



# Ermington

Parish Magazine

April 2024

# Parish Diary

Event	Time	Place
Parish Council Meetings	7.30 p.m. Tuesdays 2 Apr, 7 May	Reading Rooms
Store & More opening times	Mon-Sat 10 – 4 Sun 10 – 1	
The Hub	See page 5	
Ivybridge Mobile Library	9.40 – 10.10 a.m. Tuesdays 16 Apr, 21 May	Fawns Close
Pub quizzes	Sundays 7 Apr, 5 May	Crooked Spire

## *News from your Parish Church*

### **St Peter and St Paul, Ermington**

7 and 21 April - **11 a.m. Holy Communion** with Rev David Sayle

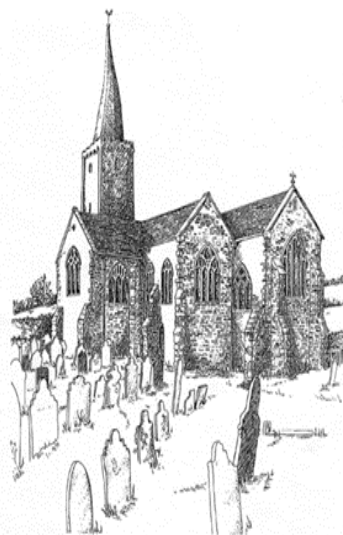
14 April - **11 a.m. Morning Service** with Local Worship Leaders

28 April - **11 a.m. Family Service** with Local Worship Leaders

**Our Church Building is open every day for visitors and those seeking a quiet reflective space for private prayer.**

*Thanks to Mr & Mrs P Daniels*

**Please note that the Annual Parochial Church Council Meeting will be held in Church on Sunday 7 April at 12 noon.**



For more information, please go to the website:  
[www.threeriversmissioncommunity.org.uk](http://www.threeriversmissioncommunity.org.uk)

# From the Editor

Hello Everyone,

My 'new' knee is now almost a year old, and should be behaving well. In practice it sends me occasional twinges; walking is uncomfortable, and I do not attempt stairs without a handrail. My physiotherapist says that cycling and swimming are good for the knee; so for the last few weeks I have been swimming in the pool at Ivybridge Leisure Centre. I cycle there early every weekday morning, and meet the same people: Malcolm, Sally, Caroline, Bob, and the rest. I am easily the slowest swimmer, which is a bit embarrassing, since everyone else has to swerve round me. To begin with I was also embarrassed at displaying my wobbly corpse in public, but I am glad to say there are some bodies even worse than mine. In any case, I flail my way through ten lengths a day, which makes 50 lengths in the Monday-Friday week.

I cycle at other times of the day if I can find gaps between rain showers, and clock up 50 miles a week. Doctors, and many 'experts' on the internet, tell me that exercise will help me lose weight, and also reduce the chances of strokes, heart attacks, and dementia. I have not lost any weight (yet), but nor have I had any of those other things; so the exercise must be working.

I recently invested in a pair of 'bar mitts', ugly neoprene bags which cover handlebars, and brake and gear levers. My hands and gloves go inside, to get protection from wind and especially rain; so I stay dry and warm for longer. I give them 6/10 for performance.



All the best,

*Adam*

*To engage the community to improve the environment  
so that all life thrives*



## **FORTHCOMING EVENTS 2024**

*Talks at the Hub:*

**Tuesday 9 April at 7 p.m. 'Swifts and the Importance of Swift Boxes' by Jerry Horn**

**Tuesday 7 May at 7 p.m. 'Compost Converters' by Ben Bryant.**

**Saturday 4 May 10–12 Seedling Saturday in the Hub.**

**Saturday 18 May at 10 a.m. Himalayan Balsam - pulling party!**

**Friday 14 June - Beaver Trip - leaving Ermington at 4 p.m. returning approx. 10 p.m.** (see page 29) Trip to visit Derek Gow, a keen environmentalist who has introduced beavers onto his property on NW Dartmoor and also embraced rewilding. Cost £20 per head; group transport currently being explored. Please email Ellen Hill at [ellenh12@hotmail.com](mailto:ellenh12@hotmail.com) if you would like to take part.

**'Family Fun Day' joining in with Modbury and Ugborough Environmental groups - Sat 13 July at Queen Elizabeth Hall and park. Times TBC.**



# The Hub Weekly Activities October 2023

Time	Activity
<b>Monday</b>	
9.30 - 10.30am	Beginners yoga with Cait
	<i>Late morning and afternoon available for hire.</i>
7.00 - 8.00pm	Yoga with Cait
8.00 - 9.30pm	Ukulele
<b>Tuesday</b>	
	<i>Day and Evening available for hire.</i>
<b>Wednesday</b>	
10.00 - 12.00	Art Class - Watercolour - Christine Pascoe
	<i>Afternoon and evening available for hire.</i>
<b>Thursday</b>	
Afternoon	Ermington Spinners 1 x monthly (2nd Thur)
7.00 - 9.00pm	Ermington Ladies group 1 x monthly (as above)
	<i>Morning and evening available for hire.</i>
<b>Friday</b>	
9.30 - 10.30am	Core strength coaching Pilates - Karen Menis
11.00 -12.30	Caring for the carers coffee and chat (last Friday)
	<i>Afternoon and evening available for hire.</i>
<b>Saturday and Sunday</b>	
	<i>Available for hire.</i>

## An Enquiry Barbara Jones

I ran a **FREE** demonstration on **Bread Making** in The Hub to make money to help our community shop. This went surprisingly well, and people were asked to give a donation for the shop. Then someone asked me what else I could do

and I jokingly said, *'I am famous for my flap-jacks'*, and that resulted in yet another demo, again **FREE**, but



getting some

donations for the shop. While flapjacks contain some sugar, it is balanced with lots of good things, such as fibre from nuts and seeds, all very healthy. I have found that if children have made any food for them selves, they are more likely to eat it.

What's more, parents know what ingredients there are in home-made treats, unlike some shop-bought goodies. Please let the shop know if you would be interested in another demo.

I have now been asked to do a **Make-Do-and-Mend** demo, where people can learn basic skills. I am not sure that this is a goer. If you would like to come along and join in – or get something mended – please let the shop know. You could bring some garment you love which needs a bit of TLC to bring it back to life. This is the sort of sustainability that we all need to save our planet --- and help our community shop.

This favourite jumper had gone through at the elbow; now it can be used again.



Have you a well-loved and well-worn piece of clothing that needs patching? Please bring it along.

