



“THE MORCHARD MESSENGER”

THE INDEPENDENT VILLAGE NEWSLETTER

www.morchardnet.org.uk

No. 190

April 2011

SPONSORED THIS MONTH BY THE MEMORIAL HALL COMMITTEE



CELEBRATING 80 YEARS OF THE MORCHARD BISHOP MEMORIAL HALL

The foundation stone for the Morchard Bishop Memorial Hall was laid exactly 80 years ago on 6th May 1931 and the hall was ready for its first big function in November of that year. Dr Charles Pratt M.D. spent many years raising money to erect the hall, along with Morchard Bishop British Legion members, whose idea it was to dedicate the hall as a memorial to those who died during World War I.

I was born in the village in 1949 and my first memories of the hall are going to the newly formed youth club every Thursday. (On one of those evenings I went home with a split lip from a boxing tournament - but you should have seen my opponent!) Mischief was rife in those days and I remember that, being one of the younger members, I had to keep watch while the older boys played snooker on the new table in the top room. Oh yes, and another game they played with girls but being only seven at the time I didn't know what it was until much later! (Oh those bad, bad boys and girls!!)

In the early eighties, the hall came very close to closing down. It was in a bad state of repair and almost unfit for use, so the good old Morchard spirit was called upon to get the building modernised and, with a team led by the then chairman, Mr Frank Yendell, a modernisation plan was put into action. All the local village builders joined forces, freely giving their time to do the many technical jobs, while others dealt with the remedial work, thereby turning this building into what it is today. However, I feel this would not have been achieved if it wasn't for Frank Yendell who worked tirelessly right through this time of the hall's life.

Over the years money has been raised in many ways, including grants, show productions, dances and bingo; also, thanks to a lady's brilliant idea of holding coffee mornings every Saturday. This lady, Mrs Barbara Elliott, raised hundreds and hundreds of pounds for the hall. She sadly passed away recently after a long illness.

Unfortunately, as with all older properties, this lovely hall constantly has on-going maintenance requirements and higher-than-ever running costs and, although the bank account is quite healthy, it is necessary to continually fundraise to keep the hall open for you good people of Morchard. **So Come to our functions and coffee mornings - see how we do it, and if you are really interested you might consider helping us with ideas of fundraising or being a committee member. Membership is free and we usually have fun planning and organising the various events. Our Annual General Meeting is on Tuesday 10th May at 7.30pm in the hall, so please come along and see if you can contribute in any way - big or small - to keeping this excellent village venue up and running for the next 80 years!!**

Anton Heal, Chairman 01363 877406



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theWI

MORCHARD BISHOP W.I.

The March W.I. meeting was well attended. Matters discussed were – the birthday lunch venue, a summer strawberry tea garden party, the Spring group meeting and group social events plus a variety of notices. President Angie Williams introduced Mr. Mike Date from the Devon Air Ambulance Trust who gave a history of the involvement of the DAA, initial fund raising starting in 1986 and the first helicopter being operational in 1992. There are now two, one at Exeter the other at Barnstaple. Half of Devon county can be reached within five minutes and anywhere in 20. If people needing assistance had a true grid reference to relay, this would be of enormous help to those operating the service. Many questions were asked and he was thanked by Fenella Rundell. The Flower of the month competition produced some delightful specimens this time with Sue Pluckwell 1st and Shirley Pope 2nd. The April meeting will in fact be the birthday lunch on the 6th at the Fisherman's Cot.

Jean Wiltsher

MORCHARD BISHOP W.I.

Will be holding an "EASTER CRAFT STALL" at the Coffee Morning in the Memorial Hall on Saturday April 2nd and again at the "Table Top" on the following Saturday 9th April (providing we have enough "stock" left to sell)

We have made all sorts of items for sale, based on an Easter theme. We have items suitable for Mothers Day too and many more useful articles made by our good ladies.

Please come along and support us, have a coffee and a chat and see what we have to sell.

