



Village News

Issue No. 140
March - April 2023

Monkton Heathfield, West Monkton and Bathpool



Little Langdale Tree by Chris Mowthorpe of Phoenix Photographers

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Cormorant hanging it's wings out to dry!
See Page 10

Publication in the Village News does not imply an endorsement. The Editors cannot be held responsible for any errors or omissions.
The information contained within this publication is published in good faith.
Volunteers deliver this publication to homes in West Monkton, Monkton Heathfield, Bathpool, Gotton and Goosenford.



Useful Names and Telephone Numbers

Rector: Rev. Mary Styles - 01823 451189
 The Vicarage, Kingston St Mary, TA2 8HW
Associate Vicar half-time: Rev Jim Cox - 07967817337
Churchwardens: Pearl Jeanes - 01823 412804
 pearljeanespcc@gmail.com
 Sally Hillman - 01823 410814
 sallyhillman@hotmail.co.uk
 staugustines.churchwarden@gmail.com
P.C.C Secretary: Sue Cleave - 07468608921
P.C.C Treasurer: David Cooke
Captain of Bell ringers: Pearl Jeanes - 412804
Church Flower Organiser: Angela Dill - 412395
Mothers' Union: Hazel Adams - 01823 443027
Benefice Office: Michele Hardiman - 01823 451257
Benefice Facebook Page:
<https://www.facebook.com/South-Quantock-Benefice-West-Monkton-Cheddon-Kingston-Broomfield-churches-242102696183594/>
Benefice website: www.southquantockbenefice.org.uk

Parish Council Clerk:: Amy Shepherd 07588571775
 clerk@westmonkton.net
PC Community Clerk: Kate Welsh 07505984006
 community@westmonkton.net
PC Chairman: Stuart Haskins 07824410997
 stuarthaskins@westmonkton.net
Community Website: www.somersetccc.org.uk
Parish Council Website: www.westmonkton.net
Monkton Matters www.monktonmatters.co.uk
Litter Hotline: 03003048000

West Monkton Primary School Head:
 Daniel Seviour - 01823 412582
Heathfield Community School Head:
 Hannah Jones - 01823 412396
Tacchi-Morris Arts Centre: 01823 414141

Taunton Deane Community Transport:
 01823 331266 Mon-Fri. 9 am to 4 pm (Slinky Bus
 24hrs notice).

Village Hall:

Telephone, incoming calls only - 01823 412068
Booking Officer: Ian Pitchfork Tel: 01823 412196
 ianpitchfork623@gmail.com
Chairman: Ray Tully Tel: 01823 252368
Security Officer: Colin Bentley Tel: 01823 413193
BACH (Brittons Ash Community Hall)
Chairman: Barry Gage 07752723311
 barrygage125@btinternet.com
Booking Officer: Maggie Little 01823 323662
 bachbookings@westmonkton.net

CCS Village Agent: please call this main number, they
 will then connect you to the correct Village Agent at the
 time of calling - 01823 331222.

The HARDY PLANT SOCIETY- Somerset Group

ANNUAL PLANT SALE
 at
West Monkton Village Hall
Monkton Heathfield, Taunton
 (half a mile up the road from Monkton Elm Garden
 Centre)
 on
Saturday 22nd April 2023
10:00am to 12:30pm

**Large Selection of Quality Locally Grown Hardy
 Plants at Reasonable Prices, including some
 Unusual Varieties, and Specialist Nursery Stalls.**

All Welcome * Entry £1
Refreshments on Sale
Free Parking on Site



Village News:

Please forward information for the next edition to the
Editor: Dawn Watts, Tel. 01823 412201
 dawnwattsdk@yahoo.co.uk
Village News Treasurer: Ken Jones
Distribution of the Village News is organised by:
 Barry Gage, Maggie & Gordon Little.

Submissions to Village News may be made by e-mail
 or by hard copy. Please ask for a receipt to your e-
 mail to ensure that it arrives.

Items submitted will be subjected to editing if
 necessary.

The deadline for submissions for the
 May/June 2023 Village News is 1st April 2023

To get a pdf copy of the Village News emailed
 to you,
 please email
 thelocalvillagenews@live.co.uk

Police Contact numbers:

Non emergency telephone 101

Emergency 999

To keep up to date on what's been happening in our
 area, you can follow police social media pages:

Twitter: @ASPWestSom @ASPolice
 Facebook

If you have any queries, the team can be contacted at:
SomWestNPTTaunton@avonandsomerset.police.uk



**'Big Coronation Lunch' Street Party
 on The Street, West Monkton
 Sunday 7th May**

**Flags, Food, Festivities,
 Fun, Friends, Families ...**

a chance to meet up with old acquaintances and to welcome new people to the village.

Keep the date. Tickets available soon: Adults £10, Children £5, Under 5s Free

More details in the May/June Village News and on village notice boards

Share fun and food together to celebrate a new King being crowned.

**Don't Get Your
 Vicars in a twist**

**A FARCE BY
 ANN GAWTHORPE
 & LESLEY BOWN**

**DIRECTED BY
 JOHN FURSE**

TICKETS:
 ONLINE: WWW.MONKTONPLAYERS.CO.UK
 TICKETSOURCE: 0333 666 3366
 TAUNTON VISITOR CENTRE
 CHANGES HAIR SALON - MONKTON HEATHFIELD
 £1 OFF TICKETS PURCHASED BY 30 MARCH

**West Monkton Village Hall
 30 & 31 March, 1 April
 New Start Time 7:30pm**

Telephone & Online Box Office provided by TicketSource
 Telephone sales are subject to a booking fee

**The MONKTON
 Players**



'Don't Get Your Vicars in a Twist' is a farce set in a country vicarage in 1993 - the first year that women priests were ordained.

Churchwarden George Williams has rented out the vicarage (which was empty while waiting for a new vicar to take up the post) to a travelling drama company for a Murder Mystery weekend to pay for his daughter's wedding.

Unfortunately, Bishop Herbert, determined to have the first parish with a female vicar, appoints Caroline Timberlake before the weekend can take place. Fortunately Caroline decides to keep a long-standing reunion with her college friends and the Murder Mystery goes ahead.

Events take a turn for the worse when Bishop Herbert decides to visit his new vicar. Actors, guests and church dignitaries create total confusion as George tries to salvage the weekend - and get paid!



Ringling for Ukraine Unity Day

On 21st January

Many thanks to everyone who supported this initiative which was also celebrated at the Minster in Taunton.

Everyone enjoyed a well-earned coffee break afterwards!



WEST MONKTON CHURCH FUNDRAISERS

Come and be entertained at a

MUSICAL EVENING

of word and song



FOR ALL AGES

SATURDAY 29th APRIL 2023

7.00 pm • WEST MONKTON CHURCH

★ REFRESHMENTS ★

TICKETS AVAILABLE ONLINE WITH FURTHER INFORMATION @
<https://buytickets.at/westmonktonchurchfundraisers/847129>
 from 1st April or from Dianne Besley on 412857



Cheddon & West Monkton Film Club

17th March: See How They Run (12A)

Comedy/Mystery: In the West End of 1950s London, plans for a movie version of a smash-hit play come to an abrupt halt after a pivotal member of the crew is murdered. When world-weary Inspector Stoppard (Sam Rockwell) and eager rookie Constable Stalker (Saoirse Ronan) take on the case, the two find themselves thrown into a puzzling whodunnit within the glamorously sordid theatre underground, investigating the mysterious homicide at their own peril.

21st April: The Railway Children Return (PG)

Drama/Family Viewing: It's 1944 and World War 2 is raging. Bobbie (Jenny Agutter), one of the original Railway Children but by now a grandmother, welcomes a group of evacuees from Salford to her home in Yorkshire. One day they encounter a young African American GI (Kenneth Aikens) who, like them, is far away from home, and who is hiding from the authorities.

