



Village News

Issue No. 153
May - June 2025

Monkton Heathfield, West Monkton and Bathpool



*A Rare Visitor Juggling a Sultana!
See Pages 4 and 24*

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*March winds, April showers
bring forth May flowers!*

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

P.C.C Secretary: Sue Cleave - 07468608921

P.C.C Treasurer: David Cooke

Captain of Bellringers: Pearl Jeanes - 412804

Church Flower Organiser: Angela Dill - 412395

Benefice Office: Michele Hardiman - 01823 451257

Benefice Website: www.southquantockbenefice.org.uk

Parish Council Clerk: Amy Shepherd 07380912775

clerk@westmonktonparishcouncil.gov.uk

PC Community Clerk: Kate Welsh 07505984006

community@westmonktonparishcouncil.gov.uk

PC Chairman: Stuart Haskins 07824410997

stuarthaskins@westmonktonparishcouncil.gov.uk

Community Website: www.somersetccc.org.uk

Parish Council Website: www.westmonkton.net

Litter Hotline: 03003048000

West Monkton Primary School Head:

Helen Newstead - 01823 412582

Monkton Wood Academy 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).

WM Village Hall:

Telephone, incoming calls only - 01823 412068

Booking Officer: Ian Pitchfork Tel: 01823 412196

ianpitchfork623@gmail.com

Chairman: Ray Tully Tel: 01823 4252368

Vice Chairman: Vacant

BACH (Brittons Ash Community Hall)

Chairman: Barry Gage 07752723311

barrygage50@gmail.com

Booking Officer: Maggie Little 01823 323662

bachbookings@westmonktonparishcouncil.gov.uk

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.

Next meetings:

May 13th

Lunch at the Maypole 12:30pm

June 10th

Lunch at The Otter Garden Centre 12:30pm

Please could I have names for all the exciting events.

Ring Dianne Besley on 01823 412857 for more information or to book a place.

Everyone very welcome.

Dianne



Places to Meet for a Coffee

Community Cafe @ THE BACH

Wednesdays 2pm to 4pm

FREE but Donations welcome

Monkton Elm Garden Centre

Open: Monday to Saturday 9am to 5pm

Sunday 10am to 4pm

Tacchi Morris Arts Centre Cafe

Open: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday 5 -

7:30pm

Saturday 9:30 - 11am

Silvers Pantry, Prockters Farm

Tuesday to Saturday 9am to 3pm

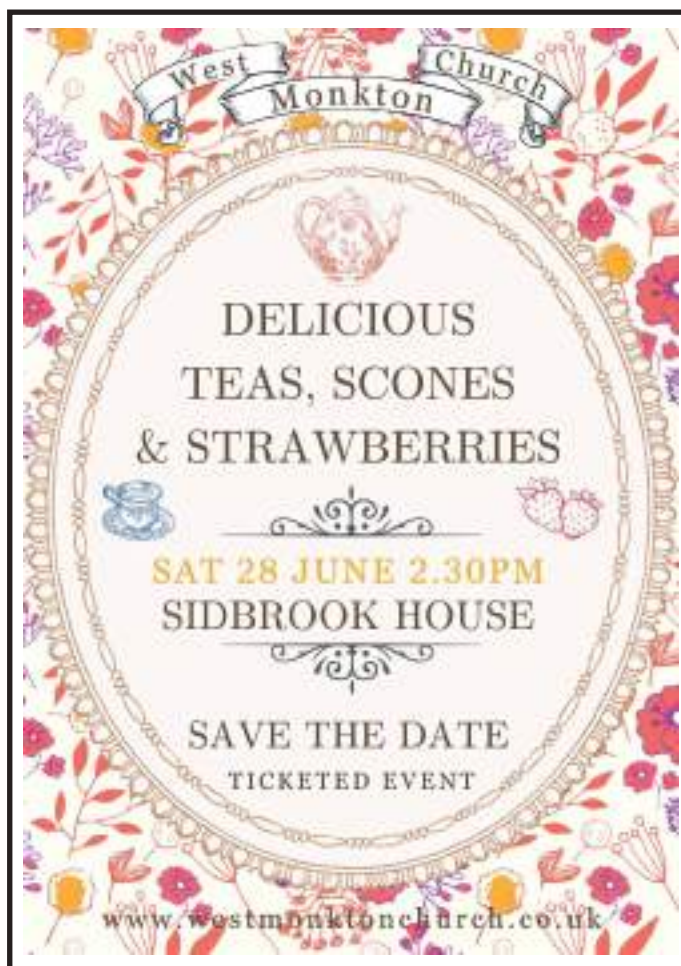
West Monkton Village Hall

Thursday 10am to 11:30am

Donations required

West Monkton Church

Coffee Morning - First Saturday of every month



Somerset Birds

In late February Carole Britton, a resident of Monkton Heathfield, noticed a strange bird among her feeders popular with the wintering Common Starlings. Fortunately for the many birders who subsequently saw the bird she was sufficiently intrigued to make on-line enquiries and the stranger was quickly identified as a first-summer Rose-coloured Starling. Although the bird was mobile in the green spaces and gardens around Bawler Road and Knight Close, with patience, most visitors (some from as far away as Devon and Cornwall) had, at least, satisfactory views and many obtained good photographs. (See Carole's article about her experience on the back page.)

Rose-coloured Starling is an interesting bird with behaviour and feeding habits similar to the familiar Common variety. It is a scarce but regular visitor to the U.K.

mostly in autumn. The majority are juveniles, unspectacular in appearance, being mostly grey brown but showing enough variation from the Common Starling to make identification possible given good views.