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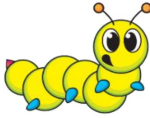
**Contact Elaine:** 075 1318 1267

**Email:** [Ticketyfluesweep@gmail.com](mailto:Ticketyfluesweep@gmail.com)

*To avoid disappointment, book a sweep before the end of August*



St Peter & St Paul's Ermington



Churchyard



# Minibeast Hunt

for families and friends

Come and have fun hunting for small creatures in the grass, leaf litter and branches



SAT **13<sup>TH</sup>** April 2024 **2pm**

Bring your **magnifier** along so together we can identify and list what we find

This is part of the church's biodiversity recording

**All children must be accompanied by a responsible adult**

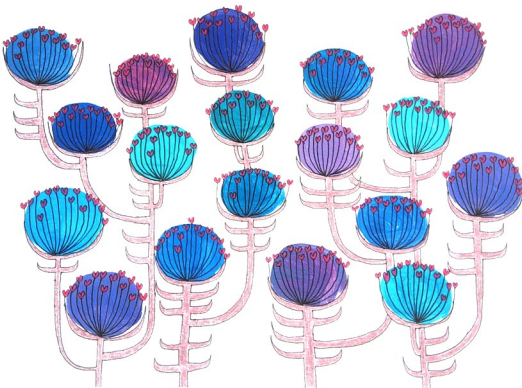
Details from Ellen Hill 07761 495033



Make a Flower Jungle Becky Crawford

# Magical Pop-Up Flower Jungle Workshop, in The Hub, Tuesday 9 April 10–12, £15

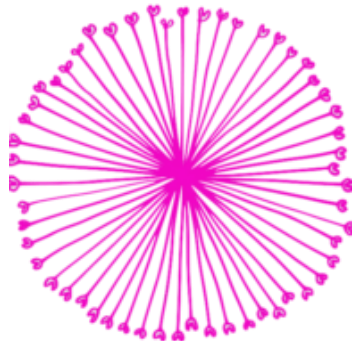
Come and make a world of wonder this Easter Holiday at Ermington Store and More on a Pop-Up workshop for both children and adults. Using upcycled and new materials you will create a paper collage pop-up flower jungle.



Suitable for anyone who can use scissors and glue. Under sevens will need to be accompanied by an adult. Any participating adults will need to purchase a place. Join in the fun; Tuesday 9 April, 10 - 12.

I'm a local artist and run regular after school art clubs in the area. I am DBS checked.

For more information, go to [www.myspacefruit.com/shop](http://www.myspacefruit.com/shop)







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# Litter Pick and River Clean



## water

### Wild About The Erme River

On Saturday 9 March a joint Litter Pick and Riverbank Clean was held in conjunction with Ermington Environmental and WATER. We met at 9 a.m. at the Hub for the litter pick, and 10 a.m. for the riverbank clean. Many thanks to Sarah West for putting out the traffic signs along the A3121 from Flete to the village, and for collecting about 13 bags of rubbish! Most of this was picked up along the roadside; very little was found along the riverbank, which we were pleased about.

We wish to thank the landowners for giving their permission for us to carry out this task, and also to the seven people who kindly volunteered their time and effort to help keep our environment tidy and clean. Fortunately the rain held off until the end of the Riverbank Clean, when a fabulous cup of coffee was enjoyed at the Hub.

Sarah West has kindly offered to run monthly litter picks, which she will advertise on the Residents of Ermington Facebook page, and another riverbank clean will be organized later in the autumn by EE and WATER.



## A BIG GREEN THANK YOU James Burnell-Nugent

Our Rector, The Rev'd David Sayle, and all the Parochial Church Council, would like to say a huge 'Thank You' to all those who have donated to our campaign to help your church go green and achieve 'Net Carbon Zero', as Ermington's contribution to the Church of England's target for 2030. Thanks to your many generous donations, and



match funding of over £6000 from the Church Commissioners, we achieved a total of £19,000. This will enable us to fit under-pew heaters to ten pews and all the choir stalls. Additionally we will make improvements to the wiring in the church as we go all electric. With no central heating any longer, we will also have to install a specialist heater to protect the organ from damp. And the old oil-fired boiler needs to be decommissioned to eliminate any risk of pollution. We hope to get all this done over this summer - so we can offer all the people of Ermington a warm welcome to their green church next winter.

Thank you.

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07807-512371

[v.hemsley60@gmail.com](mailto:v.hemsley60@gmail.com)



## Ermington Seedling Saturday

We're pleased to let everyone know that there will be a Seedling Swap on Saturday 4 May 10.00-12.00 in The Hub in Ermington Store and More arranged by Ermington Sustainable Saturdays (ESS).



Start to think about what you might want to bring along to donate/swap sell.

Vegetable plants would be great but also other cuttings and small plants for swapping.

There will also be a table set aside for swapping seeds - there's still time in May for planting.

We hope there will also be an opportunity to bring along garden tools for checking and possibly sharpening.

Look out for posters around the village for more information, as well as on social media sites.



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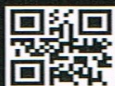
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## Growing Tips    Ro Hughes

I really hope that, by the time you're reading this, the rain will have abated and given the ground a chance to dry up. Spring marches on regardless, and temperatures have been very mild. Two sides to this; on the one side many seeds and plants will have already got going, but on the other, the lack of cold weather has deprived those plants of a long dormancy, like our apple trees, which need it.

The lack of cold weather also allows pests and diseases better survival. In our gardens, the best way to manage this is to create as much variety as possible. This will give the familiar slugs and snails plenty of wild plants and places to go, and leave crops alone. PLEASE don't poison them; the poison passes on to the birds and other wildlife.

Biosecurity is a term some of you will be familiar with; it is all about minimizing the risks of disease and pests, particularly those brought in from abroad. So many imported plants and trees have brought new onslaughts to the country, with no natural defences, that this is a serious problem.

Never has it been more important to try and source plants and even seed locally. Not only does this reduce the likelihood of introducing problems, but local plants will be naturally adapted to the local environment and climate.

This is still the best time of year to get flowers and vegetables going, either from seed or young plants. By May, although frost is still possible, most things can be growing, either in greenhouses or straight outdoors. If you are growing from seed, it is good to make successional sowings. Plant a few every couple of weeks; this ensures a better survival rate, and also staggers flowering and cropping times.

Whatever you grow, large or small, make the most of the wonders of Spring and enjoy the sunshine, when it comes.

# Ermington Gardeners, Gardens, and Gardening Group (4Gs)

## (New Shoots : The Companion Planters)

The first meeting of this group was held in The Hub on Wednesday 6 March under the umbrella of Ermington Environmental (EE) Group.

Pat Hannam gave a short talk (see below for details) about the food-based garden she is making. Then, after some questions and discussion, over refreshments we talked about what kind of gardening group in Ermington we might like to breathe some life into. This group should build on the fabulous gardening group that was active for many, many years in Ermington before COVID. Some people from then, and others newer to the village, are working together to plan a sequence of events taking place about once a month through the year.

This will include talks from outside speakers, and chances to share our successes (and failures – we all learn from these), as well as opportunities to visit each other's gardens. We aim for a range of things, so as to be of interest to as many people as possible.

We like the idea of 'New Shoots' being in the name of the group and the idea of 'Companion planters' to sum up the way the group will run as a friendly, informative, inclusive group open and welcoming to all, with any levels of gardening expertise and experience. It should also suit those with range of gardening interests, and ways of managing our gardens.

Please keep an eye on social media and other publicity around the village with dates and events.



Two dates for your diary:

**8 April (Monday) morning** on the bank at the bottom of Town Hill. Bring any wildflower seeds you have to sow. This can be a tricky place to be when cars go fast; so this event will be at your own risk. We may try and put some things in the road to slow traffic.

**4 May Seedling Saturday: A Seedling Swap 10.00-12.00 in the Hub.** This is being organized by Ermington Sustainable Saturdays. There is another notice about this on page 14.

Pat Hannam's talk was focused on ways in which she has been making the vegetable and fruit garden at their new home in Ermington, using a number of ideas including permaculture design, forest gardening, and no-dig gardening. The plot is around 30m x 5m and until the spring of 2022 was largely part of a field where two lovely horses still live.

Pat started by saying her aim for this garden was to produce food, both fruit and vegetables for the kitchen, but to do this in such a way as to make an environment that would be supportive to wildlife, mammals, birds, and insects.