Cheddon Fitzpaine Memorial Hall

Refreshments: 6:30pm; short film: 7pm

Feature: 7:20pm. Admission is £6 per person at the door. Card payment accepted.

cwmfilmclub@cfmh.co.uk

07586413290

The Hardy Plant Society (HPS)

The HPS is a registered charity started in 1957 by the late Alan Bloom, a famous plantsman, to promote interest in and knowledge about herbaceous perennials. These are plants that die off in the winter but come back into growth in the spring and last at least 2 years; they encompass a wonderful array of different colours and shapes eg salvias, delphiniums, hardy geraniums, hostas, hardy chrysanthemums and penstemons. Our current President is Roy Lancaster, a man with a wealth of gardening knowledge.

There is a National HPS and then lots of local groups around the country; you need to join the National HPS before you can join the local group. Costs are £17 (£19 for joint membership) for the National group and £5 (£8 for joint) for our local, Somerset, group. Once joined, you receive two magazines a year from the National HPS as well as the chance to buy seeds once a year that members have sent in from a vast array of plants at very good prices. There is also a photographic competition you can enter and more information is available on the website (www.hardy-plant.org.uk). There are also specialist groups that can be joined, for example the Snowdrop group, the Peony group and the Variegated plant group.

The local Somerset group of the HPS (www.somersetgps.com) is a friendly welcoming club of about 160 members with an active and varied programme of garden related events. From September to April there are monthly talks given by local and national speakers on a wide range of topics and are always of interest (previous programmes can be found on the website). These are held in West Monkton Village Hall on a Saturday morning, doors open 10.30 for chat and tea and the talk starts at 11am. The talks are free for members and guests are very welcome to attend (£5 charge). There is usually a Flower and Pot Plant of the Month competition as well as a bookstall and plant stall at each meeting. Once a year, there is a Plant Sale in

the hall, where there are many quality locally grown hardy plants at very reasonable prices as well as some specialist



nursery stalls (entrance £1 or you can hire a table for £5 if you are a member and have lots of plants to sell). We are also involved in running two plant fairs in the year, one in early spring at Yeo Valley Organic Garden, Holt Farm, near Blagdon and the other in June at Lower Severalls garden near Crewkerne. During the summer, there are several garden visits organised, either by coach or self-drive. We have visited some lovely places over the years, both locally and further afield eg the Orchid festival at Kew Gardens; they usually involve lots of plant buying at the nurseries, and tea and cake. We also send out 2 newsletters a year (online these days to save postage).

The date for the Plant Sale for this year is 22nd April at West Monkton Village Hall (10-12.30pm, entrance £1) and the Early Spring Plant Fair at Yeo Valley Organic Garden is on the 26th March, 10am-3pm.

We welcome new members to join us, whether experienced or novice gardeners who have an interest in knowing more about perennial plants and look forward to meeting you at one of our events.

Singles Club

Next meetings of the Singles Club:

March 14th: 12:30pm lunch at The Merry Monk.

April 11th: Tea at Monkton Elm Garden Centre 2:30pm onwards.

New members always welcome.

Names for these events and if you want to know more about the Singles Club contact Dianne on 01823 412857.

*Photo shows:
The Singles at Langaller for
mulled wine and nibbles.*



Letter from Rev. Jim



I have a friend, an undertaker, in fact, who worked for a company for many years and then decided to go into business for himself. He set up within our church building and over the next 5 years he made great sacrifices to ensure the business became a success. There were no family holidays, he had a smaller car and life had to become simpler.

I have another friend who got to the edge of, but never broke into the British Olympic swimming team. For years, every day she spent 2 hours before school in the pool and many hours at the weekends in competition. She never made it, but learned the popular lie about 'if only you want it enough'!

I may be biased by the newspapers I read, but it seems to me that self-sacrifice is respected in many walks of life – unless it's done for religious reasons when it suddenly becomes morbid and a sign of an inadequate personality.

Lent is upon us: or the time to 'give up chocolate' as it is popularly known. Religions across the world have times of fasting, self-restraint and focused piety. There will be a variety of reasons. Least among them is the 'personal well-being' advice to treat your body better – a sort of religious 'dry-January' – which is fine, but can sometimes be little more than a modern style of self-indulgence, in order to look fitter/slimmer/better...

The classic reasons for self-restraint in faith are:

- a) to relate to people who have less
- b) to learn to live with less for the good of the planet
- c) to exercise self-discipline and self-restraint
- d) to focus more attentively on the life of prayer.

It might be that after six weeks of this we establish a new life pattern; it might be that six weeks is all we can manage. It doesn't matter. Lent, like the other seasons of the church, is a gift to us to explore different aspects of faith. And so, I bid you a joyful Lent and trust it is an opportunity for us all to go beneath the surface of things.

Jim (jimcox11@gmail.com)

South Quantock Benefice

office@southquantockbenefice.org.uk

(The parishes of West Monkton, Kingston St Mary, Broomfield & Cheddon Fitzpaine)

Lent Groups

Monday afternoons 2 – 3:30pm
in West Monkton

Wednesday evenings 7:30 - 9pm
at the Vicarage, Kingston

Please contact the church office or check our website for details if you want to participate so we can print enough materials for everyone in time for the start of the groups.

Tel Michele 01823 451257 or Email:
office@southquantockbenefice.org.uk

From West Monkton Registers:

Funerals:

03.01.2023 Stanley Harris – Funeral & burial in churchyard

Thanksgiving Service:

04.02.2023 Betty Stone

Interment of ashes in churchyard

03.12.2022 Keith Stevens
10.12.2022 Trevor Ellis

MEN'S GROUP MEETINGS:

Anyone welcome to come along to the group – contact Jim for more information:

jimcox11@gmail.com 07967 817337

March Sunday 19th in Cheddon Memorial Hall 7pm

Talk: 'Plutonium – the Devil's material or a potential future fuel?' Talk by John Earp

April Sunday 23rd

Games night at Richard Ashford's, Kingston 7pm

St Augustine's Church 100 Club Prizewinners

January

The draw was held on Wednesday 4th January
First Prize: £104.00 won by Jennifer Board
Second Prize: £52.00 won by Michael Cavill
The sum of £364.00 will go towards the church.
The number of £5.00 shares entered in the draw was 104.

February

The draw was held on Friday 3rd February
First Prize: £100.00 was won by Colin Ayres
Second Prize: £50.00 was won by Graham Taylor
The sum of £350.00 will go towards the church.
The number of £5.00 shares entered in the draw was 100.

If you would like to support West Monkton Church and be in with a chance of winning, please contact:

Kate Ayres 01823 413873



Please see our website for up-to-date information
www.southquantockbenefice.org.uk

March

5th 2nd Sunday of Lent

8:30am BCP Communion	West Monkton
10:00am Morning Worship	West Monkton
10:00am Holy Communion	Kingston St. M
4:00pm Evening Prayer	Broomfield

12th 3rd Sunday of Lent

8:30am BCP Communion	Kingston St. M
10:00am Holy Communion	West Monkton

19th Mothering Sunday

8:30am BCP Communion	West Monkton
10:00am All Age Mothering Sunday Holy Communion	Cheddon
10:00am Mothering Sunday Service	Kingston
10:00am Mothering Sunday Service	West Monkton
10:30am Mothering Sunday Service	Broomfield

26th March 5th Sunday of Lent Passiontide

8:30am BCP Communion	Kingston St. M
10:00am Holy Communion	West Monkton
10:30am Holy Communion	Broomfield
6:00pm Choral Evensong	Kingston St. M

April

2nd Palm Sunday

8:30am BCP Communion	West Monkton
10:00am Morning Worship	West Monkton
10:00am Holy Communion	Kingston St. M
6:00pm Evening Prayer	Broomfield

9th Easter Sunday

9:30am All Age Communion	West Monkton
9:30am All Age Communion	Kingston St. M
11:00am All Age Communion	Cheddon
11:00am All Age Communion	Broomfield

16th 2nd Sunday of Easter

8:30am BCP Communion	West Monkton
10:00am Morning Worship	West Monkton
10:00am Holy Communion	Kingston St. M
10:00am Holy Communion followed by APCM	Cheddon

23rd 3rd Sunday of Easter

8:30am BCP Communion	Kingston St. M
10:00am Holy Communion followed by APCM	West Monkton
10:30am Holy Communion	Broomfield
6:00pm Choral Evensong	Kingston St. M

30th 4th Sunday of Easter

10:00am United Benefice Holy Communion in Kingston St Mary church, followed by APCM	
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A goodbye from Rev Mary

I write to say a big thank you and goodbye to Village News readers – I will be off to pastures new in Suffolk in April. I have loved been your Rector for a little short of 7 years and am moving to be much closer to my family.