It is almost annual in Somerset, and doubtless some are missed among the thousands of visiting Starlings from eastern Europe and Scandinavia. A first winter bird like this one with a patchwork of



First summer Rose-coloured Starling



Adult Rose-coloured Starling

faded pink and grey black in the plumage is more unusual. At the time of writing, it may well have moved on, in the company of the rapidly diminishing flocks of

Common Starlings to the summer breeding sites. It will soon moult into adult plumage, this an unsullied piebald mix of rich pink and black. Then it really will be a 'Rose-coloured Starling.'

Although it has much in common with the regular Starling recent research has shown it to be not as closely related as once thought. For this reason, it has been placed in a scientific genus of its own *Pastor* with the Latin name *Pastor roseus*, reflecting its alternative, but now little used name, 'Rosy Pastor.'

This rare visitor has travelled far to reach Monkton Heathfield. Rose-coloured Starling breeds colonially from the Crimea and eastern Turkey

through Kazakhstan and into Asia. Isolated colonies occur in Bulgaria and Asia Minor. They breed, often in large numbers in holes, sometimes like Common Starlings under roof tiles and cavities in walls, but also in the company of other hole nesting species like Bee-eaters and Sand Martins. I once had the pleasure of seeing just such a colony in a sand quarry in eastern Bulgaria, quite a display of brilliance from the Starlings and the colourful Bee-eaters.

Rose-coloured Starling is an eruptive species. In summer it is very dependent on the myriads of Grasshoppers found in open grassland. Should this Grasshopper harvest fail, as it occasionally does, the birds are forced to move westwards, away from their home range, in search of food. This is when it is most likely that adult birds reach Europe and our shores. 2020 was just such a year, and one adult made it to Somerset, spending some days near Curry Rivel, typically in the company of local Common Starlings. Almost all Rose-coloured Starlings winter in northern India, but for poorly understood reasons some, a very few, head in the opposite direction. These tend to be inexperienced juveniles. The Monkton Heathfield bird may have been one of these and could have been around for some time, certainly enough time to moult into its first summer plumage. But for the curiosity and interest shown by Carole it may well have gone unnoticed, and unrecorded.

Closing with another interesting bird, May is the best time to see the secretive and elusive Bittern. This rare member of the heron family spends much of its time hidden in the reeds, although its booming call is heard during spring. Male Bitterns have a number of partners but take no part in rearing offspring. Females do all the hard work and, as they return to the nests with food, sightings are almost guaranteed. Ham Wall RSPB is the place to go.

Brian Hill



Bittern

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

Taunton Rugby Football Club - Our Local Rugby Team



It is very difficult to imagine what it was like to be living in 1875 as it is such a long time ago. But that was the year in which Taunton Rugby Club was formed when an enterprising gentleman named Jimmy Loveday hired Fullands rugby pitch and put together a Taunton RFC team to beat Weston-super-Mare. Since then as a result of hard work, enthusiasm and lots more hard work the club has gone from strength to strength and now sits proudly as one of the top 50 clubs in the country.

Most of the on field progress has taken place in this century and it may not be a coincidence that this success occurred after the club moved from Priory Park in 2001 to its superb purpose built home ground in Hyde Lane, Bathpool. In 2010 Taunton reached their then highest playing level by gaining promotion to National League 2, the fourth tier of English rugby. National League rugby was a big step up and Taunton struggled for a couple of seasons before putting in strong promotion challenges. Every season when they looked like gaining promotion there were always one or two teams that got the better of Taunton denying them promotion.

Then in 2019 it seemed that Taunton at last had a team to gain promotion. However just as Taunton looked like they were going to win the league, Covid arrived and the league season was halted. After a few months of uncertainty Taunton were declared champions and promoted to National League 1, their highest level in their history. Rugby resumed in the autumn of 2021 and Taunton spent three years battling it out against some of the giants of English rugby with the standard of play reaching new heights.

The third season was one season too far and the club were narrowly relegated despite winning their last four games. The club's target this season was win the league and get back to National League 1. The club have performed well this season and with

three matches left to play at the time of writing sit in third place in the league but the top two teams are so far clear of the rest that third is the best position Taunton can hope for.

Taunton suffered the loss of several key players at different stages of the season and it is to the credit of the current first team squad that the club is still comfortably situated near the top of the league. The home supporters have had excellent entertainment with only one defeat in their home fixtures and have been treated to plenty of exciting rugby. The most recent match at the time of writing was a win by 38 - 33 against Macclesfield who fought back from 31-7 down in the last 15 minutes. Real edge of the seat stuff with a sigh of relief as the final whistle blew to halt the comeback.

Last year the club held a Gala dinner to launch the 150 years celebrations with guest speakers as part of the entertainment. This year, being the 150th anniversary, there will be an another celebration dinner with a five course meal. The event will be held on 17th May and it is hoped that many local people will feel proud of the club's achievements, its longevity and its successes. Anyone wishing to attend should contact the club on 01823 336363.

See Invitation on Page 3

I feel sure that some Village News readers will have been persuaded to watch some of the club's matches so why not come and join in the celebrations for the great achievement of having played rugby for 150 years with many more years to come hopefully.