She began by mentioning the 'Coronation gardens' idea from King Charles. This is an initiative to encourage people to grow more of their own food in an environmentally careful way, and links the Wildlife Trusts together with Incredible Edibles. King Charles has of course been involved with Wildlife Trusts for many decades. More info about Coronation gardens can be found on the website, which is full of ideas about how to get started in your garden. You can join the link here: <https://mycoronationgarden.org/>



Pat went on to say more about the threefold approach she's used to making her garden.

The first was about 'Forest Gardening', an approach to growing food that incorporates trees into the landscape. It's based on traditional systems of gardening found in many parts of the world, and has had a revival since the 1970s. Pat mentioned



she had spent some time in the very south of Mexico and seen this in action in the Lacandon rainforest there. Trees help the land with management of water, provide windbreaks and give a home to helpful wildlife. An example of an established garden based on these ideas is at Dartington, planted and managed by Martin Crawford. <https://www.agroforestry.co.uk/about-agroforestry/forest-gardening/>

The second, an approach known as 'no-dig', aims to minimise the amount of digging of the ground through the use of mulches and compost to suppress weeds. Building up the soil in this way encourages the activity of worms, and in other ways improves soil structure, increasing fertility. Pat's approach has been heavily informed by Charles Dowding in Somerset.

<https://www.charlesdowding.co.uk/> The Royal Horticultural Society also has a page about this on their website <https://www.rhs.org.uk/soil-composts-mulches/no-dig-gardening>



Permaculture design is the third bit of gardening thinking that has influenced Pat's approach to her vegetable and fruit growing. Permaculture design is a multi-faceted approach, aiming to be an ecologically harmonious way of designing a garden. It can supply many of the needs of a family or community in an efficient and sustainable way.

Pat explained that she started by thinking about what she and her husband Steve liked to eat, and so looked to grow those things in a sustainable way. She therefore grows some things which are perennial, things like chives and



Welsh onions that spread and don't require planting each year.

Swiss Chard can last more than one year; also perpetual spinach. Permaculture ensures soil fertility is achieved in part through planting nitrogen-fixing plants like clover as well as beans and



related flowers (e.g. lupins) alongside other trees (alder is a nitrogen fixer) and plants such as comfrey to aid fertility. Permaculture design strives to work with natural principles, learning from nature and harmonising things to regenerate and create natural systems that in turn can support us human beings on planet earth which we all share.

Pat can be contacted on [patricia.hannam.epc@gmail.com](mailto:patricia.hannam.epc@gmail.com) if you would like to know more about The New Shoots Companion Planters (4G group) or either of the two events noted above.



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# Beavers John Lintott

Most of us read about beavers as children, but after that the connection normally ended. We have probably seen more elephants and giraffes in the flesh than beavers. They disappeared from these shores in the late 1700s.



Humans brought about their demise.

Now they are being reintroduced, because we recognise they can help us resolve our environmental problems, particularly in reducing flood damage by slowing down the flow of water after heavy rain, thereby reducing erosion and damage to river banks. Also the dams, which are porous, help to create ponds that are wonderful habitats, and provide a superb environment for insects, toads, frogs, fish, birds, and waterfowl which would not be there without the water. Ponds have been disappearing fast; farmers fill them in as they hinder the cultivation of their arable land by large machinery.

Beavers also help create wetlands, another invaluable habitat that increases diversity in nature, which has been neglected so much in recent years. Obviously they store water too which is precious in times of drought.

One of the pioneers of reintroducing beavers is Derek Gow, who has a 300-acre farm on the Devon-Cornwall border at Broadwoodwidger, Lifton, about an hour's drive from



Ermington. A group from Ermington Environmental is planning to visit him in June to learn more about beavers and the rewilding he is carrying out there and also to spread the word; see page 4.

# Parish Council Report Denis Onley

Our Annual Meeting will be held on 21 May, with a theme of how we can all prepare and adapt to climate change. More details will be posted on our website and noticeboards nearer the time. Our next normal Parish Council meeting will be held on 30 April.

## Highways

Following a successful pilot over the winter months, Devon County Council (DCC ) will be filling fewer potholes on our roads from **1 April**. It is hoped that larger and deeper holes randomly appearing in our lanes and threatening to buckle vehicle wheels and break suspensions will encourage motorists to drive more cautiously and reduce speeds.

More seriously, flooding continues to be a problem in Westlake, and we have asked for DCC to clear the drainage gullies from Tod Moor, when a machine becomes available.

We are awaiting advice from DCC on the required 'visual clues' to enable the agreed speed reduction on the A3121 (Totnes Road) to be implemented.

We have ordered another Vehicle Activated Speed (VAS ) Sign (the flashing speed cameras) to move around the parish, as they are proving effective in reminding motorists of their speed, and in recording speed and frequency data. The VAS sign on Town Hill is within the 20mph zone and regularly records speeds of 40 m.p.h. The most frequent times for excessive speed are just after 9 a.m. on weekdays, and late evenings. The police have been advised, and parishioners are encouraged to report offenders using the OpSnap form on the police website, with photographic or video evidence.

### Fly tipping

Suspected incidents of fly tipping can be reported direct to SHDC; they will then examine the material for clues, to enable prosecution.

### Planning

We are required to respond to Planning Applications within strict timescales; so please let us and SHDC know any views as soon as possible through the SHDC planning website, or by letter to SHDC.

### Co-option

We have received three applications for co-option, however two of the candidates say that despite recent attempts to clarify the unwritten process used by the parish council over many years, it is still unclear. We have therefore agreed to write quickly a more detailed policy, and share this with applicants before their applications are considered.

We still wish to co-opt more councillors (we currently have five vacancies); please consider applying.

### Litter picking

The litter pickers have several 'Spring Clean' events planned to clean up the river bank, hedges, and road verges. Our thanks to all involved. If you can help, please contact us and we will pass your details on to the organizer.

### Footpaths

We have agreed to repair the footpath from The Square to the Church.

Much more information is available on our website, or speak to any councillor, attend our meetings, or contact us via our website, email, or post.

## War Horse – from Local to International

Ella Thurston

My Devon-linked literary column continues with a contemporary author who lives not far from Okehampton, having adopted this county in later life. The February issue of the Ermington Parish magazine included an article about the role the village pub plays in bringing together a community. What better reminder then of the importance of one's local than the story of how Michael Morpurgo came to write the beloved tale of Joey, the eponymous *War Horse*, now a world-touring stage adaptation and 2011 Spielberg film.

In 1975, Morpurgo and his wife Clare moved their family from Kent, where they had been teaching, to Iddesleigh in deepest Devon - a small village of thatched cottages, a 14th-century perpendicular church, a village hall, and a shop with post office and petrol pump. *'It was and is so remote that if strangers discover it, it is mostly accidental.'* This decision to move was set in motion because Clare's father Allen Lane, a high-up publisher at Penguin, was great friends with the landlord of the village pub in Iddesleigh. As a result, she holidayed there frequently throughout her childhood, and when the Morpurgos received an inheritance, they decided to pursue their ambition to set up a charity, and bought a small farm nearby.



This is the humble beginning of the praiseworthy Farms for City Children charity, which now operates three farms, and has hosted over 100,000 children since its origin in 1976.

