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Underhill, Brockweir, in the early 1900s. Photo courtesy of the History Society.

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Dear Friends

Things we might learn from this strange time.

This is a very strange time for all of us and there are questions aplenty for all of us. Initially, people were asking 'why has this happened.' Now more people seem to be asking 'what can we learn?'

So, what might we learn from this time?

1. **The Beauty of Physicality.** Oh how much many of us miss human touch and gathering together! Who are you missing being close to?
2. **The pain of isolation and exclusion.** The Bible alludes a lot to the hapless state of being socially excluded. We are all getting a little insight into what some people face every day. Perhaps our human compassion will extend to others from this time.
3. **Are we people of fear or faith... or both?** A lot of church leaders are preaching and writing about living under faith and not fear, whilst taking all sensible precautions against the virus. Sadly, there are some still living in stupidity and selfishness... and putting it under the banner of faith! Sadly also, there are those paralysed by acute and chronic fear.
4. **The value of stopping and reordering our lives.** This time is forcing many to slow down and re-orientate our lives. "Be still and know that I am God." (Psalm 46:10)
5. **How unessential are so many of our essentials!** There were things we couldn't possibly live without before this crisis... but that's changed. People are re-evaluating priorities. Do I really need to do as much travel? Is GDP everything in life? Family and friends are rather important!!
6. **Creation is thriving.** Pollution is down and creation is loving it.
7. **Our fragility as human beings.** Psalm 103:15-16. "All flesh is like grass..."
8. **We are not in control.** We like to think we have everything under our control but this time is showing us otherwise.
9. **There is good and bad.** How amazing has been the community spirit, the support groups, the dedication of essential workers!!! How sad that people just have to contravene social distancing rules so they get the last flour on the shelf... just in case someone else might get it first!
10. **Where hope is to be found.** Where is hope to be found? It's a good question! What's your answer?

What are you learning from this time? Do stay safe! God bless.

David (Treharne), *Priest in Charge of St Briavels with Hewelsfield & Brockweir.*

BROCKWEIR MORAVIAN CHURCH

During the current Covid-19 pandemic, all Church services and meetings are cancelled until restrictions are lifted. However, that does not mean that we are not joining together in worship. Members and friends of Brockweir Moravian Church have a choice of 3 different services to listen to or take part in each Sunday.

SUNDAY SERVICES DURING THE LOCKDOWN

At 10.30 am each Sunday, a recorded service prepared by ministers of the British Province is published via a link on the website www.Moravian.org.uk, via the Moravian Church British Province FaceBook page or via YouTube, if you search for Moravian Church British Province. The services last approx. 30 mins and include, prayers, readings, hymns, and a short sermon.

At 3.00 pm you can join in via Zoom for a live service including members of Moravian congregations across the Western District. In addition to hymns and prayers, the readings are followed by questions for discussion. This is a longer service and is an opportunity to 'meet' others across the district.

At 6.00 pm the Brockweir Congregation hosts a live service via Zoom, and this is open to all members of our community. The service will generally follow an evening liturgy with readings from the lectionary, and some thoughts on the readings. This will last approx 30 mins and there will be an opportunity for 'conversation'.

There will also be a service via Zoom for Ascension Day at 7.00 p.m. on Thursday 21 May.

If you would like to join in with any of the Zoom services, please contact Sue Groves (susangroves@yahoo.co.uk, Tel: 07803 745913) for joining instructions. For security reasons, we are not posting the links in the public domain. If you do not have a laptop/pc/tablet with camera and microphone you can still join in the services via your telephone. Please ask for details, calls will cost between 5p – 10p per minute from a landline and more from a mobile.

Gift Day: It is our custom to hold a Gift Day collection in May/June each year to raise funds for our church. This is an essential part of our fundraising to help pay for our running costs; even during the current lock-down we still have to pay towards Minister's stipends, buildings insurance, rates, and maintenance. We know that many people are also struggling at this

time but if you would like to make a donation towards the upkeep of our church, this would be most gratefully received. Donations can be sent to our treasurer, Philip Ashton, (Herries, Underhill, Brockweir, Chepstow Mon, NP16 7NQ) or can be made direct into our Bank Account. Please contact Phillip on jaap1@waitrose.com for our bank details.

Make Your Exercise Count! If you are running short on exercise opportunities in your own home or garden, we can offer a chance for a really good work-out mowing our church grounds! At this time of year, they need mowing at least every two weeks! If you would be interested in helping out occasionally, please contact Mary Harris on 01291 689668 for information.



The current crisis is a difficult time for everyone, and it is especially hard for those suffering illnesses, bereavements and other difficulties, and having to do so without the close support of friends and family we normally take for granted. It is additionally hard for those who are still suffering the after-effects of the recent flooding. We hold all our community in our regular prayers and our minister is available if anyone wants to contact her for additional support.

May God bless us all and guide us through this time of peril.

Minister: Rev Patsy Holdsworth, 35 Quarry Way, Emersons Green, Bristol, BS16 7BN, Tel: 0117 907 8994 email:

Patsy.holdsworth@moravian.org.uk

Please note that Patsy's day off is normally on a Tuesday. Please try to only contact her in an emergency on that day.

Church Committee

Jean Green	01594 530955	Judith Ashton	01291 689572
Carol Ostler	01291 689675	Sue Groves	01291 689804
Sr Mary Harris	01291 689668	Philip Ashton	01291 689572

ST BRIAVELS CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

What does a church look like when it can't gather? What should a church do when it can't meet and the buildings stand empty? Where do we turn for hope when faced with crisis?

Maybe questions that we'd never fully considered before, but it highlights a few important ideas:

- A church is a people, a community of those who believe in Jesus, not a place.
- Christian faith is the life lived on all seven days of the week, not just church on Sunday.
- The resurrection of Jesus, celebrated at Easter, offers enormous hope that death and disease don't have the last word.

Whilst it's not the same – we miss gathering together – our services are being recorded for YouTube. They can be found with a playlist of songs on our channel: <http://tiny.cc/sbser> We would love for you to listen in.

