

Village News

Issue No. 145
January - February 2024

Monkton Heathfield, West Monkton and Bathpool



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*Look at the cakes - it must be the WI!
See Page12*



**Dancing Elves at the
Christmas Fayre!**

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 Jim Cox

Tel: 01823 802790 or 07967 817337

The Vicarage, Kingston St Mary

Email: jimcox11@gmail.com

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 website: www.southquantockbenefice.org.uk

Parish Council Clerk: Amy Shepherd 01823 412922

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

Litter Hotline: 03003048000

West Monkton Primary School Head:

Helen Newstead - 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 Tulley Tel: 01823 4252368

Vice Chairman: 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.

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

Singles Club

A place to meet new people and old friends.

Contact Dianne Besley on the number below for more information.

Next meetings:

January 2nd: Mulled Wine and nibbles at Henry and Dianne's, Langaller Farmhouse. 10:30am

February 13th: Lunch at Monkton Elm Garden Centre. 12:30pm

Numbers to Dianne Besley on 01823 412857 please.

Everyone very welcome.

Village News Deliveries - please can you help us?

We are looking for some volunteers to go on our back-up deliverers' list.

We have a large team of wonderful people who deliver the Village News to your door each time a new edition comes out. However, occasionally someone is ill, on holiday or for some other reason cannot do their delivery round. So we are looking for people to join the team – if you are interested please contact: barrygage125@btinternet.com

Or

TheLocalVillageNews@live.co.uk

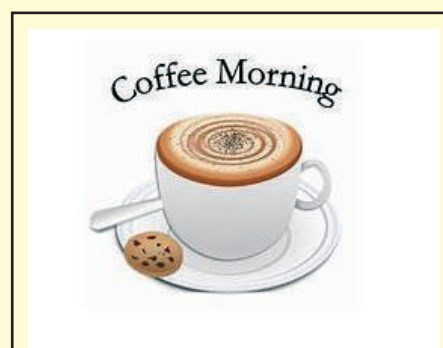
West Monkton Village Hall
Heathfield Hall

Our **Coffee Mornings** will
resume on
Thursday 11th January

Come and join us

We are a friendly group and would welcome newcomers (ladies and gentlemen). So, if you are sitting at home feeling lonely, please join us.

If you would like to have more information please ring
Iris Pigott on 07766127777.



Christmas Fayre



Bacon Baps, Christmas songs, laughter, and lots of Fun!

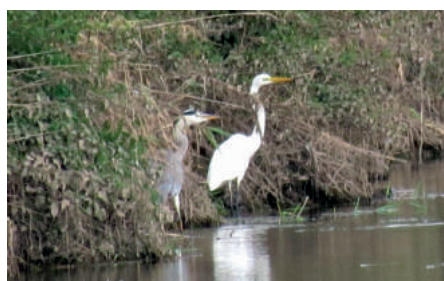


Somerset Birds

As I write this in late November the temperature is below freezing and it is hard to imagine that any birds would be thinking of nesting, but as we move into January one of our familiar water birds, at least in Somerset, will be doing exactly that. The Grey Heron is a familiar feature of our waterways, and can be seen along our rivers and canals, even in town centres. It is a common bird throughout the Avalon Marshes. Until recently it was possible to say this bird can be confused with no other, but now we have a small but burgeoning population of Common Cranes in the County, a

little more care is needed, especially as 'Crane' is an old Somerset name for the Heron. In reality though, the Grey Heron is easily distinguished, and the Crane is confined to the levels.

Grey Herons are for most of the year solitary birds, but do congregate for breeding. Like Rooks they nest communally, and similarly build large stick nests in tall trees. We have a number of well-known heronries in Somerset, and one of the best and largest ones to visit is that at the RSPB Swell Wood reserve overlooking West Sedgemoor off the road between Fivehead and Curry Rivel. A purpose-built hide overlooks the heronry and is best visited in late spring when the adults are making regular flights to and from their feeding sites. The chicks, and indeed the adults, are noisy and conspicuous.



Grey Heron and Great White Egret together

February and take a month to hatch. Fed by both parents with a diet of regurgitated fish, the chicks can remain in the nest for as long as 55 days. They are fed by the adults for a further two weeks or so, and then have the difficult task of fending for themselves. Not all are successful.

Grey Herons are patient fishermen. At times they will stalk their prey and can be seen in cut fields doing so, particularly when voles and frogs are abundant, but their usual tactic is to find a convenient waterside spot and wait motionless, eyes fixed on any movement beneath. A passing fish is captured with a swift downward strike and



Grey Heron with fish

manoeuvred head first for swallowing. Surprisingly large fish are taken in this way. Food is not confined to fish however, and rodents the size of rats, grass snakes and other reptiles are also eaten. Birds as large as Moorhens that stray too close have been recorded as victims, seized, drowned and swallowed. Unwary ducklings are regularly plucked from the water.

Until recently Herons have had their heronries to themselves, although they are known to share sites amicably with Rooks. In the last thirty years or so, however, things have changed dramatically. Little Egrets, vary rare until the turn of the century, are now established throughout the British Isles, and also nest communally. They too have taken to established heronries although, it seems, without conflict. Even more recently, the Cattle Egret, which recently bred for the first time in Somerset, has also moved in. Little Egrets can be seen nesting in Swell Wood and Cattle Egrets might soon follow. The only problem this is likely to pose is to the nest recorders charged with censusing the heronries, a



Great White Egret head view

difficult enough task with just one species to worry about!

A third white heron, the elegant Great White Egret, another recent arrival from the south-east is a potential competitor for the Grey Heron, but this lovely bird nests not in trees but in large



Little Egret

reed-beds surrounded by water. Nor do they appear to compete for prey, although their diets are similar. I have seen them fishing side by side though this is clearly not usual. Ham Wall RSPB reserve is a good place to see Grey Herons, Great White and Little Egrets, and if you are lucky, Cattle Egrets in the nearby fields. It is pleasing to report that this particularly family of birds is bucking the trend and doing well.

