SDNP boundary in the Valley to what it is now; it was going to follow the line of the B3047 and now follows the railway line.

**Champagne Moment:** Revitalising the Upper Itchen Valley Society, which I urge all to join as it would be in your own self interest.

**Surprising snippet:** Losing our elder son to cancer when he was fourteen.

**Passion:** The unadulterated truth

**Favourite place in**

**Hampshire:** River Itchen

**Best thing about the Valley:** The lovely countryside

**Worst thing about the Valley:**

When sermons exceed eight minutes!!!.

**Favourite TV Programme:**

Yes Minister

**Best one liner:** In life you reap what you have sown.





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## Allotments

It seems that the pandemic has led to an upsurge in the number of people growing their own food. And whilst many in the Valley have big enough gardens, it has been suggested that more residents would take up this worthwhile activity if there were local allotments for rent. It appears that allotments in Alresford and Kings Worthy are so popular that there are waiting lists. The Parish Council would be interested in hearing from locals to establish whether there might be a latent demand for allotments to rent and invites them to express their interest by responding to [cllr.s.percy@itchenvalleyparishcouncil.org.uk](mailto:cllr.s.percy@itchenvalleyparishcouncil.org.uk)



An obvious likely stumbling block would be the availability of land, an issue that might prove to be insurmountable. However, a first step would be to assess potential demand, so please respond with your views to the above. For further information about allotments, see the website of the National Allotment Society.

Steve Percy

*I'm on the waiting list at St Cross. It's seven years. Ed*

## Jackie's County Corner

The Barton Farm Meadow is a great place to walk. The paths across it are part of the approved plans of the Cala site.



Residents and councillors are working with the Council to improve connectivity and safety at both Worthy Lane and Andover Road. With agreement from the developer, the route from Headbourne Worthy to Andover Road across the Barton Farm Meadow will provide a new all-weather route for cyclists and pedestrians.

25 November was 'Stop Domestic Violence day: this year, as the usual street based activity could not take place, I am encouraging all employers to join the Employers Initiative on Domestic Abuse. It is free to join the scheme. 'Stop Domestic Violence' is a priority of both the Hampshire Safety Partnership and the Winchester District Safety Partnership.

I am expecting HCC to tackle flooding problems at a number of sites in the next few months: Itchen Valley, Kings Worthy, Alresford, Headbourne Worthy (due Jan) and Micheldever Station (in progress). If you have a flooding problem, please contact me asap.

Speeding and noise on roads. This occurs in almost every community. Residents ask me if I can ask HCC to lower the speed limits to solve speeding problems, but I often refer speeding matters to the Police - as it is their remit to enforce the mandatory limits. There is more information on how to send clips on the Hampshire Constabulary website.

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The Economic Impact of Covid-19: this may be affecting you or your family. At the County Council's Policy and Resources Select committee, we have received an update on unemployment in Hampshire, covering just from March to July 2020. Unemployment rose from 26,075 to 63,385 Youth unemployment rose to 8,170. If you need advice or help to cope, please don't forget you can call 0333 370 4000.

We also had a presentation from the Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEP). Our local M3LEP policy (which covers this area) is 'Make every funding Decision a Clean Growth decision'. Kathy Slack, CEO, is happy to discuss funding for potential investment under this banner.

I know there are groups of homes, or whole communities, who do not have reasonable broadband. The Government Gigabit scheme aims to address this with funds boosted by HCC. Please go to [www.hants.gov.uk/broadband](http://www.hants.gov.uk/broadband) for more details or contact me direct.

After the 17th century plague, Winchester set up a fund to train apprentices. In 2020, I am very conscious that we will have a generation that will find it hard to get jobs and work experience. Richard Coope of Winchester Creatives has started a programme to help. The

Project is called 'Mind the Gap'. You might be just the link that Richard needs to fulfill this mission. If so, please contact him on [www.winchestercreatives.co.uk](http://www.winchestercreatives.co.uk) Thank you. Your gift might be just the thing a young person needs to brighten their Christmas.

County Councillor Jackie Porter  
[Jackie.porter@hants.gov.uk](mailto:Jackie.porter@hants.gov.uk) tell/text 07973 696 085

## Environmental activist at work in the Itchen Valley

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On the Valley Gardeners' committee, we are very lucky to have our own Eco Warrior. Our Club Secretary, Cathy Swann, has added another dimension to her already busy life by embracing the huge task of trying to make us all more careful about what we throw away and recycling whatever we can. Hampshire County Council has made her one of their Waste Prevention Champions. This role sits well with her position as Valley Gardeners' Secretary because, as a Club, we hope to encourage our members to do their best to conserve resources and tackle the waste crisis too. One of the ways of doing that is composting.

Composting has never been more central to good gardening practice; not only do you get a valuable resource for your garden soil for free but removing large amounts of organic matter from the waste stream and reducing the need to buy in endless amounts of soil improver are good for the planet too. If in the past you have been plagued by rats invading your compost bins or if the thought of them puts you off, there is now a solution! This steel collar is designed to fit around the traditional 'Dalek' shaped bin and if the bin is set on a hard surface - paving slabs are





ideal - there is no way in for Ratty. It has been devised by a Southampton based engineer and biologist, working in collaboration and successfully trialed in the Southampton area and more recently in Alresford. Tiny gaps between paving slabs and a very slight tilt to the base to allow for drainage are good ideas and composting worms can be added either from an existing bin or just with a couple of handfuls of soil.