It starts at 10.00 am till 12 noon.



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PUDDINGTON VILLAGE HALL

EASTER COFFEE MORNING AND SOCIAL
10.00 am Sat 16th April
Cake & Produce Stall, Bric-a-brac, Cards
Lucky Dip for the Children
Entrance 50p Children Free
PROCEEDS TO THE VILLAGE HALL REFURB.



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VILLAGE NOTICES

ST. MARY'S CHURCH

Services in April

April	3	10.00	Mothering Sunday - Morning Prayer. Worship Group
April	10	10.00	Passion Sunday - Common Worship Eucharist
April	17	10.00	Palm Sunday – Book of Common Prayer. Holy Communion
April	22	10.00	Good Friday – Joint Service with Emmanuel Methodist Church. Procession through the Village to the Chapel
April	24	18.00	Easter – Common Worship Eucharist

PLEASE NOTE: There are a few alterations to the usual pattern and times of services.

**MORCHARD BISHOP
MEMORIAL HALL**

Table Top Sale Saturday 9th April
10 am to 12.00 noon

Tea, coffee, toast and bacon baps.

Books. Household Goods, Home Made Cakes, organic free range eggs and lots more.

Come and visit us for bargains galore
To book a table ring Sonia on 877349

For Hall Bookings

Please contact Carol Hutchings on 01363 877259

EMMANUEL METHODIST CHURCH

Services in April

April	3	11.00	Bible Class – Family Service
		18.00	No service
April	10	11.00	S. Schofield - Family Service
		18.00	E100 Challenge
April	17	11.00	Rev J Budd – Family Service
		18.00	C. Hutchings
April	22	10.00	Good Friday – Meeting at St. Mary's to proceed to Emmanuel
April	24	11.00	Easter Sunday – R. Sambles – Family Service
		18.00	Circuit Service - Spreyton



**WOMEN
OF MORCHARD**

You are invited to a meeting on
Monday 4th April at 2.30 pm

in the Emmanuel Church Lower Room
when we will welcome Peter Brewer as our speaker.
He will be speaking about his years as a policeman in
Devon and Cornwall.

There will also be a time for tea, coffee, chat, exchange of
news, stories, etc.

ALL WELCOME

Phone 877501 or 877209 if you need a lift

COFFEE MORNINGS 10:00 – 11:30 ish

Saturday	2	W.I. (Craft Stall)
Saturday	9	Table Top Hall Committee
Saturday	16	Chapel
Saturday	23	EASTER

APRIL 2011 DIARY DATES

Sat	2	20.00	MBFC	Sports Club	Race Night
Mon	4	14.30	W.O.M.	Emmanuel Church	P.C. Peter Brewer (Police)
Tue	5,12, 19, 26	10.00	Emmanuel Church	Lower Room	Coffee Mornings
Wed	6		W.I.	Fisherman's Cot	84 th Birthday Celebration
Wed	6	19.30	Gardening Club	Memorial Hall	"Very Berry", Lori Reich
Sat	9	10.00	Memorial Hall	Memorial Hall	Table Top Sale
Sat	9	10.00	MBLPM	London Inn Car Park	Produce Market
Wed	13	10.30	Welcome Club	London Inn	Easter Coffee Morning
Mon	18	19.30	Morchard Maids	London Inn	"Neuro Linguistic Programming", Andrew Staniford
Tue	19	19.30	Sports & Social Club	Sports Club	AGM
Wed	20	09.00	Welcome Club	Outing	Endsleigh Garden Centre, Lee Mill & Bovey Tracey
Sat - Tue	30 to 3 May	-	Twinning Association	Visit	Visit from St. Gatien des Bois

PLEASE NOTE: The diary of events in the parish is maintained by Helena Sykes, 16, Old Rectory Gardens, Tel 01363 877434, email heli.col@btinternet.com who will record events up to 6 months in advance. If you are planning an event please let her know to ensure this does not clash with another function.

