

Aymestrey Matters



Winter 2024

Parish Notice Board



FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Thursday 12th December 2pm – Whist Drive

Friday 13th January 8pm – Christmas Fun Quiz

Wednesday 1st January 10.30am - New Years Day Walk

Saturday 4th January 7pm – Twelfth Day of Christmas Concert

Wednesday 8th January 7.30pm- Parish Hall AGM

“Tea/Coffee at the Hall”

*Come and join us for the **weekly** social event.*

Meet new people, have a chat, all parishioners welcome.

*Every Tuesday
10.30am to
11.30ish*

On the Twelfth day of Christmas...

An evening of music sacred and profane for Christmas and Epiphany

Saturday 4 January | 7.00 pm

Aymestrey Parish Hall, HR6 9SU

Tickets £12, including light refreshments available from
lucinda@mortimerscrosschurches.co.uk
or Rhian on 0777 906 2217

Christmas Fun Quiz

13th December

8pm

In the Parish Hall

Prize for Best Christmas Outfit
Refreshments (tea & coffee) available inc. mince pies

Bring your own drinks and pals or come along and meet new friends

PARISH HALL

100 CLUB

Runs March

to

December 2025

Monthly Prizes
of

£30 and £10

Renew your numbers
NOW

or join in Jan/Feb

£10 per annum

Tel: 07434621260

or at the Coffee morning

Whist Drive

Thursday

12th December

&

16th January 2025

2pm

Aymestrey Parish Hall

£3 per person

Cash Prize

Light Refreshments inc.

All Welcome



New Year's Walk

Walk off the Xmas pud and the excesses of New Year.

A social walk with hot drinks and food mid-route at our pop-up cafe. The walk is about 5 miles, not too hilly.

Bank Holiday Wednesday
1st January 10.30 at the hall

In case of poor weather
ring Martyn 07748604215

All Welcome - don't forget your Dog

EDITORS' PAGE

Whilst both of us are Yorkshire, born and bred, we have lived in Herefordshire for almost 20 years and it has become our forever home. We are greatly concerned by the coming changes to the inheritance tax on small farms and how this will affect all of us in Herefordshire and beyond. So below are extracts from an article written by Christopher Winn and recently published in the Telegraph 'The English rural paradise at risk of vanishing for good' which perfectly explains how we feel.

'Herefordshire is one of England's most beautiful, least populated and most rural counties. Agriculture is the county's biggest industry and 95 per cent of the county is rural with over half the population living in a rural area. The gentle, comforting landscape of orchards and patchwork fields has been shaped over centuries by numerous small farms that cluster around the county's peerless black-and-white villages, from where local produce is taken to one of the county's five picturesque market towns.

So, if it's peace and quiet and the enduring loveliness of Olde England you want, then seek out Herefordshire. But you'd better be quick.

As a county of traditional small farms, Herefordshire is threatened by the Government's inheritance tax overhaul, which may see the county's age-old family smallholdings broken up, tenant farmers who have tended the land for generations evicted, fields given over to solar panels and housing estates, and the lovely towns and villages that depend upon them become mere theme parks to a lost England.

With its abundant farmland, river valleys, pretty villages, half-timbered splendour, idyllic scenery, inspiring history and legends, surprising literary connections, unique country churches full with hidden treasures, Herefordshire is a rural paradise, enhanced and enriched by the love and toil and dedication of generations of traditional hard-working small farmers.

But, alas, their time may be up for, as Labour grandee *John McTernan* puts it, "we don't need small farmers".'

We would like to express our thanks to all contributors and distributors, regular and occasional, not forgetting Imogen Davis for her charming front covers this year and take this opportunity to wish everyone a very Happy Christmas and a peaceful and prosperous New Year.

Denise & Martyn

Please forward all articles, photos, notices and letters to editor@aymestrey.org



**Aymestrey Parish
Commons Association
AGM**

15th January @ 7pm
*All Welcome, please show
your support for this valuable
project*

**Parish Council
Meetings**

*held in the Parish Hall
7.30pm
ALL Parishioners are welcome to attend*

CHURCH NOTICE BOARD

SUNDAY 15TH DEC

CHRISTINGLE
SERVICE

St Andrew's Church,
Leinthall Earls
@ 3.30PM

DECORATION of the CHURCH for CHRISTMAS

Aymestrey Church Friday 20th Dec
at 10am

All contributions of holly and greenery much
appreciated



Christmas Day Services

9.30am Holy Communion
@ St Andrews
Leinthall Earls

11.00 am Holy Communion
@ St John the Baptist and
St Alkmund
Aymestrey

CHRISTMAS CAROL SERVICE

@ St John the Baptist
& St Alkmund
AYMESTREY
at 3pm

Sunday 22nd December

Followed by the usual mulled wine
and mince pies



PLOUGH SUNDAY @ Aymestrey Church 11am

Sunday 12th January 2025



'God speed the Plough'

Come and join in this ancient service which
traditionally marks the start of the Farming
Year, to include the traditional Blessing of the
Plough, outside the church.



Twelfth Night Concert

Saturday 4th January
Aymestrey Parish Hall
at 7pm

Tickets £12 (to inc food)
available from

Meg 07943 046450
or Lucinda at

mortimerscrosschurches.com

Aymestrey and Leinthall Earls Churches

Rev. Julie Read

Rev. Rosie Roberts, Curate



I have just enjoyed an afternoon in church with a class from Kingsland School and a diocesan film crew who have recorded a brief nativity story for the Hereford Diocese Christmas publicity. By the time this magazine comes out it should be live – so google Hereford Diocese and Christmas and you should catch sight of it. The premise is, that something in life overturns all our usual turn of events. I'm sure that you have had something that you remember, that has stopped you in your tracks and you remember in great detail. Often these are traumas of life, but sometimes they have been moments of great joy – someone has proposed to us, or the birth of a child; you can add to this. Each Christmas we are invited to remember what would have been both a trauma, in the sense we know, of something changing our life beyond measure, and great joy, the birth of a very special child.

We tend to hurtle towards Christmas bound by the list of things we have to do, and it is often a very busy time, but we are invited this year to find some *CALM* and *BRIGHT* this Christmas. Some calm in the time leading up to Christmas and a bright celebration of the birth of Jesus and the change that this made to our world.

There is much research on what the world was like before Jesus – and what a difference the era of Christendom brought. You may well quote, to me, great negative chapters but the whole justice, education and equality values that our country is based upon are Christian values.

We are putting aside some conversation times in our Advent this year, and looking at a book called 'Women of the Nativity' by Paula Gooder. Have a look at it on line and see if it is a book that you would find helpful. I have some copies for the first who ask, but we are hoping to gather on 4 Tuesdays in Advent from 1 – 2.30pm at the Rectory for soup and discussion, or Thursday evenings from 8 – 9pm on Zoom. Please contact me if you fancy being part of this (at the moment there is just me, Rosie and Wendy!!)

Christmas celebrations start on Sunday 15th at 3.30pm at Leinthall Earls with the *Christingle Service* and on Sunday 22nd with the *Aymestrey Christmas Carol Service* at 3pm, all with suitable refreshments. And of course Christmas Day at 9.30am at Leinthall (enjoy your lie in) and at 11am at Aymestrey and finally before the 12 days of Christmas end there will be a *12 Days of Christmas Concert* at the Parish Hall on Saturday 4th January 2025 with vicar and curate and lots of local musicians to entertain you.