But the story I wish to tell is of a fateful fireside encounter at the village local, The Duke of York. It was here that Morpurgo fell into conversation with a veteran of the Great War, Wilf Ellis:



*'He began telling me all about it, which was extraordinary because I don't think he'd ever spoken to any one in any depth or detail about his time in the trenches until he met me. He was a young man of 17 or 18 at the time, and he recounted, beside the fire in the Duke of York, what it was like to be there, to fight, and to be wounded and gassed. I didn't know him well, but he was confiding to me things that he had not wanted to speak of to his wife and family.'*

Another man in the village, Captain Budgett, told Morpurgo of his time spent with the war horses: *'It was he who told me of the closeness, respect, and love that there was between a man and his horse under such circumstances. At night he would go to the horse lines to feed and talk to his horse. He would tell his horse so much that was in his heart, perhaps his longing for home, his fear of tomorrow. He would put his hand on the horse's warm neck as he talked, and he told me that the horse listened - and Captain Budgett was not a sentimental man.'*



Another villager, Albert Weeks, recalled a sale on the village green when the army came to buy horses, and he was there when only some of the boys who left to join up came home. It is this tragic aspect of the memories long kept private that spurred Morpurgo to set pen to paper. Seven of the boys, for they were boys rather than men, never

returned to Iddesleigh. *'I thought through the horse's eyes we could see the conflict from all sides, and tell the tale of the universal suffering in that war, and indeed all wars, and make it, above all, not simply a story of fighting, but of reconciliations.'*

As those who have read *War Horse* will know, the book is narrated by Joey. The unique equine perspective, straight from the horse's mouth, brings a neutral, detached tone to the work, emphasising the futility and senseless nature of the conflict.

*'I thought: people have written about this war almost always from one side or the other - British, German, French, American, or Canadian. I wanted to tell the tale from no side - from the point of view of a horse who leaves the farm in that Devon village, is sold, trained as a cavalry horse by the British, is soon captured by Germans, is used by them to pull ammunition cars, ambulances, guns, and who spends the winter on a French farm.'* The horrors and harsh reality of the First World War are experienced through the journey of this creature - an odyssey of joy and sorrow, passionate friendship, and high adventure.

In describing his experience writing the novel, and whether he expected the work to be turned into a major touring theatre production and film, Morpurgo harkens back to his time as a teacher. *'What you're doing when you're telling a story is trying to get the audience deeply engaged - I've done it for 35 Year-Sixes in a school, and that's what I'm doing when I'm writing.'*

The idea to bring the work to life on stage was introduced by Tom Morris, who had been looking for a production to direct. His mother had picked up a copy of the paperback by chance and asked her son to read it.

Morpurgo admits to having found this suggestion of a dramatic adaptation ridiculous, until he saw the work of Handspring Puppets. *'You don't see the puppeteers - you suspend disbelief totally, as a child does in reading - you lose yourself completely. Once that transformation has taken place,*





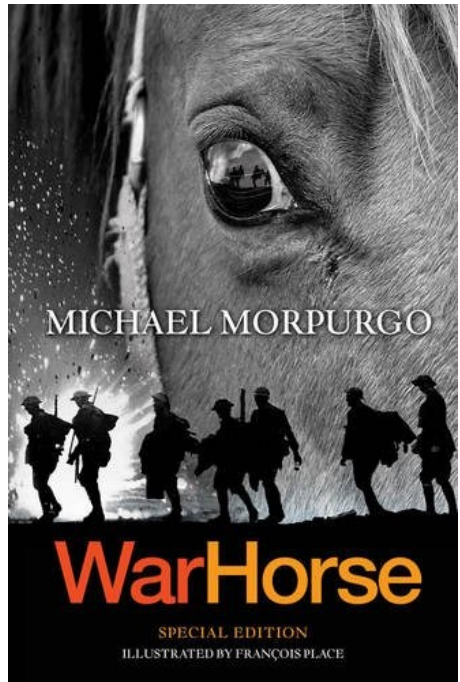
*this creature becomes real in your eyes, and the situation that he is in - the First World War, the loss, the grief, the longing - somehow you see it all through the horse's eyes.'*

Dartmoor's role in the film ended up being more prominent than initially planned. Spielberg was only going to have a few days' worth of material shot in Devon, but after Kathleen Kennedy sent him photographs of various locations, he decided to cut other elements of the story to enable more filming here.

Spielberg said of the area: *'I have never before, in my long and eclectic career, been gifted with such an abundance of natural beauty as I experienced filming War Horse on Dartmoor. With two-and-a-half weeks of extensive coverage of landscapes and skies, I hardly scratched the surface of the visual opportunities that were offered to me.'*

Filming took place predominantly around Meavy and Sheepstor. Other locations include Ringmoor Down, Burrator, Haytor, Hexworthy, and Cadover Bridge. There is now a War-Horse walk route on Visit Dartmoor's website, with a gentle two-hour stroll around Meavy. It is heartening to see that this tale with humble beginnings in a quiet Devon pub had led to the beauty of Dartmoor reaching audiences far and wide, across the globe. One hopes that the legacy of *War Horse* does justice to the memories and experiences of the veterans from those low-key fireside conversations in The Duke of York all those years ago.

War Horse is touring the UK from September and showing at the Theatre Royal Plymouth from Tuesday 26 November to Saturday 7 December 2024.



# Penquit House Farm Newsletter

Margaret Lawson

As I write, it's yet another grey, damp morning! 'How many more days will we get like this, and how long before we get some lovely dry weather and the ground starts to dry up?' is something I hear all the time around the meal table here (and from everyone I meet). When I last wrote, four months ago, we were waiting for the weather - and hence the land - to dry up ... and still we wait. The ground is absolutely sodden, to a point where it can take no more, which means any rain now just stands there or runs off the surface.

Some of the cows went out to graze in mid-March, the earliest we've ever turned milkers out. The fast-growing grass that we planted



in September has grown very well, and the cows would have been out grazing earlier had the weather been on our side. This week, with the silage pits almost empty, out they went, by day only to start with, although it's still wetter underfoot than we would like.



We've managed to buy silage bales throughout the winter, to supplement our meagre stocks of chopped clamp silage. This has kept the young stock satisfied, although bale silage, which contains longer grass, as it grows in the

field, rolled up and baled, doesn't fit well with our system here. It involves a lot of hard work forking silage into the troughs and sorting out the silage that the cattle have pulled out onto the ground.

One of the most important jobs on the farm, and one that we often overlook, is the milking; this happens twice a day (at about 6 a.m. and 4 p.m.) day in, day out. It's in the milking parlour that the cows are inspected at close quarters, where early signs of illness or infection can be detected, and of course, the all-important job of getting the milk from the cows is completed.

Do they come on their own to be milked? That depends where they are. In the winter when they are all comfy in their cubicles, someone has to go round the shed and get most of them moving.

When out in the field, if the weather is bad or they've eaten all the grass, they will be often stood by the gate waiting, although there are still a handful at the far end of the field that need to be fetched. On a glorious summer day (remember those days?) they need to be rounded up with lots of calling, walking, or driving around to get them moving. Once you get a few moving most of the rest follow on; they hate to be left behind.

At worst they are all laid out in the sunshine and you have to go up to the majority and remind them to move. They get up, and immediately put their head down to eat. They do recognize the sound of a vehicle turning up, or a gate opening, and some start to move. The funniest thing is early morning when it's just light and we very, very occasionally come across a cow sound asleep. I've seen Andrew speak to the cow, rub its head, and all of a sudden the cow comes to, gets up quickly, and, looking around, realizes all the others have gone in – and she's off at a pace. They know the signs that it's time for milking.

The cows all have their own characteristics, and are creatures of routine. There are definitely some early cows and some late cows in the milking queue. Some like to be milked on one side of the parlour, some on the other. Most don't worry at all. They all get

a feed of dairy cake during milking; the amount is dependent on their milk yield; the rest of their daily feeding is very similar.