The collar costs £35 and the inventors are happy to deliver them. They are looking for a retailer who would like to stock this very useful device as well as someone local who, after training, would help purchasers to install the collar, which is not difficult and takes maybe 20 minutes using just a pair of pliers.

If you would like to find out more, contact Cathy Swann at [cathymtswann@gmail.com](mailto:cathymtswann@gmail.com). Cathy has also written two really good articles on waste management in The Forum

magazine. You can read them by going to <https://forumpublications.co.uk/> and clicking on the March and July archive copies of the Itchen Valley editions. Here at The Valley Gardeners, we are increasingly engaging speakers who have an interest in conservation and sustainable gardening. One such is Professor Dave Goulson from the University of Sussex will talk to us in April about *The Garden Jungle or Gardening to save the planet*. We will open this talk up to Valley residents who might be interested so watch this space.

Catherine Hahn

## Local Heroes

Patrick Appleby has been named as a Local Hero by the Mayor of Winchester for his work on the Covid situation: encouraging neighbour self-help groups, putting up social distancing signs and advice posters, closing the playgrounds and taping off play equipment when it was forbidden and re-opening when it was allowed - a huge amount of work. All this while continuing with the normal Parish Council work and a few other crises! The Parish Council as a whole have also been designated Local Heroes, they all deserve our thanks in normal times and even more so this year. Ed



## Our Wild Valley:

Sustainable Festivities, Soil and a story of two worms.

"What I like doing best is Nothing. It means just going along, listening to all





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## Save the Dates

Please be aware that, given the  
current situation, events may change.

**17-20 June 2021** Easton Flower  
Festival

**11 September 2021** Itchen Valley  
Flower and Produce Festival

**18 September 2021** The Building  
Ball 7pm, at the David Roth Memorial  
Cricket Ground, Easton. Village Hall  
fundraiser.

**23 November 2021, 9 January and  
25 February 2022:** Martyr Worthy  
Lecture Series in IA&A Village Hall in  
aid of Itchen Valley Churches



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the things you can't hear, and not bothering." - Christopher Robin.  
Now, Nature needs us possibly more than we need it. Multitudes of websites give out ideas to do (or not do) as a family, individual or as part of a bigger team:

WINACC - Action for Climate in Winchester - top tips to lower our carbon footprint.

Instagram - eco Christmas - and you can just keep on searching and making. You can even now do Christmas Tree Rental - search for ones local in Hampshire.

Charities such as WWF, FOE, HIWWT and a thousand others have ideas and not all about just giving money, but time, energy and thought. Thought, or rather lack of, brings me on to what I didn't do the other morning when I went out of the back door to check the hens. They are in a state of excited bliss being no longer penned into their summer quarters, and look so pretty. While I watched them my eyes caught onto a very strange sight - an elongated worm that looked like it had stretched out across the mud and got stuck. A strange extended lobe was in the middle, half hidden under a beech leaf. My brain had twigged something weird was going on. But without thinking, I picked up the leaf. Bam, whizz, flippety jippety I recoiled as my brain tried to process what had happened; the worm appeared to split into two and withdrew down into two holes at the speed of an elastic band pinging back. What a fool I was to interrupt when I could have just watched and waited. The only saving grace was I probably did save the worms from being breakfast for the hens.

Earthworms are hermaphrodite organisms, meaning that each

earthworm has both male and female sexual reproduction organs. The two earthworms produce a slime tube and grip onto each other using parts located on the saddle (central part of



the worm) and mate. A slimy band is formed around the saddle and is moved along the earthworm until it comes off at the head end. Along this journey it picks up the egg(s) and the sperm of the earthworm that was mating with it. This then forms the cocoon and fertilisation of the egg occurs within the cocoon. A cocoon harbours the eggs produced and protects them until small hatchlings are ready. These feed and then become juveniles, similar in shape and size to an adult but without the saddle. (<https://www.earthwormsoc.org.uk/lifecycle>). Soil supports our future, our food and our water quality. Worms look after our soil and The Earthworm Society has a brilliant website full of the world about earthworms, photos, projects such as surveying your own garden. All the best for a safe, sustainable festive time, and if things are tough, maybe return to Pooh.

"If the person you are talking to doesn't appear to be listening, be patient. It may simply be that he has a small piece of fluff in his ear." - Winnie the Pooh.

*Sophie Miller*

## From the Rectory

I have heard it said of Archbishop Justin Welby that he is a person who uses the name 'Jesus' naturally in



conversation. I write this as we approach Christmas because it does puzzle me why it is that many of us do not, except as a swear word. We seem to be happy to use the word 'God' (if we believe that he exists) but for some reason the 'J' word just seems so difficult to say. People who talk about 'Jesus' are seen by much of society as crazed loons. But why? After all, a recent survey found that around 40% of the UK population described themselves as Christian, even though a much smaller figure (about 10%) attends church regularly. It seems odd that so many of us are happy to describe ourselves as 'Christians' when asked to do so by a survey or census, but find it difficult if we hear someone speaking about 'Jesus' without looking at our shoes or seeking some way to escape.