I hope to see you over the festive season and share some of the bright joy of our celebrations.

Every blessing

Julie

Martyn Booth
Chair, APH



2024 Round-up

Well, the year certainly started with a bang!

However despite a vehicle crashing into the hall's reception area, we didn't let it interfere with holding a very enjoyable Burns Night Supper that same evening. The main issue caused by this incident was the limited access to the hall for months; while having to deal with insurers, loss adjusters, structural engineers and contractors – ten different companies at the last count!

We have now moved on with a smarter brighter foyer, and a new front fence.

Life at the hall continued with our regular events; monthly Film & Food nights (thank you Ian) also the monthly fun quizzes – thanks to everyone who hosted one of these. Our weekly 'Coffee Mornings', Tuesdays 10-30 – 12 ish, are very well attended, the Monday night bowling is thriving, and there's also the Thursday morning Pilates classes with Sequence Dancing later that evening. All these events would welcome new participants, please feel free to come along and get involved.

A new venture has been a Whist Drive, organised by Hazel Bows, this now takes place monthly through the winter, it's a very social afternoon and not too serious. New players always welcome, experience and ability not important.

In June we held a very successful plant sale, with a wide range of plants from the numerous sellers and plenty of buyers. The teas, coffee and cakes did a roaring trade, thanks to all who contributed to the day.

Some of the gardening community then reappeared for the 'Plant and Produce Show' in August. It was good to see so many entries despite the difficult growing season and well done to all the winners.

Despite a good turn out of quality and varied vendors, the Table Top sale in September proved disappointing with a limited number of buyers. On a more positive note, the October Macmillan Coffee Morning raised £322, thanks to all who contributed so generously to this event, incidentally, the final nationwide total for Macmillan amounted to almost £15m.

Returning to the repairs to the foyer, it was identified during the work, that the insulation within the external walls of the hall, is woefully inadequate and in parts non-existent. This has prompted us to set up a sub-committee to look at what needs to be done to replace this with modern materials to improve both the thermal and acoustic insulation, thereby making the building more comfortable for users and reducing running costs. We expect this to be a rather expensive project and are considering how any work of this size can be funded.

As 2024 draws to a close, I would like to thank a few people;-

My fellow members of the Hall committee for all the support they have given this year, the helpers who supply cakes, wash-up, and put away the chairs and tables. Special thanks to Dan Hurcomb and team for organising the Fete and Bonfire, the proceeds of which benefit both the Church and Hall greatly. Finally everyone who uses the hall – the hirers and people who turn up to events, all making the effort worthwhile.

Martyn

We would like to take this opportunity to wish everyone a
Happy Christmas and a Peaceful New Year.
The Parish Hall Committee.

AYMESTREY PARISH HALL

Provides excellent facilities for all your events



Children's Parties, Birthdays, Anniversaries,

Wedding, Christening & Wake Receptions,

Meetings & Workshops

Large, welcoming main hall with stage & screen.

Comfortably seats 90 + people at tables.

*Well equipped kitchen with large cooker, two sinks, dishwasher, fridge, freezer,
ample preparation space and serving hatch*

Separate side room

Free Wi-Fi

Very reasonable rates – Tel: 07796 590266

AYMESTREY PARISH HALL

A.G.M

WEDNESDAY 8TH JAN @ 7.30PM

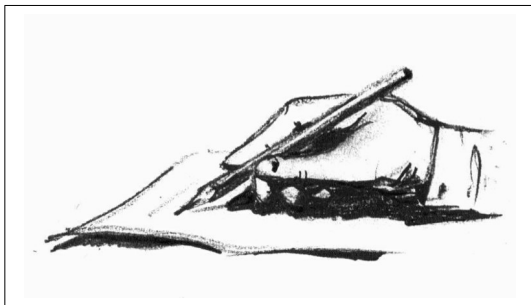
ALL WELCOME

Christmas Quiz

- 1 Which King of England was crowned on Christmas Day?
- 2 What famous Christmas carol was the first song broadcast from space?
- 3 Which Reindeer is named after a Roman God?
- 4 In which film is Clarence Odbody the guardian angel of George Bailey?
- 5 Who made Christmas illegal in 1647 until 1660?
- 6 In what real-life department store does 'Miracle on 34th Street' take place?
- 7 Boxing Day is also the feast of which Saint?
- 8 Name the best selling Christmas song of all time?
- 9 What Christmas item did a London sweetmaker invent?
- 10 Stollen is the traditional fruit cake of which country?
- 11 In the story 'A Christmas Carol' what is the relationship between Scrooge and Jacob Marley?
- 12 Who had a 'Close Shave' at Christmas 1995 after being framed for rustling sheep?
- 13 Prior to becoming associated with Christmas, what was Yule?
- 14 Which is the only English county whose name can be spelt without using any of the letters from the word CHRISTMAS?
- 15 The Mistletoe is the emblematic flower of which county?



Answers on page ~ 23



Parish Council

Reflections on Parish Council doings and extracts from the Clerk's postbag.

Parish Councillor news!

Councillor Dan Hurcomb submitted his resignation after the September meeting: co-opted in April 2021 at an online meeting during the COVID-19 pandemic, and elected in 2023 during the un-contested election, Dan has been an invaluable member of the Parish Council. He is wholeheartedly thanked for his contributions to the Council and the wider community. The vacancy created by his resignation has been filled by Councillor Alison Archer. Well known as an active member of the Traffic Calming Group, Alison was co-opted in November and welcomed to the Parish Council.

The defibrillator training session took place in November, just after this was written. If you were unable to attend, but would like to receive training, let me know. There will be another session, relatively nearby, in due course. The defibrillator must be checked regularly to ensure it is ready in an emergency. Thanks are due to a Yatton resident who has agreed to do this.

Many others are thanked too – including all members of the Aymestrey Traffic Calming and Floral Display Working Groups, for their time and expertise. The Head of Highways at Herefordshire Council, for accommodating the Traffic Calming Scheme when implementing the resurfacing programme and for providing Speed Indicator Device (SID) bases. Tarmac, for their help in installing the new gates and several SID bases, and Breedon Quarries, for sweeping the road on several occasions and for offering to continue this action.

Other news includes the delivery and installation of the new SID which you will have seen in action. The notice board at Mortimers Cross will get a new lease of life thanks to Cllr Goddard who has offered to repair it. Certain stiles on Public Rights of Way will be replaced with gates, using a grant from Herefordshire Council. My thanks to the Footpaths Officer for his help arranging their installation and the repair of steps to Pokehouse Wood.

All residents are welcome at Parish Council meetings, which are on the 4th Wednesday of each month, except in August and December. 7pm at the Parish Hall.

December – no scheduled meeting

22 January 2025

26 February

26 March

23 April

Your input is valued, and we look forward to seeing you.