You will still have Rev Jim, and also Michele in our Benefice Office keeping things going for the 4 parishes, and of course your fantastic churchwardens at West Monkton will ensure that worship and other services and events continue. The Parishes will enter a period of praying and thinking about your next Rector and a parish profile and advertisement created soon after I leave. Do contact one of the team if you have questions.

I continue to pray for you and hope you will pray for your parish church in this time of transition. God bless you,

Mary

The ministry team and congregations would like to add they are very thankful for Mary's time with them, the gifts she has brought to us all, with a deep love and faithfulness. We will say farewell with sadness on our part, but send Mary to her new parishes with our very best wishes in this next stage of her ministry.

You are all invited to come along to say farewell to Mary on:

**Sunday 2nd April 2:30pm – 4pm
 in Kingston St Mary Village Hall.**

Easter Activity Morning

For children (2-11) & families

in Cheddon churchyard -
 (we will move inside if weather bad)

Saturday 8th April - 10:00am – 12 noon

FREE event: Crafts; Refreshments

All are welcome to come along



Bathpool Chapel

01823 710453
 07882764153
 naomigull75@gmail.com
 bathpoolchapel@outlook.com



Greetings dear friends!

How wonderful to be enjoying the Spring and the reminder of the Eternal hope that is the Lord Jesus Christ! Both follow after what can be a time of challenging weather, poor health and a spiritual darkness that seems to reflect the long dark evenings. Regardless of what may be happening in the world, the seasons, and the great love of the Lord for His Creation is never ending, springtime and harvest, sunshine and rain, the Word of the Lord lasts forever. We have had a busy couple of months at the Chapel with an Annual General Meeting to celebrate all that has been achieved and all the aspirations for what we believe the Lord is calling us to do. There is a new kitchen installed which was mainly funded by our dear Doug and Irene Gray in memory of their service to the Chapel over many years, as well as Doug's love of coffee and biscuits!

Maintenance work to ensure the future of this Chapel will continue as long as the funding does. We would welcome any community fundraising by those who have a heart and desire to see this community, in all its diversity, flourish and serve others. Watch the notice board for any events that you may be able to participate in.

A Warm Welcome to you, your friends and families at the Service:

Every Sunday Morning at 10:30am, with Holy Communion. Tea and coffee afterwards.

A creative approach to learning: **Bible Studies and Seminars** you don't want to miss out on!

We are beginning an exciting new Bible study with a seminar using a creative approach to learning, suitable for all ages and abilities. If you are struggling to read and understand the Bible or have questions that you have never found an answer for, then this is the study for you. We also offer a Discipleship Course and bespoke Group Discussions which are always informative and helpful for our continuing journey with the Lord. Please contact us and make time to join us – it may be the most important decision you will ever make!

Let Us Pray for your friends, families and for yourself every Tuesday 7- 8 pm at Bathpool Chapel. Let's stand in unity for your loved ones!

Musical Fellowship: Are you at a loose end on the last Friday of every month? Why not join us for worship and music practice from 7 to 8.30 pm. Bring your own instrument or use the keyboard and percussion we have available.

Whatever you decide you will be made very welcome and will be a blessing to others!

Wishing you a very blessed Easter/ Passover time.

And may the Lord Bless you and keep you, may He make His face to shine upon you and be Gracious to you and give you, His Shalom.

Rev T. Naomi Gull and friends at Bathpool Chapel

Carol Singing

Thanks to everyone who came along to the carol singing, or who donated.

We raised over £500 for ARC Taunton <https://www.arcinspire.co.uk/> which is a great result - thank you all!

Arc house, support and enable homeless people to maximise their potential.

Working in Taunton, West Somerset and Sedgemoor.

They strive for all homeless people to have a safe and supportive environment, where people can be inspired and empowered by their own strengths.

1 in 6 people in the UK will spend at least one night homeless. But we know that, given the right help even the most vulnerable in our society can recover from the issues that have resulted in their homelessness. Every year Arc is able to support hundreds of people through a positive and personalised journey to independence.

West Monkton Primary School

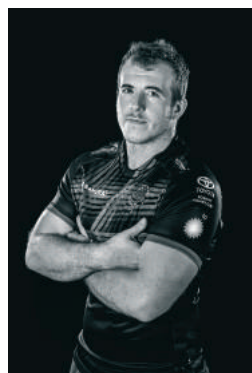
Year 1 and Year 5 had the pleasure of being involved in The Space Touring Company's performances. These young adults had prepared a performance with songs, dance and action for the children to enjoy and they then led an interactive workshop for all. It was not only wonderful to watch the show but also a real pleasure to welcome some previous students as performers! As always we were very proud of our students past and present.



Taunton Rugby Club

In my article about Taunton Rugby Club in the previous Village News I mentioned how the players put their wellbeing and their livelihood on the line every time they step onto the field (writes Robert Harris).

I would like to tell you about two players who have suffered horrific injuries which have had a major impact on their lives. First there is Freddie Fraser

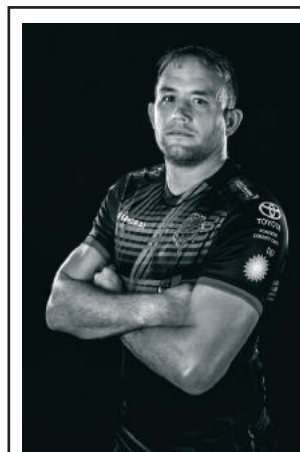


Freddie Fraser

who must be one of the unluckiest players injury wise ever to have played for Taunton Rugby Club. Freddie has been described as the toughest tackler in the club. He played a big part in Taunton's attempts to gain promotion to National League 1, the third tier of English rugby and the highest level the club had ever reached. His efforts were rewarded just before

COVID struck in 2020 as Taunton gained promotion. Freddie was a natural choice to play in the first match for Taunton Titans in their first match in the higher Division at Leeds but his participation in the match ended after 30 minutes as he suffered a broken leg which kept him out for the whole season. Fully recovered a year later he resumed his fully committed style of play but after just 10 games disaster struck again. A serious shoulder injury ended his season and, on medical advice, it ended his playing career too. Freddie is a PE teacher and these injuries have had an impact on his career but he is now able to resume teaching PE. The second long term casualty is Andy England who has played nearly 50 matches for the first XV. He is currently recovering from a broken leg sustained while playing for the club. Andy's injury

means that he has been unable to do his job as a plumber and heating engineer for four months. These two examples show the risks the players take for the entertainment of the club's supporters. On the pitch results have been most disappointing despite many battling performances by the team. Taunton are in the middle of a



Andy England

relegation struggle but in their most recent match at the time of writing they managed a much needed home win against fellow strugglers Esher by 27-18. Taunton were 0-12 behind after only 7 minutes but then showed great battling qualities to run out winners. Recent signings have lifted the quality of the squad and the team know that every match between now and the end of the season is one they can win.

Finally, if you want to experience rugby for free at Hyde Lane it is always worth coming to see the second XV in action. They are riding high in their league and have played exciting skilful rugby, inflicting heavy defeats on several opponents. The first XV (Taunton Titans) have home fixtures on March 11 and April 1 and 22. The second XV have a home fixture on March 4th. To keep up to date with all news TRFC head over to their website www.tauntonrfc.co.uk or follow them across social media @tauntonrfc



Somerset Birds

The common cormorant or shag Lays eggs inside a paper bag

Even if they cannot recite it in full many people will know the opening lines of Christopher Isherwood's whimsical little poem. Such a feat is beyond the most accomplished Cormorant but they are, nevertheless, in many respects, remarkable birds.