Brian Hill

Somerset Ornithological Society welcomes people whatever their level of interest in birds. Please contact me at alnitak.hill82@gmail.com for further details.

Coach Trip to Buckfast Abbey

We are arranging a Coach to collect us at the Merry Monk on Weds 20th March at 9 am. We plan to arrive at **Buckfast Abbey**, Buckfastleigh in Devon by 10.30 am and return to the Merry Monk by 5 pm. Buckfast Abbey is a beautiful historic building - <https://www.buckfast.org.uk/> is free to enter. There is also an Exhibition Centre which is well worth a visit for a small fee. Tickets may be purchased in the Gift Shop on arrival. There is a very good restaurant - <https://www.buckfast.org.uk/what-to-do-eat/> or plenty of spaces outside to sit if you wish to bring your own food. Cost of the coach is £15 per person - please feel free to encourage your friends and family to join us visiting this very special place. Book early to avoid disappointment - Offer closes at the end of February. See Poster on right

Monthly Coffee Mornings



More than just coffee

Come along for coffee & cake and...

6th Jan - Carol Hicks talk on the building trade in the 70's & 80's

3rd Feb - West Monkton Church does



2nd March - Speaker, Helen Newstead

Headmistress of West Monkton School

Everyone is welcome, Kettles on for 10am!

www.westmonktonchurch.co.uk

Coach Trip to Buckfast Abbey

Wed 20th March 2024
9am-5pm

£15

Coach pick up/drop off at Merry Monk

For more information and booking go to www.westmonktonchurch.co.uk



Letter from Rev. Jim

South Quantock Benefice
office@southquantockbenefice.org.uk



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

We had a few baptisms towards the end of last year - in the season of All Saints and Remembrance Sunday - and because my thoughts were on those themes, my brief address to the families often turned to thinking of their baby as a little old man or woman, looking back on their life and wondering if they'd made the most of it. Not in a morbid way, but rather in a preparatory way. If they wanted their children to look back with a sense of satisfaction and think their life had been worthwhile, maybe that is a process that ought to start at the beginning.

So, January. The gateway to the year. Janus looking both forward and back. But maybe not so much looking back to 2023, rather looking back from the end of time until now.

How do we want to reflect on 2024 in 12 months' time? It would be a shame to let the year slip by unremarked and unabsorbed. It will have its trials and triumphs, we know. But the hope is we will look back with a degree of satisfaction, that we have made some modest contribution, and feel it has been time we've spent well.

Jim Cox



Keeping in Contact

To be added to our weekly news-sheet mailing list contact Michele:

office@southquantockbenefice.org.uk

or see the website for links and up to date information www.southquantockbenefice.org.uk

From West Monkton Registers:

Funerals:

16.10.23 John Dill – funeral in church
17.10.23 Anthony (Tony) Stone service at the Crematorium
27.10.23 John Dill – thanksgiving service in church
27.11.23 Evelyn Chapman funeral in church followed by burial in the churchyard

Baptisms:

19.11.23 Stanley Taylor
10.12.23 Everly Walsh

Men's Group Meetings:

January (Sunday 14th)

Talk: Magic Moments. Malcolm Lown.
Cheddon Memorial Hall (7pm)

February (Sunday 4th)

Conversations: New Mill. 7pm

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

jimcox11@gmail.com 07967 817337 or
01823 802790

St Augustine's Church 100 Club Prizewinners

November

The draw was held on Saturday 4th November

First Prize: £103.00 won by Susan Cleave

Second Prize: £51.50 won by Linda Daly

The sum of £360.50 will go towards the church.

The number of £5.00 shares entered in the draw was 103.

December

The draw was held on Monday 4th December

First Prize: £103.00 was won by Joyce Keyte

Second Prize: £51.50 was won by Barry Cossey

The sum of £360.50 will go towards the church.

The number of £5.00 shares entered in the draw was 103.

CONGRATULATIONS

to our winners!

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

Kate Ayres (01823 413873)





January

Sunday 7th	The Epiphany	
8:30am	BCP Communion	West Monkton
10:00am	Morning Worship	West Monkton
10:00am	Communion	Kingston
4:00pm	Evening Prayer	Broomfield
Sunday 14th	2nd Sunday of Epiphany	
8:30am	BCP Communion	Kingston
10:00am	Holy Communion	West Monkton
10:00am	Morning Worship	Broomfield
Sunday 21st	3rd Sunday of Epiphany	
8:30am	BCP Communion	West Monkton
10:00am	Holy Communion	Cheddon
10:00am	Communion	Kingston
11:00am	Plough Sunday Service	West Monkton
Sunday 28th	4th Sunday of Epiphany	
8:30am	BCP Communion	Kingston
10:00am	Holy Communion	West Monkton
10:00am	Holy Communion	Broomfield
6:00pm	Choral Evensong	Kingston

February

Sunday 4th	2nd Sunday before Lent	
8:30am	BCP Communion	West Monkton
10:00am	Morning Worship	West Monkton
10:00am	Holy Communion	Kingston
4:00pm	Plough Sunday Service	Broomfield
Sunday 11th	Sunday next before Lent	
8:30am	BCP Communion	Kingston
10:00am	Holy Communion	West Monkton
10:00am	Morning Worship	Broomfield
Sunday 18th	1st Sunday of Lent	
8:30am	BCP Communion	West Monkton
10:00am	Morning Worship	West Monkton
10:00am	Holy Communion	Kingston
10:00am	Holy Communion	Cheddon
Sunday 25th	2nd Sunday of Lent	
8:30am	BCP Communion	Kingston
10:00am	Holy Communion	West Monkton
10:00am	Holy Communion	Broomfield
6:00pm	Choral Evensong	Kingston

Plough Sunday Service on 21st January 11:00am

**Service will be held in West Monkton church
followed by soup, bread & apple cake**

Do come along to this traditional Plough Sunday
service where we pull in a real and ancient
plough.