The Parish Council would like to take this opportunity to wish everyone a Happy Christmas and Best Wishes for the New Year

Mrs Maggie Brown, Clerk. clerk@aymestrey.org



Forest Church

Aymestrey Church and Churchyard

9.30am Fourth Sunday of Every Month

Come and join us for an outdoor service to connect with nature and share our concerns for the environment. We meet for about 45 minutes, starting with refreshments before a time of prayer and worship.

Followed by activities on an outdoor theme for those who want to be creative.

Future services:

26th Jan, 23rd Feb, 23rd March

For more information contact:

wendy@mortimerscrosschurches.co.uk

3rd Annual Curry Competition 2025



The third Aymestrey Curry Competition is being held on Friday 21st February at 7pm in the Parish Hall. For £15 you will have the opportunity to taste and mark ten different curries with rice, nan, poppadoms and condiments.

Following the competition we will be showing the film 'The Fall Guy'.

Please let us know if you are coming by phoning Ian on 01568 770816, or emailing webadmin@aymestrey.org or filling in the form on Aymestrey website at www.aymestrey.org/aymestrey-curry-competition as we need to know numbers so the cooks have an idea how many tastings they need to cater for.

If you would like to enter a curry, please contact Ian Banks via email at me@ianbanks.me.

If you do not wish to taste any curries but would like to see the film it is likely to start at around 8pm, however you are welcome to attend earlier if you wish, film only is £6.

Please pay cash on the door and bring your own refreshments.

‘The Hands and Feet of the British Army’

Beth Lockett

This is taken from a short talk given by Beth for Remembrance Sunday at Aymestrey Church, in November 2024, about her father Geoffrey Hodges’ research in East Africa. It reminded us all of how widespread the impact of the 1914-18 war was, and how important it is not to forget that it was a ‘World War’. Geoffrey was Church Warden at Aymestrey Church for many years before his death in 1994.

NK

You might wonder why I am telling you about East Africa during the First World War, here in Aymestrey! In the 1960s, our family lived in Nairobi, where my father Geoffrey Hodges worked as a history teacher. When my parents and sisters arrived back home from Kenya in 1970 with a third baby, only ten days old, it was to Aymestrey. My parents lived in the village for the rest of their lives, and it was here that Geoffrey spent the next 15 years writing up his researches into a history titled “*The Carrier Corps, Military Labour in the East African Campaign 1914-18*”, first published in 1986 and later in 1994. Wendy Duggan, David’s mother, was a huge help to him in those early days typing out his unwieldy first draft with humour and forbearance. Wendy, whom many will remember fondly, died in September of this year.

Living in Nairobi, being fascinated by military history, and a devoted teacher, Geoffrey was aware that his students had their own stories to tell of their grandfathers’ involvement in the campaign against German East Africa in WW1. When German East Africa, to the south, now called Tanzania, launched an offensive in September 1914, the British East African Protectorate (now called Kenya) responded and eventually conquered the area, but at vast human cost.

There are thought to be 42 ethnic groups in Kenya today. Modern Kenya encompasses many tribes of peoples from very different origins. The students in Geoffrey’s classes were diverse tribally, and as Nairobi is adjacent to their traditional lands it was possible for them to take him to meet their grandfathers who had been members of the Carrier Corps during the campaign. With the students translating, Geoffrey recorded hours of interviews with these old men hearing first hand of their experiences during the war in East Africa.

The British East African fighting force consisted of three corps: the Askaris, or local soldiers, of the Kings African Rifles (KAR); the Arab Rifles and the Carriers who were a non-combatant force. What did the Carriers do? In early 20th century East Africa, thoughts of using animals to bear burdens were soon abandoned, as the presence of tsetse fly infected animals, with sleeping sickness, spread to humans with fatal results. With no roads, using wheels in the rough terrain of the bush was impossible. So there was no alternative but to recruit porters or Carriers. These men were to carry great loads, on their heads, over challenging ground in extreme weather, both hot and wet.

So the Carriers were ‘The hands and feet of the British army’. Each fighting soldier needed many provisions in order to survive and it was the job of a Carrier to bear all of this, as well as to carry what they themselves needed: “*We are the porters who carry the food of the porters who carry the food of the porters who carry the food ...*” Carriers carried up to 60 lb for 15 miles a day, on an unvaried diet of 2.5 lb of mealy meal a day. They carried provisions from depots, down lines or paths, which were interrupted about every seven miles or so by a post. Just to give an idea of what

was required to move stores to the army: an army column needed 10 tons of food a day. To move just 1 ton of food over a 150 mile distance, where Carriers also carried their own food, required 1,800 Carriers.



The Askari Memorial on present-day Kenyatta Avenue, Nairobi was put up in 1928. The figure on the left honours members of the Carrier Corps (photo: Dominic Imbuga, Wiki Commons)

Unfortunately, the organisation of the provision lines was chaotic from the start, despite the best efforts of some conscientious British officers, who later on did manage to improve conditions, management and care of the Carriers. However, the lack of preparedness for war on the British side and miscommunication between the local administration and the War Office, created the bad conditions for Carriers and Askari. Furthermore, the War Office was guilty, at the end of the war, for not remunerating all families of the Carriers with the wages of those who did not return.

There was also a lack of understanding of the differences between the many people who formed the British East African corps, which caused enormous problems to their wellbeing. It was assumed that everyone could eat the same food; however, nothing could be further from the truth. The recruited peoples were from very different altitudes and climates of Africa; most had lived entirely amongst their tribes and had had no contact with Europeans or many other Africans. They had particular diets and limited, if no, capacity for digesting food that they had never encountered before. Out of their usual environment and weakened by malnourishment, they were vulnerable to sickness: Highland Africans had no resistance to the malaria prevalent in coastal regions and people from lower lying coastal regions suffered from pneumonia if they operated in higher altitudes. Everyone suffered from dysentery, smallpox and later the terrible spread of Spanish Flu which killed 4-6 % of Kenya's population in 9 months. In addition to the many different Africans, there were Indians and men from the Seychelles, all with different dietary requirements which were not met, contributing to high mortality rates. On the supply lines, especially in the appalling rains of early 1917, Carriers and Askari alike slipped off the duckboard paths and died in large numbers in the mud along with animals dead from sleeping sickness.

For the British, recruiting men into the Carrier Corps in the early part of the campaign was reasonably easy, the promise of adventure being appealing to many young men. District commissioners visited tribal elders who were usually co-operative in providing recruits. As the years of war progressed, finding a supply of Carriers became increasingly difficult, as the stories reached home of harsh conditions and scarce pay. In response, recruitment was made compulsory and the procuring of young men traumatic. The tribal headmen or Askari would round people up; as Leah Karuga said *“They were recruited by force. At least every house had to produce one young man ... their mothers crying as they went ... The son of a man who was hated was taken, the son of a man who was respected was hidden ... ropes were put through their ears and tied together.”* There were reports of men running to hide in the bush only returning at night to eat. Possessions such as goats might be seized, as a way of pressurising people to relinquish their young men.

Carrying anything was seen as a woman’s task. My father was often laughed at as he carried his daughters around Nairobi on his back! African Carriers commented that they ‘were to be the women to the fighting soldiers, carrying their supplies’. The role reversals that emerged at this time became even more apparent, as the loss of men from their communities was increasingly visible; women were seen doing men’s work, breaking up the land with hoes.