I think that, maybe, the reason that it is so difficult to use the word 'Jesus' is that it is so specific. We can talk easily about 'God'. We can say whether we think a God exists or not. We can speculate on what his character might be, if he does exist. We can reinvent him as the sort of person we think that he should be. But when we say the word 'Jesus' then this is a whole other ball game. We have to deal with what we know about a human being who actually existed 2,000 years ago in Palestine, a man whose existence and character is documented by historians

contemporary to the Ancient World, such as Tacitus, Suetonius and Josephus, none of them friends of Christianity. But, most importantly, we can discover his character from reading the contemporary witness statements of what he said and did, which appear in the Bible. There really is no other way that we can know what he is like. It is Christianity's contention that this man is God, in a trinitarian combination with the Father and the Spirit. So, as we look at the character of Jesus revealed in the Bible, we discover the character of God the creator of the universe himself. And that character is pretty amazing.....

We learn that he loves each of us. We learn that his love was ultimately expressed in his journey to the cross where he carried the cost of our sinfulness - all those things we do that create an obstacle between us and our creator. We learn how we can access that love by being 're-born' and trusting in him. We also learn that he has some very challenging things to say to us on how we should live, but also that knowing him is the answer to all our questions of purpose and identity, which are so central to our well-being and happiness.

Even if so many of us find it difficult to talk or hear about Jesus or don't attend church, still over 90% of us celebrate Christmas! We, in Itchen Valley Parish, are so delighted to welcome so many of our neighbours at Christmas every year, but it's going to be more of a challenge this year to receive you all in church than usual. As I write this, I am assuming that we will go back to the same level of Covid controls as we were in before we were put in lockdown. We are hoping that we will be able to have about 30 people in every service wearing masks and sadly

refraining from singing. We will need to book our attendance at all our services (for track and trace purposes) and it's probably best if you could only book for one service at Christmas per household. We won't be able to put on our usual Carols in the Barn (it's just too difficult to manage the children on a socially distanced basis) but we will have Midnight Mass at Avington. We are going to try and put on something to substitute for the Crib Service in Easton on Christmas Eve, but numbers will be limited and we would ask that only families with young children attend and book in advance. On Christmas Day itself we are hoping to hold communion services at all our churches at 10am in Avington, Easton, Itchen Abbas and Martyr Worthy, which will be led by our LLM Gerry Stacey and our two BCMs Dan Day-Robinson and Tim Clapp, whom you will have seen at the Acts of Remembrance in Avington and Itchen Abbas in November. I will be leading the service in Easton and this service will also be zoomed.

I hope that if you are able to attend one of our services over the Christmas period, you will engage with the story told, that you will be astonished, as I always am, that God the Creator of the Universe came to earth as a man 2000 years ago and that you won't find (if you do at the moment) using the name 'Jesus' such an embarrassment in 2021!

*Alex Pease*

## The Kindness of Strangers

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On 30 October, just prior to this present Lock Down, I drove to the New Forest to meet my sister who was staying with friends near Bucklers Hard. I had a wonderful time including a walk along the beach near their house in the sunshine after the rain of

the morning. I left not long after 4.30 expecting to be back in Easton about 5.15 or so. I was taking my normal short cut across the Forest and had just passed some cyclists when my tyre blew, so I skidded into the side of the road. The cyclists stopped to check I was OK and then some walkers came up and said that they could help – Stuart and Rebecca. They live at Dibden Purlieu and were doing a circuit walk which they do regularly. Rebecca as it turns out was, until March when Flybe collapsed, cabin crew with Alex Bendall whose parents live down the lane from me. Stuart, very kindly and efficiently changed my tyre and we said our goodbyes, shutting the passenger door and when I went round to get in on the driver's side everything had locked. I had left the key in the ignition, thinking this was a sensible thing to do, which it was not!! My handbag, phone, coat, everything was locked in the car. Rebecca and Stuart, realising there was a problem came back and there was nothing to be done. They telephoned their son who came with a metal coat hanger and a rug. Various people stopped to see if they could help, but it was beyond everyone until Karoc, a Polish Mechanic, came along who knew exactly what to do but had to go back to his workshop to get some puff things to get the car window open and some wire. He left and Stuart and Rebecca would not leave me. After about 25 minutes Karoc came back and with his window puff things and wire and also with the wire hanger that Stuart and Rebecca's son had brought,





Karoc got to work. It was probably another half to three quarters of an hour, but slowly, slowly, Karoc and Stuart managed to get the window open enough to get the wire in and then gradually feed that down to eventually open the passenger door!! I have never been so relieved in all my life! Then because the key had been in the ignition the battery was flat but with jump leads, Karoc and Stuart got me going again.

I ruined Stuart and Rebecca's walk and they went home in their son's car and Karoc had to take a photograph of me and the car to prove to his girlfriend that he was doing a good deed and not standing her up!!

This was not the end of kindnesses as I wanted to get over to Hertfordshire to have lunch with my son and family and could not drive over there with the emergency tyre. I went to Kwik Fit for 0930 to get in the queue for their

10.00 a.m. opening and I thought I was first in the queue but I was not as a chap had booked in on line, but he had his wife with their other car and they were going to come back later.

Basically with the help of the two Kwik Fit chaps and this kind man – I was on my way to Hertfordshire by 10.20 and was with the family by mid-day!!

All those people I cannot thank enough for all they did for me and in these difficult times, it just shows how wonderful strangers can be

Penelope Kellie

## Short poem competition

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*There once was a lady from Easton  
Who using her key let the priest in  
To St Mary's church  
Where, after research,  
She socially distanced when feasting  
I'm sure you can do better than that!*

Maybe Haikus are more your style.

