

The Cleobury Clarion

ONLY FOR THE BRAVE

It's a measure of local newsletters like this that the correspondents who bring fresh news and views every month can take a careful look at a trend that pleases the well informed and puzzles the less informed by trying to explain what it's all about.

Nigel Reid, best known in Clarion circles for his 'Let's Beat the Scammers' page that has helped a number of readers avoid attempted robbery, takes a look at Artificial Intelligence, AI for short, this month. On Page 11 is the first instalment in a short series that will examine and report what the latest idea in communication is all about and possibly what to avoid if he can smell something nasty in offers to we innocents. When sending this first report, Nigel did say he was going to pass it to someone with more knowledge and if they were critical of what he's written, he'd ask for it to be withdrawn. No news on that question means good news in bringing you what he finds.

THE CLEOBURY NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

On March 21st, at a meeting of the full Shropshire Council, it was agreed to accept the Cleobury Mortimer Neighbourhood Plan. Which means that the Plan for which the majority of interested local voters showed agreement in the referendum held on December 7th 2023, will form part of the Development Plan for Shropshire.

The Plan will be used to help decide planning applications in the area. If you want to read the Plan and its associated documents it is available on the Council's website at: Cleobury Mortimer Neighbourhood Plan | Shropshire Council.

The actual turnout for the referendum was modest, to say the least, but democracy has to be seen to operate, even if it does not make headline news or exciting reading. Our Town Council and other interested locals worked hard to get our influence heard and we owe them a debt of gratitude.

BROOME PARK FARM B&B IN THE AWARDS AGAIN

Catherine Evans writes:

At the West Midlands Tourism Awards, held at the Bear Grylls Adventure Centre in Birmingham, Broome Park Farm B&B were shortlisted in two categories - Best Small Serviced Accommodation and Best Ethical, Responsible and Sustainable Business. Against stiff competition we were thrilled to receive the Bronze Award for serviced accommodation and Silver in the sustainable business category, reflecting our commitment to caring for the environment whilst delivering the best service possible.

What great news this is, a working farm here in rural Shropshire wins two awards in a competition that included big names and bigger budgets than the Evans family could ever dream of.

As Catherine very succinctly put it: "Not bad for our little B&B"

There's a lesson for every small business in this news - if you're small you can be very beautiful.



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The new staircase to the Parish Church bell chamber.
See Page 17



The Pignose Pippin Gallery.
See Page 19.



The common grass snake, which Linda Iles knows is harmless. See Page 21.

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GARDENING CLUB

A very topical subject for our April meeting, "Climate Change Gardening." The appropriately titled David Cropp will be giving us the benefit of his knowledge on this subject.

David trained at Pershore, as did so many of our local speakers. He retired from teaching about 10 years ago, manages three allotments and also enjoys travel and bellringing. He has written a book too, "The Lost Gardener"

Remember to bring along a flower for the flower of the month competition. You have to be in it to win it! Come armed too with your magazines to swap.

We look forward to seeing you on Wednesday 24th April.

Judith Lawson

DOG FOULING

A large number of residents have shown concern when completing a Neighbourhood Matters Survey about members of the public allowing their dogs to foul public spaces and not clearing it up.

Below is an extract from the Shropshire council website:

Dog owners are required by law to clean up after their dog; failure to do so can result in a fixed penalty notice being issued or possible prosecution. Dog waste should be disposed of in the appropriate manner, either by using our dog or litter bins or by taking it home and disposing of it in your black refuse bin.

Please use the below link for further information or to

report dog fouling to the council.

[Dog fouling | Shropshire Council](#)

*Stephen Dunn-Brown
(West Mercia Police, Senior
Police Community Support
Officer*

THE REGAL FOLK FESTIVAL

The Regal in Tenbury Wells does keep coming up with new names and ideas. The latest is their first Folk Festival, from the 16th to the 20th this month.

Daoiri Farrell opens the event on Tuesday the 16th at 8.00, an acclaimed singer and guitarist with a Radio 2 Folk Award amongst his credits.

Thursday the 18th sees George Boomama with support from Dan Williams adding to his following who like his poetic lyricism. Start time is again 8.00.

Grey Wolf is an old time Americana folk-rock band with a wide range of instruments and songs to please you on Friday 19th, at 8.00

And to round out the week, on Saturday 20th, The 4 Of Us and Smith and Brewer combine their talents that have earned them acclaim. Two duos, two albums; be prepared to buy. 8.00 start, of course!

A DOUBLE QUIZ NIGHT

Unusual, to say the least. On April 27th, Corley Memorial Hall will be offering a Double Quiz Night with two Quiz Masters. It starts at 7.30, with teams of up to six players, or make up your number on the night. You take your own

glasses and drinks and pay £10 on the night, which includes a Ploughman's Supper. All profits and a raffle in aid of the Hall funds. Make your reservations on 01584 891320 or 891285 and 07973 549921.

Sounds like a good night, so long as you're not as confused as the editor is.

GOLF CLUB QUIZ NIGHT

These are proving popular and the next one is on Friday the 12th; gather at 7.00 for a 7.30 start. Play is for teams of four, at £10 a head that includes supper. The contact for booking a place is Mike at catering@cleoburygolfclub.com

The Footpath Association AGM and Annual Dinner will be held at the Club on April 6th. This is one of those really friendly events that gatherings of enthusiasts with a common interest always develop. All the mud and rain of past months will be forgotten and good stories swapped.

IAN CASEY SINGS

**Friday 26th April, 7.00 for
7.30pm**

After a successful evening last September in St Mary's, Ian Casey returns – this time to the Parish Hall – for an evening of cabaret, singing in the genre of Frank Sinatra, Tony Bennet, Matt Monro, Neil Diamond et al.

Tickets at £15, including a two-course dinner, are available from Gabby Franklin on 01299 271713, or www.cleoburyparishhall.uk/cabaret. Bar, including



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CLEOBURY W.I.

Our February Winter Warmer lunch was a great success, with around 50 lunches served, despite the miserable weather! We were happy to welcome WI members from Neen Savage and Kinlet, along with many members of the local community.

Everyone who joined us for the Kidderminster Carpet Museum visit found it an interesting morning. We were greeted with tea/coffee, then after a talk on the history of the town, we were able to browse the displays, watch demonstrations and enjoy hands-on activities.

Patchwork sessions continue, learning a different pattern each session. Members are also involved in knitting blankets for the Tiny Tots group which meets in the Parish Hall. We still need a few more knitters/crocheters to help with this project, so if you can help, please contact Sue Kershaw for further information.

March marked the close of another busy WI year. The Annual General Meeting began with a 'bring and share' supper, with a review of 2023/24, a financial report and the election of the team that will lead next year. We welcomed Sally Serrell-Cook as a new team member and Judy was voted as President again. However, we shall be looking for a new President in 2025, as Judy has decided it will be time to step down after more than 10 years in the role. Fran outlined what promises to be an interesting programme of events for the coming year. Subs of £40 are now due and can be paid on-line, by cheque or cash.

Dates for April:

Wednesday 3rd April 10.30am - Centenary Garden tidy up. Bring gloves and tools! Help welcomed and gratefully received.

Tuesday 9th April 7.30pm in the Market Hall - A highly recommended talk on Communication Skills (members only)

Friday 26th April 10.30am - Morning coffee and chat for members at the Colliers Arms. Please let us know if you need a lift!

Further ahead: Monday 20th May we have been invited to Cleobury Mortimer Bowls Club for a taster session. More details to follow.

For further information or to join WI, you are welcome to contact Judy 01299 270983 or email judysant10@gmail.com. Check out our Facebook page!

Val Sniadowski

OPEN GARDENS AT NEEN VIEW

Ian and Chris Ferguson will be opening their gardens at Neen View twice in May - the 8th and 15th, from noon until 5.00 each day. It's located at the bottom end of the Live and Let Live carpark and admission will be £5.00 a head, with proceeds going to the National Garden Scheme. The Scheme is a well established supporter of cancer charities.

Di at the Live and Let Live will provide hot drinks and home made cakes, with those proceeds also going to the charity. It's just a lovely spot from which you can look out across the valley and be reminded what a beautiful county ours is.