Ash Wednesday Services on 14th February

10:00am Kingston St Mary
6:00pm West Monkton



Christmas Fayre

On the 3rd December at our annual church
Christmas Fayre we raised a grand total of £1784. It
is a fantastic amount considering our footfall was
down perhaps because of the very frosty, very cold
weather.

The atmosphere was great and everyone seemed to
have a good time.

Thank you one and all for your support and helping
us to raise much needed funds for our Church.

See photos throughout this edition of the Village
News.



The joy of finding just what you want!



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)

Sports Pitches

Following the acquisition of the Sports Pitch land adjacent to the Eastern Relief Road between the Canal roundabout and the Hardys Road roundabout from the Developer, a fenced dog walking area has now been assigned and a dog waste bin provided for dog walking. Groundworks will shortly get underway on the remainder of the land to add the required drainage and seed the pitches.

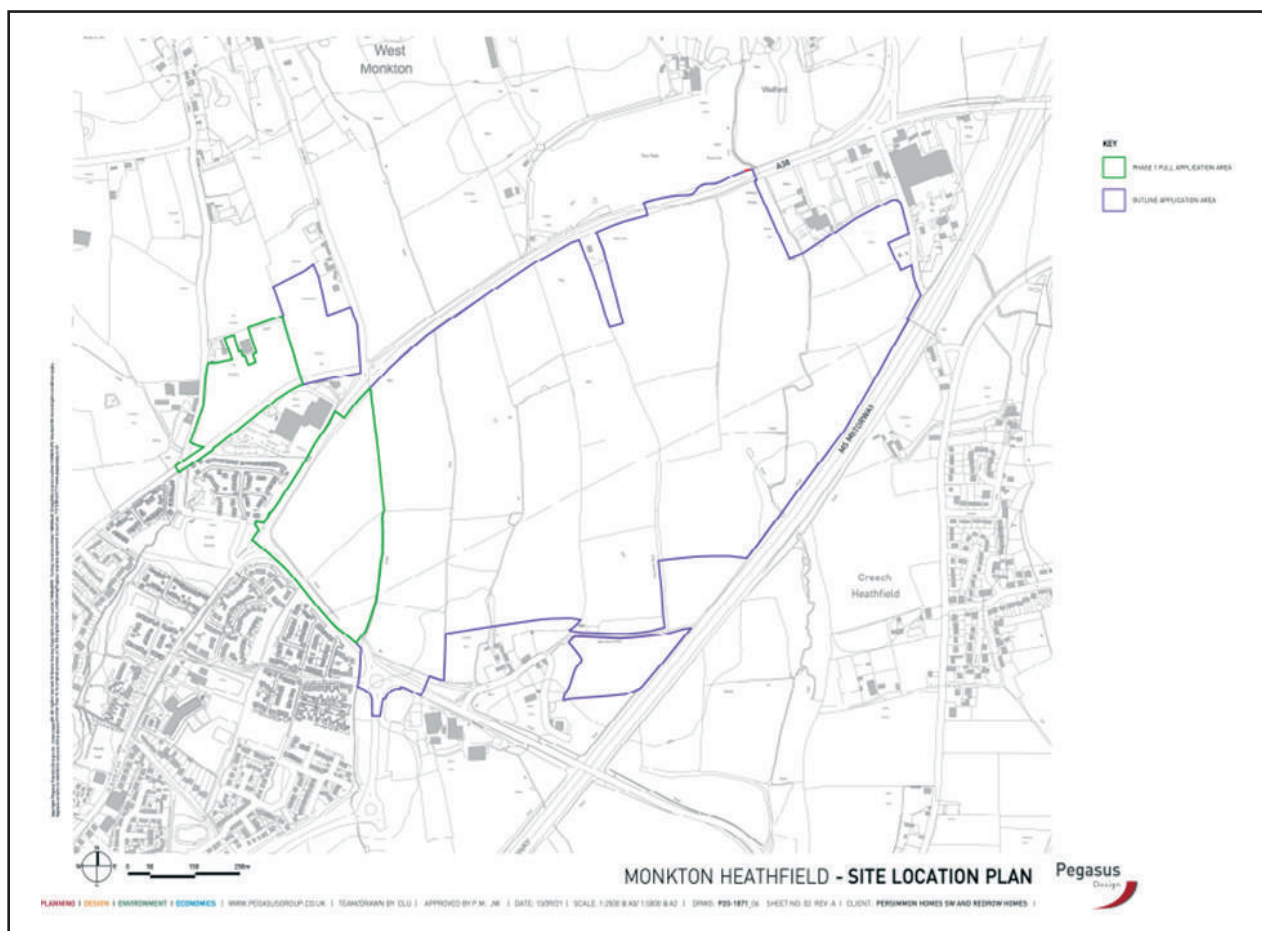
If you would like to know further details about this project please contact clerk@westmonkton.net

Monkton Heathfield Phase 2 (To be known as Langaller Park) Planning Application

In December 2021 a Planning Application was made to the Local Planning Authority in respect of the MH2 development.

The details of that application are as follows:
 14/21/0047/HYB Application for a Hybrid Planning application for Outline planning permission with all matters reserved, except for access related to the A38, for the second phase of the Monkton Heathfield development comprising of a residential and mixed use Garden Town Neighbourhood including up to 1210 No. dwellings, up to 4.83 hectares of land for strategic employment uses, 8 hectares of land for a through school, mixed use district centre, community facilities, green infrastructure, drainage works, land for a 600 No. space 'Bus and Ride' facility, relief road (EER2) and associated works and for full planning permission for the erection of 240 No. dwellings with access, including temporary access arrangements, and associated infrastructure works on land east of the A38, south of Walford Cross, Monkton Heathfield.