*Avington lies still*

*The virus keeps folk at home*

*Sheep on the golf course*

The Itchen Valley News is offering (small) prizes for the best short poems on the theme of "The Itchen Valley during 2020". You can use a limerick or Haiku format. Your Haiku must be three lines long, with the standard 5, 7 and 5 syllables pattern.

Any limerick must be five lines long.

The first, second and fifth lines must rhyme but may not end with the same word. The third and fourth lines must also rhyme but not with the same word. Please send your entries to [itchenvalleynews@gmail.com](mailto:itchenvalleynews@gmail.com) by midnight on Tuesday 8 December.

Vernon Tottle, Chief Editor

PS If you want help with Haikus, search "James May Haiku" and watch the resulting five minute video for some ideas.

## Box Set review

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If there is one good thing about 'being confined to quarters' it is the opportunity to stop, relax and indulge in some serious boxset bingeing.

Problem is where to start? Sky, BBC, Netflix, Amazon...the list goes on.

Hopefully, the following recommendations will help relieve the boredom.

### Food

*Somebody Feed Phil*: Netflix 32 Episodes. Philip Rosenthal was the Writer and Producer of the US hit show *Everybody Loves Raymond* and he has now turned his talent to presenting this delightfully funny food show. Philip travels the world exploring everything culinary on offer. He is not a natural presenter but his enthusiasm and humour is a joy to watch.

## **Drama**

*The Blacklist* – Sky One 153 Episodes  
If you like your American crime thrillers, then you will love *The Blacklist*. Raymond Reddington, played by the brilliantly engaging James Spader, is a former U.S. Navy officer turned criminal, who surrenders himself into the FBI armed only with a list of names and one request...He will only speak with Elizabeth Keen. This is a huge boxset coming in at over 153 episodes but each one will see you wanting more.

## **Travel**

*Long way Up* Apple TV 11 Episodes  
Once again Ewan McGregor and his friend Charley Boorman take to their bikes and embark on another journey, this time it's Ushaia in Argentina to Los Angeles. Following on from their two previous highly successful journeys, London to LA and Scotland to Cape Town, they attempt this long journey only this time on prototype electric Harley Davidson. Well-presented and beautifully shot and a definite must see for the sofa-bound adventurer.

## **Kids**

*The Mandalorian* Disney Plus 12 Episodes.  
If you have *Star Wars* fans in the house, then read no further as you have probably already heard of this brilliant new spin-off. Directed by Jon Favreau, he of *Iron Man* and *Avengers* fame. Set five years after the *Return of the Jedi*, this story follows the adventures of the lone gunfighter who was hired to retrieve "The Child" but chooses to go on the run and protect the infant. Filmed with the same care and quality as a full-on *Star Wars* movie and with a sound track that comes straight out of the old westerns. A good watch for all the family.

**Time for a walk down memory lane.** Sometimes it's good for the soul to revisit all those programmes we loved. Take some time to remember what life used to be like before masks, elbow shakes and the waft of hand sanitizer. Enjoy...

**River Cottage** (1999) Channel 4 – Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall's first steps into the world of self-sufficiency and gorgeous home-cooked food.

**Grand Designs** (1999) Channel 4 – Kevin McCloud guides us through 20 years of ever-changing design taste.

**Hinterland** (2013) Netflix – Gritty detective drama, filmed against the backdrop of rural Wales complete with brooding Detective and gripping storylines

**Doctor Who** (2005) BBC – Still going strong 15 years on and it is such great fun for the kids and parents to watch. Look out for this year's Christmas Special. Date to be advised.

**Morse/Sherlock Holmes/  
Midsomer Murders/Agatha**

**Christie** – ITV is the one stop shop for all your crime fiction needs

**Michael Palin** (1989) BBC / Amazon  
There are many of his productions littered around the channels and they are well worth hunting out. Especially his first adventure, *Around the World in 80 days*. A snapshot look at travel before the internet and the fall of the Berlin Wall. A great show to share with the kids. Who remembers telephone directories?

**The West Wing** (2001) – Channel 4 – Creative writing at its best. Brilliantly cast winner of multiple awards. Well worth a revisit, especially considering what's going on at the moment over 'the pond'.

*Esther Armitage*

## Support Local Business

---

### **The West Lea Farm Shop**

Sited on Itchen Stoke Road, it has a new owner. I'm Rachel Peppiatt, I live in Ovington, and took over last month. I am intent on increasing the amount and range of locally sourced produce. Shopping locally is vital for all of our community and local businesses alike and I want to welcome new local suppliers who need an outlet to sell



their produce alongside my existing suppliers. West Lea will continue to supply fresh local trout from Itchen Abbas and watercress from its own beds, in addition to three varieties of local honey, homemade quiches, cakes, soups, terrines, pesto, bread and pastries, fresh fruit and veg, strawberries, jams, pickles and chutneys. The shop will be open throughout lockdown and with Christmas just around the corner, customers are able to order everything from Christmas trees and local free range turkeys through to handmade wreaths and Christmas table decorations. As in previous years, hampers will be available which can be packed individually with any amount of delicious goodies.