Robert Harris



Letter from Rev. Jim

In my early 20's I worked as a barman in a sea-side hotel on the west coast of France. I did 2 summer seasons, which was hard work but very enjoyable. There were 3 of us running the bar and we developed a competitive game whereby we tried to be the first to correctly guess the nationality of the punters as they came in. If we hadn't decided before they spoke, we generally considered that cheating and there were prizes and forfeits usually involving who cleaned the beer pumps at the end of the shift, so it was serious stuff.

English, French and German were usually a quick-spot; if we hesitated, we generally learned that they would turn out to be Dutch.

All of which leads me on to wonder if Christians are in any way identifiable – even before they speak. They say that 95% of communication is non-verbal, so what is the body-language of the body of Christ? Nationally the picture is pretty grim. But I'm not too worried about that. That's for the media and important people like bishops to sort out. That's not what affects the lives of most of us. Are our local churches – of all shades and stripes – witnessing to the unconditional love of God? Because that's the only thing that matters and that should be our main defining feature. So, at the very heart of our churches, we hope to focus on good relationships, a concern for the community and a sympathetic engagement with issues of the day. Let us know if we are not!

I'm sorry to report that the English in France were usually identified by their awful dress-sense. It would be a shame to think this might be the only way to spot a Christian today.

Jim Cox

South Quantock Benefice

office@southquantockbenefice.org.uk

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

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



Meditation Group

Start 4th June – 4 weeks

Thursdays 10.30am - 12noon

in West Monkton (address supplied)

Please contact the church office if you want to come along.

Tel Michele 01823 451257

or email office @southquantockbenefice.org.uk

From West Monkton Registers:

Funeral service in crematorium:

31.03.2025 Doreen Webber

Ashes interment in churchyard:

03.04.2025 Mavis Fouracre

Men's Group Meetings:

Wednesday 21st May

6:00pm Barbecue at David Langford's

Please book by 15th May through the Benefice Office 01823 451257

Wednesday 11th June

10:30am Pub Walk The Swan, Kingston St Mary (1pm for food)

Wednesday 2nd July

6:00pm Barbecue at Malcolm's

Please book by 28th June through the Benefice Office 01823 451257

Anyone welcome to come along to the group – contact Jim for more information and costs of each event : jimcox11@gmail.com

07967817337 or 01823802790

St Augustine's Church

100 Club Prizewinners

March

The draw was held on Thursday 13th March

First Prize: £102.00 won by Lesley Mildren

Second Prize: £51.00 won by Dawn Watts

The sum of £357.00 will go towards the church.

The number of £5.00 shares entered in the draw was 102.

April

The draw was held on Monday 1st April.

First Prize: £101.00 was won by Anonymous Winner

Second Prize: £50.50 was won by Julie Rucklidge.

The sum of £353.50 will go towards the church.

The number of £5.00 shares entered in the draw was 101.

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)

Ascension Day – 29th May

7:00pm United Benefice
Holy Communion Service
in
Kingston St Mary Church

Services

May

4th 3rd Sunday of Easter

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

11th 4th Sunday of Easter

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

18th May 5th Sunday of Easter

8:30am	BCP Communion	West Monkton
9:30am	Holy Communion	Cheddon F Paine
10:00am	Holy Communion	Kingston St Mary
10:00am	Morning Worship	West Monkton
11:00am	Holy Communion	Broomfield

25th 6th Sunday of Easter

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

Thursday 29th May Ascension Day

7:00pm	Ascension Day	Kingston St Mary
	HC - Benefice Service	

June

1st 7th Sunday of Easter

8:30am	BCP Communion	West Monkton
10:00am	Holy Communion	Kingston St Mary
10:00am	Morning Worship	West Monkton
6:00pm	Rogation Service	Broomfield

8th Pentecost

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

15th Trinity Sunday

8:30am	BCP Communion	West Monkton
9:30am	Holy Communion	Cheddon F Paine
10:00am	Morning Worship	West Monkton
10:00am	Holy Communion	Kingston St Mary
11:00am	Holy Communion	Broomfield

22nd 1st Sunday after Trinity

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

29th

8:30am	BCP Communion	West Monkton
10:00am	United Benefice Holy Communion	West Monkton

Taunton Deanery Evening Service:

Reflection in Word and Song

6:00pm - Sunday 11th May

at St. John's Church, Staplegrove





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 and publicised on Monkton Matters and our Facebook page.

If you aren't sure of the calendar of meetings, please check with the Clerk

(clerk@westmonktonparishcouncil.gov.uk) or

Assistant Clerk – Community

(community@westmonktonparishcouncil.gov.uk)

Annual Parish Meeting

Thank you to all those who attended the West Monkton Annual Parish Meeting that was held on 25th March at 7pm at Brittons Ash Community Hall. More than 45 members of our community attended the Annual Parish Meeting on 25th March during which some of the achievements of our community and the projects that the Parish Council has been working on were summarised. A copy of the presentation from the evening is available here:

<https://westmonktonparishcouncil.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Slides.pdf>

2024/25 Annual Report

The 2024/25 Annual Report is now available on the Parish Council website:

<https://westmonktonparishcouncil.gov.uk/parish-council/>

The document

summarises and celebrates what the Parish Council achieved during 2024/25 against the vision, aims, objectives and action plan outlined in the Parish Council's Strategic Plan. In addition, the Strategic Plan 2024-2027 has been reviewed and the Action Plan updated. The updated Strategic Plan is also available on the website via the link above.

Brittons Ash Community Hall (BACH)

The BACH is open for bookings aside from regularly booked 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@westmonktonparishcouncil.gov.uk).