In the end, over a million Africans were employed, as Carriers, during the East African Campaign, and ten percent of them were lost. The conflict for East Africans had long-term repercussions: the connections made, by those involved, brought about a greatly improved knowledge between Africans and Europeans. The Africans understood better the power structures at play within their countries. They saw, maybe for the first time, the vulnerability of Europeans fighting in the bush, and the Europeans witnessed and acknowledged the superior bush soldiers that the Africans were; appreciating the incredible cheer and optimism, the breath-taking bravery in dire conditions and unmatched physical and mental resilience. People also learnt new skills that enabled them to have better wages in the future and there was a pride in having served in the Carrier Corps, stories from which were absorbed into the telling of war legends and sagas. The vast theatre of war also put Africans in touch with each other as many learned Swahili, which became a widely-spoken East African language.

These stories, still relatively unknown in Britain, provide yet more examples of how this conflict impacted so many diverse peoples, from Aymestrey to East Africa, making the war truly a World War. To end with the words of Elspeth Huxley, a famous British novelist and settler, *“What is sure is that without their endurance and achievement, scarcely a shot could have been fired.”*



Geoffrey Hodges with two of his students Lawrence Narains and Dick Waiveru with four veterans of the Carrier Corps, Kenya, 1970



Mary Young lives in Aymestrey with her husband Tony. She was born in Barry and met Tony at a school dance and married in 1969 moving to the Midlands in 1970. She is a chartered Public Finance Accountant and has held numerous directorships and company secretarial roles. She is Chair of Trustees of Kemp House (hospice) in Kidderminster.

What is your earliest memory?

I must have been about 2 years old, in a pushchair alongside my twin brother, contentedly running a stick along a fence in Barry.

I can only think this sticks in my mind as either the stick was confiscated or my brother objected vociferously as he couldn't reach the fence.!

Where in the world have you most enjoyed travelling?

So many wonderful places -India for fascination: Australia -vibrancy; Austria -skiing; the Far East -mystery; France, our second home -beach life, bonhomie.

What is your most memorable moment?

Predictably, the birth of my daughter and subsequently, grandchildren.

What book have you most enjoyed reading?

Kim by Rudyard Kipling. I was forced to read it in school and hated it with a passion but came back to it as an adult after visiting India and loved it.

What do you like to watch on TV?

Emily in Paris, Antiques Road show, MasterChef, Gardener's World, and Gavin & Stacey (I once worked in Marco's on Barry Island!).

What is your most treasured possession?

My dog, Dai.

What is your proudest moment

Back in the 90s my nomination for Midlands Business Woman of the Year.
(I was runner up)

What word or phrase do you most overuse?

Oh, for Gawd's sake!

What is your biggest extravagance?

Travel.

How would you like to be remembered?

Pushing the boundaries a little for professional women at a time when it was an uphill battle. More importantly as a wife, mother, grandmother, who tried her best. A welcoming host and friend.
In reality, feistiness will probably feature!

What do you consider to be the most overrated virtue?

Humility.

Do you have a motto or proverb that you live by?

Not yet!

What is your idea of perfect happiness?

A summers lunch with family and friends on an island in the Med, sipping chilled rosé

MH

There's quite a bit I dislike about Christmas; the rampant commercialism that starts before I've finished my summer holiday; the banal music that hits the airwaves on the first of December, or earlier if we are really unlucky, (why has a song got to be played every half-hour just because it has the word Christmas in it and the jingle-jangle of sleigh bells). Most worrying is the pressure normal rational people put themselves under attempting to produce the 'perfect' Christmas.

Now I've got that off my chest, what do I like about Christmas?

At the moment I can think of three things; the excitement it brings to children (under 14's only please); Christmas trees, especially real ones and best of all Christmas Cake.

So.... Christmas Cake

It's origins lie in the Middle Ages as a plum porridge, made with boiled beef, fruit, spices, bread and oats. It was a hearty meal to end the fasting associated with Advent and Christmas Eve, and fill everyone up on Christmas Day. It then developed into more of a cake when richer people, with ovens, began adding ingredients like flour, eggs, butter and spices, then baking it. This could well be when the Christmas cake and Christmas pudding became separate treats.

As sugar became more plentiful people began to decorate their cakes with marzipan and royal icing, requiring the cake to be more solid with higher fruit content. Many other countries have fruit cake at Christmas but these are usually undecorated or just have a simple glaze and nuts.



For some strange reason adding alcohol has become popular, this usually takes the form of Brandy or Sherry although Port or Whisky are sometimes used, it's all down to personal taste. This extra liquid makes the cake more moist giving it an even richer taste and also may increase it's shelf-life. Adding the alcohol can be done by either pre-soaking the fruit in it, or drilling holes into the cake and pouring it in, or both.

Because of the way Christmas cake is made it has good storage properties, my mum used to make 12 cakes during November, we gave a few away to friends, ate the rest over Christmas (we were a family of six) all except one which we saved for Easter. We didn't have the cakes decorated, but maintained the Yorkshire tradition of eating our cake with a piece of cheese, either Cheddar, Cheshire or preferably, '*a nice bit of Wensleydale*'. This is still the way I prefer to eat my Christmas cake, if you've not tried it, you should.

There is an overlap with something called Twelfth Cake, this is a similar fruit cake probably from the same origin as Christmas cake, it was eaten on Twelfth Night as a finale to the Christmas feasting. It was also known as 'Bean Cake', having a dried bean incorporated into the cake mix. When the cake was eaten at the Twelfth Night feast, the lucky person who got the bean was pronounced 'king' for the night and could give people silly forfeits and tasks which they had to obey. Twelfth Night celebrations declined during the industrial revolution due to workers not getting the time off after Christmas Day.

However you choose to eat you Christmas Cake this year, be it with marzipan and icing, or with a nice piece of Wensleydale and perhaps a glass of Port or simply plain, I do hope you enjoy it.

Martyn Booth

Winter's Tales

In the Autumn issue of Aymestrey Matters we told some ghostly stories from Yatton Hill Common, related by Jackie Watkins in correspondence with Ian Goddard. What follows is some of the history of the Hill, not from the archives but from the people who lived there, as related to Ian.

“Yatton Village used to be up here on the Common. It was when the water started going deeper underground that the villagers decided to move down to where the village is now. Prior to that, at the south end of the Common there were three cottages; one which is now our house; what is now Yatton Hill Cottage next to us and another cottage once owned by the late Mrs Gillian Hodges. In addition there were two cottages in the old orchard and a pig pen at the gated entrance to the common and another cottage in Beech Grove. The ruins of the two cottages and pig pen in the old orchard were far more substantial when we first came here than they are today. Somewhere in our garden is a well, that was filled in; supposedly because the woman who lived here became forgetful and her relatives were worried that she may fall in! It may also be that the well had dried. We have never found the well, but we have found various old bottles so whether these were thrown down the disused well to dispose of them, and over the years have surfaced; we have no idea.

Between Yatton Cottage and Yatton Marsh Farm there was another dwelling. It was on the narrow flat strip of land that now forms one of fields at Yatton Marsh Farm.

