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SPRING 2024

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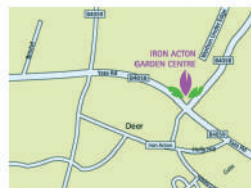


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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

LOCAL POYNTZ TEAM: - Jon Aries, Nikki Johnson, Sarah Ridler, Amanda Scott, Jane Spare, Heather Tillotson, Laura Walters, John Wright, Marilyn Wright and myself, Pamela McCoy.

We have lost a very valuable member of our team. Caroline Haselhan had been with us from the beginning and checked every article for spelling and grammar and adjusted font type and size. Caroline's husband, Jason, has a job in Washington U.S.A. and they have moved there. We hope that they settled quickly and enjoy their life there. Maybe they will read the magazine on the website!

LOCAL POYNTZ PHOTOGRAPHERS: - Sally Aries, Gillian Otlet

ARTICLES — In the past I have asked you for new articles so that the magazine does not become boring!! Sadly, the response has not been overwhelming so I am asking again. If you have anything you would like included, please, please contact me. Don't be shy.

On page 37 there is a red box which contains some text. The idea is that each quarter the box will be available for anyone. You can write any announcement of births, engagement, wedding, anniversary etc. etc. It can have items from more than 1 person. Simply email me with your text and I will include it.

ADVERTISING/SPONSORS: - We would welcome any new advertisers and sponsors. If you would like to place an advert, or know of anyone who might, please contact me and we can discuss terms, etc. My details are below. Please bear in mind that any advert will also appear on our website for no extra cost.

The deadline for the summer edition is 15th April 2024. We really need to have all articles by that date, PLEASE. You would be amazed by how many people ask me, many days past the closing date, "when is the closing date?" Even one of our team members asked me that question not too long ago! Generally, I reply with a smile "It was xxxx". No matter, I always do my very best to accommodate everyone.

FRONT PAGE: - Some years ago, there was a movie called Scream and it was rather gruesome. I think it may have been the late 1990s. The advert for the movie had the image which is below. I took the photo which is on the front page, and it is a bush. If you walk away from the village along Nibley Lane and go past the new houses, past the first telegraph pole about 50 – 100 metres on the right-hand side, you will see it. You could be forgiven if you think it is man-made. It is very weird and it looks very similar to the image, below.

EDITOR- Pamela McCoy 01454 228874, 07766074252
Email pam.localpoyntz@gmail.com.

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SPRING BIRD NEWS

Some of you may recall that in the winter edition of bird news, which I wrote last October, I was packing for a family break in warmer temperatures and at the same time thinking ahead to the middle of winter and what it might bring bird wise.

Well, as I write this in the middle of a cold snap, I think I can confirm that some of my thoughts have materialised. I am sitting watching a Fieldfare pecking at my windfall apples which I have left on the ground especially for the wildlife. There are only so many cookers we can eat and freeze so the remainder are left for Thrushes, including Robins, the odd Wood Pigeon and even the Jackdaws have enjoyed them, but this Fieldfare is making them his own and even after he has had his fill and sitting in the branches, he will not let a single bird get near them, chasing all interlopers away.

In the first week of January, we have indeed seen an invasion of Waxwings from Scandinavia and Russia. So far there are plenty around Cheltenham and Gloucester and they are slowly moving south so with a bit of luck we may get to see some around the village feeding on Rowan and Hawthorn berries. If you are fortunate to see these Starling sized birds you will quickly understand why they are called Waxwings; the tips of their wings look like they have had red wax, the sort they used to seal documents with, melted, and dripped onto them.

There has also been a steady influx of Redwings. You see them feeding in the field margins and in the Hawthorn but when you get within 50 metres they are up and away in a steady stream. They are quite shy birds, unless there is a real frost for days on end, when they will venture into gardens.

The start of the winter however was very warm, and this year was the latest date for Berwick Swans to arrive at Slimbridge since records began. The first 2 birds to arrive were a surprise because they were young birds bred in May and on their own! Now how did they know to migrate to Slimbridge from Svalbard in the far north above Norway, without their parents? Nature is marvellous and never ceases to amaze.

What did we get in February, any surprises? Well, I hope you can tell me in March because I am preparing for a holiday far afield, to the opposite side of the world, and while there I will see flocks of waders preparing to make their migration back to their breeding grounds in the Arctic. The birds in question have the longest non-stop migration from the marshes on the coast of New Zealand back to Alaska. It is the Bar Tailed Godwit, a medium sized wader that flies over the Pacific covering 8,500 miles in 11 days without stopping for food or rest. There are birds that have longer migration, like the Arctic tern, which flies between the north and south poles, approx. 18,500 miles but it feeds along the way just as Swifts, Swallows, and Martins do.