YOUR PARISH COUNCIL



PARISH COUNCIL ELECTIONS

5th May 2011

As reported in last month's Morchard Messenger, we have invited everyone intending to stand for election, to submit brief details about themselves and their interests in our village in order to let the Morchard Bishop electorate know just a little bit about who is standing

The following twelve candidates have submitted information as requested, which is reproduced here.

Cousins, Liz: I have lived in Morchard Bishop for 6 years now, but am a local Devon girl! I am married and have 3 lovely children that attend Morchard and Chumleigh schools. I have family that live in Morchard, so the village is very important to me.

I think we are very lucky to live in such a friendly community and I enjoy involving myself in the village activities. I have also set up a Netball Team in the village which I captain and which now has a very good following.

I have put myself forward for the Parish Council as I would like to contribute more to the village and feel that I have a good knowledge of what our village needs are.

Davies, Keith: I have lived in this wonderfully friendly village of Morchard Bishop for 10 years and have been a Parish Councillor for the last 4 years and Chairman for 3 years. I am the Council representative on the Memorial Hall committee, a Member of the Gardening Club and have also been Editor of the Morchard Messenger for 7 years. This year I am President of the Rotary Club of Crediton.

I am a Civil Engineer working from home as a Consultant and Technical Director for a large international consultancy and also a Visiting Professor in Coastal Structures at Plymouth University.

I am married to Christine, have two sons who have long flown the nest and live with their families in Calgary and The Netherlands.

Field, Roger: Having lived in the village for eleven years I would like to help represent residents' views on village issues. I feel it is important that village life and character is maintained in a way that we all can support.

I am a member of the Gardening Club and also as a Memorial Hall Committee member I play a part in various village activities.

Gilbard, Sarah: A lot of you will know me as the lady with the two dogs and very long leads, but I am actually Sarah from the Pub, who has now lived and worked there with my Mum, Vera, for 18 years. Prior to this I was born and brought up just outside the village on a farm. I attended the primary school here and played sports for the local teams.

I have enjoyed village life throughout and I would like it to continue so that families can be raised in a safe and enjoyable environment as I have. We can then say that we have a village we are proud to live in.

Grant, David: I am 54 years old. I was born at Northwood Farm, Morchard Bishop where I have lived all my life farming sheep and cows until 12 years ago when we sold the cows and I diversified into other areas including driving 2 days a week for M C Kelly Ltd. I have been pleased to serve the Parish as a Councillor for the last term of office and in the past I have been a school governor at Morchard Bishop Primary School and Chumleigh Community College. I was involved in Devon Christian Youth Camps for 20 years, many of which I had the honour of serving as Chairman. I am a local Preacher and a Circuit Steward in the Methodist Circuit which includes Morchard Bishop. I am pleased to support progress and development in our Parish as long as it is appropriate to our village and surrounding area's needs.

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Continued on next page:

PARISH COUNCIL ELECTIONS

5th May 2011

Heath, Nick: Aged 50yrs I was born in Morchard Bishop and except for a short break when I was at Primary School have lived here all my life. My family can be traced back in Morchard since 1756 and members of my family have lived here every year since, I have been married for 25 years and my three daughters all attended Morchard School, I have played Football for Morchard and captained the Cricket team for several years before it ceased in the 1990s
I am a Private Investigator which I have been for over 30 years being a director of an Exeter Detective Agency for 20 years and running my own business from home for the last 10 years.

Hinchliffe, Jan: Over thirteen years ago I came to live in Morchard Bishop with my husband Ken. I originate from Sheffield where I had lived for over 50 years and brought up my family of 3 sons. I was fortunate to have had a father who had enjoyed a rural younger life and he passed on to me his love and understanding of the countryside.
I have worked for several years in commerce and have also been a primary school teacher where I was elected to the Board of Governors. For several years I attended and was a trustee and warden at a small Unitarian Chapel where Ken and I were married.