MAY COFFEE MORNING

Stottesdon and Cleobury Hospice Support Group COFFEE MORNING

at 8 Catherton Close, Cleobury Mortimer, home of Shaunah Murrell.

On Saturday May 25th, 10.00 to 12.00 noon. Coffee & Cake £3.00 Home made Cakes & Savouries for sale plus raffle.

FLICKS IN THE STICKS

In this very funny, outrageous and brilliant murder/love story, Walter Matthau plays a total narcissist whose love of 'life at the top' leads to financial ruin. Taking a loan from his uncle, but having to agree to outrageously high interest, he sets out to marry a woman of tremendous wealth, but with a secret plot to set himself free after a short interval, by 'disposing' of her. He settles on Henrietta (Elaine May) who gives the expression 'wallflower' new meaning. Things don't work out as he plans and they end up facing the future together.

Saturday 20 April, 7.30pm. Bar, tea and coffee. Tickets £5.

Christian Aid week Garden supper

GARDEN SUPPER

On Friday 17th May from 6.30 to 10.30pm the garden at Swan House, 10 Church St. Cleobury Mortimer will host a supper in support of Christian Aid. The evening will include cheese and wine/soft drink with hot pork baps and pudding, £10 payable on the door. Please book in with Judy and John on 01299 270983 or judysant10@gmail.com.



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The central fund is controlled by the board and grants may be made from that fund's income, not from the capital. In 2023 £8,000 was granted, in sums ranging from £350 to £1,000 to applicants resident in the Cleobury Mortimer area and aged from 16 to 25 years old. Applications are welcomed from students living in Cleobury Mortimer, Milson, Neen Sollars, Corley, Hopton Wafers, Farlow and Oretton, Kinlet and Neen Savage.

The range of students' needs is wide and all cases will be carefully considered. Application for grants should be made by May 31st and the trustees prefer personal requests with supportive tutor comments. Application forms are available from Councillor B u t l e r

gwilym.butler@shropshire.gov.uk or from Lacon Childe School.

All applications are reviewed by MFG Solicitors and may expect a short informal chat. The awards granted will be announced in August.

THE CURLEW



Have you heard your first Curlew of 2024 yet? If so, we'd like to know about it, please. Our bird survey is now underway, but it's not too late to join in. It's very easy to do. You would make three visits to a survey square, each for about three hours, in early and late April, and mid-June. You mark where you see Curlew, Lapwing and other Target Species on a map, and send it in.

The map will be sent to you, along with simple survey instructions. If you feel you would benefit from informal on-the-job training for the bird survey, please come on the Bird Walk.

The Bird Walk will be held on Clee Hill, starting at Cleeton St.

Mary, and lasting about three hours, but it is open to anyone else who wants to come. We expect to see and hear two pairs of Curlew, Red Kite, Kestrel, and several of the other target species. Arrangements have not been finalised at the time of writing, but it is likely to be during the first weekend in April. You will be able to find details, including time and date, on our website, www.ShropsCWGs.org.uk

In addition to Lapwing and Curlew, we are also trying to locate Kestrel, Cuckoo and breeding Red Kite. We are continuing a nest-box scheme for Kestrels, to help with a research project to try and find out why their numbers are going down. We can learn a lot in Clee Hill, which is a County hotspot with probably 8 – 9 breeding pairs. If you see any of these species, please let us know.

If you see or hear a Curlew, Lapwing, Kestrel, Cuckoo or Red Kite, or want to join our survey, please contact Chris Bargman (01299 270514, email: chcwg@shropscwgs.org.uk)

SOUP LUNCH

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ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

It's a brave man who offers to explain to we ordinary (but decent) folk what AI is about. Nigel Reid has offered to do his best over a few months, which we hope you will find interesting and enlightening. JR.

What is Artificial Intelligence? To answer that question we must first take away the word Artificial and define just Intelligence which is the capacity, amongst other things for, logic, understanding, self-awareness, learning, reasoning and problem-solving. It can be described as the ability to perceive or infer information; and to retain it as knowledge to be applied to adaptive behaviours within an environment or context. So now the high brow stuff is disposed of, three key words stand out and they are Logic, Learning and Problem Solving. These are all attributes of human beings and indeed many forms of animal life. Our brains manage these behaviours throughout our entire life and this is the basis for our existence.

Now bring in the word ARTIFICIAL and we introduce something that is not related to what our brains do for us. What we have introduced is machines! Artificial intelligence is the intelligence of machines or software, as opposed to the intelligence of living beings, primarily of humans. It is a rapidly developing field of study in computer science that is becoming talked about and already implemented in aspects of our daily lives. We now call this simply AI. When we as humans make decisions we generally base them on experience using logic and possibly within a set of rules. AI does exactly the same in a machine with the benefit of computing technology, except with the benefit of masses of data within a starting set of rules. As

modern computers process data faster than the speed of light they can assimilate and problem solve within a set of rules in a flash. We as humans could get there eventually but far slower. Now just to make it clear, no computer has ever been built and worked in a random fashion. By definition a computer needs a basic set of rules to get started. In computers with Artificial Intelligence these rules can be analysed and developed and refined and returned to the computer control in a more effective efficient way. The similarity between these computers and us is not so different. We use our experiences in life to change the way we do things in the future. We are just a wee bit slower than today's computers at doing this. To summarise at this stage, AI Computers have the capability to 'learn and adapt' without our input. They can also do it very very quickly! So we are now at a crucial question. Is this a good thing or a bad thing? Look around you, almost every little thing around you has some form of a computer in it. We tend to defer to the term "digital" so your digital watch, your digital camera, your remote TV control even qualifies as a digital device and how many of us can survive without the ability to just press a button and make something happen? Scientists, Engineers and Developers working in the AI world are constantly looking at ways to make our lives easier by taking away much of the 'brain decision making' capability that has existed since man first walked on earth. Some will argue in favour of this and some will equally argue against. Fair enough we must be entitled to opinion. In next month's article I will start to look more in depth at the current impacts of AI in our world and where it might take us.



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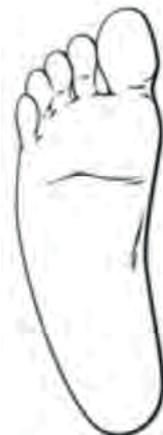


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CLEOBURY GARDENERS

Our meeting in March involved a presentation by Ben Matthews on Hostas. He was first aware of them when six years old and his parents bought home two for their new garden. Over the next few years Ben learned about planting and growing and by his early teens had increased his holdings to about a dozen. Now, from his property in Worcester, he holds the National Collection of Hostas, watching over some 600 different registered names. He is always looking out for names he does not have in the collection, and also hybridizing and propagating new varieties for registration.

Hostas had first been identified in the East – Japan, China, Korea – around the 1400s, when these countries began to be opened up. The plants were prolific, growing anywhere where there was a little soil and some water, and they were predominantly green. The name *Hosta* is believed to come from a plant collector called Host, and was used by M. Siebold, of Sieboldiana, and Robert Fortune of Fortuneii fame.

By the 1900s the number of varieties was about 60. Today the American Society of Hostas numbers 7,384 registered varieties. To achieve registration new plants have to be tested under a rigid system of molecular and visual parameters to achieve formal approval. The American system is much more stringent than our own. Who wants a garden full of green hosta? Hostas have achieved their place in our plant

collecting because of the varieties of shape, size, flowers, fragrance; but mainly because of the tremendous range of variations of colours and shapes in the leaves. The latest work is on a red version but its staying power is limited; the white version is very susceptible to sunburn. Hostas carry out their own form of hybridization in the form of spore production and therefore it is useful to observe your own plants to see if a new variety has been created.

Ben brought us back to earth by mentioning pests and diseases, then listing a few defence mechanisms. Coffee grounds, eggshells, sharp gravel, things to make travel uncomfortable for a snail or a slug; garlic spray to make the leaves inedible and then the lamp and bucket job on a warm damp evening. For my own plants I use a standard pest control spray. All these methods have to be used and maintained regularly.

Ben's National Collection is open by arrangement; we are hoping to organise a visit. If you are interested in joining us, please make contact and we will keep you informed.