The application relates to the site outlined below:



A number of plans and supporting information were submitted with the application and are available on the Somerset Council website: <https://www3.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/asp/webpages/plan/PIAppDets.asp?casefullref=14/21/0047/HYB&QC=fcaC1>

Since the application was submitted the applicants / developers have been working up alternative plans and proposals. West Monkton Parish Council, jointly with Creech St Michael Parish Council, has engaged with the Developers, Somerset Council Highways and the Somerset Council Planning Officer trying to influence the plans and proposals as they were developed but unfortunately with limited success.

Throughout the period of engagement, the Developers have consistently refused the Parish Councils permission to share the plans with our communities.

The Parish Councils' now understand that the finalised new plans and supporting information for the new planning application will be submitted to the Local Planning Authority during December 2023 and when they are they will also be available on the Somerset Council website via the link above, in the public domain where members of our communities will have the opportunity to view the updated proposal and put forward any representations they have.

The Parish Council would like to clarify its position that the plans, particularly in relation to the proposed highway infrastructure, have changed significantly since the original submission in December 2021, and that the Parish Council has, throughout its engagement with the Developers, voiced its concern and objections on this point in particular.

As soon as the plans and supporting information are submitted by the Developer, the Parish Council will be organising a consultation event, most probably in January, to gather your views on what is being proposed. Your views will then be reflected in the formal comments that the Parish Council makes in respect of the proposal.

Please keep an eye on the Monkton Matters website (www.monktonmatters.co.uk) and Parish Council Facebook page where details of the consultation event will be made available.

Monkton Matters



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 are 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.

[News, information and events in the Parish of West Monkton \(monktonmatters.co.uk\)](http://www.monktonmatters.co.uk)

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

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).

Annual Parish Meeting – Tuesday 26th March 2024 at 7pm at the BACH

The Annual Parish meeting will be on Tuesday 26th March 2024 at 7.00pm. All are welcome, come and enjoy a glass of wine or soft drink, and nibbles. Please keep an eye out for details of the Annual Parish Meeting on the Parish Council website www.westmonkton.net and Monkton Matters website www.monktonmatters.co.uk

2024/25 Budget/Precept Setting

The draft budget for the Parish Council for the year 2024/2025 has been developed and discussed by the Parish Council. Its final approval will take place in January. Due to the financial position of Somerset Council it is likely that services that they

previously provided will fall to the Parish Council to deliver going forward – discussions about this matter are taking place with Somerset Council and the 2024/25 Parish Council Budget will not be finalised until these discussions have concluded. It is possible that there will be an increase in the Parish Council's 2024/25 budget and precept demand as a result of these discussions.

Community Matters

The **Community Café** has been really busy this term with our new **Crochet and Knit Group** meeting every week and we continue to be busy over the school pick up period. We opened up the café on the 15th December to sing Carol Songs with hot chocolate and mince pies for all.

Our **Repair Café** runs once a month alongside the café from 2pm until 4pm, the next repair café will be on 17th January and again on the 21st February. Please come along, we have a few handy volunteers who are up for a challenge! Old electrical items that can be repaired and reused or perhaps alterations to some clothing? We also offer support to people with any IT issues who maybe struggling with online forms or websites, please pop in on these days for some support.

The **Crochet and Knit Group** decorated the Parish with poppies before the Remembrance Service at Maidenbrook Country Park and Somerset Wood on the 10th November, everything looked wonderful! We then made decorations to go on a 'Dog Bed' themed Christmas Tree which was displayed at the Tree Festival on the 9th December. Please get in touch with Kate on 07505 984006 or email community@westmonkton.net if you are interested in getting involved.

We have also been running our **Loss and Bereavement Group** on the 1st Wednesday of every month to offer support and a safe space to talk and share the difficulties and challenges of losing someone you love.

We have had the pleasure of meeting a fair number of new families at our **Stay and Play** sessions so welcome those to our groups. The Stay and Play Group runs at the BACH every week from 12:30pm until 2pm on a Wednesday and on a Thursday from 10:30am to 12noon. 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.

Litter Picking Volunteers

We have a wonderful team of litter picking volunteers who go out and about in their own time trying to keep on top of the litter around the parish. We offer free litter pickers and hoops for anyone interest in getting involved.

Community Fridge

We have been fortunate to receive some funding grants from Sainsbury's Helping Everyone Eat Better Community Grant Fund, Magic Little Grants and Somerset Community Foundation to help us expand Our Community Fridge and enable us to store more food including frozen foods. We are looking to purchase a larger shed. We were lucky enough to have Stars and Stripes create our logo and Bathpool Flooring also gifted and fitted the flooring. Any local organisations who would like to help again with our new shed please get in touch with Kate on 07505984006 or email community@westmonkton.net.

We have also linked in with the Somerset West Lottery and should you wish to sign up to the lottery they run, you can choose us as your local cause to support and we will receive regular money to help us keep 'Our Community Fridge' going with day to day costs.

We are always looking for more regular volunteers so please contact community@westmonkton.net if you would like to help.

Community Garden

Every Wednesday the garden is open for the community to come along and help us at the garden, we often need an extra pair of hands for weeding, harvesting and watering. If you have some spare time, come and join us.

We have also secured some funding from the SALC Health and Wellbeing Grant for the garden which will allow us to purchase some new tools for both adults and children, making it easier for families to get involved. We are also looking to purchase some benches and seating, if anyone would like to donate any wellbeing items for a wellbeing area or would like to get involved in setting up a wellbeing area then please get in touch with Kate on 07505 984006 or email community@westmonkton.net to discuss this in further detail.

Work doesn't stop in the Winter so if you have any time to spare and would like to help us grow, plan and harvest winter vegetables please get in touch.