We are so proud of our community and glad to be a part of it. A number of our members are keeping busy delivering prescriptions, providing meals, etc. If you want help, would like to talk to someone or want us to pray for you, please get in touch.

Should it be needed, our pastor, Matt, would be privileged to help you with funeral arrangements.

We hope that before too long we get to see you face to face – until then we are praying for all of you in our community.

Warmest regards,

St Briavels Congregational Church. Phone: 01594 530098

Email: Stbriavelscc@gmail.com Website: www.stbriavelscongregational.org

No face to face appointments, following government advice.

Call 01594 823927 or visit the website citizensadvice.org.uk



St Mary the Virgin St Briavels & St Mary Magdalene Hewelsfield

FROM OUR PARISH CHURCHES

At the time of writing we are still in lockdown due to the Covid-19 virus. Sadly, this means that our churches are closed for public worship and private prayer and reflection. It is still possible to access the "Little Larders" at both churches.

However, thanks to the internet it is possible to join other worshipping communities all over the country. Below are some suggestions:

Tidenham Parish Facebook page – folk from St Briavels & Hewelsfield & Brockweir are most welcome to join.

www.facebook.com/groups/114300818701466/

YouTube channel: 'Tidenham Parish Online Church'

with videos and resources to assist you in your devotions.

www.youtube.com/channel/UCkRjOlvDBT9M9usfhp2722w

Daily Morning Prayer organized by Chepstow Churches together

commencing at 9 am Mondays to Fridays via Zoom. The link is:

<https://zoom.us/j/122778377>

For those who don't have access to the internet, St Timothy's Church, Sheffield offers a telephone link to their worship: "Church by Phone" 0114 303 1731

For the latest Church of England Covid-19 guidance, which

covers all kinds of issues including weddings, baptisms and funerals,

www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre There are also some really helpful resources for prayer and worship on this website.

I am also looking to start a service of late night prayer (Compline) perhaps once or twice weekly. Once I have sorted out the IT, I will issue notices giving details.

The Little Larder - These were placed at the churches in St Briavels and Hewelsfield several years ago to provide for those who for whatever reason were experiencing difficulties in obtaining essential supplies. The contents are replenished regularly by kind donations from members of the public. These "Little Larders" can be accessed by anyone when the churches are open.

Being a Good Neighbour - In these strange and unfamiliar times, it is important that we keep an eye on and support our neighbours and the more vulnerable in our communities. (I know many of you are already). If anyone needs help, wants to let off steam or simply wants to chat, then please ring Mandy (01594 530844) or myself (01594 530443) anytime.

David Rees

ST. BRIAVELS PARISH COUNCIL

CORONAVIRUS: Information concerning COVID-19 is cascading down the various Government levels to us. The guidelines seem to be changing almost daily so it is hard to keep up. Nevertheless, currently we are keeping the cemetery and graveyard open, with signs requesting that social-distancing is maintained at all times. Please do respect this request.

We have funded and distributed a leaflet concerning volunteer help for groceries and prescriptions etc if you are unable to get out. There are various numbers on the leaflet with Parish Councillors Chris McFarling, 01594 531225, and Mike Smith, 01594 530332, available if you need help.

THANK YOU: As well as Chris and Mike, other residents volunteered to make their names and numbers available. There have been numerous offers of help. We thank everyone who has contributed. The response has been outstanding. The WhatsApp groups, the clap-for-carers, the bell ringer, the Pantry team and many other kind actions indicate what a great community we have. Finally, we thank the Village News team for their efforts during a difficult time. Communication is important at times like these, and the Village News is key to that.

BUSINESS-AS-USUAL: We have approved the regular financial commitments (including the grass-cutters who continue despite a reduced work force). We reviewed, and had no objection to, one planning application.

MAILING LIST: The Parish Council is keen to engage with as many residents as possible. If you wish to have your name added to our mailing list, please send an email to the Clerk (stbriavelsclerk@outlook.com) with 'MAILING LIST' in the subject box and the simple message "Please add my email address to your mailing list". All information will be held strictly in accordance with General Data Protection Regulations. You will receive the agenda and minutes of every meeting as well as up-to-date information on matters we consider will be of general interest, such as road closures.

NEXT MEETING: As you might expect, all Parish Council meetings are cancelled due to COVID-19. We are unsure when our next meeting will be. Please keep an eye on the Notice boards where the next meeting will be advertised.

Richard S Crighton, CiLCALocum Clerk – St Briavels Parish Council
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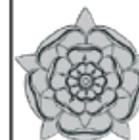
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HEWELSFIELD AND BROCKWEIR PARISH COUNCIL

The Parish Council has received legal briefings from both the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) and Gloucestershire Association of Parish and Town Councils on how it should act during the pandemic with regard to official duties. In the light of these briefings, the following has been agreed:

The Parish Council will not hold any meeting, either in person or otherwise, until Government restrictions are lifted unless an urgent matter arises. Should an urgent matter arise, we will organise meetings via Zoom, as these are now permitted following amendments to legislation. These will be advertised as normal. The reason for this is that there is no need to place any additional risk on people, ourselves or the public, and the considerations go beyond the meetings themselves.

The Parish Council is required to hold at least three meetings a year. We have already held two, and hopefully this will be over long before the year end, but if not we will assess further in due course.

Planning Applications will be 'discussed' via email and comments provided as normal. We can then officially record the comments when we do all next meet. Councillors will pay close attention to the FODDC Planning Portal to assess parishioner thoughts on any applications that come through, so we would urge all parishioners with an interest in applications to send comments through to the planning department. This will enable councillors to reflect local feelings and views. Please do not send your comments to Councillors – comments must be recorded on the planning portal.

The Government has confirmed that AGMs should not be held this year, which means that Councillor Sinfield will continue as Chair for another year.

Our annual audit (which is an audit carried out nationally by appointed agents) has been delayed until September. So year end results will not be published until after that date.

During these strange and uncertain times, Councillors will continue to deal with any queries or problems that may arise and which you bring to our attention. Business will continue as near to normal as possible.

If you need to contact the Parish Council, please get in touch with Lynda Skuse the Clerk in the first instance either by email – handbpc@outlook.com, or telephone 07974220140.