Maidenbrook Country Park and The Somerset Wood Update



The Maidenbrook Country Park and Somerset Wood Lottery Funded Project is progressing well.

In addition to a new logo for Maidenbrook Country Park and Somerset Wood being designed and approved, a Facebook page has been created and the new website is now live www.maidenbrookcountrypark.org.uk. The website includes information about the park, events that are planned and the latest news. You can sign up for regular newsletters on the website too.

The design for the park signage has also been approved and an application has been submitted for advertising consent. Once consent has been achieved work to install the signage will commence.

Planning approval is awaited for a volunteer hub, toilets, benches, bins and pathways at the Country Park.

If you are interested in volunteering at the Country Park, please contact Candy Sundy, Volunteer Coordinator by email:

maidenbrookcountrypark@westmonktonparishcouncil.gov.uk we have lots of opportunities available.



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 \(monktonmatters.co.uk\)](https://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

Community Matters

The **Community Café** is open every Wednesday from 2pm until 3:30pm and is open to everyone in the community with free hot drinks and refreshments, the perfect place to catch up with friends or to meet new people. We have the **Knit and Crochet Group** join us most weeks. We also enjoy seeing the children and families that pop in after school for a hot chocolate each week. On the 3rd Wednesday of each month we run the **Repair Café**. 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.

We have also been running our **Loss and Bereavement Drop in Cafe** 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.

Our **Stay and Play Group** runs every Thursday at the BACH from 10:30am to 12noon. There is no charge for the group. This is an informal group which enables parents in our community to

meet other parents and gives little ones the opportunity to play. We accept donations for our café, repair café and stay and play via our QR code.



Youth Cafe

We run a Youth Café after school each Wednesday from 3:30pm until 5:30pm at the BACH. Here, secondary age young people can come for a range of donated foods from the community fridge and a hot drink. The young people form part of the planning for this group and we have a pool table, table tennis and craft activities which they enjoy. We will be inviting Y6 young people to attend after Easter from 3:30pm until 4:45pm to support them with their transition to secondary school, they will have the opportunity to chat with the older students about secondary school as well as socialise and have fun.

Mandy Cooper, our volunteer, completed her Youth Work Level 2 Training which involved over 40 hours of sessions and many more hours of independent study. Mandy has been instrumental in ensuring that we have all the correct policies and procedures in place as well as being dedicated to our young people and the values of youth work support. We would like to say a big thank you to Mandy for all her hard work.



OPERATION TRIBUTE - POPPY OF HONOUR

**THE GIFT THAT KEEPS ON GIVING
 THINKING OF A UNIQUE GIFT FOR YOURSELF OR
 A LOVED ONE!**

We are seeking donations in order that a Pavilion can be erected to house the POPPY OF HONOUR at Somerset Wood in the Maidenbrook Country Park in Taunton. When built it will become an official Commonwealth War Memorial. Visitors will be able to view Free of Charge.

The POPPY holds 1,117,635 individual remembrance poppies inside its encasement, representing the number of British and Commonwealth servicemen and servicewomen listed by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission as 'Killed in Action' or 'Missing in Action' together with those 'Shot at Dawn' then later pardoned and those who died from their wounds after the Armistice in WW1. You will have the unique opportunity to have yours or a loved one's name on a plaque. Businesses can also contribute. These will be placed near to the pavilion for all to view for perpetuity.

Minimum donations are £25 for a small plaque, £50 for a medium and £75 for a large plaque.

This operation will continue until funding is complete. For information is available via this link or by scanning the QR code.

<https://westmonktonparishcouncil.gov.uk/operation-tribute-poppy-of-honour/>



During the summer holidays we will be running the Summer Food Project on a Wednesday and Thursday between 12noon and 2pm. The young people will help to prepare food to share with the community at the BACH Café. We have received funding from Hubbub to run this project again.

HYPE (Hestercombe Youth Project Evolving)

Hestercombe Local Community Network (LCN) meet regularly to discuss common issues and Children and Young People have been one of the top priorities for this LCN. A steering group has been meeting for sometime to look at provision for young people which has led to some initial funding for consultation with young people. Following this initial research West Monkton Parish Council applied for funding from SALC (Somerset Association of Local Councils) for a youth project on behalf of the Hestercombe LCN. This application was successful, and we are now able to extend our research to provide the 'Boombox', see poster below. The Boombox is a Youth Club on wheels and will be going out into our communities until August. We will be promoting the existing provisions during these sessions as well as looking at what else young people want going forward, with a view to planning provision from August onwards.

Companion Support

Our Companion Volunteer has been visiting those in our local community who are isolated to offer them some company through a cuppa and a chat. Our volunteer has an enhanced DBS check as well as first aid and safeguarding training.

If you know of anyone in the parish who would benefit from a visit from time to time, please let us know.

'Keep our Parish Tidy' 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 interested in getting involved.

We also have a group of graffiti removal volunteers, their work has had a really positive impact with much less graffiti in the parish.

With the unity authority now looking to delegate powers to the parish council, they have set up some volunteer training for those who might be interested in helping keep the parish tidy. If you are interested in helping by clearing weeds off the kerbs or tidying up hedges and other smaller tasks around the parish, please get in touch.