Community Events

Our **Community Quiz** nights at the Tacchi Morris are extremely popular and always fully booked. Andy Derry our quizmaster prepares the monthly quiz with a range of rounds from Geography, Music to food and drink and TV. The quiz is free but you will need to book through the Tacchi Morris box office, you will need to contact them early to get a table! We do ask for a small donation on the night for the second team's cash prize. The team in 1st place will get tickets to see one of the latest shows at the Tacchi Morris.

Community Quiz Dates:

Wednesday 24th January at 7:30pm
 Wednesday 21st February at 7:30pm
 Wednesday 20th March at 7:30pm
 Wednesday 24th April at 7:30pm
 30th March 2024 - Easter Egg Hunt
 6th June 2024 for D Day remembrance at Maidenbrook Country Park – Beacon Lighting Event
 29th June – Tug of War Event followed by Evening in the Park – **please note change of date**
 1st September – St Giles Fun Dog Show and Fun Day

If you are interested in having some input or would like to join the volunteers to help us organise these events then please get in touch with Kate on 07505984006 or email community@westmonkton.net.

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. We are specifically looking for more gardeners for the Community Garden and we would also like to take on some Companion Volunteers to support those in the community who are isolated and without transport.

If either of these roles appeal to you 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.



Helpers and more helpers at the Christmas Fayre



Monkton Evening WI

Hi everyone

I hope you all managed to spend some time with your friends and families over the Christmas period and that 2024 turns out to be a healthy New Year for us all.

Walking Group: October and November were really wet and unfortunately, on the dates we chose, the weather was even worse than normal. But, hopefully, we can start again in January and find some new local walks to enjoy.

Book Club: Going very well; a small group meet up once a month at Monkton Elm to discuss the book that they have read. The latest book is 'The War Pianist' by Mandy Robitham.

In November we were asked to organise light lunches at the Village Hall for sixty ladies at the SWFWI Speaker Day, which is a day where new speakers come along and talk for about 15/20 minutes on their chosen subject, the aim being to be included in the WI Handbook and for WI groups to book them at their meetings.



Getting into the spirit of Christmas at our November meeting, Sue and Sarah demonstrated their creative skills by showing our members how to make reindeers out of clothes pegs – interesting! Great evening had by all.



Our fund-raiser for the year was our Annual Quiz on the 25th November. Fifteen teams entered and everyone had a great evening, enjoying a ploughman's supper. This event raises extra funds to enable us to book more expensive speakers during the year. There was a 'Heads and Tails' round and the proceeds were donated to St Margarets Hospice, along with the money donated in lieu of a Secret Santa at our Christmas Meal, which was held at the Quantock Restaurant at Somerset College in December.

We are all looking forward to the Pantomime at the Brewhouse in January – Oh yes we are! 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.

2024 Programme:

January: Social evening
January: Pantomime at the Brewhouse
February: Somerset Waste Partnership
March: Nursery Rhymes and their origin (Brian Wright)

Shirley Hector (Monkton Evening WI)



Happy New Year

from all of us who make the Village News.





Green Shoots of Recovery for Taunton Titans?

Ten games into the season, one win and nine losses. Taunton deep in the relegation mire. I visualised how I would present this article, full of doom and gloom, but waited until, match 11, the last match before the publication deadline before completing it. There was very little optimism that the team would make the 600 mile round trip to mid table Darlington and come back with a win, especially as the squad was hit by injuries and unavailability of at least five first choice players. Taunton's patched up team upset all the odds scoring five tries and running out winners by 33-24 with sensational teenage winger Noah Fenton scoring twice including a try where he intercepted an opposition pass deep in his own half and sprinted the length of the field to score.

I spoke to injured club captain George Gosling the previous week and he pointed out quite rightly that the standard of play this season is

probably the highest it has ever been. Taunton play in the third tier of English Rugby and George added that the recent loss of three teams from the Premiership (the top tier) and one from the Championship (second tier) meant that players from the demised clubs left to join other teams creating a trickle down of talent into the lower leagues thus raising the standard in Taunton's league.

George also pointed out that despite their series of defeats the team has only really had two bad losses, the rest of the matches being very close. The other win was Taunton at their best thrashing Rosslyn Park by 40-17, showing that the team is capable of producing great performances. One thing is certain, the increase in the standard of play and the closeness of most of the matches create a thrilling spectacle for the spectators and the captain's message to the locals is, "Come down to Hyde Lane and be thoroughly entertained. We could really do with your support"

Taunton Titans' next two home matches are on 20th January against Moseley and 10th February against Sedgely Park. These are important matches for



Noah Fenton sprinting to the line.

Taunton and your local support would be most welcome. A noisy bumper crowd makes a big positive difference to the players so come and enjoy a top class game of rugby. Why not also book yourself in for the matchday two course carvery and enjoy the pre match atmosphere.

You can contact the club for details.

Meanwhile Taunton's second team, Taunton

Warriors are enjoying a magnificent

season. They have won all of their nine matches gaining a bonus point for scoring at least four tries in every game and at present have scored an average of 66 points per game. They sit proudly at the top of their league with a six point lead over their nearest rivals. Their next home fixtures are on 13th January and 3rd February. Admission to the Warriors matches is free so why not come down to Hyde Lane then to see this exciting young team. Last but not least the ladies team. They are playing a series of friendly matches this season before a decision is made to get down to the serious decision as to whether to move on to playing in a league. Just before writing this article I watched them take on a team from Andover. These ladies really put heart and soul into their performances and this match was no exception. The team has a wide mix of abilities but everyone gave their all as they built up a 12-0 lead. Andover came strong in the second half reducing the deficit to 12-10 before Taunton rallied in the final quarter to run out 24-10 winners. The ladies section welcomes all ladies interested in playing even those with little or no experience. Enthusiasm, a willingness to learn and try hard are all that is needed. You can contact the club for details.