*Rachel Peppiatt*

### **Alresford Gift shop**

We live in Easton and took over The Alresford Gift Shop six years ago. We

developed a website at the end of Lockdown and now have well over a thousand items online. Cards (everyday and Christmas), Charity Christmas cards, advent calendars plus gifts, jewellery and decorations can be purchased by visiting:

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We offer a very personal and prompt service with delivery straight to your door, sometimes even the same day. If you prefer to discuss what you need over the phone, we can be reached at 01962 732192 or by email at [thealresfordgiftshop@gmail.com](mailto:thealresfordgiftshop@gmail.com).

Lockdown 2 has meant that we, like many other small businesses in Alresford, have been forced to close our doors for a month just at the busiest time of year having already lost out at Easter. We have been amazed by the support of the people of Alresford and the Itchen Valley in particular.

*Susan and Vernon, Dymoke Cottage*

### **Winchester Charity Christmas Card Shop**

Well, it opened on time in October, it shut as demanded in November but it intends to reopen in December whenever the second lockdown ends. A full range of cards will be available from the shop at 155 High Street (the former Whittards shop). Do visit it if you can to get your Christmas Cards and to support charities at the same time.

*Cathy Wallis*



## Bird of the Month



Look out for these smart finches, Winter migrants from Russia and Scandinavia. They often feed in flocks with chaffinches and to see one in the garden is very special. This is a photo of a female; the males are very striking with a black cap.

*Elaine Labram*

## The Chestnut Horse shop is open!



After much eager anticipation, the Chestnut Horse Shop is now open from 10 am to 4pm, Wednesday to Sunday.

I popped in this morning and the shop looks clean and bright with plenty of milk, vegetables and vegetables, eggs etc. There are even lollipops on the counter for smaller customers!

I chatted to Nathan who was behind

the till. He told me, "We sell daily essentials with fresh bread baked on site each day, plus croissants and a sweet baked treat - brownies, lemon cake etc." I bought a loaf of freshly baked and still warm olive bread that was delicious.

The shop also serves take away coffee, tea and hot chocolate which Nathan told me had been very popular with walkers, both locals and those from further afield.

They take cash, card and Apple Pay so no need to take cash down there unless you want to.

Please do remember to go and use the shop as it's such a great asset to our community and it needs our support to flourish and survive.

*Sophie Goodhall*

## Plant of the month

The Spindle Tree will grow into a seven metre high tree but it is usually seen in hedgerows. The young shoots make a very fine charcoal for artists' use. The conspicuous fruits are very distinctive.

*Simon and Dorothy Broadley*





*Itchen Valley Churches  
are hoping to put on the following  
services over the Christmas period*

**Second Sunday of Advent** - 6th December  
Christingle 4pm St Mary's, Avington (also zoomed)

Sung Evensong 6pm St John's, Itchen Abbas

**Christmas Eve**

Crib Service 4pm St Mary's, Easton (also zoomed)

Midnight Mass 10.30pm St Mary's, Avington

**Christmas Day Communion**

10am Services at

St Mary's Easton (also zoomed)

St Swithun's Martyr Worthy

St John's Itchen Abbas

St Mary's Avington

There will be limited spaces for all services and you must  
book by emailing - [admin@itchenvalleychurches.org](mailto:admin@itchenvalleychurches.org)

All services will require masks, require social distancing  
by household and no singing will be possible

With the Covid situation changing so fast there  
are likely to be changes made at short notice - please  
follow [www.itchenvalleychurches.org](http://www.itchenvalleychurches.org) for updates on  
what will be happening.



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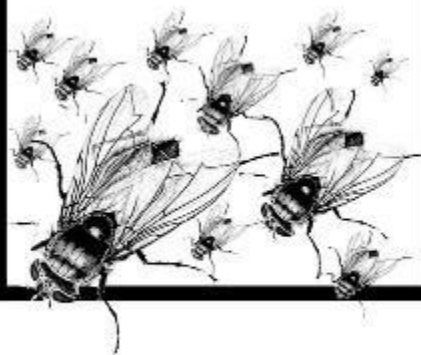
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## From our City Councillors

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**COVID-19 Update:** Here we are again, back in lockdown; Is your support network in place? After having checked my patch in Alresford I am cautiously optimistic that we can cover all needs, with some contingency for illness. A valid point was made by one street co-ordinator, she is quite happy to organise, but with children in the house she feels it is not safe to handle goods that are to be delivered to vulnerable residents. Those who organise also have their place in the firmament.

The incessant number of new rules, changes to them and the lack of detail about them, continues to make it difficult to give advice, or even to know to whom to refer questions. The latest rules can be seen at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/new-national-restrictions-from-5-november>. Once again, these are short on detail.

**Money:** The new lockdown will cause yet more and as yet hard to predict damage to the city's income. It is still not clear how much we will be eventually refunded by the central government. All this adds considerably to the problem of creating a realistic budget for 2020-21. Undoubtedly a challenging task, but it will be done.

**Street Surgeries:** It was a pleasure to be out meeting people again, not only for the usual friendly chats but

also to deal with the considerable amount of casework that had been 'waiting until I saw you'. All this now has to stop until the end of the second lockdown. We can only sort out the issues and concerns of residents if we are told of them, so please contact us by email or phone, until we can re-start our surgeries either in the street, or as in the past, indoors.

The usual pattern of housing problems, lack of neighbourliness, and our old friends, planning and enforcement have changed slightly. The increase in housing and neighbour trouble can be directly linked to our spending more time at home, the increase in environmental nuisance is beyond my logic, perhaps everybody is just a little more grumpy. The street surgeries are of course, now suspended. We hope for not too long. The development of a new vaccine is perhaps a glimmer of hope on the horizon of a rather dark night.