There was a chapel at the Deepmoor entrance to the common. The preacher was by all accounts a bit of a fire and brimstone chap and his sermons could go on for hours. The chapel eventually fell into disrepair, but this did not put the preacher off: he simply drove up the lane on a pony and open cart, stood on the back of the cart and preached. Rumour has it that it wasn't only his congregation who were struck rigid though boredom but the pony also. When the pony became fed up it simply jolted the cart unbalancing the preacher, who shot backwards and had to shut up in order to concentrate on staying on board. The pony would then set off back down the lane of its own volition. Sensible equine!

The late Mrs Morgan of Deepmoor Cottage was a 'Canary Girl', making bullets for the troops during World War II. Her husband had a fatal heart attack whilst driving his tractor up on the hill and sadly was found dead with the tractor engine still running some hours after leaving home.

The Hole cottage used to belong to Croft Castle until, I think, 1938 when it was auctioned off - Alan and I were once shown the auction particulars. At one point a military chap and his family lived there. I think his rank was that of Major but I am not sure. His company had a donkey as its mascot. It proved troublesome as it was so noisy, continually braying, but not enough to scare the enemy, so the army wanted to be rid of it. The Major in his wisdom decided that he would bring it to live at The Hole which had an attached barn, about as big as the actual cottage, so the donkey lived in there. The Major and his family acquired a small donkey cart and used to carry water and other items up to The Hole for the time that they lived there. The donkey was supposedly settled in his new home and was never any trouble. It would appear that military life doesn't suit all donkeys.

Once a year local people used to come onto the common and set it on fire to burn off the majority of the bracken and gorse. When the fire had been safely put out they all used to go back into the village and get drunk on homemade perry. There used to be pear trees then in most people's gardens apparently. It was the late Steven Price who told us this last story and he can remember as a boy taking part in this tradition. His family were the first to have electricity and the first in Yatton to have a TV. If there was a special event on TV many villagers would turn up at Steven's home to crowd into their lounge to watch it.

Well, I have related these facts and stories as I have remembered them. I think the folklore is more intriguing than actual history in some instances. I will pass on more folklore gems and/or history as and when I think of them or from the various documents that we have."

Thank you Jackie. The Editors would welcome any other tales from the Parish - true, rumoured or apocryphal - and not only about the common, both for the interest of readers but also as to preserve them.



PARISH NATTERS & POST BOX



Dear Eds

Autumn Fayre 2024

Saturday 9th November saw the annual arrival of the Autumn Fayre in aid of Aymestrey and Leinthall Earls churches.

I'm very happy to report that it was a resounding success both in terms of financial contributions and community engagement.

From the moment the doors opened, the atmosphere was one of happiness and generosity. This could not have happened without everyone's time, effort and kind donations for which I am truly grateful. This event is a testament to what we can achieve when we come together with purpose and dedication.

Thank you to everyone involved for your hard work before and on the day. It was worth it!

Alexia Phillips

Letters, notices and events are most welcome, please send to editor@aymestrey.org

Flooding

I have lived at Aymestrey Mill nearly 50 years and have watched the River Lugg during this period. I remember arriving here from London and being welcomed by Mrs Gardner who lived at Yatton Court, and who was well into her 90s. She told us we had no need to worry about the River flooding any more because along with all the good practice that was put in place by the Atlee Government after the 2nd World War including river maintenance; the result was that years of flooding here had ended. She told us stories of the piano being ceremoniously pushed up to Yatton Court in preparation for flooding every year and the then mill owners being passed soup through the back window while they were stranded upstairs. We half listened and thought no more of this.

However along with everything else that was privatised, during the Thatcher government, the river maintenance was cancelled. I met a worker from this Team and he told me all the equipment was sold off overnight so no work could be done any more anyway. Their job had been dredging, moving shale appropriately, clearing ditches and working with the farming community, plus pollarding trees they were aware would cause problems over the winter.

It took 10 years before we experienced our first flood. More recently in 2020 storm Dennis caused havoc. Then 6 weeks ago the water came in again, although not so seriously.

The River has never been in such a state; there are no longer the amount of fish here as there were in 1975 and I am aware the levels of pollution are being monitored; this is of concern. The culprits being sewage discharge, and non regulation of poultry farming upstream. We used to swim in the River, I will not let my Grandchildren go near the water these days.

Because there is no care given to the river it is starting to return to its original course, pre-Saxon days when the mill stream was installed to provide water to work the Mill. It is now breaching half way up the field above the mill, and will gradually break through. The Weir was listed in the Domesday Survey over a 1000 years ago and generations of Aymestrey locals have ensured it is tended too. This is not happening on our generations 'watch' and the Environmental Agency have only a handful of staff to oversee the area.

Driving through Floods

It seems many people are unaware of how to manage flooding. This has had a direct impact on us financially here at Aymestrey Mill. In 2020, Storm Dennis meant we had to buy a new boiler. This was not due to flooding but tidal waves cause by drivers who insisted on approaching the deep water outside, on the road by our house, *AT GREAT SPEED* creating a tidal wave and in the process wrecking their car engines! More recently the same occurred 6 weeks ago in the last flood resulting in a £500 Bill for my Boiler, due to this reckless approach to driving through flood water.

Can I explain, the best approach is to drive slowly and not take your foot off the accelerator which would result in water coming up your car exhaust? Also *NEVER* attempt to go through a flood without being able to see the end of it. This can be exceedingly DANGEROUS. Car-loads of folks came a cropper last week in Leintwardine due to not taking appropriate precautions. Luckily no one was drowned but the Fire Brigade were called and the villagers were involved providing support and hospitality.

CL

Thoughts from a Retired Gardener

Jim Logan

Mooching with Meg

It's my habit to walk my Collie Meg in the late afternoon. It's more of a leisurely mooch than a bracing walk, we would miss too much by striding along. Meg is probably about the same age as me in 'dog years' so it suits us both to mooch. Today in mid November the dew hasn't dried off the grass all day, a pale Supermoon is rising over the Edge of the World field, I presume it has this name because it is at the edge of the estate and also the edge of Shropshire, the Hen brook to my left; in the Poplars is the boundary with Herefordshire.

Meg is nose down noting the scent trails, she is often so engrossed that she will fail to see a Hare move out of our path, but when she crosses it's scent can follow it unerringly until called off. The chill air has caused a drip to develop on the end of my nose, a common affliction of old gardener's, so now I too have a cold wet nose but all I can smell is the slightly balsam aroma of the poplar leaf litter and occasional whiff of wood smoke from our neighbours fire; the rank smell of a Fox I can detect, but it doesn't interest Meg.



I amble slowly, musing on the recent changes in agriculture, this field, just a few years ago would have been ploughed by now, slick shiny furrows in this heavy ground and left to the elements for the winter; not worked again until the top blew dry in February

or March.

This was the creed, and after the frost and snow the surface mould would work to a good seed bed in the spring. Now with a commitment to minimum tillage there is no ploughing and the winter cover crop of legumes and flax etc. will be sprayed off prior to the next crop being drilled directly into trashed remains. The subsequent harvests look superb to me, clearly all that autumn ploughing wasn't that essential.