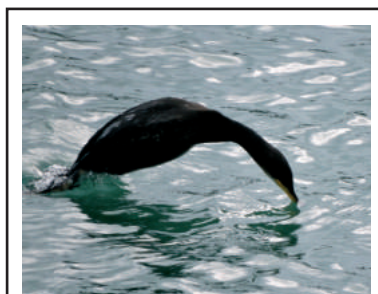
Cormorant is a generic name for a very large family of diving birds with a worldwide distribution. With only two regular species in Britain we fare poorly in comparison to countries such as New Zealand, where at least six species are recognised. Perhaps it is no bad thing because, in New Zealand, a large number of similar looking subspecies occur around the coast, some of which pose identification challenges.

We may have only two species to worry about here, but telling them apart can still be difficult for the inexperienced. The larger one is the Common Cormorant and the much smaller Shag, despite how the poem would have it, is a different bird altogether.

The Cormorant is a familiar bird in Somerset and can be seen on most waterways in the County, even smaller ones like canals. They can often be seen flying between them and have a goose-like appearance in flight and indeed are sometimes mistaken for such.

Originally mainly a coastal bird they have, within the past 50 years or so taken to breeding far inland. Being expert fish hunters they are unpopular with anglers and in many places, despite some protection measures, are persecuted, although this seems to have little effect on numbers. Colonies, nearly always in dead trees over water, can be seen on the Avalon Marshes in spring and early summer. Although some marine animals will take Cormorants, and gulls and other egg stealers will raid nests, Cormorants have few other enemies. This probably contributes to their success although marine and river pollution is an increasing hazard.

The Shag, so named for the curly crest it sports in the breeding season, is a smaller and much neater looking bird. Both species are essentially dark overall, with large webbed feet and an upright stance when perched. The Shag in particular has an attractive glossy sheen when seen at close range and both species, although rather



Shag diving

reptilian in appearance, have one splendid feature, beautiful emerald-green eyes that simply sparkle in sunlight.

Many aquatic species dive to catch fish. Among these are the true Divers and some species of duck.

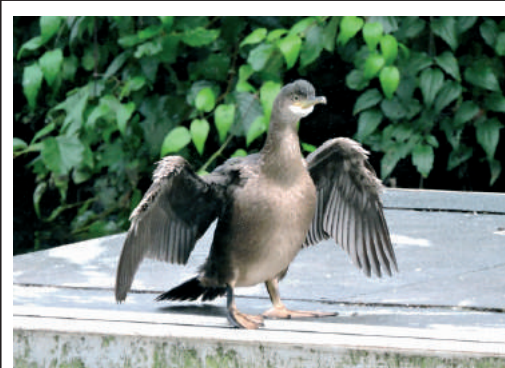
Cormorants as a family are unrelated but nevertheless excel as fishermen. Both dive regularly

from the surface, the Cormorant sliding under like a submarine, the Shag with a leaping dive, one good way of distinguishing them at a distance. Ungainly and clumsy ashore, they are transformed underwater, chasing fish with ease and swiftly manoeuvring to catch them.

Large fish rarely escape a pursuit and some, particularly flatfish, look impossible for the bird to swallow. However Cormorants have a very elastic gullet and by positioning the fish head on can swallow it without much difficulty, even though, to us, it looks a struggle. The birds do, however, have one problem unique among diving birds.

Aquatic species in general have a full set of waterproof features, maintained in good order with oil from a preen gland. In Cormorants the body feathers are water resistant but the wing feathers are not, something evolution evidently overlooked. This means that after a fishing spell they literally have to hang out their wings to dry. They find a convenient perch ashore to do this and spend some time, often hours, to dry out digesting their meal as they do so.

The Shag is a bird of rocky sea coasts, preferring deep blue water, and as such is rare in Somerset where our shores are unsuitable. Some occasionally stray up-channel to Minehead, and on both Devon and Cornwall coasts they occur in large numbers often entering fishing harbours. However severe storms occasionally blow them inland and they can then turn up in unexpected places. After one such autumn blow in 2017 a juvenile (brown coloured) bird visited the pontoon on the river opposite Morrisons, Taunton. It cared little about the curious watchers and had no trouble catching food. The ending was a happy one. After some days it recovered enough strength to depart and would almost certainly have made it to the coast.



The Morrisons Shag

So no paper bags required, and no need to worry about bears either - read the poem!
 Brian Hill

Somerset Ornithological Society welcomes people whatever their level of interest in birds. Please contact me on 01823 442918 for further details.

Blackdown Chills – a short story

Some of you will be familiar with The Holman Clavel Inn near Culmhead in the Blackdown hills which lie south west of Taunton. It is said to have an extra member of staff.....

The Inn gets its name from a "clavey" – the large wooden beam that can still be seen over the fireplace in the cosy lounge bar. The wood is holly - or "holman" as was the old local name.

One evening a local farmer stopped at the inn after work and heard the story of "Charlie" - a tree spirit who inhabited the hearth at the inn - looking after the hearth but inclined to mischief. The farmer scoffed and jeered at the landlord's tale, stating there was no such thing as spirits.

A few weeks later the same farmer, his family and friends, and a few farm hands had ordered a meal at the inn. The inn staff laid the table next to the hearth, in an adjoining room, the food brought in and the guests were seated. This done, the serving staff withdrew the dining room, closing the door. Shortly, the door opened and a guest marched up to the landlord angrily demanding the table be laid and the food brought in. Confused, the landlord explained that this had been done - and he had seen his serving staff do it, which the servants confirmed. On checking the dining room, no food was laid, the table was bare - drinking tankards and goblets were neatly hanging up in their places with the table linen neatly folded on a window sill.

The landlord ushered out the dining party to the public bar and ordered the room be re-laid with food and dining utensils, drinks vessels etc. This was done, checked by the landlord himself. He closed the door and went to fetch the dining party to reassure them that the room was now definitely ready for them. On entering the room the farmer, who led the party turned aggressively to the landlord: "Is this a joke? We are hungry and don't find it funny!"

The landlord stepped into the dining room and to his astonishment the same scene met his eyes - no food, utensils gone, drinks vessels hung away, linen folded. He also heard something the rest of the party did not - a faint chuckle coming from the hearth.

Charlie has a good memory for faces - never scoff or jeer at Charlie.....

Craig P Manning
– story based
on local legend

Illustration by
Paulie Wells



Gardening Corner Springtime Helpers

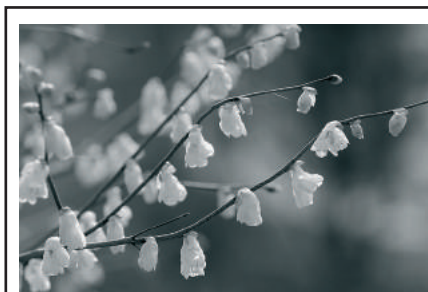
Writing a gardening column for this time of year is hard. I'm writing this in late January so there is time for the magazine to be finished, printed and distributed, but spring feels like an almost unbelievable prospect. I rationally know that it has to come, but the cold still clings on, the sun is weak and the garden is largely sepia toned and bare. So I force myself to look. And in the garden I see the birds beginning to think about spring, their song and flight patterns changing. By the time you read this, they will be nesting or thinking about it, ready to fatten their young on the insect populations that can cause problems in the garden. Blackbirds and thrushes flip leaves in search of snails, slugs and grubs; blue tits comb the shrubs and hedges for clusters of aphids and caterpillars to scoop up and return to their nests.

Putting up nesting boxes is important to encourage these tiny but mighty pest control engineers, but it is also good to feed them through cold spells and to plant a mix of

deciduous and evergreen shrubs and trees, to give them cover from the worst winter elements.

These shrubs are important to the garden aesthetically too.

The evergreen elements add structure and coherence when everything else is dormant and many of the deciduous shrubs we commonly use in gardens flower early in spring, carrying the garden forward to when the majority of herbaceous plants get going in late spring and early summer.



Carylopsis



Witch Hazel

I like Witch hazels (*Hamamelis mollis*) and their close relative *Carylopsis*, both of which have gorgeous yellow blooms and don't get too big! *Spinea mumberryi* has long shoots covered in white flowers and grows to a similar medium shrub size. For evergreen cover, *Osmondering delavagii* gives you glossy deep green

leaves and fragrant white flowers in April – what more can you ask for in a shrub? All of these are currently available and are reliable plants that won't let you down.