**Green Waste bins:** This programme is being rolled out early and they will be collected on the same schedule as green waste bags.

**The Tip:** The deputation that went to Hampshire County Council to point out the lack of equality of prohibiting pedestrian access to the Tip, but allowing cars was politely received. There is still no sign of action. Many people are further frustrated that it is empty most of the time, since apparently the list of appointments is closed the previous evening and no appointments are available thereafter. Surely HCC cannot be so cynical that since their poor management and unjust rules have led to a decline in use, that they will use the lack of users as an excuse to close the site?

**Parking Strategy for Alresford:** This was promised more than three



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years ago and started in February. Officers developing this are involved in the Covid SD changes to highways. Staff have been under immense workload, reacting to ever changing directives, I hesitate to ask for action on this when our priorities need to be on supporting others.

**Covid travel Map** <https://hantscovidtravelmap.commonplace.is/comments>

There was tremendous input locally to suggestions for making it easier to walk and cycle. None of the suggestions for Alresford & Itchen Valley were put forward for central government funding. A great shame as it was an opportunity to resolve several issues that make it so unattractive, or downright dangerous to walk or cycle and to leave the car at home. A lowering of speed limits would emphasise the comfort and safety of pedestrians over the convenience of motorists.

*Margot Power 01962 734167*

*Russell Gordon -Smith 01962 733219*

## Protection of the River and People

---

First an enormous thank you to the many who have responded with understanding and agreement to the position that I set out in the information sheet circulated to all those who requested it. I am also grateful to the many of the silent majority who tell me that they are amazed at the lack of appreciation of the need for preservation of our natural habitat and absence of gratitude for being permitted by the landowners to use Cow Down from time to time over the years.

This section of the river is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and a Special Area of Conservation (SAC).

We must protect wildlife and nature for future generations, but just as relevant and misunderstood is the need for protection of people from falling trees and from the diseases that abound in many rivers. Sadly we live in a litigious age when all land and riparian owners have to take precautions against the irresponsible minority who do not or will not take care of themselves and their children.

Unfortunately some of these people are locals as well as visitors drawn by social media to "Itchen Beach". The damage they cause, the disgusting rubbish they leave and the abuse they give when challenged is well documented in a letter to the Hampshire Chronicle on 12 November from Pat Brockway.

As land and riparian owners, we have to have public indemnity insurance, as would any public body owning or managing the same land, if there were



to be such a body prepared to take on the liability for management and public safety. The insurance cover does depend upon the owners taking all necessary precautions against known and reasonably foreseeable risks to the public, however unlikely these risks are to occur and cause accidents.

Unfortunately the law of liability is strong and well tested. Precautions need to be conspicuous and emphatic. Our experience around Cow Down is that warning notices have been little observed and often torn down. They are not sufficient on their own. Fencing is essential to deter and will have to be put up. The risk of accident and liability is a powerful reinforcement of our

decision to close Cow Down on environmental grounds.

Experts have advised us on all the fencing and tree works. As its chairman points out, the Parish Council does not have jurisdiction over these works. Nonetheless we and our experts have made a presentation to a committee appointed by the Council. The minutes of the meeting are on its website.

The need for these actions has been compounded by the decision of Cllr Jackie Porter to follow up her suggestion, in interview with the Chronicle, that a small part of our fields and river itself should become a Village Green. It has come to our notice that she has been seeking

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Pilates with Emily	Tue & Thu 0900		Emily	07876 033893
Baby massage	Mon 1015 & 1400		Janet	07973 855107
Mum & baby Yoga	Wed & Thu 1030		Janet	07973 855107
Pregnancy Yoga	Wed 1815		Janet	07973 855107

### Martyr Worthy Village Hall

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Watercolour Art	Wednesday 1000	Kirstin	07484 393197
Thursday Arts	Advanced 1000 Mixed 1400	Kirstin	07484 393197

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[manager@iaavillagehall.co.uk](mailto:manager@iaavillagehall.co.uk) 07947 191229 Village hall callbox 01962 791021

signatures to support an application to register this, all leading to a public enquiry, at considerable public as well as private expense. There are many reasons why this proposal for a second local village green is inappropriate and regrettable. The whole river is in an SSSI/SAC and protected by law. It is the duty of riparian owners to enforce this protection.

The river has been a known source of water borne diseases such as Weil's disease and Cryptosporidiosis as well as possible infections from cattle, dog or human excrement and discharge from private sewage. These are rare but frequent enough for Alresford Surgery to have warned in the past against swimming in the river. The diseases are usually caught by water getting into the mouth, nose or cuts. When the Rector baptised in the river, after a full risk analysis, there were three adults in attendance and purified water was available for use should there be any risk of contact with the face. This is a managed and safe procedure, quite unlike children swimming or falling into the river.

Management of a village green needs regular control, cleaning and inevitably cost. The manager would need to take responsibility for accident and damage as well as protection of this highly sensitive environment. I have seen no suggestion of anyone prepared to take that on. The Parish Council does not have resources for a second village green which would become a cost to ratepayers. At the full meeting of the Parish Council, no member spoke in favour of a village green.

There is no vehicle or bicycle access and parking has to be in Chilland, by Itchen Abbas Church, on the road verge in Itchen Abbas and is sometimes attempted in the lime avenue leading to

Grey's Lea. Parking in any of these areas creates nuisance and obstruction for local residents and emergency services.