By Robert Harris

To find out more about Taunton Rugby Club or to contact them here is the information you need:

<https://www.tauntonrfc.co.uk/>
01823336363
rugby@tauntonrfc.co.uk



Club Captain George Gosling

Taunton Film Society @ The SPACE, Monkton Heathfield

We would love to see you at one of our film showings - new members are always welcome. We are showing two films in January. Doors open 7pm, films start at 7:30pm..

January 5th 'The Eight Mountains'

Belgium/Italy 2022

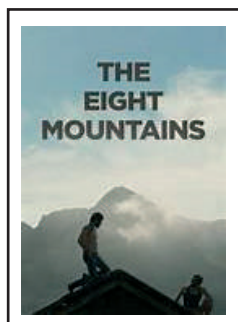
Drama Cert: 12

2 hours 28 minutes

Belgian film-makers Felix van Groeningen and Charlotte Vandermeersch have adapted the award-winning 2016 novel by Italian author Paolo Cognetti and have created a deeply intelligent meditation on our capacity for love, and how it is shaped by the arbitrary, irreversible experiences of childhood, and by our relationship with the landscape.

This rich and beautiful film is about the friendship between men who can't talk about their feelings and about winning and losing at the great game of life. It is set in the breathtaking and wonderfully photographed Italian Alpine valley of Aosta, which includes the slopes of Mont Blanc and the Matterhorn. But the "eight mountains" of the title refers to the eight highest peaks of Nepal: a mysterious symbol of worldly ambition and conquest.

This is a movie with air in its lungs and love in its heart. It is spacious and unhurried in its devotion to beauty and to what it means to be human. This film has mystery and passion, it climbs mountainous heights and rewards you with the opposite of vertigo: a sort of exaltation.



January 26th 'Blue Caftan'

Morocco 2022 Drama Cert: 12

2 hours 3 minutes

A finely crafted Moroccan love story in which the secret of a tailor's homosexuality is woven into his married life in Maryam Touzani's gently observed drama.

Halim (Saleh Bakri) is more than a tailor. At the traditional shop in a Moroccan medina that he runs with his ailing wife Mina (Lubna Azabal), he works lovingly and painstakingly, hand-embroidering silks so exquisitely fine they are like wearing air. And in a way, this delicate, precise, time-consuming approach is mirrored in director Maryam Touzani's film-making, with its focus on tiny details, the fleeting glance, an almost imperceptible brush of skin against skin. It's a gentle piece of Arabic-language storytelling, one that softly, slowly unfolds the audience rather than propels them on a journey.



Halim, with his sad eyes and melodic, minor-key voice, loves his wife deeply, but the couple live with the secret of his homosexuality – something Mina has come to accept but that still generates an occasional stab of jealousy in her. When a new apprentice, Youssef (Ayoub Missiou), joins them, she is aware of the attraction between the two men; there is a sharp edge to her manner when she talks to Youssef. But the dynamic between the three subtly shifts over time. As Mina's health fails, she weaves Youssef into the fabric of her own present and her husband's future life.

February 16th 'Alcarras'

Spain 2022 Drama Cert: 15

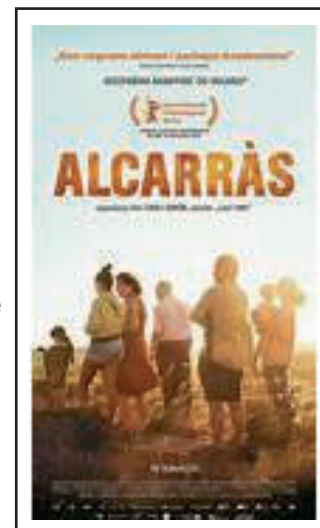
2 hours

The life of a family of peach farmers in a small village in Catalonia changes when the owner of their large estate dies and his lifetime heir decides to sell the land, suddenly threatening their livelihood.

Capitalism never looked more brutal than in this Catalan-language movie from Carla Simón.

Quimet, is a middle aged farmer who lives with his clan in a rambling rented house with its own swimming pool, surrounded by peach trees, whose delicious fruit he is getting ready to harvest: backbreakingly hard work which he does by hand with family members, together with some African immigrant labour.

Movies about rural ways of life are often supposed to be all about the sacred, seasonal rhythm of reaping and sowing. But here there is no rhythm. There is just one continuous throb of anxiety: whether the crop will fail, whether it will be eaten by rabbits, whether it will be underpriced by the supermarket buyers. And now the whole system has been thrown out. There is a new harvest to be gathered: solar power.



For more information: www.tauntonfilmsociety.com



Tacchi-Morris Arts Centre - Our local theatre and arts hub

The Page is Printed 2024 - Competition Deadline

Sun 14 Jan, 11:59pm

Write in any genre: prose, poetry, script, a confession, a love letter, a list... be bold, be imaginative, but contain your entry to just one side of A4.

18 and Over - 1 Entry £5, 3 Entries £10 | Under 18s - Free

Rule The World Sat 27 Jan, 7:30pm

Rule The World return to Tacchi-Morris Arts Centre due to popular demand after wowing audiences with their incredible and accurate portrayal of Take That. They bring you a concert that features all of the biggest hits including Never Forget, Greatest Day, Back For Good, Relight My Fire, Everything Changes, Shine, Pray and many more.

Adult £23 | Concession £22

The Magic of Terry Pratchett Fri 2 Feb, 7:30pm



Join author and comedian Marc Burrows on a journey through the life and work of Sir Terry Pratchett, based on his Locus Award-winning biography and

officially endorsed by the author's estate.

Adult £17.50 | Concession £15.50

Truly Collins Fri 9 Feb, 7:30pm

Truly Collins is the hit show that celebrates the unforgettable music of Phil Collins & Genesis. As seen on USA's NBC, the show is by far the most authentic sounding tribute to Phil Collins.

All Tickets £23

The Page is Printed 2024 - Celebration Evening

Sat 10 Feb, 7:00pm

An evening of spoken word celebrating this year's entrants to The Page is Printed creative writing competition. Words will be shared and winners will be announced.