My interests include walking, gardening, painting, bowling and enjoy attending the village Gardening Club (I ran the Flower Festival for 4 years), Bowling Club (ladies captain last 2 years), Bridge Group and usually effect a display at the Church Flower Festival. I attended to the planters at the War Memorial for 10 years until last year when I felt no longer able to manage them.

I have always felt Morchard Bishop and especially its residents, to be special and have unique qualities, especially of friendship. I have been working with my fellow Councillors for the last 4 years to preserve the quality of life we are privileged to enjoy here.

Parkhouse, Dawn: I have lived in Morchard for 47 years, I am married to Charles, and mum to Jack. In the past I have been chairperson of Morchard Bishop Primary School P.T.A, treasurer of Morchard Bishop Football Club. Present time I am on the committee of the church, a member of Morchard Maids and I still support the football club by doing half-time teas at home games.

Partridge, Les: I am 49 years old and run a dairy farm business with my family in Morchard Bishop. I am an active member of Emmanuel Methodist Church, where I am a steward and have previously been involved with various youth work and also belong to the Churchyard Committee at St Mary's.

I feel closely connected to our village primary school through my wife Caroline's employment there, through the positive experiences of our three daughters who attended and in the course of my own years as a School Governor. This association has taught me that a thriving, vibrant school is central to the life of our village.

For the past 16 years, I have been entrusted with the role of Parish Councillor. Should I be successful in serving in this position for a further term, I will continue to take a full part in the life of this village and to seek the best for Morchard Bishop.

Snell, John: I have lived in the village for 26 years. I have been married to my wife Eira for 48 years and have 3 children and 4 grandchildren. I have been retired for 6 years from farming and HGV driving.

I have played bowls for Morchard Bishop for the last 22 years and I am Captain of the London Inn skittles team. I also help the ladies who run the Welcome Club by putting up tables, washing up and anything else that's needed.

I enjoy living in Morchard Bishop and would like to see the Post Office and shop stay open.

Valder, Ross: I am married to Dr David Valder and have the grand total of 5 children. We have lived in the village since 2005 and since then I have become involved in many aspects of village life such as the preschool, social and sports club, WI and book group in the last 6 years. In 2009 I became a foundation Governor at the school as I wanted to help the school grow, adapt and change for the future needs of the children and the local community. Before taking time out of my career to raise my children I worked in customer services with qualifications in business and Public Relations. Positions which require a high level of organisational skills, diplomacy and understanding of human nature. My reasons for wanting to run for the parish council are simply that I want to help enhance the quality of life within Morchard Bishop and it's environs and to become more involved in shaping the village for the future and aiding it's long term prosperity. We love living in Morchard Bishop, it has given my family a safe place to grow, a wonderful community spirit and a fantastic quality of life.

Yendell, Frank: I have lived all my 61 years at Wood Barton, helping to run our dairy farm with my family. I have served on our Parish Council for 24 years and was chairman of our village hall committee for around eleven years. I am on our Church yard committee and was a parent governor at our school.



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HELP WANTED

Two volunteers are being sought to
take over running the **Memorial Hall
Table** at the monthly Table Top
Sales.

Is anybody interested in adopting this
role when Maureen and Pat give it up
in the near future? If there are two of
you, one can manage the task alone
if the other is unavailable from time to
time!

If you are interested, please contact
Jo on **01363 877224**



“CELEBRATIONS”

FLOWER FESTIVAL

10TH TO 12TH JUNE

Do you enjoy flower arranging?
Anything from a small posy to a
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If so, the organisers of the Flower
Festival would be delighted to hear
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Please contact
Anne Jones (877225)
or Mo Sparrow (877350)

(a monetary contribution is made towards the
cost of the flowers)

To the Gardeners!

As there will also be a plant stall
during the Festival, please consider
potting on any spare plants or
perhaps planting a few extra to be
sold that weekend. Thankyou.