Tom Nielsen
Biocentric Planting Design & Nursery
www.biocentric.org.uk Instagram: @tombiocentricplants



Parish Council Meetings

The Parish Council continues to meet twice a month; on the second and fourth Tuesday of the month at 7pm at the BACH. The agenda for the meetings will be posted on the website and noticeboards.

If you aren't sure of the calendar of meetings, please check with the Clerk (clerk@westmonkton.net) or Assistant Clerk – Community (community@westmonkton.net)

Community Matters

The **Community Café** has continued to be popular, however we have decided to reduce the times of the warm hub and offer an additional Stay and Play Session, the Tacchi Morris continues to open its doors on a Tuesday morning for free refreshments as well as the existing coffee morning run at West Monkton Village Hall on a Thursday morning.

We are planning to start a new **'Repair Café'** on a Wednesday afternoon once a month. This will run alongside the Community Café from 2pm until 4pm, this will start on the 15th February and we will run this again on the 15th March and then 3rd Wednesday of each month after should it be popular. We have two volunteers who are keen to support the community by looking at items that might be repaired and reused. If there are any handy residents who have some time to give once a month then it would be great to hear from you!

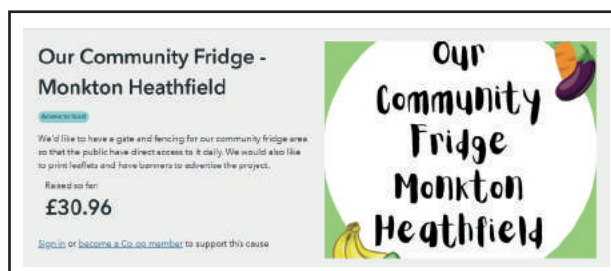
Sarah, one of our volunteers provided meals at the BACH over the Christmas holidays and this was attended by a couple of families and individuals, additional meals were made up and taken to the community fridge and these were taken by the residents of the community. We would like to thank Sarah and team for providing this and look forward to repeating this next year.

Community Fridge

Our volunteers have been continuing to collect, clean and replenish Our Community Fridge on a daily basis and worked above and beyond over the Christmas period to ensure as little food went to waste as possible, sharing supplies with the wider community when the fridge was not open. Thank you to all our fridge volunteers for your dedication and commitment.

We recently met with Coop's Pioneer for Local Causes who was thrilled to see 'Our Community Fridge' in action. They are keen to promote Coop Membership and of course if you chose us as your local cause on your Coop app you will be helping to fund 'Our Community Fridge'! Easiest way to do it is

to go online and nominate us as your local cause. We will receive funds in April and again in October



this year which will enable us to expand, refurbish or just keep the project running. So please, if you haven't already, become a member of Coop and choose us as your local cause to fund. Each time you shop at the Coop we will get a contribution towards our fund, family and friends can also choose us but if they live out of the area they will need to go online to link us as the cause they want to support. Please spread the word!

We continue to collect from the three local Coops, and have now expanded to pick up from other locations so if you know of a local business who may want to donate close to use by date items that would otherwise go to waste the please ask them to get in touch with Kate on 07505984006 or email community@westmonkton.net.

Community Garden

The Community Garden at the BACH continues to donate fresh produce to Our Community Fridge and has been awarded funding of £2,000 to expand the area! Plans have been drawn up and we are now actively organising the expansion of this area to grow more fruit and vegetables. We are desperately in need of more volunteers with the garden going forward so please contact community@westmonkton.net if you would like to help out.

Community Events

Our 2nd **Community Quiz** on the 25th January was a great success, with nine teams competing for prizes! Our Quizmaster Andy Derry prepared a challenging set of questions which included audio and picture rounds and the quiz kept the teams on their toes! Thank you to all those who came and of course to the Tacchi Morris for supporting us with these events. Next Quiz Dates: **Wednesday 22nd February at 7pm and Wednesday 29th March at 7pm**. Tickets are free but you will need to book your tables at the Tacchi Morris Box Office.

We have a number of upcoming event dates:

- Wednesday 22nd February at 7:30pm Community Quiz at Tacchi Morris (free but need to book at Tacchi Morris Box Office)
- Saturday 25th February at 9.30am **HELP NEEDED** at the BACH to move compost for the Community Garden.
- Sunday 5th March from 10am to 2pm The **BIG** Swap Event

- Wednesday 8th March from 4pm to 5.30pm Hot Cross Bun Making Demo with Paul Youd
- Tuesday 21st March from 7pm Annual Parish Meeting at the BACH – all welcome!
- Wednesday 29th March at 7:30pm Community Quiz at Tacchi Morris (free but need to book at Tacchi Morris Box Office)

SAVE THE DATES – More information to follow:

- Sunday 8th April **Easter Egg Hunt** at Maidenbrook Country Park
- Saturday 6th May **King Coronation Event** at Maidenbrook Country Park
- Sunday 11th June **Bike Week Event** at the BACH – 10am to 2pm
- Sunday 18th June **Dog Show** – run by St Giles Animal Rescue and West Monkton Parish Council at Maidenbrook Country Park



Community Quiz at Tacchi-Morris

Please get in touch with community@westmonkton.net if you would like to help with any of these events or if you would like to run a stall or food van at the events in the Country Park and we can reserve a spot. You will be charged £10 for a pitch for each event, money will be taken on the day.

Stay and Play Group

We have expanded to offer Stay and Play group to residents twice a week due to high demand. It has been lovely to see so many parents and grandparents with their little ones. We have had really positive feedback about the group, and it is really lovely to see so many families coming together to chat and for support at this group.

The Stay and Play Group runs every Wednesday afternoon at the BACH from 12:30pm until 2pm and also on a Thursday morning from 10:30am to 12 noon. There is no charge for the group, however some families have kindly offered donations of biscuits or tea/coffee which of course help and are gratefully received.

Volunteering Opportunities

If you have some spare time on your hands and want to meet new people and get involved in our thriving community there are a number of volunteer opportunities open to you. Whether it be helping at the café or stay and play group, cleaning or collecting for the Community Fridge, becoming part of the Community Garden Group or do you fancy becoming

a Companion Volunteer, supporting those that are struggling in our community?

We also have water watchers, litter pickers and have a group of emergency volunteers who helped with watering in the summer and will be looking to expand these roles to ensure we are able to come together in an emergency to support each other.

Perhaps you have some tech skills or are handy with repairing things? If you have some spare time and can volunteer once a month on a Wednesday afternoon then please get in touch. If any of these roles appeal to you and you have a bit of time to give then please get in touch, volunteering is good for not only our community but also for personal well-being.

Contact Kate Welsh, Assistant Clerk for Community at community@westmonkton.net or call on 07505984006 for more information.

Monkton Matters



The new community website; Monkton Matters is growing in popularity

www.monktonmatters.co.uk. Monkton Matters is an online space giving news, information and details of events in the Parish of West Monkton (incorporating Monkton Heathfield, West Monkton and Bathpool). Monkton Matters is for the community and its contents is developed and posted by the community. All local residents are encouraged to contribute relevant articles or submit details of local events. The website is as good as we make it and the vision for the site is that it is a one-stop shop; the go-to place for all community matters.

Various local institutions, from schools to the police, from churches to the council, are represented on the site, posting updates. It is possible to find local businesses and services as well as hear about community groups, clubs and sports teams running in the local area. It has helpful information to aid exploration of the parish and its history as well and plenty more besides. If you would like to submit an article or an event for inclusion on the website, please visit the website and complete the form.

Alongside news and events, businesses that are based or operate in the Parish can also add their details to the directory. If you would like to add your business details, please visit the website and complete the form.

If you have any queries or would prefer to submit items for inclusion on the website via email please contact editor@monktonmatters.co.uk

PC news continued:

Brittons Ash Community Hall (BACH)

The BACH is open for bookings aside from these times. The BACH has facilities to host virtual meetings, hybrid meetings, as well as meetings in person and we have also recently installed a hearing loop in the committee room. Further information is available on the website. If you are interested in booking the BACH please contact our Bookings Officer, Maggie (bachbooking@westmonkton.net). Parish Council Cont.