Our next meeting is on April 8th April, when Claire Tatler will be presenting a talk on "Gardening in Historic Places". Entrance is free to members, and £5.00 including light refreshments for visitors.

Linda Ashman, Sec, email ashmanlinda240@gmail.com

THE READING GROUP

Back to Victorian times this month when a small group at the library met to express views

on 'Great Expectations' by Charles Dickens; my thanks to absentees who emailed reviews. A very popular choice despite the small print and large number of pages. Not easy to finish in a month, perhaps too long.

Being a contemporary observation of life in 1800s it contained some words not used today. It was a second read for many, the first often at school. Maybe an abridged version as several of us didn't remember the back stories of some characters. We chatted about how our views of the story had altered over the years. Wonderful descriptions of dress, speech and mannerisms, keenly observed and humorous. Good to have something to make us smile. A moral tale of relationships and family still relevant today, money and possessions not replacing love and friendships. I hadn't realised Dickens had written two endings, both a little ambiguous, one member would have preferred a clear happy ending.

This month we are reading 'Dead Man's Land' by Robert Ryan a mystery set in Flanders Field, featuring Dr Watson. It was again mentioned that with a reading group you get variety, mostly of books you wouldn't pick off the shelves. We meet in April on Monday 15th and now have a vacancy in the group. Deana Kimber 01299 271754.

NEW SECRETARY

At their meeting on March 13th it was announced that the CM branch of the Royal British Legion have welcomed Chris Bayliss as their secretary.



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Written and directed by Elaine May

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A BEACON ON THE HILL

The project to create a new heritage gateway and improved community facilities at St John's in Doddington is moving ahead at pace. There are many opportunities to create, learn new skills and help shape this new resource which will celebrate the character and community of Titterstone Clee Hill. The team are looking for local people who are interested in getting involved. If you are interested in local history, nature or learning new skills, they would love to hear from you. There are opportunities to help record and share local heritage, help at events and work alongside artists to create new work.

Clee Hill Village Primary School are working with the project to tell the stories of local families who have come together at St John's for generations. To help with this, we need you to look in your lofts and in old photo albums and let us know if you have old wedding or baptism photos taken at St John's over the years. These will be curated by the pupils as a guide to the church and its people.

If you want to know more about the project or have an image or object to share, please get in touch with Jim jim@grevatte.co.uk

Celia Gibb

PARKINSONS/ STROKE SUPPORT GROUP

The Stroke Support Group has joined forces with a group who either have Parkinsons or care for somebody with it. We have a lot in common and would welcome anybody who has a long term condition and/or their partner to join us in our social programme. We meet on the 4th Tuesday of the month in the Community Room at St Mary's Place. If you would like to come along please contact Katja Jones at the Medical Centre.

Our programme for the next two months gives you an idea of what we do:

In April (23rd) we are being joined by Rhythmicity Drumming for a workshop where we make music together using various types of drum and percussion instruments. This couple recently came to the WI and it went down really well. This workshop we will be paying for from funds donated

to us, and we would like to acknowledge a new donation from the Wednesday Afternoon Tea Club.

In May (28th) we hope to have a Bluebell walk at Hurcott on the other side of Kidderminster, with the option to also go to nearby Hodgehill Garden Centre for refreshments.

Graham Simpson

THE LEGION GOES MOTORING

It still makes you stop and wonder if you heard it right. A car factory in Bayton, just down the narrow road from Cleobury Mortimer. Is this a joke?

Anybody who knows the Gregory family will be aware that Phil started making three-wheelers of a sporting type some years ago and that his son Guy took over the production side and lifted the profile of the company to the present level of fame in the specialist car world. As an example of a family business succeeding, they make interesting reading.

So the local Royal British Legion branch is paying them a visit in late March and we'll be there to photograph and listen to the story and their future plans. A car factory in Bayton - it's a success story, not a fairy tale.

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SAINT MARY'S TOWER

It seems a long time since I've posted an update on our progress. The restoration of the clock and the painting of the bell frame were both completed in 2022. A lot of last year was taken up with agreeing the specification and costing for the staircase, and getting permission from the Diocese to carry out the work. For various reasons, both of these took a lot longer than we had anticipated, but it was important to agree a design which met our requirements. Work finally started in February, and the staircase was installed in two days by technicians from Elite Spiral Stairs Ltd, following preparatory work by Richard Price. This part of the overall tower project was overseen by our main contractors, Recclesia Ltd. We are all very pleased with the result. Please look in the church, behind the red curtains, to see what has been done.

The Project is not completely finished yet. There is more work to be done in the ringing room, particularly the completion of a case to protect the mechanism of our historic clock. Work on this is well advanced, and other

improvement work is in hand. We installed a new set of bell ropes last week to replace our old set which were about 25 years old. We hope that the project will be completed by the summer.

Chris Kippin

THE BREAKFAST CLUB

On 12 March, the Breakfast Club met to hear Chris Kippin explain what he meant by 'So Near But Yet So Far'. He reminded us of the typical world map in a school atlas. In the middle lay the British Isles, astride the Greenwich Meridian. What was at the top left hand corner? – Alaska – and top right? – Russia's eastern edge. Thus Russia and Alaska couldn't have been further apart. In truth, Alaska and Russia are only about 50 miles apart, separated by the Bering Strait, in the middle of which lie a pair of islands: Big Diomedes (Russian) and Little Diomedes (American), and these are only 2.4 miles apart. It is possible that early man migrated across the Strait from the west, and thus settled North America.

By the nineteenth century, Russia still owned a large chunk of North America, but its remoteness made it awkward to govern, and in 1867, the United States purchased the Russian foothold in North America for \$7.2 million. This is now Alaska, which became the 49th state in 1959.

During WW2, the Japanese invaded the Aleutian Islands, creating the spectre of a Japanese invasion of Alaska. The US reaction was to drive a new road across Canada - the Alaskan Military Highway. This was 1,700 miles long, and was completed in 7 months.

In 1941, Russia became one of Britain's allies, but after WW2, Russia became an enemy of the West, and the Bering Strait is now a very real boundary between power blocks. Global warming means that we soon see the opening of a reliable sea route into the Arctic Ocean, providing access to the north of both Russia and Canada.

The Club's next meeting will be held at the Golf Club on 2 April (earlier than normal) with visiting speaker Tim Blackburn (a Facial Plastic Surgery consultant) who speaking on 'Facial Reconstruction Surgery'. Anyone wishing to attend should contact Angela Drennan (270636).

Mark Baldwin

FLOURISH AND NOURISH

New Cleobury community group, Flourish & Nourish, will be planting beautiful edibles in the planters along the High Street on Sunday 7th April, from 11am. Come along to see what's going on and share ideas for how we can grow more fruit and veg for local people in the town.

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THE PIG NOSE PIPPIN GALLERY

It's certainly an unusual name to give to what was once the renowned Gordon Hems's butcher's shop. That was long ago and it's looked empty and out of use, because the couple behind it have been so busy with an international range of work and supporting culture charities in Shropshire. Steve Hems and Zoe are the property owners. If you want to learn the art of silversmithing, or pottery Steve can get you booked into one of the courses. If you want an authority on getting disabled and in particular blind people into expressing their art talent, Zoe has built contacts and given tuition over most of the globe, working for bodies like the British Council.



When they sit and talk about their work, it's rather like listening to a world tour. Zoe says her work for the British Council has taken her "From Japan to Brazil" as she's given training, help and encouragement to people who react to her ability to show her own talent despite being technically blind. They talk about people they met and trained in Rio and the blind colleagues they have met like Pericles they worked with and

trained to the point where he's come to the Arvon centre in Clun and last year her Deaf colleagues performed here in Ludlow, London, Europe and New York. In Tasmania she met and worked with Duncan Meering, another blind man with talent as a designer. He visited England last year to renew acquaintance and train staff with Zoe at the Bartlett School of Architecture and shows off his stylish lighting designs. Blind people performing through sign dance and designing may sound unlikely, but it's what Zoe has been doing for years. She shows others with very limited or no sight how to rise above what sighted people may see as just a handicap and express their artistic talent. Steve is her partner and they've been together for years, him working and having a go at silversmithing. Years ago he worked in the family butcher's shop before turning away to develop his new role as a colour theorist and driver for Zoe. Together they're quite a team. Zoe, a woman whose chronic condition and lack of sight has never stopped her consultancy and creativity blossoming. Their small gallery hides much that's not obvious, with a second studio behind the public one, where what looks like an piano is in fact a piece of artwork in itself. If you find them in, ask for a demonstration and prepare to be amazed. They can host almost any artistic gathering, with the crochet club currently using the shop space and the second studio for pottery

because the front unit isn't big enough. If you have a small number looking to start a club activity, this could be the answer.