St.Mary's Church, Morchard Bishop

“THE MORCHARD MESSENGER”



**The deadline for
articles, adverts
and notices for
the next issue
is:**

The 15th April

The Editors retain the right to
reject, edit, alter or correct
articles which are sent in for
publication.

Copy should be sent
preferably by E- mail to
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but may also be left at Morchard
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Morchard Bishop Sports & Social Club

Annual General Meeting

Tuesday 19th April 2011

The Sports Club
All Welcome

Angie Brimicombe

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MORCHARD MAIDS W.I.

Lynn Askew and Marilyn Daw came to the February meeting of Morchard Maids WI and gave a talk on the important work of the Devon branch of the Womens Food and Farming Union (WFU). The WFU's strength lies in the fact that it is the only organisation committed to:- promoting demand for British produce; encouraging farmers and growers to practise better marketing; ensuring British produce is available and well promoted and lobbying against unfair competition. The meeting was shown a DVD of different food production methods and techniques, which is shown as part of an education initiative to primary schools in the area. There followed a question and answer session and some interesting discussion about the increasing spread of TB in the west country. The UK has the highest incidence of bovine TB in Europe and the developed world, and it is for this reason the Devon WFU has produced a number of information leaflets, some given out at the meeting, relating to this very important issue, which can also be accessed from their website.

Frances Anson

CELEBRATION FOR THE ROYAL WEDDING

FRIDAY, 29TH APRIL 2011

Unfortunately, due to various circumstances it has been decided not to organise a special village event. Several notices have appeared in the Messenger regarding a village celebration and asking for ideas and help. Sadly, no offers or help have been forthcoming. It would therefore, appear that there is no interest in an organized event. We were hoping that we could enjoy celebrating the Wedding day and also raise some money for the Devon Air Ambulance. We hope to raise money for the new helicopter at another event later this year. Let's hope we can get some help and support.

The M.B. Charity Fund Raising Group.

THE END OF AN ERA ?

After some 12 years as our Parish Clerk, Bob Davies is retiring with effect from 1st April.

Bob has, during his tenure, had a strong guiding hand on the affairs of our Parish Council. His advice on all matters has been based not only on knowledge of how Council matters should be conducted but also very strongly on a practical and reasoned approach. His contacts and open approach to our District Council, County Council and statutory bodies has been invaluable.

His monthly article "Parish News" has always been incisive, to the point and with a touch of humour. Above all it was individual – almost a trademark of Bob's!

One thing that cannot be doubted is that Bob has always had the best interests of Morchard Bishop at heart.

Bob, we thank you and wish you and Maureen all the very best in the future.

and we wish Bob Patten every success as your successor!

BOW YFC are holding a quiz and carvery in aid of Devon Air Ambulance.

9th April, at The Countryman, Sandford Courtenay EX20 2SA

7.30pm - 8pm start with food at 8.00pm

Teams of 4, £12 each.

PLEASE PRE-BOOK TEAMS, CONTACT HANNAH ON 07742459931

*Hannah Palfrey
Secretary Bow YFC*

Grahame A'court

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LETTERS



We welcome articles and letters. However we would like to point out that the views expressed are those of the writer and not necessarily the views of The Morchard Messenger.



While we may, albeit somewhat reluctantly, withhold names upon request, we regret that we will NOT publish letters that are submitted anonymously.

Ed.

Dear Editors,

I would like to know whether any Freeview users in the Chulmleigh Road area have been experiencing difficulties with the BBC transmissions. All BBC stations have been lost at fairly regular intervals on my receivers. It seems apparently to be a transmission fault, but the BBC have no knowledge of this and it would be helpful to know if others have the same problem. I am at present receiving BBC on Channel 28, which is normally the only good BBC signal, showing approximately a 75% value.

If you are having the same problem, please contact me by email at lmlw@safetyfocus.eclipse.co.uk or on 01363 877422.