Emergency Planning

The Parish Council is developing an Emergency Plan designed to support the community in the event of an emergency affecting some or all of our parish, for example, flooding of properties or heavy snow fall.

Over the coming months, the Parish Council will be putting a call out to the community to identify resources that can be used, for example four wheel drive vehicles and volunteers to act as wardens for their local area. The Parish Council will also be providing you with the information you need should an emergency occur.

In the meantime, Brittons Ash Community Hall is registered as a place of safety should it be needed.



West Monkton Church of England School
 Bridgwater Road, Bathpool, Taunton, TA2 8FT

Tel (01823) 412 582
 Email office@wm.oak.education
 Online www.westmonktonschool.co.uk



As a school, we are continuously looking for ways in which we can continue to grow our links with the local community. You may have noticed that we have staff and pupils present at the front of the school during drop-off and collection times. We are seeking to address concerns about some inconsiderate parking, and the pupil safeguarding team have enjoyed their role in raising awareness. Do pop over and say hello if you see the team!

On the theme of community, as a school we are looking to increase our team of volunteers. We are particularly interested to recruit individuals who have some time to listen to children read. Our pupils love reading to visitors to the school. **If you, or anyone you know, would like further information about volunteering with us, then please contact the school office for more information.**

We continue to publish our half-termly newsletter, which captures many of the exciting events and activities that take place within the school. This is available online on the school website, or a printed copy can be collected from the school office.

Thank you for your continued support of our school. If you have any suggestions to further ways in which we can develop our links with the community, do get in touch!

Best Wishes,
Daniel Seviour
 Head of School



Tim's Tech Tips



Tims Tech Tips By Tim Finch
 07514 059313, www.Taunton.IT

Taunton Deane's Tech Tips Column

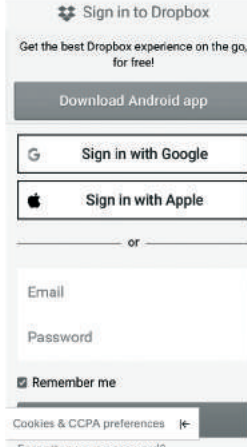
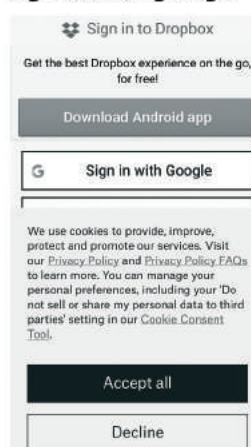
Signing over Sign In...

I'm often intrigued by seeing the online world through the eyes of my customers. One discovers just how confusing so many web sites are when helping people navigate it all. One such area of confusion is the 'Sign In' screen. To use shopping websites, surgery appointment websites, train & air booking sites etc., at some

point in the process, you have to 'Sign In'. This is so the service provider can identify who you are, as distinct from everyone else. Fair enough. Now, in past columns I have bemoaned the whole area of password creation and retention. But today, I want to look at the increasing myriad ways of signing in to a website. In particular I want to look at the issues from the point of view of working on a mobile phone. Using the example of popular 'cloud provider' company Dropbox, this is what their sign in page looks like when you first see it (Fig 1 left). Half the screen is the blasted cookie message! Once you accept or decline (there is a set of articles due on that topic

as well, watch this space), you then see Fig 2 right. What is the most prominent option being presented to you? 'Download app', for starters. Now that is a useful option, on a mobile phone, if you use Dropbox. But what is next most prominent? Seemingly two choices: Sign in with Google or Apple! People, not surprisingly, think they have to use one or the other. If you click on Sign in with Google, you then see Google log in screens which very much encourage you to create a Gmail address, if you don't already have one. Here's the point: you don't need to sign in with Google or Apple at all to any website (except their own of course)! Look carefully, and underneath is 'Sign in with Email' in a somewhat less clear font. Even if your email address is an @gmail.com one, you don't have to "Sign In with Google". Those options actually mean you are giving Google/Apple permission to know what other online services you use. Article space prevents me recounting lots of other reasons to not do this. Always look carefully when signing in! Where you can, sign in with Email / Password options on websites!

Fig 1 above, Fig 2 right



Community Transport Survey 2023

Being aware that our parish is poorly served by buses, West Monkton Parish Council is looking into community transport solutions. We would love to have your feedback on the following questions as we investigate the possibilities. Our aim is that more of us will be able to find more sustainable and cheaper travel options. The survey will take around 5 minutes to complete and is available online using the following link <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/7KBNNVX> if you prefer.

Q1: How frequently do you use public transport and taxis?

- Often
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

Q2: What prevents you from using public transport and taxis more? _____

Q3: Would you be interested in using a low cost, door-to-door community car scheme service for any of the following travel needs?:

- Attending medical appointments
- Having prescriptions collected
- Food Shopping
- Visiting friends and family who live locally
- Attending a community group/club
- Other (please specify): _____

Q4: When thinking about using a low cost, door-to-door community car scheme service, what barriers (if any) come to mind?

- Takes too much time to organise
- Not a priority for me
- Cost
- Prefer to use a private car
- Other (please specify): _____

Q5: If there is sufficient community interest to start a Community Car Sharing scheme, would you be interested in volunteering as an occasional driver?

- Yes
- Possibly
- No

Q6: How often do you estimate that you and members of your household would use a low cost, door-to-door community car scheme service?

_____ journeys per month

If you have any further comments on a possible Community Car Sharing scheme for West Monkton parish, please enter your comments below.

Transport Survey Continued:

The Parish Council is also looking into an Electric Bike scheme, as these can be great alternatives to the car for commuting, everyday errands & leisure trips.

Q7 If you don't have an Electric Bike, what reasons (if any) have prevented you from using one?

- Never really considered it
- I'm not confident on a bike
- The cost is prohibitive
- I prefer other forms of transport
- Other (please specify): _____

Q8 If one was available, would you be interested in having the opportunity to try out an Electric Bike for a few weeks?:

- Yes
- Maybe
- No (please say why): _____

Q9 If you are interested in an electric bike scheme, what types of journeys do you think you would make? (tick as many as apply)

- Commuting to your workplace
- Commuting to use other transport (e.g. to the train station)
- Business related journeys
- Shopping
- Leisure
- Exercise
- Other (please specify): _____

If you've expressed interest in using a community car scheme service or becoming a volunteer driver or you're interested in trying out an Electric Bike, we ask that you complete the following personal information so that we can remain in contact with you as the project develops.

Please note that any information that you provide will be held securely in compliance with current GDPR requirements and will be utilised solely for internal use as part of this West Monkton Parish Council Community Transport project. Your data will not be shared with other organisations under any circumstances.

Name: _____

Email Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this survey. We kindly ask that completed surveys are dropped into the letterbox at the Brittons Ash Community Hall (BACH). Alternatively, if you are unable to do this, please contact Kate Welsh (Assistant Clerk – Community) on 07505 984006 to arrange for it to be collected or scan it and email it to community@westmonkton.net

8 ultras completed so far - 3 more planned for this year.

At the moment, I'm training for my next ultra - the Isle of White (IoW) Challenge, 106k over 2 days, in April, with my son. So you're quite likely to see me in my Vegan Runners vest (though still walking) pounding the foothills of the Quantocks, and in and around the parish in general.

But, back to my completed ultras: I wrote about the 'South West Coast 2 Coast' in August 2021, which got my son and I addicted to this form of activity. We followed that up with a Virtual Trek to Kilimanjaro, which was actually a 50k walk over the Chilterns, accompanied by my 17yr-old Grandson, on the wettest day in September that year. But

we discovered, after an hour or so of steady downpour, that the rain no longer bothered us - it became the norm. And once we got our feet wet - when it was no longer possible to avoid the large puddles that formed - 5 minutes later, our feet felt warm again and they were no longer a concern. Wouldn't you know it, just as we were finishing, in the half-light of dusk, the rain stopped!

Next was the Christmas Virtual Challenge 2021, a walk to the North Pole. I was going for the 400k trek from Canada, but I broke my leg in December, and had to scale back to 250k. Nevertheless I still received a medal for my efforts.