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THE COVID CLIMATE CONNECTION

Our world, let's call her 'Gaia', has an infection. That infection is spreading and compromising her restorative immune ecosystems. She has a fever as her atmosphere heats up. The increasingly frequent hurricane coughs and intense rainfall splutters are signs that she is reacting to, and trying to cope with, the disease. The infection has badly affected her lungs, with deforestation and wildfires reducing her ability to provide the oxygen she needs to breathe. The infection has polluted and poisoned Gaia's life supporting assets with air, soil and ocean contamination damaging the integrity of her web of life. The infection has multiplied incredibly quickly, with 7.8 billion infectious agents today, and reproducing at pace. We know Gaia's infection.....it's us.

Our unpreparedness for Covid-19 – a pandemic that scientists predicted would take place following the SARS 2003 experience – should teach us not to downplay or delay our 'eco'-responsibility as climate chaos fast approaches.

There are lessons we can learn from covid-19, that we can apply to the climate emergency. For, whilst thousands may die from the virus, millions will die from climate change. We must test, test and test again. We must shed light on our systems of governance, democracy and economy, which are clearly not fit for purpose as exemplified by the embarrassing buffoonery of Donald Trump.

Politicians and media cover up for an economic system which prioritises wealth above health; leaking billions in tax avoidance schemes; wasting millions on projects that benefit the few at the expense of the many and underpinning the morally corrupt practice of selling military hardware and even personnel to foster massively expensive wars whilst denying peace a chance to flourish. We must redirect these funds. As we invest in the protection of health and care workers, we must invest in protecting the environment. As we invest in the supply of ventilators and intensive care beds, we must invest in local permaculture food growing enterprises and the protection of soils.

As our exit strategy emerges, now is the time to invest in a new deal which provides jobs in the renewable energy industry, the sustainable farming sector, a natural and national health service, and community resilience with a universal basic income welfare safety net. By recreating an economy that works for everyone, we stand a chance of fulfilling our Sustainable Development Goals. By rediscovering our faith in scientists to help guide our response to the corona virus, we can use a factual evidence base to reduce global warming below a 1.5°C increase in temperature, and re-wild our earth in the process.

We are at war with a virus, with each other and, tragically, with the planet itself. We must learn from this pandemic. Let this be our education, our new mindfulness.

We must not let truth be the first casualty of war, declaring victory before wisdom is won. With 4.5 billion years of R&D to rely upon, Gaia will use one infection to fight the other. Her survival is not in question. Ours is!

Chris McFarling

OFFERS OF HELP IN BROCKWEIR AND HEWELSFIELD ARE AMAZING

The speed of responses from volunteers when a request for some assistance has gone out on the WhatsApp Yelp for Help in Brockweir and Hewelsfield has been staggering.

A request will come in with a beep, for shopping to be taken somewhere or a prescription to be picked up or maybe help needed in the shop, and literally within seconds replies come flooding in – “yes, I'll be there”, “I can help”, “I'll be up when I've washed my hands from gardening”.

We always knew we were privileged to live in the beautiful place that is Brockweir and Hewelsfield. But now we know we are the luckiest in the country to have such wonderful generous hearted neighbours.

Thank you so very much to all those wonderful volunteers!!

If anyone should need to request some assistance, please ring:

Adam Sinfield on 07834 483143 or Barbara French 07879 917699

They will then use the WhatsApp link to ask for help from whoever is available, and we will then get back to you as quickly as we can.

Barbara French

A RECONNECTING REALITY

Being social creatures, we have an instinctive need to communicate with one another. So when the government brought in lock-down measures which included social distancing, many of us took to the isolation reluctantly and with difficulty. To some, it began as a temporary holiday, an opportunity to rediscover clean air, quiet skies and the sound of bird song. For others it became a prison sentence, made all the worse for those living in flats, with no gardens and no friends to call or have visit.

However, the boom in video-conferencing technology has helped us reconnect, albeit virtually. And there is a certain delight when seeing and hearing our friends and colleagues again from the comfort of our own home.

If ever there was an opportunity to learn from the pandemic, it is that we can communicate and organise ourselves effectively without the need to waste time and money commuting, polluting the air and congesting the roads. We have reduced the need to travel in a matter of days, reducing our carbon emissions to boot. This will take a while to get used to, and there will always be a need to meet up physically, for we are humans after all. Yet if we can teach everyone to use and share these virtual facilities, equally and cost effectively, we will have changed the behaviour of society incredibly quickly.

Just goes to show what can be achieved in the face of adversity.

Chris McFarling chrismcfarling@phonecoop.coop

MOBILE MEALS

You might know that the meals service has been taken on by a new benefactor, and is called Forest Mobile Meals. Meals are being prepared in the same kitchen that Age Concern used. At present temporary drivers are delivering the meals, many of them on furlough, as most of the usual drivers are isolating.

The phone number is the same - 01594 827927"

Their email address is forestmeals@gmail.com

If have access to the internet, go to the [Forest Mobile Meals](#) website which will give you more information.

IN THIS TOGETHER – COMMUNITY MATTERS FUND

Local authorities, parish councils, charities and community groups are being encouraged to apply for extra financial support from Western Power Distribution (WPD), as the company launches its 'In This Together - Community Matters Fund'.

This £500k fund intends to support communities affected by the coronavirus outbreak within WPD's operating region, by helping local organisations to deliver vital support and services directly to people in vulnerable situations.

Phil Swift, WPD's Chief Executive, said: "I'm delighted to announce we are launching WPD's 'In This Together - Community Matters Fund'. We are establishing this with £500k to directly support community organisations working at the grassroots, helping families and our customers who need extra care throughout the coronavirus pandemic. I'm pleased that we will be able to offer much needed financial support to enable key service partners to deliver vital support to people at this time, from food drop-offs to befriending services for those living in isolation alone. We look forward to hearing from local organisations with ideas of how our funding could help them to extend their support."