Steve, better known as Squeeze, handyman, driver and reader for Zoe. Since the Gallery opened in January they've had a pop— up shop for a short period and a dozen workshops in the premises. A neat touch in the development is the flat that visitors who've travelled a long way can book into and make a weekend break of the tuition course or whatever has drawn them here. "If people want it, we'll do it," as Zoe neatly summed up their willingness to run courses to order. They're certainly busy, with so many irons in their artistic fire. And do take a look in that front window at the abstract paintings and admire the work of a lady officially partially blind. And the Gallery name? They heard it as a rare Hereford apple type and thought "Why not?"

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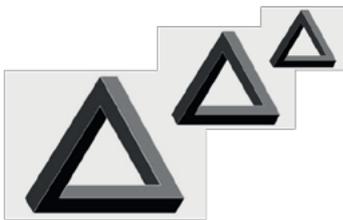
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We all love a bit of sunshine and our reptiles (lizards, slow worms and snakes) love it even more. They don't have a mammal's ability to regulate their body temperatures so they need to move to a place of greater or lesser warmth to keep their metabolism at an optimum temperature. A big stone or patch of dry bracken can provide a nice, warm spot in the sun but exposes them to the watchful eyes of predators such as buzzards. You may have been lucky to find them under tarpaulins or in piles of composting plant material, but deliberately providing basking places gives you a much greater chance of seeing them and gives these declining species of wildlife some much-needed help.

We used to see slow worms very occasionally when we first came to the farm but it was generally when our chickens, which were then very free-ranging, caught one and fought each other for the privilege of eating the poor creature. Now we have several pieces of corrugated iron (also known as 'wriggly tin' but made of steel in any case!) placed around the farm and lift them from time to time during the summer to see what we can see! These 'refugia' can also be made out of roofing felt or Onduline and need to be placed beside long vegetation which will allow the creatures to move safely to and fro. There are certainly many more reptilian visitors than we would have known about otherwise, and they are often joined under the tin sheets by black ants and voles, both of which like to make nests in the warm, dry conditions. Our best count so far was on a warm August day last year when we had a total of 11 grass snakes and 15 slow worms under 5 of the tins. I chose

this subject for the April article because this is usually the earliest month when we can expect to see any reptiles, although we have already seen a small slow worm in March this year. In September we often find several grass snake skins either under the tins, by rocks or in the wood pile: anywhere where the snake can take cover while using a rough edge to help slough off the old skin which it has grown out of. The photos show a grass snake and the creepy-looking head end of a shed skin. This one was 96cm long and was probably from a female. Incidentally, grass snakes do not have a venomous bite and so are completely harmless. They have learnt to keep away from people and will take cover as soon as they feel the vibrations of approaching steps, so if you see one you can feel very honoured!

Linda Iles





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Church services throughout the Benefice in April 2024**

St Mary's Cleobury Mortimer

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Sunday 14th April: 8.30am Said Eucharist
10.00am Parish Eucharist
Sunday 21st April: 10.00am Parish Eucharist
Sunday 28th April: 10.00am Parish Eucharist

Every Wednesday: 10.00am Eucharist
Every Thursday: 10.00am – 11.30am: Drop in at St Mary's. Drop in for a free cup of tea or coffee.

St Michael and All Angels', Hopton Wafers

Sunday 7th April: 9.30am Eucharist
Sunday 21st April: 9.30am Eucharist

St John the Baptist, Doddington

Sunday 7th April: 11.00am Eucharist
Sunday 21st April: 3.00pm Evening Prayer

All Saints', Neen Sollars

Sunday 7th April: 11.00am Village Worship
Sunday 14th April: 11.00am Village Worship
Sunday 21st April: 11.00am Village Worship
Sunday 28th April: 11.00am Village Eucharist

St George's, Milson

Sunday 7th April: 6.00pm Even Song
Sunday 21st April: 11.00am Parish Eucharist

St Mary's, Neen Savage

Sunday 7th April: 6.00pm - Evening Prayer (BCP)
Sunday 21st April: 9.00am – Parish Eucharist (BCP)

St John the Baptist, Kinlet

Sunday 14th April: 11.15am – Parish Eucharist (BCP)
Sunday 28th April: 6.00pm- Evening Prayer (BCP)

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Philip Dunne's Letter from Westminster

With the clocks having changed, and the welcome lighter evenings alongside the beginnings of verdant growth, it feels as though we are finally moving out of winter months and into Spring.

There is a certain sense of renewal that many of us feel at this time of year – particularly those of us who are Christians, noting the story of Easter. Parliament is currently in recess over Easter, providing a welcome opportunity for me to spend more time in the constituency.

Somewhat less idyllic than the blooming greenery of South Shropshire at this time of year, though no less important, is that we also have the new tax year in April. But this year it comes with significant positive news from the government in terms of tax and benefit changes.

At last month's Budget, the Chancellor announced a cut in the main rate of employee National Insurance Contributions by 2p, from 10 per cent to 8 per cent, from 6th April. Combined with the 2p cut which came into effect in January, this will save the average worker over £900 a year. It also sets a clear direction of travel for lower personal taxation.

The main rate of self-employed NICs will also be cut by a further 2p. This means that also from 6th April, the main rate of Class 4 NICs for the self-employed will now be reduced from 9 per cent to 6 per cent. Combined with the abolition of the requirement to pay Class 2, this will save the average self-employed person around £650 a year.

This month also sees the National Living Wage (NLW) increase by 9.8 per cent from £10.42 to £11.44 an hour. This pay boost, worth over £1,800 a year for a full-time worker, is the biggest cash increase in the NLW in more than a decade.

Additionally, this month all working-age benefits, including Universal Credit, will be uprated in line with September 2023 Consumer Price Index Inflation – 6.7 per cent. For pensioners, the basic State Pension, new State Pension, and Pension Credit standard minimum guarantee will be uprated in line with average earnings growth of 8.5 per cent.

To support low-income households with increasing rent costs, this month the Government will raise Local Housing Allowance rates to the 30th percentile of local market rents. This will benefit 1.6 million low-income households, who will be around £800 a year better off on average in 2024-25, and give families greater security and peace of mind.

The Household Support Fund is being extended for a further six months until September this year, with an additional £500m investment, to provide targeted support for the most vulnerable as inflation continues to fall, including the cost of essentials such as food and utilities.

In a further welcome easing of the pressure on household budgets, the energy regulator Ofgem announced the typical energy bill will fall to £1,690 from 1st April, which is £238 lower than the price cap set between 1st January to 31st March this year, and is at the lowest level since Putin's invasion of Ukraine two years ago. This should also help us get a further grip on inflation, which takes so much out of household budgets.

As the end of my time as your MP approaches, I am concerned there has been a creeping sense of pessimism about the fate of our country – which I do not share. I hope the measures outlined above, easing the cost of living, alongside the changing of the seasons, might lead to greater optimism and hope for the future.

Philip Dunne

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THE FOOTPATH ASSOCIATION

Just when I was beginning to think that Spring weather was on the way March began with more snow! As the weather folklore says "In like a lion, out like a lamb", well the first part is definitely true for 2024.

Luckily Sunday March 3rd dawned chilly but with clear blue skies. As the very muddy conditions in the fields and footpaths around Cleobury continued, the walk leader chose a shorter than usual route that was mainly firm with a few sections of mud and puddles. We passed small groups of rather bedraggled daffodils in bloom along the Musbatch

bridleway showing signs that Spring is on the way. The track between Neen Savage and Walfords Bridge was challenging except for those wearing wellies, a good choice of footwear with all the mud and puddles. The riverside Papermills meadow was surprisingly firm when walking close to the river. Ten people including two new to the area enjoyed a lovely chatty walk at a relaxed pace. The Country Walk on Sunday April 7th is traditionally our Daffodil walk. Starting at 10.00am outside the Market Hall, join us to see if there are any in bloom.