The later cows tend to need coaxing into the parlour from the collecting yard, but the early cows are very keen to get in and get their cake, waiting at the back gate for it to be opened.

The cows' udders are washed and dried, and then the milking machine is attached by hand to start the milking process. At the end of milking on one side, the milking machine detects the cessation of the flow of milk, the vacuum is cut off automatically, and the machine takes the unit off the cow and stows it away ready for the next cow. Seven cows at a time are milked on each side of the parlour, and it takes about ten minutes to milk a batch. This depends on the speed the cow milks at and how much milk they are giving, which is directly related to the stage in the cow's lactation.

On average a cow reaches peak production about two weeks after calving, when they can produce anything up to 40+ litres a day. They produce that for a while and then their yield declines slowly over the remainder of their lactation. Once all seven cows are finished, the front gate is opened and the cows walk out - with a little reminder if they are day dreaming.

The milk is never exposed to the air; it passes through a series of pipes, through a heat-exchange plate cooler, and into the bulk milk tank. By the time it reaches the already cooled milk in the chilled tank, the new milk will be at 13°C, down from 26°C as it comes out of the cow. By the end of milking the milk in the tank will be 5°C or colder. That really is the end of our job. The tanker arrives every other morning and the driver takes the

milk on board and off it goes, for bottling, cheese making, manufacturing etc. We never know where it ends up.

Adam asked me if the cows enjoy being milked? How do we really know whether they do? But they soon tell if they don't, by being reluctant to move or leaving their displeasure behind via a mess on the floor! Probably they do enjoy the routine, and remember the reward of some tasty dairy cake in the parlour, and the relief when a full udder is emptied. Our new mums soon get used to their new routine.

Every month our 'National Milk Records' milk recorder comes to the farm for two consecutive milkings, and takes a milk sample from each individual cow. These samples are sent to a lab, and soon afterwards we receive detailed reports for each cow, telling us the protein, butterfat, and mastitis cell-count content, as well as the quantity.



From this we can calculate the value of milk produced during the whole of the lactation. Event data is also entered, giving calving dates, insemination dates, and service sires and vet examination information. This generates lists of calving dates, drying off dates, and breeding records. Information on previous lactations can also be accessed.

\*\*\*\*\*

If any small groups of residents from the parish would like to visit the farm informally during the summer months, to meet the cattle, learn more about how we produce your food, and answer any questions, we would be only too pleased to show you around. Please email the editor with your contact details and we will get back to you to arrange a suitable time.



# Thermal Camera Rob Hill

Thermal cameras work by displaying the temperature of what they 'see' in terms of different colours. Cold areas are displayed in shades of blue, and warm areas in orange or red.

## **Could a thermal camera help you save money and be more comfortable?**

Do you live in a house that is expensive to heat in winter, or, perhaps has uncomfortable rooms? If so, a thermal camera might help identify the reasons why. To test how effective one might be, a camera was kindly lent by the Ugborough environment group (GUP) to EE for a basic evaluation, and this is an account of my experience using it.

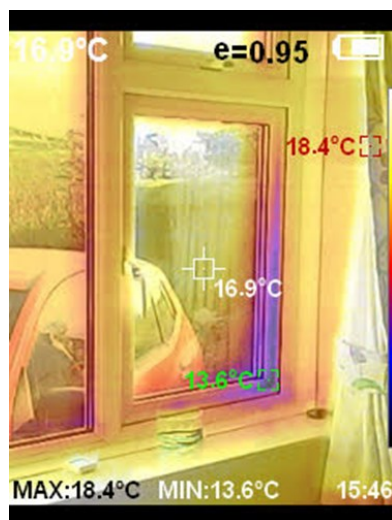
## **Revealing problems with draughts and mould**

Our house has several heat-loss related problems and two that are very annoying. The first are areas of mould that typically occur on the inside surface of external walls. The second is an uncomfortable cold area next to a bedroom window.

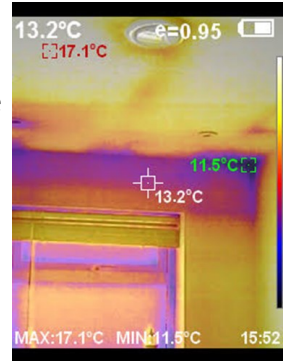
Of course, the most likely cause of both of these issues is cold resulting from heat loss. For example, the wall areas which are subject to mould can occasionally be seen to be damp from condensation and the window, despite being UPVC and with new seals, is still draughty. Therefore, could the thermal camera help by revealing more about what is happening and perhaps identify further sources of heat loss.

## **Identifying sources of heat loss**

This is what it made of the window, and the blue areas are, in fact, where the seals are poorly fitting.



As for the mould-prone areas, this was more of a surprise. The cold area is quite clearly defined and the coldest area (11.5 °C) is where the mould has a tendency to appear. Before using the camera I thought it would show heat loss from the metal window lintel but this image suggests to me something like missing cavity-wall insulation. More investigation is required.



Overall my experience was a positive one, and has resulted in a greater insight into my house problems of heat loss and discomfort. If you are an Ermington resident and interested in what a thermal camera could do for you then please get in touch with Rob Hill ([rhill39822@gmail.com](mailto:rhill39822@gmail.com)). If sufficient interest exists we may be able to borrow the camera again.

### Mark Walker writes

Although we live in a house that was built only nine years ago, and it's warm, we noticed during cold easterly winds that the aluminium letterbox on the inside had condensation on it. We used insulation tape to cover the gaps in the letter box, and the temperature in the hall became 4-5°C warmer.

Using the thermal camera will pick up cold spots, and solutions can then be investigated.

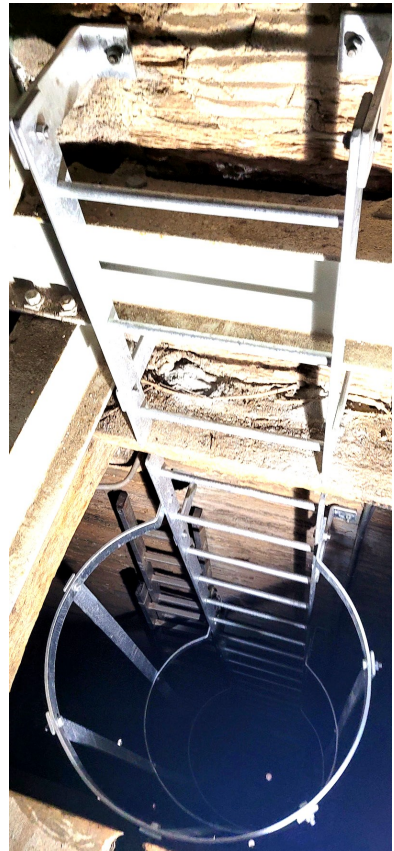


A promotional banner for NHS 111. The background is a gradient of orange and red. On the right side, there is a large, stylized yellow triangle containing a blue triangle with the number '111' in white. In the top right corner, the NHS logo is visible. On the left side, the text reads: 'NHS 111 is now available online' in white, followed by 'Visit 111.nhs.uk' in a smaller white font. In the bottom left corner, there is a small blue triangle with the number '111' in white.