HYPE
FOR AGES 11+

BOOM BOX - COMING TO A SPACE NEAR YOU!
SCHOOL HOLIDAYS TIMETABLE

BRITTONS ASH COMMUNITY CENTRE (BACH)
MONKTON HEATHFIELD
TUESDAYS 2PM TO 4PM

SOMERSET BRIDGE PRIMARY SCHOOL
NORTH DETHERTON
WEDNESDAYS 1.30PM TO 3.30PM

GREECH RECREATION GROUND
WEDNESDAYS 4.45PM TO 6.45PM

STARTS
WEEK OF 14TH APRIL 2025
INCLUDES MAY HALF TERM
AND SUMMER HOLIDAYS



are sowing and planting now to prepare for the summer's harvest. The team are also working with the school and young people from the Youth Café to grow, plant and build bug houses. The team could really do with some additional regular volunteers going forward so if you are interested, please get in touch.

Community Events Spring/Summer Events

- *VE Day – Beacon Lighting**
Thursday 8th May, 5pm to 10pm
- *Somerset Day – Picnic**
Saturday 10th May, time 12 noon to 4pm
- *Falklands Commemoration Get Together**
Saturday 24th May, 11am
- Share Event at BACH**
Saturday 28th June at 12 noon
- *FunFest – Joint Parishes Event**
Saturday 12th July, 12 noon to 10:30pm
- *St Giles Dog Show**
Sunday 10th August, 11am to 4pm
- *VJ Day**
Friday 15th August, details TBC
- *Maidenbrook Country Park Open Day**
Saturday 6th September, details TBC

*At Maidenbrook Country Park and Somerest Wood

Community Fridge

We continue to collect from our regular supermarkets including our local Coop stores, Aldi, Lidl, M&S plus a few others. Our volunteers give up their time to collect, clean and keep the sheds tidy and between them manage to keep the fridge open every day of the year! We very much appreciate the teamwork it takes to keep this fantastic provision going.

We are also happy to accept donations of books and uniform but please do not leave any other items.

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.

To purchase lottery tickets go to www.somersetwestlottery.co.uk

Community Garden

Thanks to all the volunteers for keeping the garden running through the winter. Now Spring is here we have plenty of work to do. The team

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 prize pot.

Community Quiz Dates:

- Wednesday 23rd April at 7:30pm
- Wednesday 21st May at 7:30pm
- Wednesday 25th June at 7:30pm

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. Please contact Kate Welsh, Assistant Clerk for Community at community@westmonktonparishcouncil.gov.uk or call on 07505984006 for more information.

Rethinking Funeral Traditions: Personalised Farewells

The traditional funeral service, often held in a church or at the crematorium, has been a longstanding practice for bidding farewell to our departed loved ones. However, did you know that you have the freedom to break away from these conventions? In recent times, there has been a



growing trend towards more personalised and unique funeral ceremonies that celebrate the life and memories of the deceased in diverse and meaningful ways.

Breaking the Mould: Contrary to popular belief, there is no one-size-fits-all approach. The conventional church service or a set time at the crematorium is just one option among many. And it may be the right one for you but do make an informed choice. Families can now explore alternatives that better reflect the personality, interests, and wishes of the departed soul.

Celebrating Life at Unique Venues. Consider hosting the ceremony at a venue that held significance for the deceased. Choosing a location that resonates with their life story can add a personal touch to the farewell. Unlike the traditional 30-minute timeframe often allocated at crematoriums, families can opt for a more relaxed

schedule. You can have your loved one there or not, the choice is yours.

Personalised Ceremonies. Customise the funeral ceremony to reflect the unique qualities of the departed loved one. Incorporate elements that highlight their passions, hobbies, or cultural background. This could involve showing their artwork, playing their favourite music, or a themed event that captures their spirit.

Ceremonies Beyond Time Constraints. Extended ceremonies allow for a more unhurried and intimate gathering, providing friends and family with ample time to share memories, stories, and support one another. You can also all stay and have refreshments in the same place afterwards.

Direct Cremation. This is an alternative where the body is cremated but the ceremony takes place somewhere else. While this approach may initially seem unconventional, it offers families so much more flexibility to plan a fitting ceremony without time constraints.

Conclusion: By exploring unconventional venues,



personalising ceremonies, extending time frames, and embracing technology, we can reshape the way we say goodbye to our dear ones. In doing so, we honour their memory in a manner that is both meaningful and true to their unique journey through life.

Who can help? You can discuss the options open to you with a celebrant before you speak to a funeral director or after. This could also be towards the end of someone's life. That way the person whose life you will be celebrating will have a say in their ceremony, so you will have the comfort of knowing it is just as they would wish it to be.

So, the next time you find yourself faced with the task of planning a funeral, remember that there are no hard and fast rules – only the opportunity to create a meaningful tribute that reflects the essence of the one we've lost.

*Jackie Aldrich and Deb Stodgell,
JustCeremonies.co.uk
hello@justceremonies.co.uk*



West Monkton Evening Women's Institute

Hi everyone

Definitely showing signs that spring is on its way ... blue skies although still a little chilly, with daffodils and other spring bulbs popping up ... love it! Now is the time to start thinking about your holidays and breaks away this year, or even, what plans you have to spruce up your gardens and it even gives you a little enthusiasm to get out the paintbrushes! Paul Frost came along from Taunton Deane Bowling Club and talked to us about the club and how we can get involved. Hopefully we can arrange a taster session in the future for some of our ladies. Sadly our main speaker for February let us down at the very last minute so we had to put a Plan B in operation - one of our members brought along some floor games and it really was great fun, members were split into three teams, which enabled everyone to have a go and to have a good laugh and natter at the same time – nicely finishing the evening off with tea/coffee and some homemade cake.