There is one little warbler that you may be familiar with if you visit wetlands and that is the Sedge Warbler, a little brown streaky job, with a song a bit like a Reed Warbler but a bit more scratchy and it favours rank grasses rather than reeds and, as the name implies, Sedge. This little chap migrates to and from sub-Saharan Africa covering up to 2,500 miles in 3-4 days without stopping and may get to heights of 5,000 metres. It starts off by doubling its weight before it starts migration and loses it by the time it has finished, but even then, it only come in at 12 grammes, the same as a £2 coin.

Getting back to New Zealand, I won't feel necessarily home sick as there are many birds that settlers took with them back in the 1800's. The last time we were there I saw more Yellowhammers in a month than I have seen in the last 10 years in the UK. I can also expect to see our common finches, Starlings, Sparrows, Thrushes, Skylarks, and various game birds. Hopefully, this break will see me fighting fit and ready for the spring return of our breeding birds at the start of March and give me inspiration for my next article in June. If you want to identify more birds especially by their song, I suggest you download the Merlin bird ID app – the one for the UK and Europe. Once you have it and you hear a bird singing or calling play the app and it will tell you within seconds what the bird is. I thought it was a bit of a gimmick

but have to say it is quite remarkable and accurate, especially for the novices amongst you, and on top of that it's free!

Chris Boyce

Any queries or observations email boycey@west-tec.co.uk

IRON ACTON COMMUNITY LUNCHES

We enjoyed 4 lunches in 2023 and the first of 2024, on 6th March. They have been successful, happy, sociable occasions and with food, music from Rob Pardoe and Iron Acton School Choir singing thrown in, what is there not to love! Such a great community!



Here are the rest of the 2024 dates for your diary:

Wednesday 5th June
Wednesday 11 September and
Wednesday 4th December

A big team of volunteers and sponsorship from Acton Aid enable these to take place. There is no charge, though donations can be made which will ensure that the lunches can continue. Anyone who has been will tell you what fun they are (and we have lots of repeat guests!) so if you haven't been able to come before, please give it a try and come along. You would be most welcome.

Please let me know whether you can come, a few weeks in advance of each lunch.

The team very much looks forward to seeing you at one or more.....

Fiona
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Iron Acton Primary School News

The children have returned to school following the busy Christmas period and the staff have been impressed with their focused and productive attitudes. At the end of Term 2, our youngest 45 children prepared and shared a wonderful Nativity at St James's Church – they did a fantastic job and it was great to see so many families watching. Our oldest 55 children performed a pantomime in the Parish Hall; they did themselves proud with their outstanding acting and singing skills – well done to all involved.

We were pleased to share together in our annual Christingle service, too. The children listened carefully to Jo as she explained the various elements of the Christingle, remembering at Christmastime that Christians believe Jesus is the Light of the World. They then had the chance to make their own Christingle then light their candles whilst singing Away in a Manger. This is always such a special event and a good way to conclude the term with a reminder about the real meaning of Christmas.

Later in the term we will celebrate children's mental health week. This has become an important part of our school calendar over recent years where we spend time thinking about the importance of looking after the mental health of ourselves and those around us. Our team of mental health champions will lead a whole school assembly reminding all members of our school how to look after their mental health. We will also hold a non-uniform day, where we encourage children to celebrate their differences and uniqueness.

Another important event this term will be the national 'Safer Internet Day' which takes place each February. Our Computing leader - Mr Taverner – will talk to the children about the benefits of using the internet along with the risks sometimes associated with it. We are keen to equip the children with age appropriate knowledge about how to keep themselves safe when using the internet as well as ensuring school wide systems are in place to promote safety for all.

The closing date for Reception 2024 applications has now passed and we are expecting another full cohort of 15 children. This is great news for the future sustainability of our school and we are pleased to be a popular choice to families in the village and beyond. All year groups are now full and there is a waiting list for some. If you are moving into the area and looking for a space please do speak to us about coming to look around.

Mike Riches, Headteacher

enquiries@ironactonprimaryschool.co.uk

01454 228322

Actonians News

Website: www.actonians.co.uk

We are now busy working on our next production of **We Happy Few** by **Imogen Stubbs**, to be performed **16th – 18th May 2024**.

Imogen Stubbs, herself a well-known, talented actress, was inspired to write this comedy by the true wartime history of the *Osiris Players*. The story follows a group of seven women, driven by the vision of Nancy Hewins, who come together to form a travelling theatre company to take theatre to people throughout the country who otherwise had no access to the arts.