Last month the work parties started after the Winter break. At least the wet ground is an advantage when digging holes for posts. The team were in Neen Savage to install a kissing gate on the road to Nethercote. Kissing gates are very popular with both dog walkers and anyone who finds clambering over stiles challenging! It is very helpful if walkers would help to keep footpaths clear as they walk. So include a pair of secateurs in your rucksack and "Snip and Slash" as you go! Brambles are already beginning to

grow so cut them back now.

Once again, last month Walking for Health continued along the firm footpaths around Cleobury town. The chat and fresh air was welcome even in the rainy windy conditions. Returning each time for cake and coffee with friends at the Coco coffee morning. Hopefully the drying winds will make the paths safer for the walks on April 10th and 24th Don't forget to meet outside the Market Hall in time to start at 10.00.

This lovely part of Shropshire sits on the borders of the Neen Savage, Hopton Wafers and Cleobury Mortimer parishes. CMFA Walk 14 aptly called A Walk in Three Parishes, goes through each one. The circular 4.50 mile walk passes the sites of a medieval manor house, the workhouse and the poorhouse. From the high ground you can see as far as the Severn Valley. A bit wet now so maybe better for the Spring.

Veronica Hargreaves

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We are really happy to announce that we are adding to our **Men's Shed**. We now have workshops on a Tuesday and a Thursday 10.30 till 12.30 Last session of the year to be on 14th December.

We are looking for people to join our **Knit and Natter** afternoons on a Tuesday 1.30 till 4.00



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WOOD WORDS

The Bowling Club

Well, well, well, here we are again! The green is now open at Cleobury Bowls Club (23 March) – where did the closed season go? – and members are getting prepared to commence battle again in the new season.

The Mortimer Team promotion to division one of the Highley League has been confirmed and the Cleobury team will compete in the Ludlow League as last season. Seniors team partake in the Mid Shropshire League.

Details of individual members club competitions are one the Events page of the club website (cleoburybowls.org.uk) as are the fixtures for the Sunday league which starts on the 14th of April.

Taster Sessions for potential new members wishing to try their skills are scheduled for Mondays 13th of May and 10th of June from 6.30pm.

Members are reminded that subscriptions are now due (details on website).

So, time to polish the bowls, sort out the rain gear and head for the green! See you there.

Anyone requiring further information telephone below

Yours in bowls
Smiffy 07494 016137

THE BIG RACE

Cleobury Mortimer Running Club will be welcoming runners from all over the country to its renowned 10K Race on July 7th. Up to 300 to contest the race along our local lanes and backroads is the organisers' estimate.

It's known as the Cleobury Mortimer 10K, with the course including the demanding run up Ron Hill near the end, a real test of stamina. It starts at 10.00 and the club have worked with Shropshire Council and the Highways Agency to time road closures so that there is minimal disruption to residents while watching over the safety of the runners. Detailed information on road closures, including timing for each section of the race, is accessible on the website : www.runcleobury.org/road-closures.

The organisation is a serious task, but the big attraction for the majority is the happy atmosphere as runners from rank amateurs to serious men and women put their training to the test. More details nearer the event, but do put the date in your diary: July 7th, race start at 10.00; the finish of the race for some could be rather late....

CLEOBURY COUNTRY LIFE

It used to be called the Trade Card, a modest but very handy source to look up who you could call to deal with a problem. A problem from domestic to pet poorliness and on to divorce, you could find professional help in there.

Today it's really moved on, with 12 pages of quality card with colour print, plus an Eat Out Pullout supplement to get you to food, drink, an overnight stop or a place to take the kids.

To be frank, I look at the quality of the product and the colourful appeal it has and ask myself if the Clarion should not have a serious overhaul. We have a well established place in the area, but should not ignore the better presentation of Cleobury Country Life.

We help distribute it, leaving Country Life at our own local outlets, with the first delivery in March and the second this month. Clare Todd has done a super job and deserves a round of applause; the whole presentation of this area as a tourist destination and a really good place to live has taken a step forward.

Jim Reynolds

THE RETURN OF DOMINOES

Dominoes was quite a big thing in Cleobury and many people want to start playing again. So, we are having a Dominoes night at The Old Lion on Wednesday, May 1st, at 8.00. Hopefully this is the first of many.

There will be no charges to play and even though it is a knockout we are trying to ensure everyone has the opportunity to get at least two games in. It would be great to see young and old people, those who are learning the game or past masters.

Anyone interested needs to add their name to the list at The Old Lion before April 22 or

email dominoescleobury@gmail.com

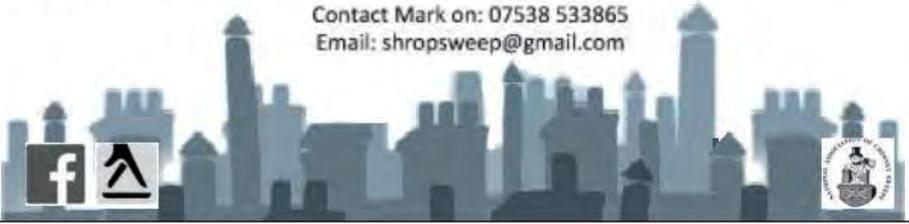
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THE FRIENDS OF ST MARY'S CHURCH

The 2024 AGM of the Friends of St Mary's Church saw a number of changes in the composition of the Committee.

We said a fond farewell to three of our long serving members who have finally had their sentences reduced on the grounds of good behaviour. Elizabeth Burton who has been on the Committee since its inception in 2003 and long term 'keeper of the glasses' has finally surrendered her raffle book with her presence by the door at most of our events leaving a substantial gap. Angela Drennan, another early member who has been the driving force behind our catering procurement and preparation, as well as being Treasurer, with a fine record in dealing with the incompetence of various financial institutions, has taken some of the strain from her cash & carry card. Last but not least, Diane Waddington, our Chair, who bravely stepped up into the hot seat following the sad death of Alec Osbaldiston and whose hospitality is legendary, has always been

supportive and there to correct the Secretary's errors. They will all be greatly missed.

As a result of the above, several brave souls have agreed to replace them:

Pete Sniadowski is our new Chair.

Mazella Witts-Hewinson takes up the reins of Treasurer.

Carol Shorrock becomes Membership Secretary.

Good luck to all of them in their future endeavours. Gabby Frankin and Myfanwy Baldwin have gamely agreed to continue as Committee members and the Church will continue to be represented by the Rev Ashley Buck, Sarah Wilde, Liz Smith and Nigel Hodgson.

Steve Todd remains as Secretary as he can do the least damage in that position.

We have also welcomed Janet Ludford as a new Committee member but there is always room for more, so if you have time on your hands (or even if you haven't) and wish to make a contribution to our community, please approach any of the Committee members.

Steve Todd

JANE BIDS THE SEVERN HOSPICE SHOP FAREWELL



A big farewell to Jane, laden with flowers and goodwill messages on her last day as part of the Severn Hospice staff.

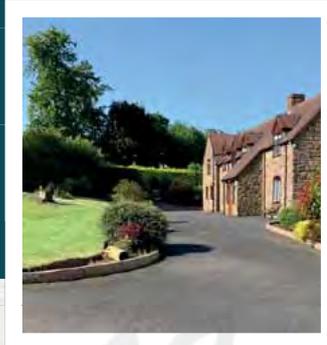
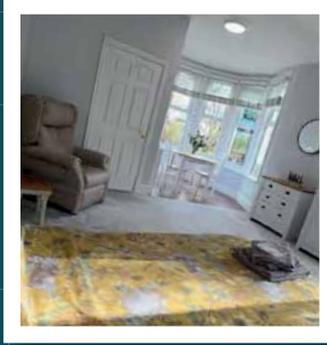
It was a real parting of friends when Jane, long term assistant manager at the popular Severn Hospice Shop, announced that she was to retire. She's one of the volunteers who joined up 14 years ago.