The presence of a village green will compound the social media effect of drawing in those who do not respect the extremely sensitive nature of the SSSI, leading to renewed damage.

The public response to these necessary measures for the protection of people, the SSSI and wildlife has generally been courteous, if sometimes poorly informed. The works have taken longer than expected as a result of the unfortunate accident with the digger. The mess made will soon clear when warmer weather returns and the first signs of returning species have already been observed. Pat Brockway referred in her letter to some unfortunate verbal abuse on the river bank which we have all witnessed. Let's hope that is only a short term aberration.

*Nick Owen - also on behalf of Andrew Impey and Richard Hunt*

## Cowdown - the Specialist View

---

Last month a formal notice from the Environment Agency was posted on the river bank and was also printed in last month's Valley News. I think it is important to put the current work on the river channel to improve the SSSI at Itchen Abbas in the context of the extensive improvements to both the world famous chalk streams, the Test and Itchen.

The Test and Itchen Restoration Strategy was set up as a joint project between the Environment Agency and Natural England in 2012 to restore the rivers to favourable condition. I jumped at the chance to take on the role of



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project officer and play my part in bringing these chalk streams back into tip-top condition. Having worked in the Hampshire area for the Environment Agency and its predecessor, the National Rivers Authority, since 1994, I had good local knowledge and experience of working on river restoration projects – and, crucially, knew lots of people.

These relationships proved to be key to the project's success due to the multiple landowners and fisheries, often sceptical of working with authorities, who needed to get on board with the overall strategy and improve their section of river and contribute 50% of the overall cost. Together with the project's strategy team, I have worked with 28 landowners to restore nearly 15 kilometres of river. The Itchen Abbas project is the latest part of our strategy.

Working together we have removed thirteen structures such as weirs and hatch dams that slow the flow of the river, making it more difficult to achieve the conditions required for chalk stream flora and fauna to thrive. Added 20,000 tonnes of gravel and narrowed overly wide channels using woody material. This has raised the beds and further increased the velocity to create a habitat for species such as ranunculus to flourish, changed many

kilometres of river bank from being manicured to natural, thereby improving habitat, creating cover, reducing erosion and making each river more resilient to climate change and brought together fisheries, landowners, anglers and multiple organisations including the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust to change and influence attitudes and practices and achieve real results. By building these lasting working relationships and demonstrating the benefits of collaboration, we have given people the confidence to work with us going forward and continue to make these positive changes that will benefit us all. Worked to increase flood storage or reduce flood risk.

By creating the right habitat, the rivers have attracted species that weren't there before, such as wild brown trout – and everything else has now begun to follow, clearly demonstrating that the rivers are beginning to thrive, with multiple benefits to people, to wildlife and to the environment. In recognition of the project's success, last month we were awarded the UK Rivers Prize 2020 for a catchment-scale project. It's taken 8 years to get where we are now but ultimately, the project sold itself once the dramatic improvements of the first stages came to life.

*Heb Leman, Test and Itchen Restoration Strategy Project Officer*





## Itchen Valley Churches

### Sunday 6th December

4pm Christingle live from St Mary's, Avington and by Zoom  
6pm Sung Advent Evensong Live from St John's, Itchen Abbas

### Sunday 13th December

10am Parish Communion with Archdeacon Richard via Zoom

### Sunday 20th December

10am Valley Worship via Zoom

**For our Christmas services please see page 25.**

**With the Covid situation changing so fast there may be changes made at short notice, please check details on the Church website.**

**Rector** - Revd Alex Pease

rector@itchenvalleychurches.org - 01962 779845

**LLM** - Mr Gerry Stacey

gerry.stacey@biblesociety.org.uk - 07554 438973

**Parish Administrator** - Becky Clark

admin@itchenvalleychurches.org - 01962 779845

**[www.itchenvalleychurches.org](http://www.itchenvalleychurches.org)**

## The Practical Gardener

Every month there is a surprise in the weather and as I write it's warm and wet whereas we might expect colder and drier. So, the job which I dislike most is leaf sweeping and wet leaves are more difficult to move. It's never a good thing to leave leaves around so I use every available tool for the job. I must say I've never been much impressed by blowers, which just seem to make a lot of noise and move the problem elsewhere. Vacuum or sucking equipment appears to me to be far more efficacious. I also learnt recently that some grass clippings help speed up the rotting process for leaves so I usually add all the grass and leaves from my orchard into the leaf bins.

It's also the time to start cutting back and pulling up. So, most annuals are finished. The exception seems to be Gazanias which are still in flower. I pot

up geraniums and over winter them in the greenhouse. Perennials have to be cut back and I am careful to see which might compost and which are more woody and need to be shredded or burnt. Woody material will compost but it takes a long time.

There's been a lot of growth in shrubs this year and I also do a lot of cutting back. If you have a shrub taller than 3m it's going to be a struggle so that's my maximum. Very tall hedges, unless



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really needed as a screen, seem to come in the same category. I'm still a great fan of electric equipment for this work. It's lighter and quieter. Batteries are still expensive and I think it pays to look at 36v or more to get a decent amount of power.

Yes, I'm still cutting the lawn and now by hand as the ride-on doesn't like wet grass, so it's been put to bed. One tip is to make sure the battery is charged a few times over the winter, easy to take off and keep in the garage.