Further information on the [Western Power website](#)

BROCKWEIR SOAPBOX DERBY

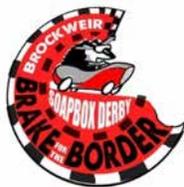
Saturday 19th September 2020

With great disappointment, the Brockweir Community Interest Company, organisers of the Brockweir Soapbox Derby, have decided to cancel the annual race that was to be held on Saturday 19th September 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Brockweir CIC would like to thank everyone for their support of the event whether as volunteers, traders, sponsors, spectators or racing teams. We hope you will be with us for our next race on Saturday 18th September 2021.

We look forward to your future support for the 2021 event. Keep safe and well.

The directors of Brockweir CIC hq@brockweirsoapboxderby.co.uk



GETTING BACK TO NORMAL

I hope everyone is coping with this surreal time of isolation and that you are staying safe and well.

If you need an idea of some things to do, how about making something to exhibit in the St Briavels Church Craft Fair in November? Hopefully, we will be able to get back to some form of normality by then. We will need our fundraising efforts even more after the Covid-19 lock-down, so hopefully our Craft Fair can be a success. This is only possible if we have our faithful exhibitors and supporters. Anyone wishing to share in this enjoyable day on Saturday, 7th November, 10am - 3pm, should get in touch with me on 01594 531096.

Please tell your friends who may not have online facilities. Many thanks.

Jean Sheraton

NOSH & NATTER

Well, it has been a strange few weeks and it doesn't seem to be ending anytime soon.

So, what have you been doing to communicate during this time of social distancing? I know some of the more technologically advanced members of our group (I do not include myself in that category!) have mastered the art of Zoom and Skype and Facetime etc, to keep in touch. Others have stuck to the tried and tested phone call or emails or texts. In whichever way you have managed to communicate, the spirit of Nosh and Natter goes on, chatting, cup of tea in hand, cake sitting on a plate beside us! But thinking firstly of others and how they are coping, and trying to offer them some comfort and society, is at the heart of our group and it certainly seems the group is living up to its reputation.

So thank you for following the government rules, thank you for thinking of others. Hopefully, we will all be able to meet again soon and admire each other's gardens which, I'm sure, have never received such love, care and time in a while – well my garden hasn't anyway!!!!

Keep well. Keep safe. Keep happy.

Pauline Siddons

ST BRIAVELS CARNIVAL

We are sad to announce that, due to current circumstances, we have decided to cancel this year's Carnival.

We will be back in 2021. Stay safe everyone - St Briavels Carnival Committee

HEWELSFIELD CHURCH TEA & CAKE AFTERNOON

Thank you to everyone who supported our Church Tea and Cake afternoon on March 14th. The event raised £235.

We look forward to seeing everyone when we are able to hold another event. Many thanks and take care everyone.

Mandy Vaughan



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NEWS FROM THE PANTRY

As we entered a second period of lock-down, Diana and I reflected on how The Pantry has had to find a completely new operating model to continue serving our community as best we can. It's been an interesting transition!

When the emergency began, we, like many others, had not really grasped the awfulness of the situation, and carried on much as usual. However, it didn't take long for us to realise that we had to do something, and fast; thus our decision to restrict entry to the shop to one customer at a time, followed a few days later by our announcement that we were closing the door and only accepting orders by phone or email, for delivery to self-isolators, the vulnerable, and others who may be unable to leave their homes. Most of our orders are now collected from outside the shop.

Transforming the Pantry into a virtual shop certainly has had its entertaining moments, most notably during the first day, as we realised that the layout of the shop didn't lend itself at all to an orderly packing operation, especially as we tried to maintain social distancing between Di, Adele and myself. A time lapse camera would have shown us performing a very strange dance as we tried to maintain 2 metres separation at the same time as darting around the shop picking and packing! However, with the arrival of a new fridge and the loan of a table, things are much more organised, and even though the average processing time is still about 24 hours per order, it's coming down. However, we're fanatical about safety, so making sure everything is clean, swabbed with antiviral and at the correct temperature is paramount, and that takes time.

On another front, we've been alarmed by some of the ridiculous price rises we've encountered at the wholesalers – broccoli and cauliflower in particular have been subject to this – and are always looking for the best deal to pass on to our customers. It may be that we'll cease to stock certain items if they become too expensive, but in general we're hoping to maintain as wide a range of stock as possible, including, we hope, cakes!

We've been really touched by all the kind words of support we've received, and these, along with all the offers of help with deliveries, have made us realise the strength and loveliness of the community we live in. So far we've coped ok, and with the stalwart support of our amazing colleagues Adele and Jill, we know we can continue almost ad infinitum, especially as we've decided to restrict our "opening hours" and days so that we can catch up with orders and admin. We'll look forward to giving you a great virtual welcome when you next place an order!

Please contact us by email stbriavelspantry@hotmail.com, and take a look at our website www.stbriavelspantry.co.uk or our Facebook site #thepantrystbriavels

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BADGER CULLING UPDATE

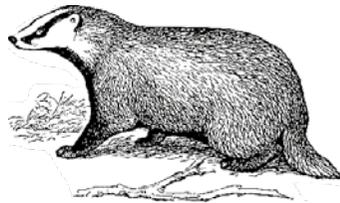
I wrote in our April edition that I would report more about the government's recent announcement of plans to 'phase out' the culling of badgers as it unfolded. Then Coronavirus understandably took centre stage.....so it has not unfolded, as far as I can ascertain. It is in indefinite abeyance and we must await 1st June and the start of the new Open Season and see what, if anything, happens.

I remember attending one Annual Badger Trust Conference when, in his closing remarks, the chairman sent us home saying 'I want you to go back to your home villages and towns and do whatever you can to endear people to badgers.' Well, my Updates are a response to his appeal helping to spread the word about the current challenge to badgers as a species (one of many they have endured historically).

Sadly I always seem to be writing about sad, bad news for badgers and hopefully arousing endearment because of their dreadful plight. Next month I will be possibly lacking any culling news again so I hope it will be an opportune time to tell a true story gleaned from study of a particular episode in the life of a local badger clan.

Fascinating, intriguing and also endearing! That is, of course, if you are a badger fan.