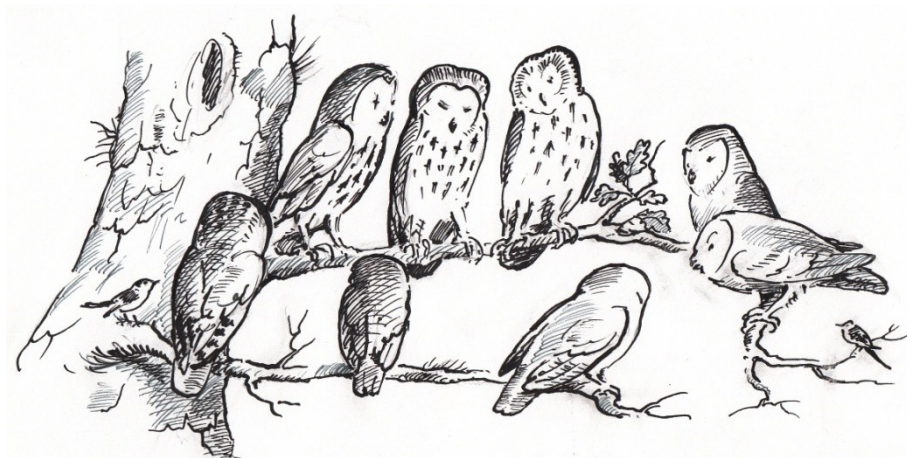
Meg is still sniffing, happy in the olfactory doggy wonderland of voles, squirrels and rats. I'm thinking about the evolution of the plough from a simple device for scuffling the surface to the development of the mouldboard to turn the earth, and now apparently redundant for cereal growing here. This huge field has several ancient oak trees dotted around, possibly remnants of woodland. When in the past it was ploughed and harrowed, dark patches showed in the earth probably evidence of charcoal burning in the past, this practice may have thinned the area to wood pasture and thence eventually to the arable ground that it is today. As Meg and I amble along I make quiet comments to her referring to things that catch my eye, she pricks her ears and wafts her tail in acknowledgment. We mooch on inconsequential in the grand scheme of things happy in each other's company.

And so to home, feed Meg, light the fire and close the poultry in; leaving the darkness outside to the wildlife.
Happy Christmas

Jim

PARISH PEOPLE

Here are some details for people in the parish you might need to contact



PARISH COUNCIL

Chair

Eleanor Waldron
contact via clerk

Clerk

Maggie Brown
clerk@aymestrey.org
Tel: 07398 222 310

Members

Ian Goddard 770251 - Helen Hamilton 709155
John Probert 708484 - Domenica Dunne 07966103698
Alison Archer hello@alisonarcher.co.uk - Nicola Luscott nicolaluscott@live.co.uk
Mike Snoswell (contact via Clerk)

Special Responsibilities

Lengthsman: Yatton Farm Services Footpaths: Dave Dunn 770224
Tree Warden: Richard Hammond rjhammond500@btinternet.com
MMP Patient Rep: Pauline Hammond pauline.hammond500@btinternet.com 708044.

Ward Councillor

Carole Gandy 01568 780583 carole.gandy@herefordshire.gov.uk

PARISH HALL

Chair: Martyn Booth 07748604215
Bookings Secretary: Pauline Hammond 708044 or 07796590266

CHURCH

Reverend Julie Read 708255. & Reverend Rosie Roberts revd.rosie@mortimerscrosschurches.co.uk 07720 333383
Churchwardens: Meg Thorpe 07943046450. Stuart Hutchings 01547540511, 07961117050

AYMESTREY MATTERS

Editorial Team **editor@aymestrey.org**
Denise Booth 07434621260 Martyn Booth 07748604215

Aymestrey Website: www.aymestrey.org Ian Banks 770816 webadmin@aymestrey.org

Mortimer Medical Practice



News from the Patient Participation Group (PPG)

Over the last couple of months the surgeries have, at times, reached capacity and had to stop taking requests from patients to be seen or receive a phone call on the day. Patients were redirected to ring 111 or go to A & E. With the exception of palliative care and children under 16 years.

But on these days there were still people who did not attend pre booked appointments, this shows **how important it is to cancel any appointment, even at a late stage.**

Yet another request from the surgeries to please be careful how and where you park, cars are still being damaged in the car park, access to neighbouring houses are still being blocked, patients should only park in a marked space. Please don't sit or lean on the bonnets of the doctors cars when waiting to collect your prescription at Kingsland, it causes damage.

In September a group from the medical practice did a sponsored walk in aid of St Michaels hospice in memory of Bel Lloyd who was a health care assistant and who sadly died of cancer earlier this year. A total of £1071.55 was raised

I thought it might be interesting to let you know what sort of things the staff do when the surgeries are closed for training :- eg. October training day
Clinical staff had Domestic abuse training provided by West Mercia police.
Admin staff had training from Taurus healthcare to enable them to better understand about medication patients are prescribed and how to help patients with enquires about their medication.

The next Training closure will be on the afternoon of 14th January 2025 after midday.

Christmas closures will be 25th and 26th December and 1st January. Please make sure you have any repeat prescription requests for over this period handed in, with time to dispense, bearing in mind they need to be in 72 hours before (not including weekends).

Since my last update there is now another new GP Dr Emma Derbyshire, so the practice now has 8 GP's and Dr Howard a GP registrar who is with the practice until August 2025.

So I would like to wish all our Aymestrey residents a happy and healthy New Year for 2025

Pauline

Notes From The Marsh

Marsh 18th Sept - 20th Nov 2024

Watch the Birdies

“Devil Scritches” have been at it again, all through October, screeching like banshees. Puzzled? A banshee is a woman from the Irish fairy mounds; she wails to predict the death of a family member. (Well, I do have Irish blood, my favourite colour is green, and I do my best to have long streaming hair but - disclaimer - no member of this family has ever been a banshee.): so do we have Jay connections? The Woodland Trust has a wonderful description of this colourful, very vocal Corvid: 'A highly intelligent loudmouth' - and a mimic too - one can live with that!

Crows are not little birds. In Britain, Ravens top the list: length to 68 cm / 26.5 inches, impressive average weight of 1.47 kilos / 3.2 lbs - think Chihuahua or, if you prefer, full wine bottle. Jays give the impression of being fairly large as they flash blue and racket about - but they measure circa 35 cm / 14 inches from beak to tail - slightly bigger than Jackdaws, the smallest of our crows. So Jays seem smaller than Magpies, till you realise that a Magpie's tail alone can measure 20 to 30 cm.

Needless to say, there were other noises round the garden in October. Fallow bucks belled towards Croft Ambrey and over to Pyon Wood; cawing Rooks (up to 49 cm long) mobbed a Red Kite (c.70 cm) over the fields. Planting was finally on



after a long wet wait - (Aiolos white hyacinths celebrate a Greek God of the wind; do Tete-a-tete daffs gossip in French? Dancing Ladies and Bee Balm were thrust into soggy soil to take their chance.). Anyway, it was a delight to hear a line of Long-tailed Tits chirruping and swooping. They have nested in my hedges; this troupe consisted of 5 or 6 birds - 13 or more have flitted together. Size comparisons are interesting; like the Magpie, the Mumruffin (Long-tailed Tit - Worcs nickname) has a tail, more than half its total 14 cm length - is it for balance or for show?