We have lots to look forward to during the year, our Quiz is later in March, we hold a regular monthly Book Club, and now that the weather is improving we are starting our Walking Group again. We are arranging a trip to the Sculptural

Lakes in Dorchester in July for our members, which we are all looking forward to, and lots of great speakers for the rest of the year.

We have been asked by the Parish Council to provide light refreshments for the VE Day celebrations which are taking part at Maidenbrook Country Park, hope to see a lot of you there, it should be a great evening.

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. We have some very interesting speakers lined up for 2025/2026, so if you require any more information just ring me, Shirley Hector, on 01823 619084 and I would be pleased to help with any questions. We meet on the FOURTH Thursday of each month (other than July when we hold our annual summer outing and August) at 7:30pm in the Heathfield Hall, West Monkton Village Hall.

2025 Programme:

May: AGM **PLUS** 'Treading the Wards'
June: Anna Reed with her Owls
July: No meeting – Outing to Sculptural Park in Dorchester
August: No meeting

Shirley Hector
Monkton Evening WI

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**Andy Ford's Flippin World
Tour of the West Country
Sat 10 May, 7:30pm**

Batten down the hatches!!! Andy Ford is back on the road again to celebrate his 56th year in this business we call Show!! The now Legendary Panto and Comedy Star embarks on a flippin' crazy tour of his beloved and native West Country.

Adults £19 / Child (12-16yrs) £16

Age Guidance: 12+yrs, some more mature themes/language

**SPACEFest: Monument to Childhood
Wed 14 May & Thu 15 May, 7pm**

The Year 2 SPACE Company present: 'Monument to Childhood', as part of SPACE Fest 2025. Using common childhood experiences to create bespoke dance theatre movement, the company explore themes such as playground games, bullying and friendship.

Adult £10 / Concession £9 / Student £9

**The Detective Dog
Sun 18 May, 2:30pm**

Tiny & Tall Productions present an accessible and imaginative adaptation of Julia Donaldson's award winning book, The Detective Dog, featuring puppetry, song and magical scent technology, bringing the story alive on stage for audiences of all ages.

With British Sign Language, creative captions and spoken English, this engaging production celebrates books and the magic of reading in an inclusive and accessible performance.

For ages 3 to 10!

Adult £12 / Child £10 / Family of 4 (Max 2 Adults) £40

**Max Fulham – Work in Progress
Sat 7 Jun, 7:30pm**

Max Fulham is coming to Tacchi-Morris with an evening of never-before-seen nonsense. Having amassed millions of online views with his signature brand of stand-up, Max is an act who's catapulting ventriloquism into the 21st century and is not to be missed! Expect talking ham, malfunctioning self-service checkouts, and an inner monologue that just can't be kept inside anymore...

Adult £13 / Child (12-16) £11

Age Guidance: 12+yrs

Mettle

Fri 13 Jun, 7:30pm

Award-winning solo performer Nicholas Collett (British Arrows Best Actor, Special Performance Award World Duo Festival, Seoul South Korea, Best Theatre Award Adelaide Fringe 2023) tells the story

of his father's service during the Atlantic Convoys of World War Two.

Adult £16 / Concession £15 / Student £12

Guidance: Strong themes – Subject matter is WWII

**The Time Machine
Sat 14 Jun, 2:30pm**

A hilarious, family-friendly mash-up of the vintage Science-Fiction stories of **H G Wells**.

We wanted to call the show...

**The Shape Of The War Of The Invisible Time
Machine Man Of The Worlds To Come!**

...but we didn't have room on the poster.

Adult £10 / Child (Under 16) £8 |

**Billy Watman
Thu 19 Jun, 7:30pm**

Classically trained at the prestigious Royal College of Music in London, and playing since the age of just 6, Billy is an award winning Anglo-Brazilian instrumental guitarist.

Inspired by Rodrigo y Gabriela, Tommy Emmanuel & Mike Oldfield, his musical style and Latin roots fuse the genres of Flamenco & Classical with Rock & Pop.

Adult £17 / Concession £15 / Student £10

**The Big Yellow Tambourine Man Band
Fri 20 Jun, 7:30pm**

Joni Mitchell and Bob Dylan are both ranked in Rolling Stone's 'Top Ten Singer-Songwriters of All Time' and their legacy is honoured in this stunning tribute, 'The Big Yellow Tambourine Man Band'. With unrivalled musical authenticity this multi-instrumentalist five-piece covers all the hits including 'Like a Rolling Stone', 'Both Sides Now', 'Blowin' in the Wind', and 'Big Yellow Taxi'. The band is fronted by Bob Thomson and Isabelle Nutton as Bob and Joni.

Adult £23, Concession £21

**The Family Magic Show
Presented By The Great Baldini
Sat 28 Jun, 2:30pm**

The Great Baldini is a magical legend, a relic of the music halls and a theatrical performer of the old school. Known the world over as 'The Emperor of Illusion', 'The Prince of Prestidigitation', and 'The Maharajah of Mystery', he is a hugely entertaining stage magician. Baldwin, the magical dog, is his faithful companion.

A Joyously silly romp. Guaranteed to have children (and parents) screaming with laughter.