During WW2 the Government, acknowledging the need for entertainment amid wartime austerity, labelled the players *an essential service* and gave them a generous petrol allowance. They travelled around in various motor cars, (including a Silver Ghost Rolls-Royce) and when petrol was no longer available for private vehicles, they used a horse drawn wagon and even a canoe!



Between 1939 – 1945 these seven women gave 1500 performances of a repertoire of over 35 plays. *Osiris Players* lasted for more than 30 years, and this play focuses on the beginning of the group during the war years.

The *Osiris Players* performed in numerous Parish Halls and on Village Greens around the country and it feels appropriate to perform this play in Iron Acton Parish Hall. I am sure that you will enjoy stepping back in time with us to pay our respects to this hard-working, passionate group of women who kept up the spirits of so many people during the second world war.

Avon Amateur Dramatics Short Play Festival

Chipping Sodbury Town Hall (Weds 6th March, Friday 8th and Saturday 9th March)

We are entering two plays into this Festival from our last year's production of *London Suite*. You can see *Going Home* and *Man on the Floor* once again and if you want an enjoyable evening watching two other short plays, you can book tickets through the www.sodburyplayers.org.uk. Come along and support us!

If you would like to know more about our group, then please contact us through our website or email us on actonians@outlook.com.

IRON ACTON WOMENS INSTITUTE

Last year concluded on a high with a meal at The Lamb in November to celebrate our 104th birthday and a Christmas party in December with everyone contributing to the buffet. Mulled wine went down well whilst the Secret Santa presents were chosen. Some members went on a trip to Hampton Court Palace along with other WI groups and for ourselves we arranged an outing in December to Dyrham Park House to see the downstairs rooms decorated for Christmas relating to different eras, concluding with one from the 1940s.

This year began with a talk from Fiona Warin on the Women's Land Army World War II. Apparently although much produce was home produced, at the beginning of the war 70% of all food was imported so 80,000 women were needed to help prevent Britain from starving. Fiona brought the subject to life by issuing names to some members and explaining what their preferences might be for jobs to be allocated. One lady apparently was a pacifist and therefore refused to work in munitions. Another had been brought up on a farm, so this was work with which she was familiar. Another had failed a medical for having flat feet but was sure there was work she could do. Fiona explained the jobs that these women might have to undertake which included long days clearing fields of thick brambles for crops to be sown or rising very early to start milking cows by hand. They stayed with farmers, who were paid by the government to look after them and whilst many were fairly treated and enjoyed the camaraderie, some unfortunately had wages withheld and were treated as slave labour. The fascinating conclusion to the stories were that they were all true, taken from letters written by the women, which Fiona read to us. A singalong of the chorus, Aye, Aye Yippee Yippee Aye concluded a thoroughly enjoyable talk.

Jane reported that we had collected £18 at our pudding tasting evening in October and together with money collected from members in lieu of sending Christmas cards, we had a total of £130 to give to charity. As we were attending the funeral of Jan's husband, who had sadly died of Parkinson's, we decided to donate the money to this worthy cause in his memory.

Owing to last year's success, we hope to hold another afternoon tea for the village in the Parish Hall in August on behalf of a charity which will be selected at a later date. We have another interesting programme this year including a talk from Richard Cornock, the farmer and author speaking about a year on a dairy farm, another instalment in the fascinating reign and private life of Queen Victoria and 'Remembering the Seventies', which is sure to instigate lots of discussion.

We are pleased to have welcomed new members recently and invite any ladies to our meetings who would like to make new friends and enjoy different experiences and outings. We meet on the second Monday of the month in the Parish Hall at 7.30pm. Our Secretary, Bridget, is happy to give details of future speakers and events and is available on 321741.

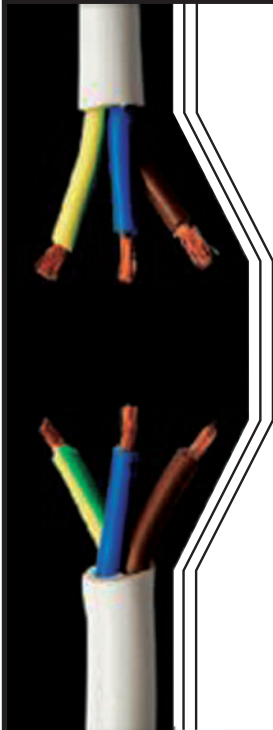
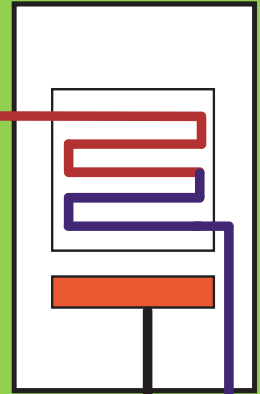
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Iron Acton's AUTObiography – vehicles that have shaped our lives.



