



# Ramsbury and Axford Village Diary

## November 2020



May we have items for the December diary before 10 November.  
They may be left at the Post Office or sent to [diary@ramsbury.org](mailto:diary@ramsbury.org)

### NATURE AND BIRD NOTES by Peter Marren

As I write, in early October, autumn is in full swing after three of the wettest days of the year. September's late flowers are still a recent memory. Until recently, yarrow, hawkbit, bindweed and scabious still coloured the verges, and one field was bright with an extraordinary late flowering of yellow dandelion-like flowers (cat's-ear, I think) and even a few buttercups. Wherever the sun shone on ivy blossom there was a hum of insects – bees, wasps, hoverflies, droneflies, greenbottles and flesh-flies – including a few Ivy Bees, a recent arrival in Britain from the continent, which seems to depend entirely on sickly-smelling ivy pollen and nectar.

Another apparently recent (and less welcome) arrival is the shiny blue-black Alder Leaf-beetle, which has been busy shredding the leaves of alders in the village. I also found an oak bough whose leaves were reduced to skeletons, and, looking round for the culprit, soon found a knot of yellow-and-black-striped caterpillars – those of the Buff-tip moth. Horse chestnuts, too, are looking ragged thanks to the micro-moth whose tiny larvae consume and brown the foliage, snug inside blisters in the leaves. Fortunately their activities do not seem to have affected the bountiful crop of conkers.

I suspect this autumn will be remembered for its harvest of acorns. The oak in front of The Bell was clustered with acorns almost like a giant grape-vine, which ripened and fell to form a carpet of brown acorns below. The crops of berries were also spectacular this year – the hedges and bridleways were a constellation of haws and rose-hips, trails of scarlet bryony, and even holly berries, a reminder that Christmas is getting closer. Another flash of red in the hedgerow is the scarlet of Virginia creeper, an escape from gardens, together with the strange pink colouration of that lovely chalk shrub, Guelder Rose, in autumn.

Many fungi appeared during the first half of September, only to disappear again in the mainly warm and dry second half of the month. There have been reports from around the country of large numbers of cep, the highly sought-after penny-bun bolete, and also of field mushrooms. Tall, scaly parasol mushrooms appeared on Spring Hill, while the planted birch trees near the surgery produced their usual crop of milkcaps, bubbling up in clumps (known as 'troops') and rings in the short grass. Those planted trees could not grow without those fungi, which have the ability to process trace elements from the soil and pass them on to the tree via its roots. After the rain of early October I anticipate another appearance of mushrooms and toadstools on lawns and in woods, until the first hard frosts put paid to them for another year.

Ramsbury's jays will be very happy with this year's crop of acorns, and will be busy burying some of them for later. If you find oak seedlings in your gardens next year, and wonder how they got there, they may well have come from acorns that the jay forgot to retrieve. Swallows and house martins will be well on their way to Africa by now. I last saw martins high above Kintbury on 21<sup>st</sup> September. By early October I hadn't yet seen any fieldfares or redwings, those northern thrushes that over-winter with us. But by the time you read this they will be feasting on this year's huge crop of berries.

In autumn many birds flock together for security – for there's safety in numbers – and efficient foraging. A field near the surgery had more rooks than I could count, while the same day I counted exactly 100 starlings on the overhead wires near Whittonditch Road. Yet, though I live less than half a mile away, I rarely see a single starling in the garden. The sale of the familiar herd of Belted Galloway cattle will have knock-on effects on the birds that feed among them. Rooks and jackdaws may have to forage further afield, and perhaps we will no longer be able to watch little egrets following the cattle as they do in the Mediterranean. Mid-autumn is a quiet time of year for birds, but we are still serenaded by the twitter of goldfinches, the sweet autumn song of the robin and the occasional high-pitched see-see-see of wandering long-tailed tits. In Savernake recently I heard the curiously soft whistle of bullfinches all around yet unseen, and the unmistakable 'clipping' flight call of crossbills as they sought out the ripe cones on the tops of larch trees.

Paul Swan was away when the Diary was published this month

## ***New Books about Ramsbury***

### ***The Consolation of Nature: Spring in the Time of the Coronavirus***

By a strange trick of fate, Rowan's book about Ramsbury (see below) coincides with the publication of my own book, *The Consolation of Nature: Spring in the Time of the Coronavirus* (Hodder Studio, 222pp, £14.99). This is, as far as I know, the first book to talk about the solace and calming effect of nature in these locked-down times of stress and grief. Written with two friends, my bit, one third of the book, is all about Ramsbury. Each day during the amazingly warm and sunny spring of 2020, I tramped around the village watching nature emerge from winter: primroses, bluebells, cherry blossom; rooks, warblers, cuckoos; butterflies, mining bees, mayflies. It builds up, I hope, into a portrait of nature in our extraordinarily blessed parish in one of the strangest seasons of our lifetimes. A limited number of (signed) copies will be on sale in the Post Office, and it is also being stocked by White Horse Bookshop and the Hungerford Bookshop, probably alongside *Ramsbury. A Place and its People!* I like to think that they complement each other. If you enjoy these nature notes, I think you will enjoy our book on the 'Covid spring'. **Peter Marren**

### ***Ramsbury: A Place and its People***

Written by Rowan Whimster, with contributions from Peter Marren and a Foreword by the Bishop of Ramsbury, *Ramsbury: A Place and its People* tells the story of this glorious corner of the Kennet Valley from the arrival of its earliest settlers 10,000 years ago up to lively and caring community of today.