Branch manager Emily was there to shake her hand and wish her well with gifts of flowers from the many friends she's made with her soft, spoken style, friendly smile and knowledge of the town and its community. Now she's planning to see a little more of the country she knows from this lovely corner of England.



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Doddington Lodge is a place where friendships are made and special moments are shared. We organise many fun activities that everyone can get involved with, whether that's a sing along, arts and crafts, collecting fresh veg from the allotment or just simply helping each other with a crossword in our daily newspaper. Each day is different, we certainly have many happy moments...

With a modern bistro dining room and bar with a delicious daily menu created by our accomplished chef. Individually designed spacious double rooms, allowing couples to stay together or beautiful single rooms all with en-suites and stunning countryside views. Even a hairdressing salon for a little pampering to provide a place of well-being.

Our home is a loving community and family, where you can consider Doddington Lodge a home away from home. We will provide you with all the key information, guiding you through every step of the process, whether you are staying with us for a short or long stay.

Come along!
Coffee morning
on Friday 12th
April 2024



Join us for a warm cup of cheer and plenty of laughs at our monthly Doddington Lodge Coffee Mornings!

Every 2nd Friday of the month, come together with residents, family & friends over tea or coffee. Enjoy freshly baked cakes as well as the Doddington Lodge monthly raffle.

For only £2.50 per person – including your beverage and slice of cake – join us for our get-together on Friday, April 12th, 2024, from 10 am until midday.

We look forward to seeing you!





HIGHLIGHTS FROM A MEMORABLE MONTH AT DODDINGTON LODGE



The past month at Doddington Lodge has been truly lovely, filled with amazing activities that created cherished memories. We were absolutely thrilled to welcome some very special visitors - the most adorable miniature ponies! Their visit brought smiles to everyone's faces, and it was an absolute joy to spend time with them.

We got crafty in preparation for Easter, with our lovely friends and residents busy making Easter bonnets. Witnessing their creativity was wonderful.

One morning, we enjoyed egg-citing Easter activities, including a game of Easter Family Fortune and the funny Carrot Splat! Jean mastered the Carrot Splat, bringing laughter and joy to all. These moments of connection and happiness made the past month at Doddington Lodge truly memorable.



CHARITY ROUNDERS EVENT SATURDAY 20TH APRIL 2024

Get ready for an exciting day of camaraderie and competition as ten teams gear up to battle it out for ten different charities! Join us on Saturday, April 20th, at Ludlow Rugby Club for the Rounders Charity Event, where we'll be raising funds and awareness for Dementia UK.

Our team, the Doddy Destroyers, comprising 14 enthusiastic members, is eager to kick off the day's festivities with our first match at 11 am. With tickets priced at just £3, available at Doddington Lodge Reception or via email at enquiries@doddingtonlodge.com, we invite you to come and be a part of the action-packed day filled with rounders, delicious food from Pizza Girls, Beefy Boys, and Divine Doughnuts, as well as activities like bouncy castles and stalls.

It's sure to be a fantastic day for all, so mark your calendars and let's unite for a worthy cause!

www.doddingtonlodge.com | E: enquiries@doddingtonlodge.com | T: 01584 707084

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Rain Doesn't Stop Play

You don't need me to tell you it's been a little wet of late. By "a little wet," I mean that navigating the path to my greenhouse has transformed into what I can only describe as an exercise in bog diving. The ground squelches in protest with every step as if to say, "Really? You're going out in this?" The slipping and sliding on the path is so comedic that it's practically begging for a slapstick soundtrack. Who knows, with a little creative filming, there might be £250 in it from "You've Been Framed." I can see the caption now: "Gardener Dives for Tulips, Finds Mud Instead."

Yet, despite the relentless rain, nature has continued to deliver. The snowdrops emerged first, putting on a show that was nothing short of bloody brilliant for a week before they began their slow retreat back to the earth. Not ones to be upstaged, the daffodils took the baton and are currently running with it, a sea of yellow bobbing heads promising that, yes, Spring really has sprung. And lurking in the background, like athletes limbering up for their moment in the spotlight, are the tulips. Bravo, Mother Nature - biblical levels of rain did not stop play.

OK - here's a phrase I never expected to find myself writing: I'm itching to get back to mowing the lawn. My garden currently has the look of an unkempt beard, all tufts and straggly bits (think "Lockdown Hair", and you'll get the general picture). Obviously, the urge to mow means it's almost time for my annual battle to resurrect the lawn mower from its winter hibernation. I'd like to apologise to my neighbours in advance -

the language you are likely to encounter as I yank furiously at the fraying starter cord is only temporary.

Oh, and obviously, within two weeks of this event, I'll be bemoaning the relentless mowing duties that consume every free minute of the day. Such is the circle of life for a gardener - a relentless cycle of complaint and satisfaction.

Here's hoping that the "Great Soggy Winter of 2023-24" will herald a beautiful spring and summer. After the deluge, we all deserve a bit of sun and warmth on our faces, don't you think?

Maggie Update

Now, a brief update on Maggie, my petrified puppy, who's slowly but surely beginning to emerge from her shell. I won't lie and say it's an overnight transformation; rather, it's a journey measured in inches rather than miles. Yet, there remains a glimmer of hope that she'll soon be a regular visitor to the fine pubs of Cleobury, sharing in the camaraderie and perhaps even enjoying a bit of the local fare. Slow and steady wins the race, after all.

So here's to the coming Spring, to the end of bog-diving expeditions and to the future adventures of Maggie. The mud may cling to our boots (and occasionally send us flying), but the promise of a brighter, warmer tomorrow can be seen in the budding flowers. Let's raise a glass to the soggy winter behind us and the blooming spring ahead. And to Maggie, may she find her courage, one pub visit at a time.

Simon



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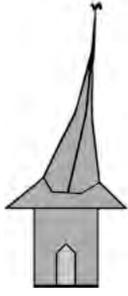
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We are bombarded with information about various scams but is anyone listening? Take the case of a phone call to No 10 many months ago. The caller claimed to be the President of Rwanda with an offer of help to solve the migration crisis. He said that could initially take several hundred asylum seekers and provide hotel accommodation in his capital Kigali, for a small down payment. Naturally he was asked how much this would be and the quotation was a piffling £290 million. Sensing a bargain, the cabinet was consulted and their response was 'Snatch his hand off' as this worked out at an insignificant £171,000 per person. Thank goodness for the Courts who, supported by the Human Rights Industry, have expressed grave doubts about the whole scheme and not one person has yet been able to take up this kind offer. As this stalemate continues, the latest wheeze is to offer each person who agrees to go a 'sweetener' of £3000. As the warning goes, 'If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is' so thank goodness it's only our money they are wasting...

Post Office management have recently gone public regarding the huge losses that their organisation is suffering. Their solution? - put up the price of postage stamps yet again. From 2nd April, a second class stamp will now cost 85p and a first class £1.35. Apparently the increase is necessary as there has been a substantial fall in the numbers of letters being posted. Who knew? With the cost of a letter now being more than the GDP of some small countries, writing to your loved ones is now a major capital investment. Reading between the lines, I suspect that they are trying to get out of letters and concentrate on the more profitable parcels work, especially as they are making repeated attempts to get out of their six day delivery obligation. Shame they haven't put as much effort into getting us a Post Office.

The latest wizzo wheeze from London's theatreland is 'Blackout nights'. This consists

of several evening performances later this year which will be restricted to those 'identifying as black'. Presumably this was carefully worded to avoid any legal issues but it does mean that there will be no need to break out the Cherry Blossom just yet should you wish to attend on any of those nights. Just adopt a cod Jamaican patois just like many BBC DJ's and you will be fine. Not sure how this will be enforced but apparently it does allow black people to enjoy the theatre without coming under the 'white gaze' whatever that is. This is hailed as a cutting edge approach but, as with most things, it has been done before. In South Africa it was called 'Apartheid' and in the US, 'Segregation'...

More mayhem from the water companies who have been caught fiddling their spillage figures and then refusing to reveal what the true figures are with Severn Trent being one of the main offenders. Apparently, they are able to mark their own homework by downgrading the severity of spills 'in house' when they are recorded. So they do. As a result, the Environment Agency attend less than 1% of spills on average. Clearly, a system that is working well, at least for some.