Keith Childs madgettsbadgers@gmail.com 01291 689319



WYE VALLEY MUSIC (ST BRIAVELS MUSIC SOCIETY)

As WVM members will know, the four concerts we had planned for April to

June have been postponed indefinitely; we're hoping to re-schedule them, perhaps some time in 2021. We have a programme planned for the autumn and winter but will obviously be keeping the evolving Covid-19 situation under review.

In the meantime, we are delighted to have received further funding from the Lark Trust for our Wye Valley Music in Schools programme, through which we organise concerts and workshops in primary schools, so we're working on plans for this too. The programme is on a small scale at the moment but we are hoping to expand it in due course

to interested schools up and down the Wye Valley

Even at the best of times, life for many of our musicians and other performing artists can be financially precarious. We are conscious of the hardship they are suffering at the present time and wish them well. Making music together in groups, singing in choirs large and small and enjoying the special thrill of live performances: these are all such an important part of life for many people. If you are feeling deprived of live music experiences you may find some consolation from the live streaming services being set up by a number of chamber groups, orchestras and concert halls. We have added a page to our website giving links to some of them www.wyevalleymusic.org.uk

A Little History

Meeting in a teashop in Monmouth in 1967, Don Eynstone and Unwin Sowter decided that it would be fun to start a little Society for performing music with their friends. Invitations were sent out to about 20 friends and acquaintances who might be interested in the idea. On the 14th April 1967, eleven people turned up at 'The Cottage', (Don and Bindy's home on Chickadee/Cockshoot Hill), and the St Briavels Music Society was born. They would meet monthly ten times a year to make music in one another's homes and also arrange two or three public concerts a year in a local church or school.

After agreeing the key posts of Treasurer and Secretary (Mrs Sowter and Mrs Eynstone respectively), and a break for coffee, it was time for the Society's first performance. Jane Brooks, who

then taught at Monmouth Boys School, played a movement of a Haydn piano sonata and a Chopin Mazurka. Mr Sowter (piano), Mr Eynstone (violin) and Mrs 'Bindy' Eynstone (voice) performed 'Morgen' by Strauss, and then Messrs. Sowter and Eynstone played a Mozart sonata for piano and violin. They were definitely in business!

Over the next few months, membership (pitched at 10 shillings and sixpence) grew steadily. At the fourth concert, held in the Old Vicarage in Hewelsfield – the home of Roy and Betty Pittman – 26 people squeezed in to hear a string quartet with some of the audience sitting on the stairs, apparently not unusual in the early days of the Society! (To be continued).

Mike Haines



PARISH GRASSLANDS PROJECT

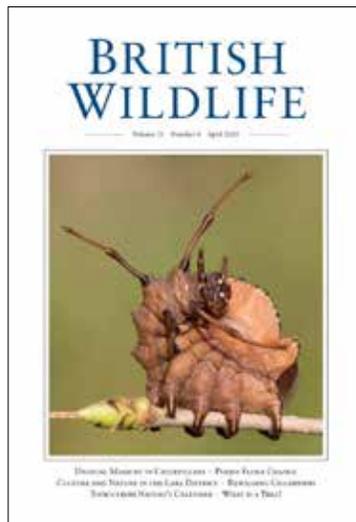
www.parishgrasslandsproject.co.uk

This month we are able to report some good news – sadly a commodity in poor supply currently. A substantial article by George Peterken and Elsa Wood about the wild flora survey of our two parishes has just been published by the prestigious journal British Wildlife. The article traces the changes in the various wild plants of the area over the last century, by comparing the results of the survey conducted over the last few years, as reported in the Village News, with the estimated tally about 100 years ago. The conclusion reached is that plants are becoming extinct locally at the rate of about 0.5 species per year, and new acquisitions are occurring at about the same rate, although some of these, such as Indian Balsam and Japanese Knotweed, are invasive.

British Wildlife is widely considered to be the UK's leading natural history magazine, followed by enthusiasts as well as professional naturalists and wildlife conservationists. Ideally, we would have liked to place the article in full on our website, but the magazine requests otherwise for the understandable reason that they need people to buy copies. We are buying copies for the committee members and a few extras, so, once we have managed to distribute them, it will be possible to read it by contacting any one of the committee directly or getting in touch via the website. George and Elsa have generously decided to donate their £400 fee for the article to the Parish Grasslands Project. And George has written a summary of the article, with photographs, which you can read on the PGP website.

We are very frustrated that our Climate Change initiative has had to be put largely on hold, just when it was up and running and the need for it has become obvious. Devastating though the coronavirus epidemic certainly is, the larger threat is still the degradation of our environment. Meantime, oblivious to lockdown and the need for social distancing, the natural world continues much as normal, and it is good to see a significant increase in the numbers of local people using our wonderful footpath network for their daily exercise.

Mike Topp



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Essential Items - The Bear Necessities.

Brothers and sisters of The Common! Listen in! I urge you, should you, like me, proudly wear the badge of venerableness, then be sure and make a list!

When kind Friends & Neighbours rang recently to ask what we really, really wanted from town, my mind went blank. Nada! I gasped wordlessly like a fish on the river bank. Listless doesn't describe it.

Now, I make it a rule, when the head goes on strike, to engage the heart and hope for the best, which is what I did on this occasion. Result? Within half a day two of the three items had arrived at our door in this order: 1. Lighter fuel. 2. Dark chocolate. And Number 3.? (Well, Burma Cheroots is a bit of an ask, even in W. Gloucestershire.)

Face it, Friends, He who hesitates over whether an item is "Essential" is lost. I mean, what need have I of a mountain of toilet tissue when in every corner of the Moucher acres a forest of Dock leaves waves in the Spring sunshine? "Crisis Management" comes in many forms.



This "Essential" question reminds me of a recording made by the late great Stan Freberg, entitled "Little Blue Riding Hood, in which a deadpan FBI agent Apprehends LBRH delivering shopping to her Grandma's cottage in the woods. He inspects the contents of her basket:

"Sawn-off shotgun, bludgeon, pack of dum dum shells. OK Ma'am, nothing suspicious here, but don't leave the Wood." But in the false bottom of her

basket he detects what he had suspected all along. – GOODIES! As he arrests her, she wails "Of course! I should have known! You look nothing like my Grandma! I forgot about the Mustache!"