Free ticket for all competition entrants | £4 for non-entrants

Matt Green: That Guy Fri 16 Feb, 8:00pm

Debut national tour from that guy you've seen on Twitter being funny about politics. A stand up show featuring jokes about politics and jokes not about politics. That probably covers it.

All Tickets £14.50



The Bar at the Edge of Time

Frozen Light Theatre Tue 20 Feb - Fri 23 Feb

The glasses are polished, the lights are low, and time will be hopping. The Bar at the Edge of Time waits only for you, so what are you waiting for? For audiences with Profound and Multiple Learning Disabilities.

Standard £10 | Access Companion - Free

A.J.'s Big Band - 40th Anniversary Year

Sat 24 Feb, 7:30pm

The South West's premier big band returns to Taunton for another packed, two set programme, of swing and jazz classics.

All tickets £19

Alice in Wonderland

Folksy Theatre Sun 25 Feb, 2:30pm

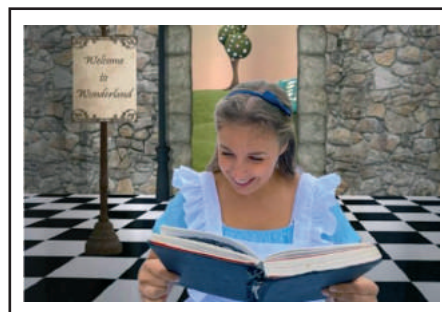
Join Alice as she travels to

Wonderland!

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Standard £12 | Child (under 16) £10 | Family ticket for 4 £40



Boy on the Roof



Vamos Theatre Wed 28 Feb - Thu 29 Feb

Created through Community Conversations across the UK, gathering people's experiences of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity (ADHD), loneliness, aging, hearing loss, connection and community, Vamos Theatre's Boy on the Roof is the story of an unlikely friendship, where acceptance, understanding and love find their way to centre stage.

Standard £17 | Concession £16 | Student £12

For the full programme:

www.tacchi-morris.com 01823414141

info@tacchi-morris

New Year's Day Food traditions around the world

New Year's Day is meant for fresh starts, but in many countries it also means eating special foods that have some kind of symbolic meaning. As the new year arrives around the world, special cakes and breads abound, as do long noodles (representing long life), field peas (representing coins), herring (representing abundance) and pigs (representing good luck)! In southern states of USA they eat a dish called **Hoppin' John**, this is a dish of pork-flavored field peas or black-eyed peas (symbolizing coins) and rice, frequently served with collards or other cooked greens (as they're the color of money) and cornbread (the color of gold). The dish is said to bring good luck in the new year. The dish has its roots in African and West Indian traditions and was most likely brought over by slaves to North America.

A fairly new tradition is found in many parts of Spain, it is called **Twelve Grapes**. The people of Spain traditionally watch a broadcast from Puerta del Sol in Madrid, where revelers gather in front of the square's clock tower to ring in the New Year. At the stroke of midnight, those out in the square and those watching at home they eat one grape for every toll of the clock bell. The custom began at the turn of the 20th century and was thought up by grape producers with a bumper crop!

Just before midnight on New Year's Eve, the Japanese eat soba noodles. The **Toshikoshi soba**, which

translates to a "year-crossing" buckwheat noodle dish, has lots of symbolism. The long noodle denotes the crossing from one year to the next. Since it's an easily cut noodle, it signifies a letting go of the past year's regrets—a cutting-off before the start the new year brings.

The tradition of a New Year's cake, often called **King Cake**, is one that is found around the world. The Greeks have the Vasilopita, the French the gâteau or galette des rois. Mexicans have the Rosca de Reyes and Bulgarians enjoy the banitsa.

Kransekage, meaning wreath cake, is a cake tower composed of many concentric rings of cake layered atop one another, and they are made for New Year's Eve and other special occasions in Denmark and Norway.

The cake is made using marzipan, often with a bottle of Aquavit in the center and can be decorated with ornaments, flags and crackers.



Kransekage



Tim's Tech Tips

Aye Aye, A.I.! Keeping an eye on you!

A.I. (or AI) It appears to have come out of nowhere in the last year. But what is it? *AI means machines can do things that people can do with their brains. For example, AI can help computers talk, choose, fix, or make new things. AI is not one thing, but many different ways and tools to help machines do different things. Some of the ways are machine learning, deep learning, and natural language processing. AI is in many things we use every day, such as chatbots, music apps, maps, and voice helpers. AI can make our lives better, but it also has some problems and dangers we need to think about.*



Now, cards on the table. I just used an AI computer program called ChatGPT to write the above text in this article, that is in italics. (Everything else is written by me, a real human!) AI, or Artificial Intelligence is a slightly concerning term to

describe new types of computer programs that attempt to emulate aspects of how humans think. Some concepts have been emulated quite well whilst others, presently at least, leave a lot to be desired. One of the tools available for the everyone to try out is called ChatGPT - not exactly the funkiest brand name ever invented. But nonetheless, it is very easy to use. (If you want to try it yourself, go to the website [bing.com](https://www.bing.com) and then click on the blue 'chat' icon). The idea with ChatGPT is that you ask real human-type questions. I posed this question: "Write me a 150-word summary on what AI is, for a non-technical adult audience." The first response, whilst quite succinct, still had too much technical jargon in it - but it was the right length. So, I then wrote back to ChatGPT "Write me simpler version of the last answer". The result is what you see in Italics above. Quite impressive! You could search Google for something on AI but you would then need to rewrite it yourself - possible reading multiple sources. ChatGPT is attempting to do that interpreting and combining for you. However, AI Picture Drawing is, ahem, somewhat experimental still. I asked ChatGPT "Draw me a simple diagram that represents AI in use." The first result wasn't what I wanted. So I said "Redraw the picture but with cartoon characters, to depict what AI is in 2023." Errr, the strange result is the image you see above! There are real concerns, of course, where this all leads. Worries over job losses, over reliance on machine-produced information that may be wrong, and on it goes. But AI is here, and already widely in use, and ChatGPT gives us early insights into how it works.