Many thanks

Mike Whitehouse

Dear Editors,

While wishing Bob Patten well in his new role as Parish Clerk, I feel a vote of thanks is due to Bob Davies for all the hard work he has put in over many years. His reports have been well informed, concise and above all have often had a smattering of humour, so much so that his has been the first thing I have read each month in the Morchard Messenger. Thank you Bob.

Maddy Tarrant

MORCHARD BISHOP TWINNING ASSOCIATION

There will soon be a visit to Morchard Bishop by our friends from St Gatien des Bois. They will arrive late evening on Saturday 30th April 2011 and return home on the morning of Tuesday 3rd May 2011.

We are preparing a programme of events for their visit. This will start with the usual games and sports at the Sports Club on Sunday morning followed by lunch with the host families. On Monday the hosts will be taking their French visitors on a guided tour of Historical Exeter with the Exeter Redcoats. This will be followed by lunch at the Mill on the Exe. The day will culminate in a dinner at the Memorial Hall on the evening of Monday 2nd May 2011.

Please look out for posters around the village nearer the time for details.

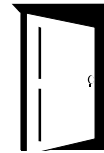
All are welcome to the dinner but tickets will be limited.

*Phil Bourne
Chairman*



Crocuses planted in St. Gatien's Garden by The Twinning Association as part of Rotary Thanks for Life campaign for the worldwide eradication of polio.

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**MORCHARD BISHOP WALKS
2011
SPRING WALK**



DATE & TIME – Sat. 2nd April at 2pm
MEETING POINT – Morchard Bishop School Car Park
TYPE & LENGTH of WALK – This depends on the weather conditions. There may be some stiles and some hills. Exact route to be decided closer to the time. The walk will be for about 1½ to 2hrs.

For further information or any other queries about the local footpaths and bridleways please contact – Julie Rudge on 877528

**MORCHARD BISHOP POST OFFICE AND
VILLAGE SHOP
Customer Questionnaire**

Thank you for the support that so many of you have shown in completing and returning the questionnaire about the Post Office and Village Shop.

We will let you know as soon as we have some news about the future of the business. In the meantime we appreciate your continuing support.

Steve Carter (proprietor)

POTHoles

DEVON County Council has welcomed the Government announcement of extra cash for pothole repairs.



Local authorities have yet to be informed of the share they will receive from the £100 million earmarked to deal with winter damage caused to the nation's roads.

The County Council received £3.6 million last year in a similar Government handout. That was part of £11 million spent by Devon last year on reactive repairs and resurfacing of highways damaged by the severe weather of last winter.

A record number of almost 200,000 potholes were fixed on Devon's 8,000 mile road network in 2010, compared with 40,000 in 2009.

Stuart Hughes, DCC Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation said "Repairing potholes remains an uphill battle in our county, simply because we have more roads to maintain than any other authority in the country, so a fair share of this money is much needed in Devon. We would hope to get at least the same, if not more than the £3.6 million we received last year. Whatever the amount, it will be spent wisely and will be put to good use in Devon."

Devon County Council has earmarked more than £7 million to be spent on pothole repairs for the coming financial year as part of its ongoing repair programme.

Potholes and safety defects on the county's roads can be reported online at www.devon.gov.uk or by calling 0845 155 1004.

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GARDENING CLUB

THE RESTORATION OF HESTERCOMBE



A well attended meeting to hear David Usher the head gardener at Hestercombe until 2004. The talk dwelt far more on the gardens and grounds than on the house itself, which is not open to the public. David began by sketching the history of the property that is mentioned in the Domesday Book.