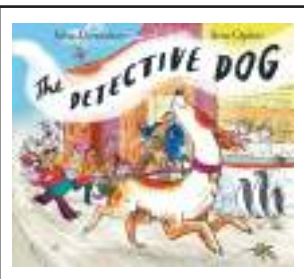
Adult £13.50 / Child (under 16yrs) £9.50

Age Guidance: Suitable for ages 3+ (children under 3 may be admitted)

**For information about these or any other of the
March/April events go on line, ring or visit the Box
Office at Tacchi-Morris.**

www.tacchi-morris.com

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**Taunton Film Society
@ The SPACE**



9th May All We Imagine as Light
India 2024 Cert: 15 1 hour 55 minutes



This is an absorbing study of three nurses in modern-day Mumbai and it is a glorious film. The light, the lives, and the textures of contemporary, working-class Mumbai are explored and celebrated by writer/director Payal Kapadia, who won the Grand Prix at last year's Cannes Film Festival for her revelatory fiction feature debut. The film alights on moments of connection and heartache, hope and disappointment. There is a freshness and emotional clarity in the film, an enriching humanity and gentleness which coexist with fervent, languorous eroticism and finally something epiphanic in the later scenes and mysterious final moments.

13th June Agent of Happiness
Bhutan 2024 Documentary Cert: 12A
1 hour 34 minutes

In Bhutan, they measure progress not just by GDP, but also Gross National Happiness. This quiet, gently absorbing documentary follows two "happiness agents" as they travel door-to-door, like census workers, collecting data for the government's happiness survey. There are 148 questions in total. Do you own a tractor? Goats? What about chickens? When was the last time you cried? Do you trust your neighbours? The agent compiles the answers into a table and

crunches the data into an individual happiness score of between 0 and 10.

Really, this is a film that quietly, intimately observes the lives of ordinary people. Co-directors Arun Bhattarai and Dorottya Zurbó are not interested in analysing the Gross National Happiness index, whether it's a gimmicky stunt or if the government meaningfully translates it into policy.

It's gorgeously shot with much food for thought.



To find out more visit: www.tauntonfilmsociety.com



We are entering a Brave New World. You can hardly avoid the rise of artificial intelligence or AI. AI systems are very clever 'computer



programs' that can simulate conversation and some level of creativity. And it's coming to a PC or Mac near you. Many readers will be using Microsoft Word, Excel and PowerPoint software on their computers. Most people pay for this software through an annual subscription called Microsoft 365. Hitherto, this has cost £59 for 'Microsoft 365 Personal' or £79 for the 'Family' version.

But Microsoft have recently hiked the price up the massively. 'Personal' will now be £85 a year and 'Family' a whopping £105. The reason for these price increases? The inclusion of the recently created "Copilot AI". You see, the problem with AI is that it takes huge computing power in these massive server centres. It eats electricity for breakfast and that electricity has to be paid for.

So, if you do nothing, your next annual renewal for renting the 365 package will automatically increase. There are some benefits to Copilot AI - although I would maintain that is predominantly in a business environment. I write this column for home users of computers and I'm less convinced that Copilot has genuine daily use.

Good news! You can actually downgrade your subscription to what they are now calling 'Microsoft 365 Personal CLASSIC' and 'Family CLASSIC'. Guess what? These new classic- named packages - which are not advertised on their main website - are the packages you are currently using at £59 and £79 respectively - without the new Copilot AI functionality.

Even if you're months away from the automatic renewal, you can log into your Microsoft Account, choose the option to Cancel Plan and then you're offered to 'downgrade' to one of the Classic plans - i.e. stick with what you've always paid for. Then when your next renewal comes around you will simply pay the same price as you paid last time.

If you have recently renewed at the higher price, you will have to contact Microsoft via a chat system in order to get them to revert you to the lower plan.

As a marketing ploy, this move by Microsoft to increase everybody's subscription by such a substantial amount, to pay for new AI features many don't need, is an underhand cash grab.

You have to act to stand still, on this one. Some would say that isn't very intelligent!



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6:55pm to 8:15pm	Table Tennis

Fridays

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

Saturdays

8:20am to 10:20am	Mini Dribblers
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Booking Officer:

Maggie Little
 Tel: 01823 323662
 Email:
bachbookings@westmonktonparishcouncil.gov.uk

FREE ITEMS/ITEMS FOR SALE/WANTED

Items up to £100 in value are included. We do not make any charge for the service and take no responsibility for the quality or safety of the items advertised.

- 3 unopened rolls of Laura Ashley wallpaper. The design is called 'Josette Seaspray' and is a pale blue/grey with white floral pattern. FREE

01823 413997

If you would like to include something in this section please contact Dawn Watts on dawnwattsdk@yahoo.co.uk or on 01823412201

- If you rang with details of 3 items for sale, one being a drone, and you still want to sell the items please contact me again.

Garage Sale

Garage sale of mainly tools, and some 'stuff' needing a good home.

Saturday 10th May @ 10.00am until 12 noon.

Tanglewood, West Monkton, TA28QZ.
 What3words:///bleak.scoop.fact"

West Monkton Village Hall Monkton Heathfield, TA2 8NE Regular Bookings

Jittabugs (Main Hall)

Mondays	Ballet & Boogie	13:45 - 14:45
	Dance Cirque 4-8 yrs	16:00 - 16:30
	Dance Cirque 9+ yrs	16:30 - 17:30
	Teens Dance Cirque	17:45 - 18:45

Sewing Club (Schofield Room)

Mondays	18:15 - 20:45
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Pilates (Main Hall)

Mondays	19:30 - 20:30
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Phoenix Camera Club (Heathfield Hall)

Mondays	19:30 - 21:30
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Pilates (Heathfield Hall)

Tuesdays	09:15 - 10:15
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Over 60's Exercise Club