But hang on a minute, is it really a tit? - it's in that mouthful of a family, the Aegithalidae, rather than Paridae:- Blue Tits, Coal Tits, Great Tits, Marsh Tits, Willow Tits. A 'tit' was a medieval term for something small or insignificant, such as a weak horse. By the 18th century, it was also used for a young and troublesome female, a 'hussy' - exactly what the trouble was and whom it troubled, I leave you to guess. Thus, linguistically, it's a tit: miniscule, weighing only 7 to 8 grams, usually only living about 2 years - I once had one in my hand when it had flown into a parked car, light as a warm feather. Its interesting lifestyle includes family cooperation, as younger birds often help to rear chicks; it can use 2,000 feathers for its nest, coating the outside with lichen as camouflage.

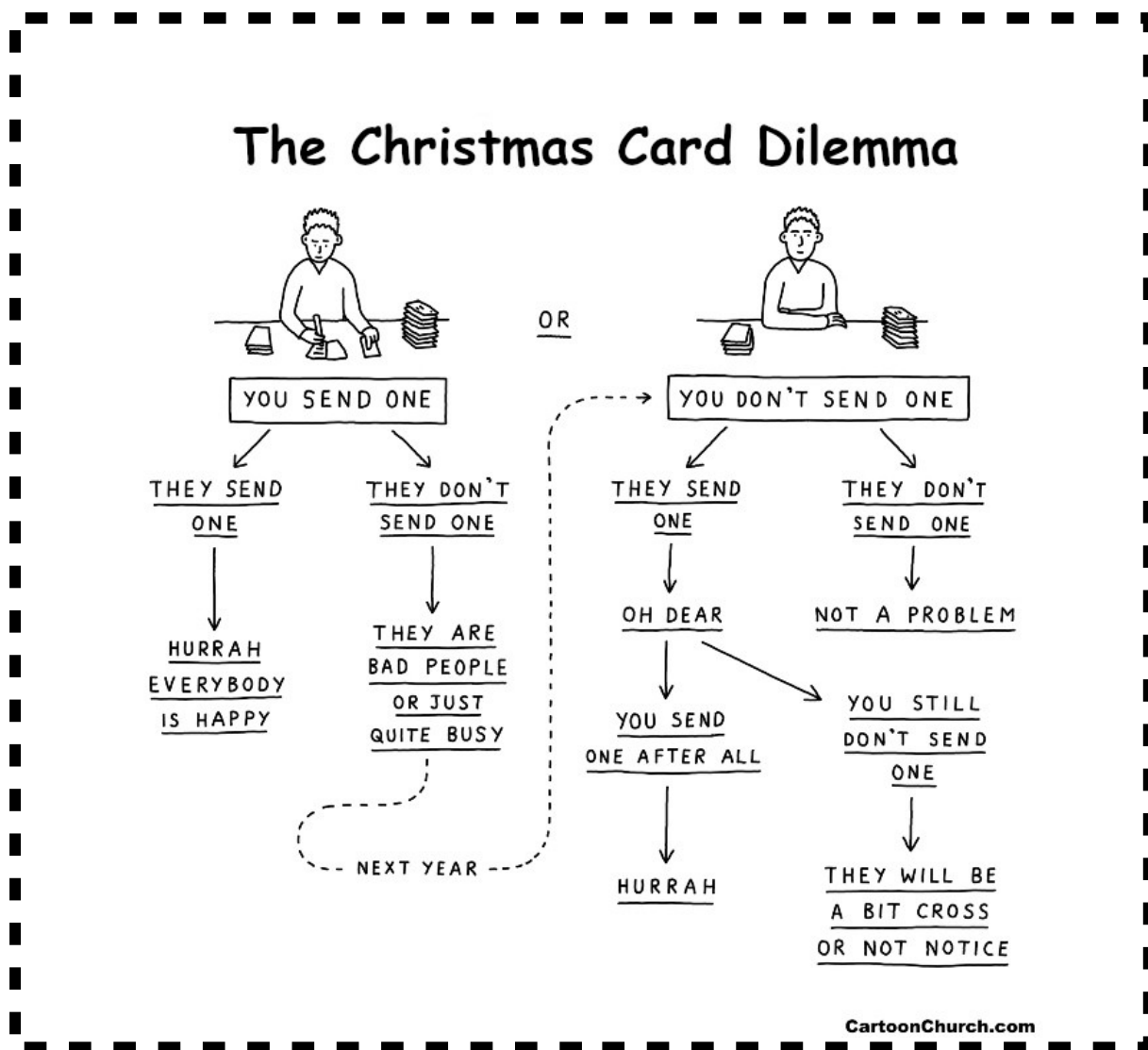
They don't seem to worry about muttering gardeners with shears and wheelbarrows. Hopefully they aren't too badly affected by the sudden November spell of ice and snow - but Mumruffins are tiny resident insect-eaters and therefore susceptible to cold. Starlings by contrast, seem in decline as residents,

but join us from Scandinavia in winter;
about 60 chattered in nearby trees a few
weeks before the snow - are we in for a
white Christmas?

So - bring in the Bramblings! Deck the
halls,

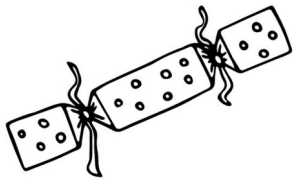
not your neighbours! - but not with
Golden King holly, a suckering thug I've
had to chop about - try Mistletoe
instead...Bingle jells, folks!

Susanna Checketts



Christmas Quiz – Answers

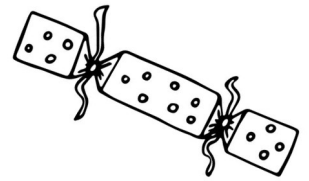
- | | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 William the Conqueror (William I) | 2 Jingle Bells. | 3 Cupid. |
| 4 It's a Wonderful Life. | 5 Oliver Cromwell. | 6 Macy's. |
| 7 St Stephen. | 8 White Christmas | 9 The Christmas Cracker. |
| 10 Germany. | 11 They were business partners. | 12 Grommit. |
| 13 A pagan midwinter festival. | 14 Devon. | 15 Herefordshire. |



Christmas Cracker Spoiler Alert.