The present house was originally built in the 16th Century for the Warre family but it was not until 1873 that the property passed into the hands of the Portman family who continued in ownership until 1944. Many alterations to the house were made by the Portmans and the gardens and grounds were developed at their behest by Edward Lutyens and Gertrude Jekyll. In 1944 the property was sold to the Crown Estates in lieu of death duties and in 1973 was acquired by Somerset County Council. By this time the formal gardens were very run down and with the help of the Fire Brigade, now occupying the house, initiated what was to become one of the first major restorations in the country. The lakes that had become completely silted up were dredged removing 17,000 tons of silt and the Cascade re-opened in 1997. Since that time the gardens have been jointly managed by Hestercombe Garden Project and Somerset County Council.

The main features of the gardens have now been secured but the work of restoration and rebuilding of small pavilions in the grounds will go on for many years. The Victorian garden and terrace were re-opened in 1998 with a restored fountain and formal bedding scheme. David's talk included personal anecdotes of successes and failures and included far more information than could be gathered in a day visit to this elegant property.

At the close he answered questions from members and after tea and biscuits and a farewell "Thank you" left the audience in good spirits.

*Colin Carrington
Chairman*

WOMEN OF MORCHARD

Our meeting this month took a new form in the shape of a cookery demonstration. Colin Sykes, aided by his wife Helena, told us about his background in bakery and confectionary. With ready baked sponges and cupcakes he deftly iced and decorated both simple and more elaborate birthday cakes.

One was done with 'royal' icing (don't forget the glycerine!) and one in Australian 'roll out' icing. He showed us how to make fondant roses and how to make forcing bags from greaseproof paper. We were then given a plain iced cup cake each, forcing bags loaded with icing and stamps with which to cut out leaves and butterflies and let our imagination do the rest. Helena passed round photographs of his work from birthday cakes made like racing cars to 3 or 4 tier wedding cakes. The fact that we were all able to eat or take home our cakes added to the enjoyment.

Our next meeting will be a talk by Mr. Peter Brewer on his life in the Devon and Cornwall Police Force.

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Nurse Clinics

Mon-Fri 9-10am & 3.30-4.30pm

DIARY DATES

A Reminder – and a Plea

The Diary Dates serve both as a useful quick reference to what is happening in our Village every month – and also by giving advance information to try and avoid event clashes.

If you or your club have a forthcoming event, and **you want it listed** in Diary Dates, PLEASE let Helena Sykes know as far in advance as possible. (Tel 01363 877434, email heli.col@btinternet.com)

Please do not assume that the Editors will scan every advert and article and automatically include events in the Diary Dates on an assumption that you will want the event listed.



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Memorial Hall
Wed 6th April at 7.30pm



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£10 Amaryllis Gift Voucher - Carol Hutching

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FOLK TALES CORNER

For England and St. George!

I've been telling the tale of St. George for nearly twenty years now, it's a rollicking tale! I always give George a nice big dragon to fight (and like any storyteller, it keeps getting bigger) partly because that is half the story and partly because, well, George makes such a meal of it. Despite the full complement of helpful horse and magic sword it takes him three goes, a shattered lance, melted armour and a lot of hiding in an orange tree to finish off the scaly adversary. Still, persevering in the face of overwhelming odds is the English way and the English way is what St George is all about isn't it?



Dragon Hill in the Vale of White Horse bears witness to this most English of battles where the spilt dragon's blood has rendered a patch of ground barren to this day. Except that a search through the archives for a more detailed re-counting of the legend fairly quickly shows this to be a recent transplant, with the medieval version set amongst the sands of Egypt. Here he saves the duskily beautiful Princess Sabia from a crispy death as reptilian appeasement and we hope, briefly, for an ending in interracial marriage and harmony. Unfortunately, George is subject to some political intrigue and religious persecution at the hands of Kings Ptolemy of Egypt, Almidor of Morocco and an unnamed King of Persia. Unjustly imprisoned for seven years he fights off two lions, escapes, kills a giant and a wizard, is reunited with Sabia and takes her back to England for a right royal wedding. Eventually George returns with a huge army to take his revenge on all three of his oppressors, conquering all of north Africa and the middle east in the process, whereupon the people proclaim him king and convert, on mass, to Christianity.