The leg was broken playing tag with my 8yr-old grandson, just before New Year. We were crossing the meadow on the public footpath which runs from just above St Augustines across to the corner between Noahs Hill and Red Hill. It had been raining, the grass was slippery, and down I went, fracturing my fibula. This was about 4 months before my next ultra, the Jurassic Coast Challenge (JCC), in May 22. The injury didn't hold me back long though, as after 6 weeks, when the cast came off, I started walking about 3k a day. Several of the hills on the JCC were pretty brutal! Steeper in places than Dunkery Beacon. Walking poles were an absolute necessity for me on the steepest ascents - my technique was to put both poles a few inches in front of me, take two paces through the 'gate' they formed, then reposition the poles a little in front of me. It was slow going, but I found it the only way. Ben and I had intended to do the full 100k continuous, but, on the last leg towards the halfway point, Ben told me he didn't want to carry on after Weymouth - the halfway stage at 58k. He'd begun to feel unwell - but he'd done brilliantly, since he'd only come off antibiotics the day before. So we were content with that 58k, achieved in 18 hours, with about 2 hours rest.



*Just one of the hills either side of Durdle Door on the Jurassic Coast -
Ben in front, Paul behind*

Towards the end of May, whilst doing my normal training, I combined it with the London 2 Brighton Virtual Ultra 100k - gaining another medal in the process.

In June I saw an item on Facebook asking older Vegan Runners to get in touch, which I did. The post was from two brothers, film producers, who were making a film called 'I Could Never Go Vegan', exposing and rebutting all the myths surrounding Veganism. They came down from Yorkshire to film a face to face interview, conducted in the Coffee Station cafe in Vivary Park (Highly recommended, their cakes are just delicious!). They then said they needed to see me in action. As luck would have it, Ben was having trouble getting childcare for the next ultra, the SWC50 in August - a loop from Dunster along to Porlock, up over the back of Dunkery, and back down to Dunster again. Tom Pickering, one of the producers, said he'd often thought about doing an ultra marathon, so he decided to take Ben's place and film me on the way round - and a worthy companion he proved to be! We set off at 7:30am, along with about 1200 others, along the road to Minehead, past Butlins, then joined the SW coastal path past Bossington, to Porlock Weir where we swung inland.

This is where the climbing began in earnest. I'd naively thought that, after the climb from Minehead up Dunkery in July last, the climb round the back of Dunkery would be easier. Well, it may not have been as steep, but it was steep - steep and long. The climb seemed to go on for ever. We finished after ten in the evening, 14 hours 40 minutes after we'd started.

Continued on Page 18

Next came the Thames Path Challenge 100k (TPC100) - continuous - in early September 22, from Putney Bridge to Henley. The conditions were ideal, and we were both feeling in good form. We did the first 50k in under 10 hours - including pit stops, where we've learned not to sit down - getting going again is so much harder when you've been relaxing in a chair. We figured if we could keep up 4k per hour for the next 50, we could come in under 24hrs. That was our mistake - we pushed on too fast in the dark - and at 58k I tripped over a malignant tree root, banged my head on the path and suffered a superficial cut. I got to my feet feeling not too bad - but then I felt faint for a few seconds, so we decided to finish. We managed to get to the next rest stop at 61k - so that remains my one day distance record - up from the 58k on the JCC. One day I'll manage a continuous 100k, but not this year, maybe 2024, when we're thinking of attempting the TPC100 again - figuring that if we take a lot more care after it gets dark, we could do it.

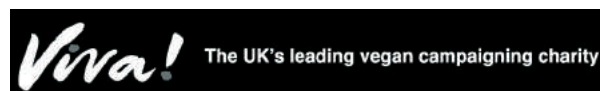
In October, I was asked to speak, alongside Tom Pickering, at VegFest, Olympia in London, about my path into veganism and my part in his film. The film is due for release 'very shortly', on either Netflix or Amazon Prime. Keep an eye out for it.

To finish the year, I did the 2022 Christmas Virtual Challenge - 250k from Russia to Lapland - between mid-November and New Year. I only just managed this, with the help of a 40k walk with Ben over the Quantocks on Christmas Eve.

So I've now done 8 ultras and my programme for this year is fairly set, I think - the IoW challenge; the SWC50 again, in August (mainly because it's on the doorstep); and the Chiltern50, in September. I just need 3 Virtual Challenges this year, to be up to date with my new goal of completing 100 ultras by my 100th birthday.

I'm hoping to get back into running in the summer - which will be 18 months after my accident, the length of time my physio says it takes for ligaments to heal. I have to say, at 85, totally unexpectedly, I'm living my best life - and mostly I'm doing it for the animals. In all my activities I'm fundraising for Viva!, the animal rights charity. I know times are hard at the moment - but they're also hard for charities. If you are in a position to make a small contribution, you can do so here, <https://wonderful.org/fundraisers/7BV07> or go to my blog www.nobreadisanisland.blogspot.com where you'll also find a wealth of cost-saving recipes - vegan, of course. And if I bump into you whilst I'm out training, please take one of my leaflets, they're full of useful info - plus you get a pic of me!

Paul Youd



West Monkton Evening Women's Institute



Hi everyone

Really hoping you are all managing to keep warm - don't know about you but I have never felt this cold, thank goodness for thermals! At least there is a sign spring is on its way with the bulbs popping up in the garden. Christmas seems a long time ago now, but we had a lovely 2-course Christmas Meal in the Heathfield Hall, cooked and served by the Committee. Everyone had a great time, and in lieu of our Secret Santa presents we raised an amount of £95 towards Huntington Disease Research.

A few days later we held our annual quiz, very well supported bearing in mind the awful weather and the football was on the television. Martin, our quizmaster, did a 'heads and tails' round and we raised a further £45 which was included in our cheque to the Huntingtons Society (total of £140 raised).

Date for your diary:

26th May: Quiz Night in the Main Hall at Monkton Heathfield, 6:30pm entry for a prompt 7:00pm start. Tickets will be £7 per person (maximum of 6 per team), which includes a ploughmans supper and a cup of tea or coffee. Bring your own drink and glasses.

If you would like to come along to one of our meetings for a taster session, you will find us a friendly 'bunch' and you would be made very welcome. If you would like some more information just ring me, Shirley Hector, on 01823-619084 and I would be pleased to give you some more information, the meetings start at 7.30pm at the Heathfield Hall, West Monkton Village Hall.

2023 Programme:

March 23rd:	St Giles Kennel
April 27th:	Emma Britton - ex BBC Somerset Presenter not a Celebrant
May 25th:	AGM
June 22nd:	To be confirmed
July:	Social outing (venue to be decided)
August:	No meeting
Sept 28th:	Damien Boyd (author)
October 26th:	To be confirmed
November 23:	Craft evening
December:	Christmas Meal (venue to be decided)

**Shirley Hector
Monkton Evening WI**

Taunton Film Society @ The SPACE

Doors open 7pm, film starts 7:30pm
www.tauntonfilmsociety.com

17th March 'Hive'
 Albania 2021 Drama Cert: 15
 1 hour 24minutes



Blerta Basholli's award-winning debut feature is a film about honey and also about ajvar, a sweet dish from the former Yugoslavia made from aubergines and red peppers. But the film tastes fierce and sharp, like black coffee.

It is based on the true story of Fahrije Hoti, a Kosovan woman whose husband went missing during the Balkan wars of the 90s, and so just to stay alive and provide for her children, she formed a women-only collective with all the other war widows (or presumed widows, longing for definitive news of what Serb forces did with their missing husbands) making honey and other delicacies to sell. But the film shows her facing brutal misogyny and violence from the men in her village who feel she is getting above herself.

Fahrije started this business at least partly to manage or exorcise her grief: the hive in their garden was set up by her husband. This is her way of staying close to his memory; she remembers how instinctive his touch was with the bees and how he never got stung. Fahrije, on the other hand, is always getting stung, and this is partly why she switches largely to ajvar; each sting is a reminder. There is a marvellous scene in which Fahrije's young son is thoughtfully combing his hair in front of the mirror, with some adolescent stirrings of vanity, perhaps. Watching him, Fahrije suddenly smiles, with transparent love and pain, and without needing to be told we can see she thinks he resembles his father. Her own father-in-law Haxhi is a glowering figure, dealing with agony and grief in his own way, but gradually coming to value Fahrije.