Tim's Tech Tips By Tim Finch
07514 059313, www.taunton.it

Taunton Deane's Tech Tips Column

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Cheddon & West Monkton Film Club



19th January: The Great Escaper (2023) 12A

(Drama): In 2014, near-nonagenarian Bernie Jordan (Michael Caine) is sad to miss out on an official group outing to the D-Day anniversary in France. Encouraged by wife Rene (Glenda Jackson), he sneaks out from his care home and goes on one last big adventure to cross the Channel, while reminiscing about his wartime experiences.

16th February: The Old Oak (2023) 15 (Drama):

The Old Oak is set in a small town near Durham, whose focal centre is the titular pub. Landlord TJ Bannatyne (Dave Turner) is struggling to stay afloat during economic uncertainty. As the film begins, the town, previously a mining community that has now plunged into poverty, faces rising tension when Syrian refugees are placed in local homes. While this is met with hostility by the locals, Bannatyne forges a relationship with Yara (Ebla Mari), one of the refugees, and her family, as they organize a food initiative to help the town community.

Cheddon Fitzpaine Memorial Hall

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

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

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Brittons Ash Community Hall (BACH)

Regular Bookings at the BACH

Mondays

9:45am to 11am	Yoga
1:15pm to 3:15pm	Art Group
3:30pm to 5:30pm	Primary Maths and English
7pm to 9pm	Table Tennis

Tuesdays

10:15am to 1pm	Age UK Group
5:15pm to 6:45pm	Yoga

Wednesdays

9:15am to 11:45	Yoga/Pilates
12:30pm to 2pm	Stay and Play Group
2pm to 4pm	Community Café
6pm to 7:30pm	Fitness Training
8pm to 10pm	Bathpool Buskers (only 2nd week of month)

Thursdays

10am to 12noon	Sewing Group
10:30am to 12 noon	Stay and Play Group
6:55pm to 8:15pm	Table Tennis

Fridays

9:30am to 10:45am	Yoga
11:15am to 12:15pm	Healthy Hearts
6:30pm to 11:00pm	Taunton Bridge Club

Saturdays

8:45am to 11:45am	Mini Dribblers
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Booking Officer:

Maggie Little

Tel: 01823 323662

Email:

bachbookings@westmonkton.net

West Monkton Village Hall Monkton Heathfield, TA2 8NE

Regular Bookings

Jittabugs

Mondays 13:45 – 14:45; 16:00 – 16:30;
16:30 – 17:30; and 17:45 – 18:45

Phoenix Camera Club

Mondays 19:00 - 21:00

Badminton

Tuesdays (Ladies) 14:00 - 15:00

Brownies

Tuesdays (except school holidays) 18:00 - 19:30

Pilates

Tuesdays 19:00 - 20:00

Monkton Players

Tuesdays (check 'What's On' for dates) 20:00 - 22:00

Sweaty Mama

Wednesday 9:30 - 10:45

Yoga

Wednesday 9:30 - 10:45

FunFit

Wednesday 18:00 - 19:00

Badminton

Wednesday (Mixed) 20:00 - 21:00

Flexercise

Thursday 9:30 - 10:30

Coffee Morning (Ladies & Gents)

Thursday 10:00 - 11:30

MNDA

Once a month on a Thursday 13:30 - 16:30

Afternoon Tea

Third Thursday of month 14:30 - 16:30

Bounce & Burn

Thursday 18:00 - 19:00

Monkton Evening WI

Fourth Thursday of month 19:15 - 21:25

Trams & Light Railways

Once a month on a Saturday 13:30 - 16:30

Hardy Plant Society

Once a month on a Saturday 9:30 - 13:00

Orchid Society

Once a month on a Sunday 14:00 - 17:00

'O' Gauge Model Railways

Quarterly on a Sunday 9:00 - 17:00

For more information please contact:

Ian Pitchfork Tel: 01823 412196

Email: ianpitchfork623@gmail.com

Village News:

Please forward information for the next edition to the **Editor:** Dawn Watts,
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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 March/April 2024 Village News is 1st February 2024

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

Gardening on the back page

Sitting watching the rain falling steadily, heavy grey skies straight overhead with no prospect of them moving for the rest of the day. A good day to catch up with seed orders maybe, or to plan a border re-jig, or even, for the first time ever, to get ahead of yourself and start your tax return?

Well, yes, all of those would be good but perhaps I can persuade you to pull on your water-proof jacket and wellington boots and to trudge out into the garden?

Looking at the garden in very wet weather can be instructive and can show you things you might otherwise struggle to see. The first thing is that it is immediately apparent where water sits and forms pools. These slight



It's raining, it's pouring



depressions or differences in the underlying soil are barely visible to the naked eye, but water shows them up. Then, armed with the knowledge, you have options. Do you want to change the soil to stop the gathering of water by eliminating the depressions, or, better, let that specific micro-climate guide your planting, making sure you choose something that doesn't mind getting wet feet in winter and, perhaps, enjoys a bit more moisture in summer, such as a Phlox or Hemerocallis (day Lily) for example and avoiding any things that hate winter wet such as Mediterranean herbs such as Lavender or Rosemary.



Once a small pond is established hours can be spent spotting pond skaters, whirlygig beetles and other wildlife!

Looking at the flow of water from the roofs and gutters also makes you aware of how much water is available for free. Diverting, even some of that water, into a pond or bog garden is a great idea for encouraging insect life and investing in a few water butts (the bigger the better) will give you off-mains access in dry times.

Tom Nielsen
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And Finally ...

Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I remember. Involve me and I learn.

Benjamin Franklin