## A Busy Year Grant Elliott

Last year was a busy year at the church in terms of repairs, and I thought you would like to know some of the things that have been going on. There has been some minor repair work to the windows. Many of the glass quarries (diamond-shaped panes) in the windows were cracked or broken, and these have now been replaced. The work was carried out by Heritage Stained Glass from Newton Abbot, who are experienced in working on historic windows. Further work was also carried out to the north transept, or choir vestry. The chimney was badly in need of repointing and this repair was carried out by the church's maintenance contractor, West Access Conservation. The flaking plastic paint was also scraped off from the internal walls to the choir vestry. Both of these pieces of work will help reduce the water ingress into the choir vestry, and help it dry out.

There were also two larger projects carried out. The first of these was to install a fixed caged ladder in the tower from the clock chamber to the bell chamber and to replace some of the rotten floorboards. This work will now provide safe access to the clock face from inside the tower for when Smith of Derby come to do their maintenance visits on the clock. The repair work was carried out by A D Williams, who regularly work on churches in Devon and Cornwall.



The second project was to install a handrail from the lychgate up to the south porch. This will make the building more accessible for everyone, and will benefit the whole of the village. The work was carried out by Dean Forge.

Over the year the church raised £1,400.00 from various fundraising activities. However, the repair work would not have been possible without the welcome help from others. For the tower ladder the church was awarded a grant of £1,500.00 from Devon Historic Churches Trust and a grant of £2,633.00 from the National Churches Trust. For the churchyard handrail the church received £4,000.00 from an extremely generous anonymous donor. The church was also awarded a grant of £500.00 from Ermington Village Fund, a grant of £200.00 from Dan Thomas, Devon County Council Councillor, and a grant of £200.00 from Alison Dewynter, South Hams District Council Councillor. We would like to thank all of them for their support.

Thank you also to everyone else who has also been involved in supporting the projects. With everyone's help we are able to keep the church in good repair, so that it will be there for our future generations in the village. To quote William Morris,

*'It has been most truly said at our meetings that these old buildings do not belong to us only. They are not in any sense our property, to do as we like with. We are only trustees for those that come after us'.*

I hope you enjoy the photographs.



## Book Review Embers Book Club

### **Gail Honeyman (2017) Eleanor Oliphant is Completely Fine**

This book is probably well known, as it has been feted in the media since its publication and was winner of the British Book Awards Book of the Year. It has sold in the millions and has been translated into 32 different languages. There must be something in it that appeals to readers, and this appeal was certainly true in our case. This book was well liked by our members. It also generated a lot of animated discussion.

This book is written entirely from Eleanor's point of view. This first-person perspective allows the author to explore Eleanor's lived experience in detail. At first it is difficult to warm to her; she is arrogant, dismissive, and contemptuous of others - particularly her work colleagues - and a stickler for routine and the 'correct' way of doing things. As the book develops, we warm more and more toward Eleanor. We realize that she is a damaged person, dealing with a childhood trauma that has had ramifications into her adult life. She has to all intents and purposes withdrawn from social life, she appears to be on the autistic spectrum, and she shows obsessive compulsive behaviours. She also develops an irrational attachment to a bar-room singer she has seen performing once by chance. She stalks him on social media and one time inveigles her way into his apartment block, where she silently listens to him playing.

Honeyman called this book a study in loneliness which can only be overcome by 'developing intimate connections'. This transformation from a lonely, damaged, and embittered young woman to someone who learns to appreciate 'intimate connections', and can engage in social life is what the author aims to show in this book. She describes a number of trigger points in Eleanor's life which start her on this transformational journey: the developing friendship with Raymond, her work colleague and an ordinary, nice 'bloke', and who is instrumental



in encouraging her to start psychotherapy, the collapse of Sammy in the street, and the help that Eleanor has to give him, and then the kindness shown to her by his family, and later her suicide attempt after realizing that the singer, rather than her ideal companion, is in fact a crude, lascivious idiot. As she undergoes psychotherapy, she learns to appreciate the small intimacies that make up social engagement, which for most of us pass unnoticed: the touch on the arm, calling someone else 'your pal', making you soup when you have just tried to commit suicide.

There was a lot that we liked about this book. Most prominently we felt it had authenticity. Eleanor was a character that we could believe in; as one member said, Eleanor is someone who is a 'credible incompetent'. The writing too was beautifully and sensitively done and there were moments of sheer hilarity as Honeyman describes Eleanor's rather literal and stilted reaction to everyday situations. Like a number of other books we have discussed which employ the first-person perspective we considered the extent to which Eleanor is a reliable witness to the events that she encounters. We felt that Honeyman shows us just enough of Eleanor's perspective for us to read through and understand how damaged Eleanor is. After all, the title is deeply ironic for the first half of the book. Another question which bothered a number of members was how plausible this novel is as an account of a person with mental health problems. In particular, the role of 'Mummy' in Eleanor's life led some to question whether Eleanor's problems were more deeply rooted in psychosis rather than autism and OCD. For others 'Mummy' was better understood as a literary device which underpinned the effects of childhood trauma and we should not treat this book as an accurate psychiatric case study in all its details.

Overall, this was a well-liked novel with a life-affirming ending; a much-needed counterpoint to the endless troubles the world has at the moment. It garnered 7s and 8s, with an average just above 7.

# Himalayan Balsam Mark Walker

These photographs, taken in mid-March 2024, show the undergrowth between the playing field and the Erme River. Lots of native species are there: wild garlic, nettle, goose grass, ivy, and lords-and-ladies. Invasive species are also present; the periwinkle and winter heliotrope can be seen in picture 1. Only a small area is covered by winter heliotrope. Himalayan Balsam is also there but



not visible yet. Pictures 2 and 3 show the native species diversity. Picture 4 , Ivybridge railway station approach, shows what happens if we do nothing. Invasive species have escaped from gardens into the wild, and are now creating a

real problem for our native plants. The concerns are that the invasive ones out-compete our native species, shade them, and attract bees and other pollinators in preference to native species.



This leads to a loss of native species and lower biodiversity, which will have significant implications for all of us. One we acknowledge invasive species are a real threat to our native wildlife, it's up to us to start reducing their numbers.



**Saturday 18 May - HB Action Morning**

10 a.m. till 12 noon. Meet at the Lower Reading

Rooms in Ermington - full details on the WATER website -

<https://ermeriver.org/project/landbased/#himalayan-balsma>

Please email me for more information and how to get involved [mwalkone@icloud.com](mailto:mwalkone@icloud.com)

## Village Fund Equipment

The Ermington Village Fund has equipment available for hire in the village and parish. Ideal for parties and other events.

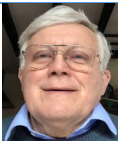
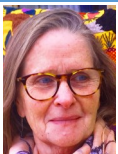


Gazebos £15 per 24 hr Tables £5 each per 24 hr

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BBQ £25 (£50 returnable deposit)

*Please contact Pete Davis on 01548 830520*

# ERMINGTON PARISH COUNCILLORS

Name		Email address
CREESE Ian		ian-westlake.epc@hotmail.com
DUNLOP John		john.dunlop.epc@gmail.com
HANNAM, Patricia		patricia.hannam.epc@gmail.com
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# Ermington Parish Council

## Has Five Vacancies



As a Parish Councillor you can become a voice for our community and represent the interests of Ermington Parish. The main requirements are enthusiasm and determination. There are plenty of training opportunities which are paid for by the Parish Council.

Parish council meetings take place on the first Tuesday of each month (except August) at 7.30 pm in the Reading Rooms. You may think that you are too busy to spare the time, but even the busiest people can usually attend a monthly meeting and its fine if you have to miss the occasional one.