As well as being a book about the people of Ramsbury it is also a celebration of the place in which they live – not only its streets and houses but just as importantly the hundreds of species of plants and animals that make their home in its surrounding woods and fields.

The book is available from Ramsbury Post Office, the Hungerford Bookshop and the White Horse bookshop in Marlborough. You can also buy copies online by going to <https://ramsburymbook.square.site> <http://ramsburymbook.square.site> Orders paid for before 31 October will cost £15 and after that £20. Residents of Ramsbury and its surrounding settlements will have their copies delivered free of charge to their door. For those living further afield postage will be added - £3 per copy or £5 for multiple copies.

If you are unable to order your copy online or from one of the outlets listed above, send your name, address and a cheque made payable to the 'Friends of Holy Cross' to Ian Smith, 27 Oxford Street, Ramsbury, SN8 2PS (tel 01672 520871, mobile 0797 7473 975, email [oldtiff@hotmail.com](mailto:oldtiff@hotmail.com))

## **RAINFALL**

An exceptionally dry first three weeks in September with just 4mm of rain. The end of the month was wetter, but a total rainfall of 39.5mm, 1.56ins, was well below the average of 66.29mm, 2.61ins.

A huge contrast at the start of October with 117mm, 4.61ins. in the first four days. Amazing how quickly it changes, making life challenging and interesting !

### ***Recreation Centre 200 Club October results***

£100 to Cheryl Dyer, £50 each to Shelley Sawers, Ken Hutchings, Tony Madden, Rosemary Triptree and Simon Smith and £25 each to Mark Graham, Di Christie, Alison Seaton, Lucy Lewis, Jon Lewis and Rosemarie Derrick.

The club costs £60 a year to join. Funds are split 50/50 between prizes and the Recreation Centre. To join, contact Ian Smith on 07977 473975 or [oldtiff@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:oldtiff@hotmail.co.uk)

### ***Ramsbury and Axford Poppy Appeal 2020***

The British Legion Poppy Appeal have announced that I am **NOW** able to place Static Poppy boxes throughout the village, however the **NO** House to House collection restriction remains in place. The Static boxes will be available at the following, The Bell, Crown and Anchor, Post Office, Ramsbury Surgery, Ramsbury School, RBL Club, Charity Shop and the Midway Store from 24 October to 7 November. They will contain a selection of traditional poppies, pin badges, wooden crosses and gift aid envelopes.

Paul Snook 01672 520970

## **Remembrance Sunday 8 November**

This year will be very different! To keep everyone safe, whilst still marking this day with the reverence it deserves, the following arrangements have been made:

The War Memorial will be decorated with poppies as usual (and putting a poppy in your window or on your door could provide a visual link, binding us together in remembrance).

*But please note that the wreath laying and short outdoor service will be restricted to the small number of representatives of the military and uniformed organizations that normally participate in this service. There will be no general access to the Memorial and Churchyard between 10am and 12 noon so please do not gather as you normally would.* It would be fitting if people joined in the two-minute silence on their own doorsteps. The old air-raid siren will sound at 10:55 to give everyone time to come out and stand together. It will sound again to mark the end of the silence.

## **Holy Cross Ramsbury**

Saturday 31 October - Walk in the Light - An alternative to 'Trick or Treat'? A COVID safe alternative for Halloween focussing on God's love and light. Dress up - go on a pumpkin hunt - collect a prize at the end! Join us at the Church Rooms between 5pm and 7pm.

Sunday 1 November 8am (BCP) Team Holy Communion. There will be an All Souls Service at 4pm - please let us know if you will attend as numbers are restricted in church

Thursday 12 November 10am midweek Holy Communion

Sunday 15 November 10am Team Holy Communion

Thursday 19 November the Revd Beth Hutton our New Team Rector will be licensed. We look forward to welcoming Beth as Team Rector as we seek to serve our communities and hear the good news of Christ.

Thursday 26 November 10am midweek Holy Communion

Sunday 29 November 10am Team Holy Communion presided by Rev Beth Hutton.

Holy Cross church is open every day (between 2pm and 3pm). Please observe all of the notices!

## **St. Michael's Aldbourne**

Sunday 1 November Team Holy Communion service in Aldbourne at 10am

Sunday 8 November Team Holy Communion service in Aldbourne at 10am (BCP)

Sunday 22 November Team Holy Communion service in Aldbourne at 10am

## **St. Mary's Chilton Foliat**

Sunday 15 November Team Holy Communion (BCP) at 8am in Chilton Foliat

**ZOOM** – Whitton Team are continuing with dial-in and internet accessible services at 11:30am every Sunday using ZOOM. Wednesday 25 November at 7pm contemplative service on Zoom 'Reflective Spaces'. Details on how to join Zoom services are available in the church notices, notice boards and online.