Agent: "I don't have a Mustache, Ma'am. LBRH: "No, but Grandma does!"

Spring sunshine at last! And here we all are, locked down. But old habits die hard. As I trundle down the lane to collect my daily comic, I pass all the familiar posteriors of old dogwalking fubsies as they squeeze their wheelbiting charges into the hedgerow. But a new national phenomenon has emerged. As the hubbub of pre-Covid life dwindles to a murmur, shy woodland creatures are observed. Young couples leave their bijoux rural retreats. Trainer clad, youth and vigour bursting from every seam of their Lycra, they wave cheerily as they thunder past me. (Not so the obese, panting, resentful pooches trailing in their wake!)

One thing worries me. Why? oh why? When Mother Nature has turned the Valley into a tapestry of Spring splendour, must they insist upon wearing Shades? At such a season, to condemn yourself to a state of Stygian gloom seems perverse. And I worry about them. How will these poor young things ever find their way home?

One can only hope they have been Micro-chipped.

PS: 21st April. Queen's Birthday. Cuckoo heard by both Mouchers, Somewhere on The Common.

Cheer up, everyone!



The lockdown has given us more time to observe animal behaviour than usual, and one drama unfolding in our garden over the last few weeks has been fascinating.

We have a birdbox attached to our large birch tree, and for the last three years we have had a pair of great tits nest in it. The same pair each year? Probably not, though it would be nice to think so. According to the Bird Watchers Digest, certain species of birds mate for life. But it's only part of the story, as lots of monogamous bird species cheat and "divorce". Now what other species does that remind you of?

About three weeks ago we saw a nuthatch surveying the bird box. It didn't exactly have a clipboard and tape measure, but it certainly looked serious as it hopped about all over the box, pecked at it to test soundness, popped its head in the hole a



few times and generally gave it a thorough looking over. While this was going on we noticed two agitated great tits on nearby branches looking at this with alarmed expressions. OK, great tits, as far as I know, don't have facial expressions, and I wouldn't recognise them if they did, but the way they hopped anxiously about, all the time giving the nuthatch furious looks (there I go again – but you needed to be there) made it clear they were not happy.

Cut to bird box, close up: A great tit warily approaches the bird box. Hops on top,

nervously twisting its head this way and that. Perches on the edge of the hole. Carefully pops its head inside and back again a dozen times. Climbs halfway in. Then suddenly, to a rising crescendo of dramatic music, the nuthatch darts down



from the sky, knocks the great tit to the ground, follows it down, and the feathers fly. Literally. They are both fighting at the same weight, but the nuthatch has a vicious stiletto of a beak. The great tit capitulates. Round 1 to the nuthatch.

Dissolve to same scene, 1 day later. One of the nuthatches is busy daubing mud around the hole of the bird box to make the entrance smaller. She (he?) works diligently at this for a while, then flies off. A few minutes later, one of the great tits, who has been waiting patiently and unseen in the branches above, flies down and starts to busily chip away at the nuthatch's labours. It goes inside! A minute or two later it exits and flies away just seconds before the nuthatch returns. Battle averted this time.

This has been going on for three weeks now - nuthatches – great tits– nuthatches – great tits. Who will be victorious? Watch this space!

Note to self: build two bird boxes next year.

You can see a short video of some of the comings and goings by [clicking here](#).

John French

MORE TIME IN THE GARDEN!

It will come as no surprise that meetings and events planned for May and June will not now take place. We keep a constant eye on the news and information from government and will review our plans accordingly.

Meanwhile, we hope our members and all Village News readers are enjoying this wonderful Spring. Whatever kind of garden you have, enjoy it and stay safe!

IN MY GARDEN

Diversionsary Tactics

In these unsettling times, like many, the place I find most comfortable and comforting to be is my garden, where I find myself really happy and very willing to be swept along on whatever diversionsary path the plants and wildlife lead me.

I spot several volcanoes of soil in unexpected places, the excavations of my favourite tawny and ashy mining bees, and take my camera out to find and photograph them. Scanning the ground around their preferred patches of bare earth, a bee fly takes my eye, hovering like a kestrel close to the ground. I know what her game is: to find a mining bee nest and craftily flick her own egg down the tunnel. When hatched, the larva will eat the bee larvae.



A bee-fly

I'd planned to cut back Cornus and Willow by the pond but spot two red mason bees having a fight on the paving. In the greenhouse, I see an orange tip butterfly in urgent need of rescue from a spider's web. And so the day goes on until dusk arrives and I haven't worried or even thought about the dreadful virus all day. I'm grateful that my garden's diversionsary tactics keep my mind and body occupied.



An orange tip butterfly

As dusk gathers and I close the curtains, bats flit over the pond, seeking night flying insects - reminding me of other night creatures like the hedgehogs. I wonder if they're around? I think I'll just get a torch and go out for a quick look

Cheryl Cummings

WHAT TO DO THIS MONTH

After chilly nights in March and the first week of April, we were catapulted into Spring in Easter week. As I write, some much wished for rain has fallen and growth is accelerating as a result. Warming soil and lengthening days tell us to get busy in May as the year races towards peak growing time, especially for vegetables and salad crops. Busy as you will be, do review your bulb and ornamental planting and make a few notes about how it might be improved for next Spring. I guarantee you

will have forgotten your brilliant ideas by the autumn if you don't!

- Allow leaves of flowering bulbs in borders to die down naturally – hopefully hidden by the foliage of emerging perennials. Lift and divide overcrowded clumps while you can still see where they are
- Tulips grown in pots can be lifted and dried, or left in their pots and 'baked' over the summer in a sunny spot. Not all will come back next year but many will
- Aim to have tender plants, like dahlias, begonias, courgettes and tomatoes ready for life outside by the last week in May
- Wait until the roots of seed raised plants fully fill their pots before final planting – treat them a little mean to get the best flowering (and fruit)
- Refresh or replace the soil in outdoor pots, adding a slow release feed before planting summer displays
- Prune shrubs, if necessary, after flowering (but don't do major pruning where birds may be nesting)

Find detailed monthly guidance on our website www.wyegarden.com

Christine Haines

PARISH GRASSLANDS CLIMATE ACTION

PARISH GRASSLANDS CLIMATE ACTION

Over the last month, while almost all of our climate change activities have been put on hold because of the coronavirus pandemic, most of our efforts have gone into helping to set up and supporting the local volunteer networks that have emerged.