Good news (possibly): It has been announced that around £250 million is being punted in our direction having been extracted from the smoking ruin that was HS2. The less good news: None of this will be available until 2025 and around half will be earmarked for Telford and Wrekin with the remainder for the rest of the County. A cynical person might wonder how much of this will manage to claw its way out of the Shrewsbury Triangle...

Just seen an article saying that some of the specialist breed and age related dog food for your overly pampered pooches comes out at around £4.50 per portion. As a comparison, the NHS spends between £5 and £6 per day on food for inpatients...

Ariadne J Grumpy

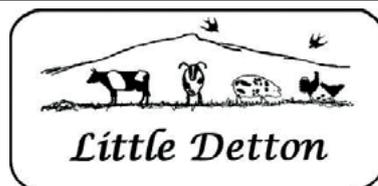
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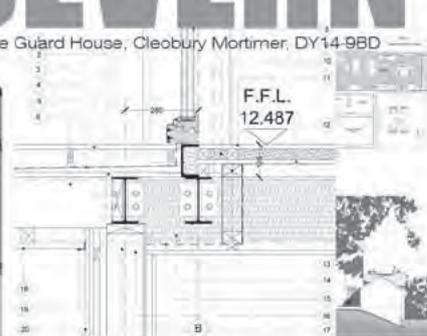
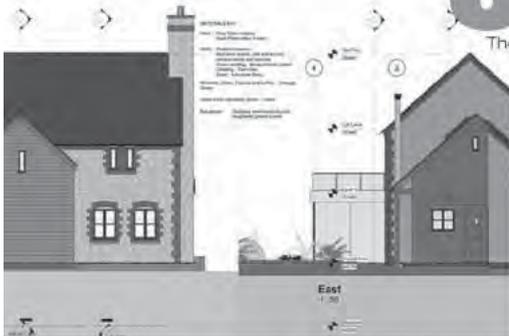
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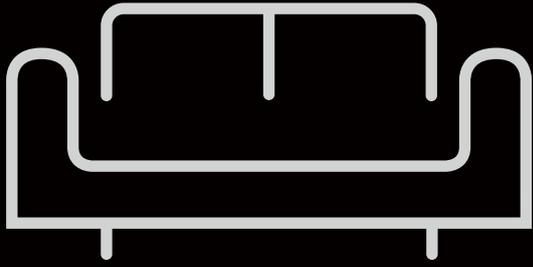
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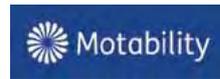
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THE CLARION SOCIAL CALENDAR APRIL 2024

- Tue. 2nd. 7.30am The Breakfast Club meet at the Golf Club. PAGE 17
 2.00 to 4.00 Carer Support Group meets at St Mary's Place, Love Lane.
- Wed. 3rd 6.00 to 7.00 Late Night at the Food Bank, Market Hall
 7.30 Whist Drive at Doddington Village Hall.
- Thu. 4th GENERAL WASTE BINS EMPTIED TODAY**
 10.00 Rock Pathfinders meet at Nimminga Wood car park DY9 9JR PAGE 27
- Sun. 7th. 10.00 CMFA Country Walk starts from the Parish Church PAGE 27
 11.00am Flourish and Nourish will be planting along the High Street.
 PAGE 17
- Mon. 8th. 7.30. Cleobury Gardeners meet at the Parish Hall. PAGE 13
- Tue. 9th. 7.30. Cleobury W.I. meet at the Market Hall. PAGE 7
- Wed. 10th GARDEN AND FOOD WASTE BINS EMPTIED TODAY**
 10.00 Walking for Health stride gently out from the Market Hall. PAGE 27
 10.00 to 12.00 CoCo Coffee Morning, Market Hall.
 12.30. Easter Soup Lunch at Melville Methodist Church, Farlow. PAGE 9
- Fri. 12th. 10.00 -12.00 Coffee Morning at Doddington Lodge on Clee Hill
 PAGE 32
 7.30. Quiz Night, CM Golf Club. PAGE 5
 8.00 Bingo Night at Doddington Village Hall.
- Mon. 15th. 7.30 The Reading Group meet at the library to review and discuss PAGE 13
- Tue 16th to Sat 20th. Regal Folk Festival, Tenbury Wells. PAGE 5
- Wed. 17th GENERAL WASTE BINS EMPTIED TODAY**
 7.30. Whist Drive at Doddington Village Hall
- Thu. 18th. 10.00 Rock Pathfinders walk out from the Button Oak Inn. PAGE 27
- Sat. 20th. 11.00. Doddington Lodge at Charity Rugby Event at Ludlow RFC. PAGE 32
 7.30. Flicks in the Sticks at the Market Hall presents 'A New Leaf' PAGE 7
- Mon. 22nd DEADLINE FOR NEWS AND ADVERTS IN THE CLARION**
- Tue. 23rd. 2.00 The Parkinson/Stroke Support Group meet at St Mary's Place. PAGE 15
- Wed. 24th HOUSEHOLD AND FOOD WASTE BINS EMPTIED TODAY**
 10.00. Walking for Health step out from the Market Hall.
 10.00. CoCo Coffee Morning, Market Hall.
 7.30 Clows Top Gardening Club meet at the Village Hall PAGE 5
- Fri. 26th. 10.30 Cleobury W.I. Morning Coffee, Colliers Arms.
 PAGE 7
 7.30. Ian Casey Sings at the Parish Hall. Ticket price includes dinner! PAGE 5
 8.00 Bingo Night at Doddington Village Hall
- Sat. 27th. 7.30 Double Quiz Night at Corley Memorial Hall. PAGE 5
- AND LOOKING FORWARD TO MAY....**
- Wed. 1st GENERAL WASTE BINS EMPTIED**
 7.30. Whist Drive at Doddington Village Hall.
 8.00 Dominoes Club meets at the Old Lion. No charge. PAGE 29

LET'S BEAT THE SCAMMERS

It's been a busy start to 2024 and we are starting to think about holidays, either abroad or to stay within these shores and the variety of holiday cottage accommodation is huge. The scammers have also seen opportunities and send out emails building attractive web sites showcasing properties that can be booked for anything from 2 days to a week.

Reputable companies like Holiday Cottages, Sykes Cottages and Cottages.com offer high standards of properties with internal and external pictures to ensure you know what you are booking. Scammers are putting up pictures of properties they have no access to, with only a few details, priced to attract families or groups on a budget. They will ask for full payment up front and when the unwitting holiday maker arrives at the property, they find that not only the property is not as described but it is a private residence and certainly not being rented out.

A huge disappointment and potential loss of quite a lot of money. But you can protect yourself from loss. Paying for goods and services online with a CREDIT card gives you a good level of protection as opposed to a Bank Debit card or other form of payment. The old saying Buyer Beware was never more true here.

Scams are emerging where an individual gets a message either by email or by text saying that a reputable delivery company has a package for you that has been incorrectly addressed and cannot be delivered. The recipient is invited to contact the sender and make a small payment, verifying their address to guarantee successful delivery.

Where this scam succeeds is when the recipient is actually expecting something, from an online store or whatever. It can be understandable that the person is fooled into taking the action suggested. But how do you identify if this is a scam or not.

Online retailers websites are designed to ensure your delivery address is accurate. Reputable delivery companies like Royal Mail, Evri, DPD and others have already been paid to deliver your

parcel and won't ask for any other form of payment.

Check the source of an email you receive, it may on the surface look very authentic, but if you expand the sender's identity by clicking on it, you will probably see an obscure identity certainly not Royalmail.com or Evri.com. The course of action is to simply delete the email and do not respond to any requests for personal details or money. Your package will still arrive!

Financial scams continue to flood the news. A telephone call from someone claiming to be a representative of the Bank security staff claims they are investigating a member of staff committing fraud. They want your cooperation in their investigation by asking you to visit your bank and withdraw a sum of money which they say will be deposited in a premium account already opened in your name. They give you all the new account details and ask you to deposit the money in the new account, claiming that in doing so he fraudulent staff member will be identified. Your money immediately disappears.

The first warning should be any unsolicited telephone call, text message or email that appears to come from your bank. Hang up, delete the message! You might bank with 'Bank X' and think it might be genuine. So STOP and take one simple action.