This is a richly intelligent drama, in which every word and every shot counts.

21st April 'Flee'
 Denmark 2021 Animation Cert: 15
 1 hour 29 minutes

An animated documentary telling the true story about a man's need to confront his past in order to truly have a future. Amin arrived as an unaccompanied minor in Denmark from Afghanistan. Today, at 36, he is a successful academic and is getting married to his long-time boyfriend. A secret he has been hiding for over 20 years threatens to ruin the life he has built for himself. For the first time, he is sharing his story with his close friend.

The Guardian says: A thrilling documentary made with a blend of animation and archive footage tells an immensely powerful tale of a gay Afghan survivor.

It's a genuine thrill to encounter a film as exciting and immediate as *Flee*. It's the kind of audacious and uniquely told story that should have audiences buzzing.

The true story at its centre is one that's tailor-made for some form of cinema, a harrowing and suspenseful refugee narrative of loss and resilience, and director Jonas Poher Rasmussen could have brought it to the screen in many ways, almost all of them more conventionally easier than the one he finally chose.

While Rasmussen animates the majority of the film, there are also interspersed montages of archival footage, deftly informing us of the basics of the political chaos that surrounds Amin's life in both Afghanistan and Russia. There's an immense weight he carries, an almost constant fear of being removed, his home being taken away, a sudden yank back to a life of violence and uncertainty. There's also an unimaginable burden, a feeling that he must always prove his worth, a responsibility to his family to succeed, an obsession with his career that we see causing tensions in his relationship.

Flee is a remarkably humanising and complex film, expanding and expounding the kind of story that's too easily simplified. Rasmussen has created a loving and unsparing tribute to his friend, a brave survivor whose story I'll find impossible to forget.





Tacchi-Morris Theatre Our local Theatre and Arts Centre

These are just a few of the events they are putting on in March and April, check the website for more information:

www.tacchi-morris.com

Flying Feathers - Taunton

Thespians

Tue 7 Mar – Sat 11 Mar,
7:30pm + Sat Matinee
2:30pm

The Taunton Thespians perform the hilarious Derek Benfield play, 'Flying Feathers'. Chief Constable Henry Potterton is astonished to learn that his late brother's estate has been turned into a 'house of sin'.

Opening Night – Standard £12, | Evenings – Standard £16, Concession £8 | Matinee – Standard £12, Concession £8

Spring Forward

Fri 17 Mar, 7pm

Spring Forward is back for 2023! With the most exciting and inclusive platform in the Somerset dance calendar, bringing together hundreds of dancers of all ages to perform on one of three professional stages. Enjoy an exciting mix of styles and choreography including Jazz, Contemporary, Street Dance and Dance Theatre, along with fantastic, fun and feel-good performances and digital dance offerings from local schools, youth dance companies, adult community dance groups and dance schools from Somerset and across the south west.

Standard £9 | Concession £6 | Child/Student £5

SPACEFest: Dorothy

The SPACE Company

Wed 22 Mar & Thu 23 Mar, 7pm

The Year 2 SPACE Company presents Dorothy, a bold and beautiful re-telling of the original tale The Wizard of Oz. A truly unique dance production that intertwines contemporary choreography, modern music with twists of the traditional plot. Dorothy is swept into a storm and displaced into an entirely different world. Journey with



Dorothy in a whirlwind of movement as she follows the never ending yellow brick staircase in her quest to find herself, the value of friendship and where she belongs.

Standard £10 |
Concession £9 |
Student £7

Three Choirs Concert

Glastonbury Male Voice Choir, Cantabile Ladies choir, Kentwood Show Choir
Sat 25 Mar, 7:30pm

A very special evening of music with three superb choirs. This is a unique opportunity to hear these choirs as they come together to celebrate the 2022 National Association of Choirs National Conference which is being held in Taunton.

All tickets £15

Romeo & Juliet

Ballet Theatre UK

Sat 1 Apr, 7:30pm

Join Ballet Theatre UK with their passionate and innovative recreation of the world's greatest love story, *Romeo and Juliet*.

Stunning costumes and innovative stage sets transport you to Renaissance Verona where our tragic tale unfolds of the Capulet and Montague families. Ballet Theatre UK create a new production to tell the tragic tale of star-crossed lovers with astonishing grace and heart-breaking intimacy.

Adult £21 | Concession £18 | Child (under 16) £14 | Student £14

Taunton Gang Show

Taunton Scouts and Guides

Wed 5 Apr, 7pm | Thu 6 Apr, 7pm | Fri 7 Apr, 2pm | Sat 8 Apr, 2pm (Relaxed Performance) | Sat 8 Apr, 7pm

The Gang are back with over 50 members of Scouts and Girlguiding and they are ready to entertain your entire family! With show-stopping ensemble dance routines and harmonies, supported by the Gangs very own Live Band, this magnificent variety show will take you on a journey through Dreams, Space and Carnival with a dash of Comedy on route!

Standard £10 | Concession £8.50

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Wednesdays

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 (only 2nd week of month)

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Yeo Valley Organic



Langdale Valley Sheep by Lynne Thomas -
Phoenix Photographers

Phoenix Group of Photographers

It's early September 2022, a Monday evening and the members of the Phoenix Group of Photographers have settled into their seats at the West Monkton Village Hall ready to be treated to a presentation by local photographer Pauline Rook.

Pauline is a Somerset based photographer and her presentation was about a photography commission she has been working on for the last twenty years. She was asked by the former Countryside Agency to produce a set of images documenting the lives of people living and working on the Blackdown Hills. She referred to her photographic influences, her background in farming and how she brought the two passions together. Her portraits and landscapes are mainly monochrome and showed the rapport she built with the people she photographed. It's a beautiful visual document of 'a way of life' hidden amongst the hills and a fantastic way to kick off our new season.

David Beer (Programme Secretary) has excelled in producing a diverse and interesting programme this season consisting of local and not-so-local photographers who attend and speak about their work either via Zoom or in person at the hall. We are fortunate to have members who offer to present insightful talks on a variety of topics, their areas of interest and inspirations.

Amongst the varied programme of talks there was Tommy Hatwell. He enthralled all present with his presentation 'Around the World and Back Again'. Via Zoom he explained how he combines his love of travel and photography to capture the story behind his portraits. Although his photographic style is very different to Pauline's, his work also emphasises the importance of spending time with the people you photograph.

Olivier Barjolle told us about his introduction to vintage Polaroid cameras when young, and how this contributed to his 'alternative processing' style of photography. He explained that the emulsion on old Polaroid film he used with these cameras were often well past their best. The spent emulsions had dried out in places; parts of the image discoloured and unexpected patterns appeared on the finished print. Some photographers would have been disheartened by the results but for Olivier the images created were interesting and evocative. What was seen as a 'happy accident' now forms the basis of Olivier's style.

Our most recent speaker was JP Stones talking live from the USA. He has spent the last 5 years living and working in Mexico photographing the indigenous Huichol people in their community, embracing their Mexican

heritage, the myths and folklore and telling their story. He produces incredible cinematic imagery explaining how the skills and set ups can be utilised to any photographic project.

As well as talks we also have practical evenings and print critiques. Photography can be an expensive pastime so our 'Portrait', 'Playing with Light' and 'Still Life' evenings allow members to try different styles of photography, uninhibited and at no expense to themselves. Print/digital critiques are a way to get feedback on the images our photographers produce. Laura Pearce LRPS was asked to critique printed images produced by members. As a professional photographer and judge her honest assessment of our work was invaluable and motivating.

Following a successful exhibition at Taunton Library last September we are currently exhibiting at the Tacchi-Morris Arts Centre until 24th April 2023. Hopefully, you will have found this article interesting and curious to discover more! For more information on forthcoming events please visit the our website pgop.org or email us at info@pgop.org.



Birnbeck Pier by Tony Raymond



Feast of Fools by Wendy Taylor

And Finally ...

Always remember that you are absolutely unique. Just like everyone else.

Margaret Mead