There are only a few rules to stand for election. You must:

- be at least 18 years of age
- be a British citizen, a Commonwealth citizen or a citizen of the European Union
- be a registered elector of Ermington Parish; **or** during the whole of the last 12 months occupied land or other premises in Ermington Parish (as owner or tenant); **or** during the last 12 months your principal or only place of work has been in Ermington Parish; **or** you have lived in Ermington Parish for the whole of the last 12 months or within 3 miles of it.

If you have any questions the Parish Clerk can be contacted by email - [ermingtonparishclerk@gmail.com](mailto:ermingtonparishclerk@gmail.com) or telephone 01752 893691, or Chair of Ermington Parish Council, Denis Onley [denis.onley.epc@gmail.com](mailto:denis.onley.epc@gmail.com).

You can also visit the parish council website at <http://www.ermingtonparish.com/parish-council/archives/> to find out more about the work of the council.

Applicants to give a brief account of their reasons for wanting to become a Councillor and any experiences or interests they may have which they feel would benefit the community.

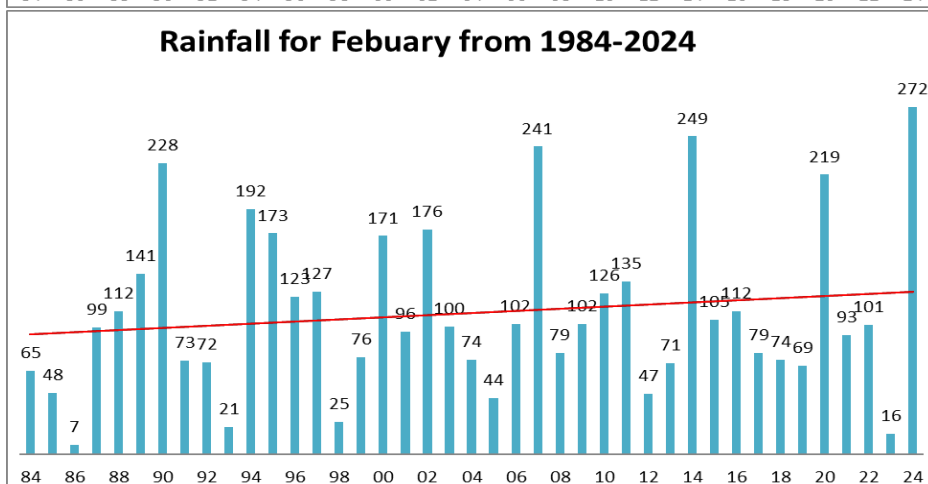
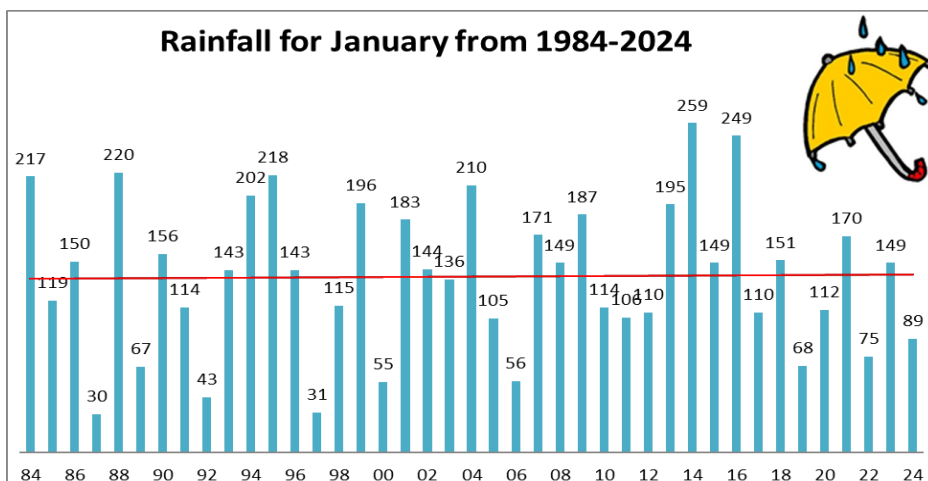
The Council will consider all applications and will co-opt the successful candidate onto the Parish Council at a later date.



# Rainfall Records by Frances Bromfield

At 89mm, January had about two-thirds of the normal rainfall, but 272mm rain made this the wettest February in my recordings, at 246 per cent of the rolling average. However, the previous wettest February (249mm in 2014) followed a very wet January when the two months totalled 508mm - one third of that year's total.

The rolling average for January appears fairly static while the trend for February is increasing.





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## The Erme, an Oral History Laura Denning

The idea for an oral history project came about as I wanted to contribute to the work being done to protect the River Erme, but not monitor water quality. Water monitoring is vital, but I felt that a spoken celebration of the Erme would show how important it is to so many people. As an artist whose work focuses upon water this Audio Project seemed logical. <https://lauradenning.com/intra-actions/>



The project has been slowly developing, and during a 'Roadshow' this spring I hope to hear from people in every catchment along the river. I will be in The Hub at the Store & More on Saturday 6 April from 11 a.m. until midday for a drop-in session, where you can share your reflections and recollections with me.

Should people be unable to make this time, I can also arrange to interview you in your home - please email me at [lauradenning2@gmail.com](mailto:lauradenning2@gmail.com) or TEXT me on 07773238314.

I hope to create a soundscape from these conversations, intermingled with recordings of the Erme, which I hope will tour the villages and communities involved, and will definitely form part of the River Discovery Zone at the Devon County Show.

I am hoping to source a second-hand horsebox, so that I can repurpose it into a listening/recording booth for use at the County Show, and for future touring events that focus on the



health of our rivers. In the longer term I hope that this project will grow and combine voices from many communities within the catchments of the South Devon Rivers.





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## Also found in...

*The Michelin Guide, The Good Hotel Guide, Alastair Sawday's 'Special Places,' Signpost Hotel Guide, and The Trenchermans Guide*

## Plymouth Argyle - Fighting Hard To Stay In The Championship League

The Greens continue to play well, with a mixed set of results to show for their endeavours. Since the last report there have been twelve league and cup matches played against some of the top teams in the league. The fixtures continued with a strong performance against Cardiff City resulting in a 3-1 victory at Home Park. This was followed by a battling draw away to Leeds United, one of the teams fancied to win promotion this year. A landmark victory followed with a 1-0 win away to Swansea City - it was Argyle's first away win in this league. Next came the cup match at home to Leeds United. Leeds had most of the possession but The Greens managed to hold them to 1-1 going into extra time. The superior strength of the visitors told in the end and, eventually, Argyle were beaten 4-1.

Back to the league programme, and the incredibly long journey to Sunderland and a loss by 3-1. Next came the visit of Coventry City and a chance to get back to winning ways. It was looking like a well-earned victory until a defensive lapse allowed the visitors to equalise in the sixth minute of added time. Such a shame but it showed that Argyle were as good as many of the teams in this competitive league.

High-flying Leeds and West Bromwich Albion were the next visitors to Home Park, and deservedly recorded wins over the Greens. The long journey back to the north-east to play Middlesbrough followed and, in one of Argyle's best away performances of the season, came away with a solid 2-0 victory. Back home to face Ipswich Town, another team aspiring to return to the Premier League. Argyle held out until the sixtieth minute when a luckily deflected shot led to

another home defeat. Away to fellow strugglers Sheffield Wednesday the Greens were beaten by the only goal of the game. The last game to report on so far saw the trip to Blackburn Rovers end in a well-deserved 1-1 draw.