In the vegetable garden, the only sowing is garlic but there's plenty to harvest. Root crops, leeks and brassicas are all ready in the coming months. I've still seen caterpillars at work, unusual this late in the year. It's also a good time to mulch. I do this with my own compost. It gives the worms something to do over the winter. All parts of a garden can benefit from this.

Happy gardening.

*Tony Gaster.*

## Write early for Christmas!

As is customary, we aim to get the January edition of the magazine printed and distributed before Christmas. To allow this to happen we need to close the books earlier than usual. The final date for the receipt of articles for the January 2021 issue will therefore be Tuesday 8 December 2020. Please help the editorial team at this busy time of year by doing your best to make this deadline.

Thank you.

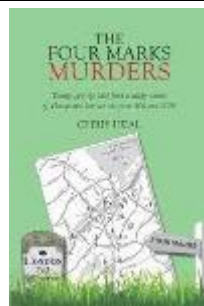
*Vernon Tottle* Chief Editor

## Book Review

### The Four Marks Murders

If you are looking for that elusive Christmas present for an uncle, a brother-in-law or even your granny, this book fills that gap. If you are

interested in local history, many of the chapters give us plenty of historical detail about this part of Hampshire and Four Marks isn't that far from the Itchen Valley. The settlement of Four Marks stands on the watershed between the rivers Wey and Itchen, the high ridge sparsely populated until the late 19th century, but over the centuries a popular route for traders, armies, kings, pilgrims, smugglers, all ripe for murderous shenanigans. In this collection of grisly tales, local historian Chris Heal picks twenty murders from Roman times right up to the present day (but in no particular order). From Amy Johnson landing her plane there, Roman





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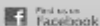
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centurions planting vineyards, stragglers from the Battle of Cheriton, the poet Edward Thomas's appreciation society to how to deal with the local drug dealer, each tale romps along beside careful academic research, with footnotes and reading lists for each chapter. Who knew that Four Marks was such a hotbed of criminals? A 'must' for that Christmas stocking filler.

*Jacqui Squire*

## Message from the Governors

---

As we near the end of another term at Itchen Abbas Primary School, we as governors continue to be immensely proud of how Mrs Dear, the headteacher and all the other staff are working so hard to make school as normal and enjoyable as possible for all of the children. The children have been amazing and continue to adapt so well to the different situation that they find themselves in.

Despite lockdown, the staff have planned and organised so many exciting projects for the children, drawing on outside resources as the children are unable to take part in off-site class visits.

You may have seen the Year 6 Foxes class out and about during last month

on their bikes learning road safety. The children did so well at Bikeability with every child enjoying themselves and achieving success. It was important to the school that this continued as it is part of getting the children ready to go to Secondary School. The school received some lovely comments from people who observed the children around the village and we are all very proud of them. Thanks to the staff for arranging and working alongside the team to give the children this opportunity.

During December, the Christmas celebrations will look very different with the usual nativity service and Christmas performances taking place via Zoom, but we are determined that the children will not miss out and we also hope to make it as enjoyable and memorable as possible for the parents. If your child is due to start school in September 2021, please do contact the school to arrange a meeting with Mrs Dear.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the staff, children and parents of the school, you have all been fantastic - working and learning together to make this time as enjoyable as possible.

*Beccy Clark, Vice-Chair Governors*



## Christmas Refuse collections

---

For the villages of Avington, Easton, Itchen Abbas and Martyr Worthy, the collections are altered as follows:

Friday 18 December – as normal

Friday 25 December moved to  
Tuesday 29 December.

*Vernon Tottle*

## Comings & Goings

---

We welcome Alexis Church and her three children to Three Acres, Easton. Heather 17, Sam 15, Beth 14.

They have moved from Twyford along with Cats Jesse and Blaze

We say goodbye to the Mitchells from Longacre. They have moved to Chilland.

*Judith Mezger*

## My Swansong as editor

---

Willow came into our lives from a family connection. Mostly Jack Russell, she has already found a way to rule our lives. We have realised how much we appreciate having a dog and what great company they are.

*Tony Gaster*



## Local monthly information

---

### **Itchen Valley area waste collections in December**

Black bins and green bags on Fridays 4 and 18 December. Green bins on Friday 11 and Tuesday 29 December. Glass boxes on Friday 11 December.

### **CAMEO**

Currently suspended.

### **Farmers Market in Winchester**

Sunday 13 December.

### **Parish Council Full Meeting**

Thursday 3 December. Via Zoom

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NB: The 16:23 service only runs on school days. On non-school days it goes at 15:23 and then only on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

Mondays and Thursdays to Alresford:  
11:49 15:19 17:09 18:09

Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays to Alresford:

09:49 11:49 13:19 15:19 17:09 18:09

### **Saturday service (same for the whole month.**

Towards Winchester:

08:23 11:23 14:23 17:23

Towards Alresford:

09:19 12:19 15:19 18:09

### **No Sunday or bank holiday service.**

Christmas services are likely to be based on the Saturday timetable.

All times shown are at Itchen Abbas.

Times are 5 minutes later (or earlier) at Easton.



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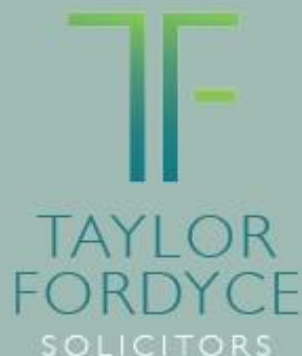
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