They are worth a groan or two!!

by SD



Q. How did the snowman keep himself cool at the football?

a . he sat by the fans

Q. Why does Santa go down the chimney on Christmas Eve?

a . because it 'snoos' him

Q. What do you get if you eat Xmas decorations?

a . tinselitis

Q. What is Santa's favourite kind of pizza?

a . one that is deep-dish and even

Q. Why did the turkey join the rock band?

a . because it had drumsticks

Q. What do you call an elf who has just won the lottery?

a . wealthy

Q. What did Adam say on the day before Christmas?

a . it's christmas, eve

Q. What do they sing at a snowman's birthday party?

a . freeze a jolly good fellow

Q. What do Santa's elves learn at school?

a . the elf-alphabet

Q. What did the stamp say to the Xmas card?

a . stick with me and we'll go places

Our volunteers are ready to support you by helping with everyday tasks such as:

- Fetching prescriptions
- Occasional lifts to the doctors or hospital
- Shopping and running errands, such as posting a letter
- Practical tasks around the house such as hanging a picture or changing a light bulb
- Help with forms or letters
- Help with a computer
- Calling for a chat

If you need a volunteer then please call us

07942 257541



DATES FOR DIARIES

2024/5

When	What	Where
Mondays 7.00pm	Carpet Bowls	PH
Tuesdays 10.30am to 11.45am	Tea/Coffee in the Hall	PH
Thursdays 8.00pm	Sequence Dancing	PH
Thursdays 9.30am to 10.30am and 10.45am to 11.45am	Pilates	PH

December

Thursday 12th 2.00pm	Whist Drive	PH
Friday 13th 8.00pm	Christmas Fun Quiz	PH
Sunday 15th 3.30pm	CHRISTINGLE SERVICE	Leinthall Earls
Friday 20th 7 for 7.30pm	Film Night	PH
Saturday 21st 10.00 am	Decorate Church for Christmas	Aymestrey
Sunday 22nd 3.00pm	Carol Service	Aymestrey
Christmas Day 9.30am	Holy Communion CW.	Leinthall Earls
Christmas Day 11.00am	Holy Communion BCP	Aymestrey
Sunday 29th 10.30am	Benefice Service	TBA

January

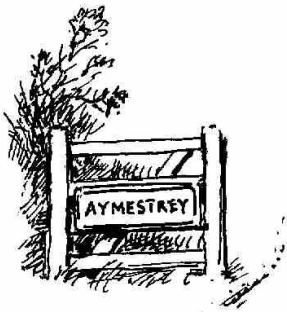
Wednesday 1st 10.30am	New Year Walk approx 5ml	Meet at PH
Saturday 4th 7.00pm	'Twelve Days of Christmas' concert	PH
Sunday 5th 11.0am.	Holy Communion BCP	Aymestrey
Wednesday 8th 7.30pm	Parish Hall AGM	PH
Friday 10th 8.00pm	Fun Quiz Night	PH
Sunday 12th 11.00am	Plough Sunday	Aymestrey
Wednesday 15th 7.00pm	Aymestrey Parish Commons Association AGM	PH
Thursday 16th 2.00pm	Whist Drive	PH
Friday 17th 7 for 7.30pm	Film Night	PH
Sunday 19th 3.30pm	Evensong	Leinthall Earls
Wednesday 22nd 7.00pm	Parish Council Meeting	PH
Sunday 26th 9.30 am	Forest Church	Aymestrey

February

Sunday 2nd 11.00am	Holy Communion BCP	Aymestrey
Sunday 9th 11.00 am	Holy Communion BCP	Aymestrey
Thursday 13th 2.00pm	Whist Drive	PH
Friday 14th 8.00pm	Fun Quiz Night	PH
Sunday 16th 10.30am	Benefice Service with the Archdeacon of Hereford	Kingsland
Friday 21st 7.00pm	Curry Night followed by Film	PH
Sunday 23rd 9.30am	Forest Church	Aymestrey
Wednesday 26th 7.00pm	Parish Council Meeting	PH

March

Sunday 2nd 11.00am	Holy Communion BCP	Aymestrey
Sunday 9th 11.00 am	Holy Communion BCP Mothering Sunday	Aymestrey
Friday 14th 8.00pm	Fun Quiz Night	PH
Sunday 16th 3.30pm	Holy Communion CW	Leinthall Earls
Friday 21st 7 for 7.30pm	Film Night	PH



Traffic Calming in Aymestrey Parish



The Traffic Calming measures machine is rolling on and you may have seen our brand, new SID (Speed Indicator Device) at the North or South ends of the village. This is proving to be very effective and has slowed down the traffic considerably. I will try and get some actual data for you of how much traffic speed has been reduced and publish it in the next issue of the Aymestrey Matters.

Over the coming months the new SID will be dotted about the village at a possible 3 locations and the original SID will be at 2, so there's plenty of opportunity for the SIDs to do their work.

The new SID does use more battery power than the old one (it needs re-charging every 2 weeks), so that will determine the length of time it'll be at any individual location. We can also change the wording aimed at those exceeding the speed limit – so watch this space!

We have also had a small team out clearing the footpath over the bridge (see picture). Our traffic calming measures are designed to change driver perception - and a tidy, cared for village helps to slow traffic. If you are able to keep the pavements in front of your house clear then we'd be delighted.

We are organising a TIDY VILLAGE GROUP and looking for volunteers. We'll be meeting at 10.30am on Saturday 14th December at The Riverside so, if you're able to help out, please come armed with a pair of gloves!

Lastly, you may have seen the 'sheep' on the verge, north of the bridge (see picture). This is more of our traffic calming measures and the first of those where we've been thinking outside the box. Two more sheep are planned for the village, but we do need to raise funds for them. We have enough to buy one more sheep at the moment, but need donations for the remaining one. If anyone is interested in making any donation whatsoever, do please get in touch with me via email: hello@alisonarcher.co.uk and I'll tell you what to do.

Onwards and upwards!

Alison Archer
November 2024





A small team of willing volunteers clears the leaves over the bridge

The two new (sheep-like) residents of Aymestrey



Let's Keep Aymestrey Tidy

Our traffic calming measures are designed to change driver perception - and a tidy, cared for village helps to slow traffic.

There are already a number of people who regularly keep parts of the village looking clean and tidy. If you are able to keep the pavements in front of your house clear then we'd be delighted.

We are organising a **TIDY VILLAGE GROUP** and we're looking for volunteers.

We'll be meeting at 10.30am on Saturday 14th December at The Riverside so, if you're able to help out, please come armed with a pair of gloves!

If you'd like more information, please call Rob on 07780 663632



Film & Food

17th January - Despicable Me 4

The world's favorite supervillain-turned-Anti-Villain-League-agent returns for a bold new era of Minions mayhem in Illumination's *Despicable Me 4*. Gru, Lucy and their girls welcome a new member to the family – Gru Jr. – who is intent on tormenting his dad, as a new nemesis shows up and forces the family to go on the run. This latest blockbuster chapter in the biggest global animated franchise in history is packed with nonstop action and filled with Illumination's signature subversive humour.



21st February - The Fall Guy

Ryan Gosling stars as Colt Seavers, a battle-scarred stuntman fresh off an almost career-ending accident. Colt is persuaded to return to his stunt career when he's told his ex, Jody (Emily Blunt), is directing a film and asked for him specifically. With hopes of winning back the love of his life, Colt returns to set only to find the movie's leading man missing and production in peril. Ensnared in an increasingly wild conspiracy, he must solve the mystery to save Jody's film and get one last shot with her. What could possibly go right? David Leitch (director of *Bullet Train* and producer of *John Wick*) delivers a hard-hitting, hilarious action-thriller with *The Fall Guy*.



This film will be shown as part of the Aymestrey Curry Competition, see other advert for more details



21st March - Juror #2

“Juror #2” follows family man Justin Kemp (Hoult) who, while serving as a juror in a high-profile murder trial, finds himself struggling with a serious moral dilemma...one he could use to sway the jury verdict and potentially convict—or free—the accused killer.