However, we have been trying to find ways to overcome the current limitations, and the energy hub has been working to deliver the planned green open homes weekend despite the need for social distancing. If you are considering updating your home heating system or making your home more energy efficient but don't know where to start, you may be pleased to hear that the energy team is organising a virtual green open homes event. It will showcase green energy systems and energy efficiency measures from local households and include useful facts and advice. You will be able to view this online with a dedicated website and there will be the opportunity to ask questions. Watch this space for further information regarding the launch date.

The energy hub is also hoping to hold a workshop on retrofit energy efficiency measures for older homes later this year. If this is something you would be interested in please contact us via the Parish Grasslands Project website to register your interest.

The Climate Action Team



NEWS FROM THE BROCKWEIR VILLAGE SHOP

It is now a month since the café closed on 18th March and the shop changed its way of operation a week later.

It remains open for custom but the only people allowed inside the building are those working there. Customers

now phone or email their orders and each is picked and packed ready for collection, normally the same day. This abrupt change was difficult at first but has rapidly become the 'new normal'.

Orders are delivered to those self-isolating by the large WhatsApp group, called Yelp for Help, that was assembled at short notice by Parish Grasslands, and the whole operation is now working smoothly, most of the time. There has been a fantastic level of support from the community, not only from Yelp for Help, but also the large number of individuals who have put their names forward to volunteer in the shop. Kris is training up as many of these new volunteers as possible, but with only 4 people allowed inside the shop this is a

Kris Vaughan-Atkins, the new Brockweir Village Shop manager, talked to The Village News about his role and the challenges the shop faces during this difficult time.

I am so lucky that the volunteers have such a vast amount of experience between them. It means I haven't really had any problems. The changes that we have had to put in place have been a fairly steep learning curve, but everyone has really stepped up to help keep the shop open.

The main thing is that local people can still get groceries from us. Customers can put an order into the shop via phone or email and we prepare the order for collection or local delivery. In order to minimise risk, we have closed the shop to customers and put a limit on how many volunteers we can have in the shop at any one time. The volunteers are all getting good at maintaining a safe distance from each other – during a busy shift it looks like a complicated line-dancing class in the shop!

slow process, with everyone keeping at least 2m apart. It is greatly affirming to see such a large proportion of the community willing to help, thank you.

We miss seeing those who are self-isolating, but the phone, Zoom and Messenger helps keep the connection.

Our range of products and levels of stock have been affected by the well-advertised shortages of some products, but those who deal with our suppliers have been really good at tracking down most of the missing items, so the need for substitutions is now much reduced. Demand for a few items has increased; we have sold a lot of flour. Stock levels are now normally very good, and our suppliers are making regular deliveries again.

Our AGM was originally scheduled for 24 April but is being postponed, as we cannot hold the meeting that our association rules require.

Peter Stickland

Our stock is nearly back to normal now, although some things are still proving unreliable, such as cereal, flour and yeast – though we have managed to source large bags of flour which we then split into smaller bags. It's been a real problem-solving exercise for us all.

Our local suppliers have been by far the most reliable; in several cases they have been able to supply alternatives where our larger suppliers have failed to do so.

The staff and volunteers have been incredible. Alan had to go into isolation, but he has been working remotely to make sure the place continues to run smoothly, with Steve and Ferne taking some of the pressure off the volunteers.

The committee have continued to meet via video conferencing to offer guidance and solutions to any problems that arise, while the existing volunteers have been taking on loads of extra shifts to keep us providing for the community.

Within the first week of the crisis we had about 30 new volunteers come forward to help us through this trying time, with the total number of people offering to help now close to 60. It shows how valued the shop is as a community asset; the moment people had free time they offered it to us to help out in a time of need. It's one reason I am sure the shop will be able to sustain itself until we come out the other side

I think the volunteers are happy to be doing something to help their community in a stressful time. It is easy to dwell on the current situation when you aren't busy; hopefully having a focus will go some way to helping with that.

The really touching story is that the shop didn't need to ask for help from the community when the crisis started, it was offered before we needed to.

The shop was featured on Countryfile on Sunday 26th April. If you missed it, you can see it on BBC iPlayer

We are open for orders 7 days a week, taking orders between 9am and 3.30pm Monday to Saturday and 10-12 on a Sunday. Phone 01291 689995 or email orders@bandhvillageshop.co.uk

You can view and download the current stocklist by [clicking here](#).

Note that not all the items listed are guaranteed to be available at any one time.



Kris with (L to R) volunteers Jo, Julie and Hilary

ART IN THE CAFÉ

With every negative there is usually a positive.... so with that in mind I will proceed to tell you what we hope will go on with the Art Exhibitions once the restrictions of 'Lock Down' are over. Sadly, we had to cut short Mariana Robinson's show of bright paintings after only one week, but we hope to reschedule her for later in the summer.

The next dates we feel might be safe to publish will be 8th JUNE - 19th JULY when young artist Connor Medford-Hawkins who lives in Brockweir will be showing his unique and experimental work. We look forward to that!

In the meantime we have a project for you all!

Many artists are using this fallow period to progress in new directions uninterrupted by 'normal' daily distractions and are finding it productive. Indeed Brit artist, Damien Hirst (famous for his Shark in a Tank amongst other things!) has been developing a new painting involving the 'Rainbow' theme, which will be sold in print form with proceeds to charities, whilst David Hockney is locked down in the South of France painting amidst the Cherry blossom and says he has never felt happier.