All this means that Argyle are three points from the relegation zone with nine games left. They have 41 points to date and realistically need 50 to avoid the drop. A lot of their play shows they have the ability to do it. By the time of the next report we might well know their fate.

**COME ON YOU GREENS!!**



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# The Attraction of Mountains

In 1687 Isaac Newton wrote a brilliant book entitled *Principia*, which explains his laws of motion and how gravity works. He said then that a weight on a string (now called a plumb bob) would hang straight down, vertically, pulled towards the centre of the Earth. For five thousand years builders have used plumb bobs to make sure their walls and doorways are vertical. But, Newton wrote that, if there was a mountain nearby, the plumb bob would be pulled a bit sideways, because it would be attracted by the mass of the mountain as well as by the Earth. This idea came to be called 'The Attraction of Mountains.'



Most people thought the Attraction of Mountains was just a nuisance, because they couldn't measure an accurate vertical in mountainous places, but in 1772



the Astronomer Royal, Nevil Maskelyne, had a clever idea, which was to use the Attraction of Mountains to weigh the world - or, more precisely, to measure the mass of the earth.

He suggested this to the Royal Society, and they said 'Yes, good idea! Why don't you do it?' First, however, a suitable mountain had to be chosen. Surveyor Charles Mason was sent off, at half a guinea a day plus expenses, to tour the highlands of Scotland on horseback,

looking for a suitable mountain.

He chose one in Perthshire called Schiehallion, an east-west ridge-backed mountain, all on its own; not immediately surrounded by others.



The Royal Society then asked Mason to do the experiment itself, but even though they offered to double his pay to a guinea a day, he politely declined; he had had enough of the highland weather. So the Royal Society went back to Maskelyne, and invited him to do it. He was not keen - he certainly didn't feel the Attraction of Mountains - and said he was so busy that he couldn't possibly go without permission from the King, but unfortunately the King (George III) was enthusiastic, and said 'Go ahead.'

Maskelyne sent his assistant in advance with all the gear, and followed him, by ship from the Thames to the Tay, and then about 40 miles on horseback into the mountains. He arrived at the end of June 1774, and his team built a bothy - a simple wooden hut - for him to live in, and also erected a large open-topped tent for astronomical observations.

He planned to lie on his back on the ground, and point a telescope vertically upwards, in order to observe stars passing almost directly overhead. This should allow him to work out exactly where he was. The weather was so bad that three weeks went by before he could make a single observation, but finally, on 20 July, he was able to begin.



First, in the southern observatory (half-way along the mountain, and half-way up) he observed several stars almost straight overhead. Then he took his tent round to the northern side - the move took 12 men a week - set up his bothy and observatory here - and observed the same stars again.

From the differences between the observed angles, he knew he could work out the apparent difference in latitude between the two observatories - in other words, how far apart the two observatories were. He had, however, been using a plumb bob to set his telescope 'vertically'.

Meanwhile a team of surveyors had been squelching round through the peat and heather with theodolites and chains, working out how far apart the observatories really were, and also the exact shape of the mountain.

In all Maskelyne spent four months on Schiehallion and made 337 observations of 43 different stars. When he finished his work, at the end of October, he held a party in his bothy, both to celebrate, and to thank the surveyors and all the locals who had helped. It must have been quite a party, for a keg of whisky was brought up from Perth and consumed; the bothy caught fire, and the local fiddler's violin was burned; Maskelyne later sent him another from London.

On 26 July 1775, Maskelyne presented the Royal Society with the results. The real difference in latitude of the two observatories was exactly a mile; by observing the stars, he had calculated it to be 1 mile 480 yards; there was a discrepancy of 480 yards. In other words, by a small amount, the plumb-bob had indeed felt the attraction of the mountain - even if Maskelyne hadn't. Newton had been right - his theory of gravitation was confirmed - and Maskelyne was awarded the Copley Medal for his heroic experiment.

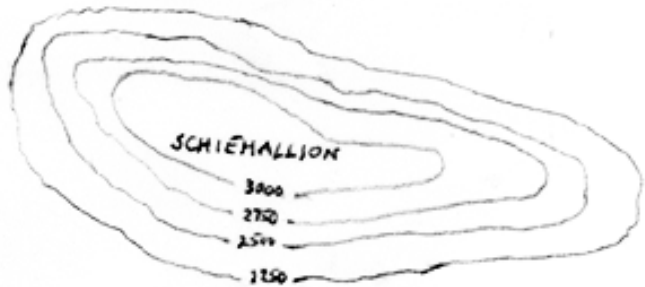
But what did his result tell them about the Earth? To work out he answer they hired a mathematician: Charles Hutton,



Professor of Mathematics at the Royal Military Academy in Woolwich.

Maskelyne's surveyors sent Hutton a map covered in numbers. They had measured the altitude, in feet, at dozens of points on the mountain. He had lots of information, but how from all these numbers was he going to work out the size and shape of the mountain? And how was he going to represent it on a flat piece of paper?

After pondering these problems, he had the brilliant idea of using faint pencil lines to join together all the points of equal height, as shown by the surveyors. The result was remarkable; he could see at once the shape of the mountain.



These lines of his are what we now call contour lines. Where they were close together, he could tell the mountain was steep, and where they were further apart the slope was less severe.

Knowing the shape, he was able to estimate the volume of the mountain, and he assumed that its density was about four and a half times the density of water. He then calculated that the mass of the Earth was about five thousand million million million tonnes. In fact Newton had guessed it was about six thousand million million million tonnes, which is close to what is accepted today. Maskelyne and Hutton, however, had made the first *measurement* of the mass of the Earth, and twenty years were to go by before anyone did it better.

## A Letter from Barbara Jones

Dear Adam the Editor,

Please may I respond to the article about the pub in the last magazine (from Andrew at the First and Last)? Kevin and I went to the pub often for many happy years, but the fog of smoke from cigarettes finally put us off, and we just got out of the habit of going. We do miss the chats with other people.

We were thinking about the pub, and both came to the same conclusion, at the same time, which we put down to some sort of telepathy, after being married for almost 65 years, and it was, 'Why don't we ask Andrew, if, instead of picking up our take-away (usually delicious fish and chips) and bringing them home to eat, can we buy them in the usual way and take them to the pub to eat them there?'



We mentioned our (we thought) original, constructive idea to our son, Brendan, who loves to go to the pub. He looked at us in astonishment and said, 'But they already do this.' And we thought we had hit on a brilliant and unheard of idea.

I spoke to confirm this with Sue at the First and Last and she said that not only could we do this but they would deliver the food to the Crooked Spire. It's a win-win. In case people in Ermington are unaware of this service, as we were, I thought I would write a letter to the parish magazine and spread the word. I know that it's 'Use it or Lose it', and agree that the pub is an important part of the village.

Barbara Jones

Dear Adam,

I write in reply to your invitation to comment on fireworks. The item on Coronation gardens in the last magazine was inspirational. If fireworks cause some distress to some people, how about that money being spent on flowers for our village instead? They will give pleasure to many people for most of the year. Would this be a good alternative?

Best wishes, Barbara Jones

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Editor: Adam Hart-Davis

[adam.parishmag@gmail.com](mailto:adam.parishmag@gmail.com) 0790 155 4143

Treasurer/ Advertising: Rob Rees

[rob.parishmag@gmail.com](mailto:rob.parishmag@gmail.com) 01548 830029

Distribution: Rodger Reid

[rodgereid@gmail.com](mailto:rodgereid@gmail.com)

Adviser: Nicky Scutt

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