The major banks now use a single number (159) which you can call from your phone and be connected straight to their FRAUD department. However very sophisticated scammers can hold up the phone line even if you hang up. They fake a dialling tone so when you dial 159 you end up straight back to them.

Avoid this by waiting a few minutes or by calling 159 from a different phone or call a friend's phone first and if they answer 'Barclays or whatever' you know there is a problem.

It does sound tedious but these scammers are dedicated, talented and will stop at nothing to get your money – stay alert."

As always, protect your money, stop and think before doing anything you are asked to do that sounds suspicious.

ANNI CALVER'S CHURCHYARD NEWS

April is often a lovely month, the daylight is longer, the weather a bit warmer and there's the possibility of some sunshine. The tourist season has started too. Easter is what starts it off, so is your church looking clean and tidy and welcoming to anyone who might venture through your door?

Simple things make churches welcoming, the best of all being flowers. They brighten up the building, flowers bought, wild or from your garden. Many churches now have visitor counters and contactless giving machines. The recent Heritage Lottery project provided many of them and it is paying off. Those churches have realised that many more people walk into their churches than the visitor book shows and contactless giving makes it easy for people to donate. And they do!

Shropshire Churches Tourism Group (SCTG) has lots of ideas on its website for welcoming visitors. This is also the year when, if your church is not a member, you can join. Sign up for £60 for 3 years membership. You will be featured in the next brochure which will be printed next year (2025/year 2) which will be available for 3 years. 30,000 brochures are printed for distribution around churches, visitor information centres in the County and surrounding ones, major visitor attractions where possible and any other relevant place we can think of. You will have a church page on the website: promotion on Facebook and Instagram: special events advertised widely. There are opportunities to learn more about pleasing visitors and help when you need it.

We are planning day trips to some member churches each year too.

April might also be the month you turn up to see what the Churchyard Task team are doing in a churchyard near you. It's a sociable thing to do, it's good for your health to be outside and you are contributing positively to the environment. There are lots of different tasks to do like cutting back, building habitat piles and taming the ivy to name but a few. I cannot believe that since retiring I have learned to scythe, can have a go at laying a hedge not to mention constructing a dry stone wall - not what I had planned for my retirement but what a privilege. We always like to see local people when we are working in your churchyard and cake is always welcome!

Churchyard Task Team - Dates for April

9th Burrington, 11th Ford, 16th Caynham, 18th Montford, 23rd Bromfield, 25th Kinnersley Cemetery, 30th Cressage.

Anni Holden Calver, Secretary of Shropshire Churches Tourism Group (SCTG)

www.discovershropshirechurches.co.uk

Trustee of Caring for God's Acre and Churchyard Task Team cheerleader!

www.caringforgodsacre.org.uk

How to contact the Town Council

Telephone: 01299 271154 or 07483 112290

Email: council@cleobury.org.uk

Speak to us at the Councillor Surgeries held on the third Saturday of every month in the Market Hall.

Councillor Vacancies

The Town Council currently has vacancies for two Councillors. If you have good local knowledge and are interested in our community, have good communication skills, are keen to work with community partners and can attend monthly Town Council meetings then please consider joining us. For more information, please contact us on the details above.

Annual Town Meeting

This year's Annual Town Meeting will be held at the Market Hall on Friday 19th April 2024 commencing at 6.30pm. Representatives from community groups and organisations will be present at this public meeting. This is an opportunity to find out more about what is going on in our local community and meet your councillors. Refreshments will be provided.

Councillor Surgery

Cllr Winward and Cllr Hainsworth attended the monthly Councillor Surgery held in The Market Hall, alongside the Farmers Market, on Saturday 16th March. We were visited by a number of residents who discussed various community matters including the flying of the Ukrainian Flag and vehicles being parked on pavements. If you have an issue you want to raise, you can contact the office on the details above or drop into the next monthly Councillor Surgery on Saturday 20th April.

Tree Works

We are pleased to report the tree works around the Playing Field, QE11 Park and Love Lane Play Area are now complete. Please be assured all works were completed for Health and Safety reasons following the appointment of an Arborist to undertake a survey and provide a detailed report. There are still a few outstanding jobs within the Cemetery and Churchyard which will be completed in due course.

Planters

Community gardening group Flourish and Nourish are working in conjunction with the Town Council and Cleobury Country by replanting the High Street planters with edible plants. Any perennial plants removed are being replanted throughout the town.

Grants available to community groups

The Town Council has some funding available to support local community groups based in Cleobury Mortimer. Grants are available for activities or for equipment. If you have a project or activity which would benefit from some financial support, please contact the Town Council for further information and an application form.

Dates for your Diary

Next Council Meeting - Tuesday 2nd April 2024 at 6.30pm, at Cleobury Country Centre.

Members of public are warmly invited to attend.

Annual Town Meeting – Friday 19th April 2024 at 6.30pm, at the Market Hall.

Councillor Surgery – Saturday 20th April 2024, from 10am – 12noon, at the Market Hall.

Cleobury Festival is being held on Saturday 22nd June 2024 on the Playing Field.

THE MEN'S SHED MOVES UP IN THE WORLD



Philip Dunne MP welcomed staff from Hobsons Brewery to Parliament in March, where they promoted the benefits of local Men's Sheds.

Men's Sheds are similar to garden sheds – a place to pursue practical interests at leisure, to practice skills and enjoy making and mending – but designed to be a social place, where people can build friendships, and share skills and knowledge. The concept started in Australia around 1999, before spreading across the world. There are now 1,100 Men's Sheds across the UK.

Sheds can be any space, including empty offices, portable cabins, warehouses, garages. Some Sheds are purpose-built workshops, but many don't have premises at all in the beginning and instead form a group that meets regularly for the social connection. Many Men's Sheds also get involved in community projects including restoring village features, helping maintain parks and green spaces, and building things for schools, libraries and individuals in need.

Hobsons Brewery has supported the Cleobury Mortimer Men's Shed since the launch of its new building in July 2022, shortly after which Mr Dunne visited. Hobsons have now brewed a

new alcohol-free IPA, which will launch ahead of Fathers' Day (16th June), with a donation from each bottle sold going towards the Men's Sheds movement. This includes other Men's Sheds locally in Craven Arms and Ludlow.

Mr Dunne said: "It was great to see the team from Hobsons in Parliament, promoting to MPs across the country the benefits of Men's Sheds to local communities. These Sheds are really important social spaces for men. The movement has grown rapidly using evidence that men typically have smaller networks of friends, or can struggle to find social connections, particularly later in life.

I commend Hobsons for their work supporting Men's Sheds in South Shropshire, and look forward to seeing their latest beer on the shelves."

(L to R) Tim Tempest from Men's Sheds, Philip Dunne MP, Charlie Farman, Hobson's marketing manager, Nick Davis, Hobsons Founder, and Charlie Bethel, Chief Executive of Men's Shed.



eme CLEOBURY

FACILITIES INCLUDE:

- Gym 
- Exercise Classes 
- Sports Hall 
- Outside Astro Pitch 
- Netball 
- Tennis Courts 

OPENING TIMES

MON	7.30am - 10am 10am-12.30pm GP Referral 3.30pm - 10pm
TUE	3.30pm - 10pm
WED	7.30am - 10am 4.30pm - 10pm
THU	4.30pm - 10pm
FRI	7.30am - 10am 3.30pm - 10pm
SAT-SUN	7.30am - 1pm

Pre booking not required for Gym use.
Induction or Disclaimer required
in advance of use.

CLASS TIMETABLE

MON	9.15 - 10am 6.30 - 7.15pm	CARDIO PILATES & STRENGTH BODY PUMP
TUES	9.15 - 10am 10.15 - 11am 6.15 - 7pm	YOGA YOGA TRX
WED	5.15 - 6pm 6 - 6.45pm	PILATES CIRCUITS
THU	6 - 6.45pm 7 - 7.45pm	STEP & SCULPT SPIN
FRI	6 - 6.45pm	STRETCH & RELAX

Pre-Booking required for Exercise classes
Book online or at the Centre



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www.teme-leisure.co.uk