To receive all the latest service details and resources by email please email [pcc@whittonteam.org.uk](mailto:pcc@whittonteam.org.uk).

More on our website: [www.whittonteam.org.uk](http://www.whittonteam.org.uk) or find us on our Facebook page: @WhittonTeamNews.

Look out for our regular short video reflections "Whitton Wonderings ". We are currently taking bookings for our planned 'Parish Away Weekend' scheduled for October next year - details available online.

## **Aldbourne Methodist Church Services**

Sunday 1 November 10.30am local arrangement service.

Sunday 8 November 10.30am Service of Remembrance led by Revd Stephen Skinner.

Sunday 15 November 10.30am H/C service led by Revd Janet Evans.

Sunday 22 November 10.30am local arrangements service.

Sunday 29 November 10.30am Advent Sunday service led by local Preacher.

The Methodist Church in Aldbourne is open for worship. The services are very different following government guidelines with social distancing and face masks worn during services. Hymns are played on the organ or CDs. Track and Tracing is in place. All are welcome.

Services will also be available online please call Julie Coe for details 521085 for details.

A big thank you for the donations made at our garden coffee morning. The total came to £76.76

During these times if you need puzzles or books to swap please call Julie Coe on 521085 who will be happy to deliver to you.

## **Holy Cross Annual Autumn Churchyard Clear-up**

Saturday 7 November 10am to 12 noon. Please come armed with gloves and a leaf rake to help tidy the churchyard before winter. If you have a petrol leaf blower that will be a big help. This year, please bring your own refreshments!!!

## **Ramsbury Flyer**

The Ramsbury Flyer is back but operating a restricted service to Hungerford Tesco. Wednesdays only with maximum 5 return passengers, leaving The Pond, Aldbourne at 10am, The Square, Ramsbury 10.16am. Strictly by booking in advance. To book please call Janet on 01672 520682 or mobile 07584 253117. Surgery Transport continues every Tuesday and Thursday.

## **News from the Crown and Anchor**

It has been a strange, tough and challenging time here at the pub. Lockdown was a shock but it gave us the opportunity to make the changes to the pub that we always dreamed of. Opening up again in August with the restrictions in place was different but our customers came back, supported us and the pub was alive again. We have opened Ebbie's cafe in the pub on Wednesday to Sunday 9am to 2.30pm for tea, coffee, cakes and sandwiches. On Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays all day full cooked breakfasts.

The bar is open 4pm to 10pm (last orders at 9.30pm) on Thursdays and Fridays 12 noon to 10pm on Saturdays and 12 noon to 8pm on Sundays.

We are serving pizzas eat in or take away from 6pm weekdays and from midday at weekends.

## **Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks**

Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks (SEN) has been in touch with the Parish Council to explain how they can help communities become more resilient in the event of a prolonged power cut.

They talked through their Priority Services Register that residents who may need extra support during a power cut can sign up to. Those eligible to join the Priority services are:

- Those dependent on electricity for medical home care e.g. Kidney dialysis machine/ventilator
- Those who have a chronic illness or short-term medical condition e.g. recovering from a major operation
- Those who are disabled
- Those who have special communication needs e.g. blind, partially sighted, deaf or hard of hearing
- Those who have children under five years old
- Those who are over 60 years old

To register with the priority service call 0800 294 3259 or 0800 316 5457 from a textphone.

Priority Service leaflets have been left with the Parish council and placed in The Post Office or call Sheila Glass on 07979327505

**To report all power cuts and emergencies call 105.**

## **Ramsbury Memorial Hall Caretaker Required.**

After 10 years the Memorial Hall Caretaker, Steve Alder, has decided to take a well earned rest. Thank you Steve for your dedicated work over the years. The hall has been the centre of village life for 100 years and, although closed at the moment owing to Covid-19, still needs a caretaker. This is a great opportunity to help run this incredible village amenity, and takes only a few hours a week. The workload can vary depending on the number of hires, but most fall into a regular weekly pattern. Don't delay. For more details on hours and pay please contact Robert Osmond on 01672 520568 or email [osmond48@btinternet.com](mailto:osmond48@btinternet.com)

## **Have your donation doubled for Prospect Hospice this Christmas**

Prospect Hospice has been selected to take part in The Big Give's Christmas Challenge 2020. This campaign gives you the chance to have your donation to your local hospice doubled this Christmas.

The hospice launched an appeal earlier this year to bridge the £2million gap in income that the charity expects as a result of Covid-19. While Prospect Hospice has had a brilliant response to this appeal, raising over £1million already, the local charity still has nearly half of the money to raise. The Big Give's Christmas Challenge is an excellent and easy way to help toward this.

For more information visit [www.prospect-hospice.net/thebiggive](http://www.prospect-hospice.net/thebiggive) or call 01793 813355 and to donate.

**Edited by John Herbertson**

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