So the action may not take place in England but at least the hero is the noble son of the Lord of Coventry... unless one reads the story of Sir Bevois (Pronounced Bevis) of (South) Hampton. Apart from a few variations in the preamble and the order of events, the two tales are almost identical. A little further digging reveals that both versions came back from the middle east in the mouths of crusaders: not folk tales at all but a stirring call to action, carefully casting the Muslims as the bad guys, and it was during the creation of this propaganda that George received a birth certificate and passport for a country he never, in reality, set foot in.

A little further digging reveals that the original Saint George was a soldier in the Roman army who, after speaking out against the emperor's persecution of the Christians, was martyred (killed very unpleasantly) for his beliefs. For those who are familiar with mummer's plays in which St George fights with a Turkish Knight, there is a final twist in that George's birthplace, Cappadocia, was in Turkey.

With the current moves to reinvigorate him with his own Bank Holiday, we can but wonder what a man who died turning the other cheek might think of the revisions that have been made to his biography for political reasons. What would the soldier who was killed for standing up to an unjust government think of the plans to take away the peoples ancient May Day celebrations? We will never know, but what I do know is that I shall probably still be telling of his fictitious fight with a dragon, in some form, for another twenty years or more because, after all is said and done, it is a cracking story!

...here's to living happily ever after, until the next adventure.

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COUNTRY FILE

There have been some milder days. A flock of common snipe flew up from the marshy field with one piping call and a zigzag flight. They must have been moving on to the north moors. A few fieldfares were among the dark hedge branches, feeling the call of the Scandinavian country. After the rain Hay Tor showed on the far skyline.



It is unlikely that fish suffered in the intense cold. A fish is described as a vertebrate which lives in water and breathes through its gills. The rivers here provide a variety of fish, rudd, roach, bullhead, little brown trout and salmon on the runs in the larger rivers. Minnow describes juvenile fish. Pollution of waterways is a serious risk to fish. The water becomes deoxygenated and the fish die.

Fishing has been practiced from the earliest times. Stew ponds full of carp and pike were features of monasteries and larger country houses. Sea fishing has been a thriving industry with many coastal towns dependant on the fishing fleet. Fishing has also been an art for centuries. Isaac Walton in 1674 wrote *The Compleat Angler* or *The Contemplative Man's Recreation*. Coarse fishing is for sedentary anglers, positioned by lakes or canals using bait such as worms. Fly fishing is one of the most popular ways of fishing for salmon and trout. Dry fly fishing is by rod when the carefully selected and beautifully designed fly and hook is floated on the water's surface. With wet fly fishing the floating or sinking line is kept moving through the water.

Looking into the darker depths of the stream and watching shoals of minnows dodging the stones and weeds is like entering into another sphere. It is written of the pike:-



*"Or move stunned by their own grandeurs
Over a bed of emerald, silhouette
Of submarine delicacy and horror
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Red Hughes 1930-2000?

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MORCHARD BISHOP PRE SCHOOL

The Pre School have been very busy this term. We've resumed our weekly visit to the Primary School to help familiarise those children starting in September with the routines of school life. So watch out for a long crocodile of children walking to school.

Earlier this term we had a fantastic trip to Crediton Fire Station, where the firemen told the children and their parents all about fire fighting, being safe and gave them a memorable go on the water hose and on the fire engines. The children still talk about the day, it made a real impression.

For World Book Day on March 3rd the children dressed up as their favourite book characters. We had Fireman Sam, The Worst Witch, princesses, mice and the cast of Toy Story. They brought their chosen books to share throughout the morning.

And to top things off we had a wonderful visit from local vet Wendy Vere, "Blacky" the hen and the ever patient "Batty" who was bandaged and examined showing the children how to look after their pets.

The Preschool is open Monday - Thursday catering for children from 2yrs to 4+ Contact us on 07816967140