Are you looking for a diversion from more endless gardening, walking, cooking and being on the computer? We are challenging the residents of Brockweir, Hewelsfield & St Briavels to MAKE ART! Once you get going I'm sure you will love it - and after normality returns we will have a Café Walls exhibition of what you have made, with a proper Preview Reception Gathering :)

So: any 2 dimensional work is acceptable, not larger than A1, (841mm x 594mm / 33.1ins x 23.4ins) You could work on paper, cardboard, any piece of wood/ board or fabric/ canvas. It's up to you, just use what you have. If you really want to get specialist materials, Jackson's Art Supplies will do online orders from their Gloucester warehouse. But household emulsion works, especially all those little Match pots we all seem to keep. Charcoal from your bonfire! Collage from old papers. Paint, draw, scratch, stitch, figurative or abstract. Paint your garden, your family members, the dog, even your emotions at being isolated; let your creative side out, even if you think you don't have one JUST DO IT!

You have until 1st June to send in a photo of your pieces with dimensions please. Enjoy yourselves!

Jacqui Trefgarne info@newleafgallery.co.uk



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ST BRIAVELS WI

UPDATE FOR APRIL 2020

We have now missed 2 monthly meetings due to the crisis. During these difficult times, like many other organisations, we have had to adapt how we communicate and remain in contact with everyone. The committee members are taking it in turn to provide a weekly update to members. They have excelled themselves in this task, providing thoughtful and often funny, creative articles which have been uplifting. We have our own Facebook page, which more people have joined and used in the crisis. Social media has many negative aspects but in these times it has become a bonus in terms of staying in contact with family and friends and remaining connected to the outside world

We have continued with the Book Club, albeit in a virtual form and this seems to be working well. Several of us have been watching and enjoying the live showings from the National Theatre and other live performances, including the weekly Saturday live performances on the Brockweir, Hewelsfield and St Briavels Facebook group.

We have continued to provide a monthly contribution to the Foodbank. This month, we also collected craft materials which are then being distributed to vulnerable families who are struggling to entertain their children during this period of lockdown. The Foodbank has had to adapt its service in response to the crisis and, apart from one collection point at Lydney Town Hall, it is now delivering most of the food parcels. Due to various reasons the Foodbank has had a reduction in contributions and it is also now struggling to buy sufficient food. The Foodbank has an organised, efficient system in place, ensuring that food is provided to people in the most need, so please try and support them. Details of the Foodbank can be found at <https://theforest.foodbank.org.uk>.

At a National level, the Women's Institute continues its work and campaigning. One of the current campaigns is to encourage more women to attend cervical screening, which is at a 21 year low. There is a particular low level of take up of cervical cancer screening amongst young women, even though the most common cancer in women under the age of 35 years is cervical cancer. As part of the campaign, the National WI are asking women to register to take part in a survey. The survey is open to all women and you do not have to be a member of the WI to participate. To sign up for the survey please use this link www.thewi.org.uk/s/cervicalscreeningresearch

In non-corona virus times, St Briavels WI meets on the 3rd Wednesday in the month at 7.30pm in the Pavilion. New members are always welcome

We wish all the community well. Stay safe and healthy.





BROCKWEIR EVENTS AT MACKENZIE HALL



Well it looks like we are going to be locked down until the VE Day holiday at the earliest; so there will be no events in May. This is the month we normally get information from Air in G about forthcoming acts in the autumn and spring at an evening event in one of the member village halls. I expect this event will not take place now, and the information will be passed electronically via the website. Once it is, I will post it in the Village News so that you can let me know if any acts appeal for the autumn or spring. This obviously assumes we have survived the pandemic and will all be let out to play by then.

I have already booked two acts for the autumn.

Friday 30 October. Paper Moon. www.papermoonband.co.uk

These are a 5 piece swing jazz band based in Bristol so should have a wide appeal, both to listeners and dancers. We will give more information nearer the time.

Saturday 28 November. Sarah McQuaid www.sarahmcquaid.com

A welcome return for Sarah, an Irish American singer songwriter based in West Cornwall, who last performed at the Mac some 5 years ago to great acclaim.

If you are at a loss for things to entertain you in lockdown, can't get Netflix and are fed up with box sets and endless re runs, there are many online events taking place. A number of plays are being streamed by National Theatre Live, Hampstead Theatre and others. The Royal Opera House is also streaming opera and ballet performances. Folk on Foot produced a Front Room Festival on Bank Holiday Monday from 2pm until 10pm and featured an amazing range of folk artists, including Sam Lee who performed at the Mac Hall a few years ago. You may also remember Ninebarrow, a male duo who performed at the Hall exactly two years ago. They are running a free online gig on Saturday 2nd May at 7pm. www.ninebarrow.co.uk.

Needless to say, many musicians of all genres are experiencing severe financial hardship leading up to the summer festival season and it remains to be seen if any music festivals will be operating. Not to be deterred, they are experimenting with apps such as Zoom and Houseparty so that they can get together online, play music together and find a way to generate income. It's a whole new world and worth exploring, but not quite the same as a live show..

When I look at what is happening in the world in general and the UK in particular, I give thanks that despite the rigours of lockdown we are extremely fortunate to live in a special place and have such beauty surrounding us.

Adrian Birch

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This is a special Covid19 edition of the Village news designed for the web.

We anticipate continuing to publishing the Village News this way during the ongoing situation. Please pass the link on to friends and neighbours: www.villagemag.co.uk/online

The web and email links should work on most people's devices, but if you find any that don't or you are having problems, please email online@villagemag.co.uk

The **June** issue deadline is midday on **Tuesday 19th May**
(Adverts and boxed events to be submitted the Friday before)

Editorial: all contributions should be sent to: editors@villagemag.co.uk, or contact any of the Committee Members:

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Babs Bergdahl	01594 530623	Joyce McKay	01291 689910

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Views expressed within 'Village News' are those of individual contributors, and are not necessarily those of the magazine or its committee members. We reserve the right to amend, edit or refuse any articles.

Advertising: all requests should be sent to: advertising@villagemag.co.uk

Classified: 3-line adverts £3 per month – Display: 1/4 page adverts (A7) £5 monthly, minimum of 3 months. Advertising subject to availability and adverts must be paid for before printing. All cheques payable to: Village News.

Magazine subscriptions: take out an annual subscription for £3.60 by calling Sally Secrett on 01594 530539, email: subscriptions@villagemag.co.uk

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Parish Grasslands Project	www.parishgrasslandsproject.org.uk
St Briavels Assembly Rooms	www.st-briavels.com
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