Tuesdays	09:30 - 10:30
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Badminton (Main Hall)

Tuesdays - Ladies	14:00 - 15:00
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Wednesdays - Mixed	20:00 - 22:00
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Brownies (Main Hall)

Tuesdays (except school holidays)	18:00 - 17:30
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Taunton Table Tennis Club (Heathfield Hall)

Tuesdays - Adults	19:30 - 21:00
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Fridays - Children	18:00 - 19:30
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Saturdays - Mixed	10:00 - 11:30
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Monkton Players (Main Hall)

Tuesdays & Thursdays	20:00 - 22:00
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Music With Mummy (Schofield Room)

Wednesdays	09:15 - 10:30
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Yoga (Main Hall)

Wednesday	09:30 - 10:45
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U3A Bridge Club (Schofield Room)

Wednesdays (except first in month)	14:00 - 16:00
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Fitness 4 Fun (Main Hall)	18:00 - 19:00
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Wednesdays	18:30 - 20:30
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Puppy Training (Heathfield Hall)

Thursdays	09:30 - 10:30
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Coffee Morning (Heathfield Hall)	10:00 - 11:30
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Tai Chi (Heathfield Hall)	14:00 - 15:00
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Thursdays (except fourth in the month)	14:00 - 16:00
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MNDA (Heathfield Hall)	19:15 - 21:15
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Fourth Thursday in month	13:30 - 17:30
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Monkton Evening WI (Heathfield Hall)	18:30 - 21:30
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Third or fourth Thursday of the month	10:00 - 11:00
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Art Club (Schofield Room)	13:30 - 16:30
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Fridays	09:15 - 12:45
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Puppy Training (Main Hall)	14:00 - 15:30
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Fridays	10:00 - 12:30
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Art Class (Schofield Room)	14:00 - 17:00
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Saturdays	09:00 - 17:00
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Trams & Light Railways (Schofield Room)	
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Saturday - Once a month	
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Hard Plant Society (Main Hall)	
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Saturday - Once a month	
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Capoeira Brazilian Martial Arts (Heathfield Hall)	
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Sundays	
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SGL Buddhists (Heathfield Hall)	
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Second Sunday of the month	
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Southwest Orchid Society (Heathfield Hall)	
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Second Sunday of the month	
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'O' Gauge Model Railways (Main Hall)	
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Quarterly on a Sunday	
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Telephone: Ian Pitchfork - 01823 412196

Email: westmonktonvillagehall@gmail.com

Website: www.westmonktonvillagehall.net

A Rare Visitor

Being a wildlife photographer in my spare time and having had this hobby for approximately 7 years, I have picked up a certain amount of knowledge about wildlife and birds. I particularly love birds and when we moved into our house in Monkton Heathfield in November 2024 I was keen to install various bird feeders to see what species I could attract to the garden.



On Thursday 27th February I was sat in my lounge having a nice cup of tea after work when I noticed a bird fly down into my garden. It looked like a Starling, but the colours were different, although difficult to tell as it was late afternoon and the bird was on the floor in the shadows. I did not want to scare it off by moving closer to the patio doors, so took a few photos of it through the glass of the patio doors.

I put the somewhat dull pictures up on a social media page called Somerset Wildlife Photography as I knew there were quite a few people on the site who knew a lot more about birds than I did. I was feeling a little embarrassed that the photos were so bad, but immediately people were messaging me and telling me that I had a Rose-coloured Starling in my garden. I had heard of the Rose-coloured Starling, but had

never seen one and really did not expect to see one either, let alone have one drop into my garden!

I was keen to find out more about the Rose-coloured Starling and discovered it is a scarce visitor to the UK, they breed from Turkey and Ukraine east to Mongolia and winter in India. The RSPB report there are on average only 100 sightings of them in the UK each year, and they are usually spotted within flocks of Starlings. This bird was identified as being a first year male.

The sighting generated a lot of interest from bird watchers and photographers who all wanted to see this bird, but I had no idea whether it would return or not. However, the next day he flew down into the garden again and I discovered he was attracted by the sultanas that I put out every day for the Blackbirds. He also liked the fat balls hanging in the garden. He became a daily visitor to my garden, some days visiting up to 8 times. Word soon spread about the location of the bird and we began noticing lots of people with long camera lenses and binoculars at the bottom of our garden, which was a little disconcerting, however I knew they were not in fact looking into our house, but searching the shrubs and trees for sightings of the rare visitor.



Being a wildlife photographer, I own a chair hide so I set it up in the garden so that I could take better photos of the bird and also set up some suitable perches for him. One was an old wooden-handled spade and another was a piece of branch that I found whilst out walking my dog. I would place a little bit of fat ball on both perches and it was not long before the Rose-coloured Starling found them.



A few friends came to visit me who are also wildlife photographers to see if they could get photos of the bird too and, to my relief, he appeared for all of them. We were hoping that he would stay until the summer because their full plumage comes in then and they are truly beautiful, unfortunately that does not appear to be the case as, just over 3 weeks since he first appeared, the Rose-coloured Starling has not been spotted since Friday 21st March, so it would appear he has sadly now moved on.

I feel extremely privileged that this rare visitor chose my garden to visit and I do miss seeing him, but it was a wonderful experience.

Text and Photos by Carole Britton

Village News:

Please forward information for the next edition to the **Editor:** Dawn Watts, Tel. 01823 412201 dawnwattsdk@yahoo.co.uk
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 July/August 2025 Village News is 1st June 2025.