Biro, Hoover, Google, Aspirin – all examples of genericide: where a brand name grows beyond a specific company and becomes an accepted term for a product, regardless of its manufacturer. This phenomenon is rarely seen in the world of cars, though, with the possible exception of 'Jeep', although I can already hear outraged Land Rover owners' howls of anguish at the very suggestion that their Solihull steed could be in any way confused with its American ancestor.

I mention it here, though, because this edition's entry to our virtual garage of vehicles that mean something to people across the parish nearly achieved genericisation. For many, the word 'Tesla' came close to being synonymous with electric vehicle or EV and would likely have achieved it were it not for the rapid rise of rivals, especially from China. Indeed in January 2024, the Chinese business BYD (Build Your Dream) overtook Tesla as the world's largest manufacturer of electric vehicles – having made over 3 million in 2023, compared with the US company's 1.83 million. In the interest of fairness, however, it is true that all of Tesla's output comprised pure EVs while BYD only made 1.6 million of these, the rest being mere hybrids. Nonetheless the market momentum seems to be shifting way from Tesla.

If you have made it this far, you may be wondering why I am telling you all this. It's because of another challenge made to me when I was having a quiet pint in The Lamb reading back copies of 'What Car?' from 1985. A fellow customer pointed an accusing finger at me and told me to feature something electric. He suggested that by spot-lighting only combustion powered vehicles, my articles were contributing directly to melting ice caps, scorched fields and the regular flooding of Chill Wood. I did think that he was over-estimating the reach and influence of 'Local Poyntz' a little, but got his drift.

It's amazing to reflect that only a little over a decade ago, an EV meant the G-Wiz, a small, slow microcar, or quadricycle, manufactured in India between 2001 and 2012. Now EVs are often fast, luxurious and robust and much of this has been led by Tesla. The company launched its first car, the Roadster, in July 2006 and developed rapidly to produce high tech unorthodox machines which soon challenged Mercedes, BMW and Audi as desirable 'executive' cars. They led on sophistication and style and their popularity was helped by generous government support across Europe – huge tax breaks soon made Tesla's the biggest brand in Norway while in 2022, they had 21.4 % of the UK battery electric vehicle market, over double the market shares of BMW and VW who were second and third in the rankings respectively.

EVs still divide opinions and within the EV world itself, Teslas themselves divide it further. In a recent article in 'The Times', columnist Matt Rudd described the division between Tesla EV people and non Tesla EV people as being like the feud between Montagues and Capulets, or the mutual contempt between users of Apple and Microsoft. This is no doubt reinforced when the driver of a BMW i3, MG 3, Renault Zoe or Kia Niro limp towards an out of order charging

point to see rows of gleaming 'Tesla Only' branded chargers waiting to bring rapid resurrection to the chosen few. Tesla seems to be the Manchester City of car brands: successful, loved by a lot for their constant domination of their field and disliked intensely by many more for the same reason. (For rugby followers, please replace City with Harlequins).

Whatever your personal views, Tesla deserves a place in the motoring hall of fame. They have taken EVs from being worthy to aspirational and shown that environmental responsibility can also be fun. They have opened up a whole new chapter in motoring and helped ensure that personal transport has a future in a changing world. The vehicle I have selected to enter the garage is a Tesla Model 3, in gleaming Pearl White. The Model 3 has brought Tesla style to a wider market and has been described as one of the most important and compelling new cars of the past few years. I'll leave it to Top Gear Magazine to conclude: "the disruptor has quickly become the establishment benchmark".

Thanks for your continued suggestions. Please do continue to propose vehicles of significance that we can include in the virtual garage – whether in the pub, or through other means.

Austin Tesla (no relation)

MERYL COOK - SOUTH GLOS. COMMUNITY AWARD WINNER



Congratulations to Meryl Cook on winning a South Gloucestershire Community Award for her dedicated support of Iron Acton Parish Hall. Meryl was presented with her award by Mike Drew, Chair of SG Council at a reception held at the Filton Campus of SGS College.

Meryl has been a member of the Hall Management Committee for 31 years and for many of those she has been Booking Secretary. The Parish Hall is at the centre of our community and provides amazing facilities for many diverse local groups. Meryl has dedicated many hours, most weeks, to hall business including advising hirers about the hall's facilities, and ensuring those facilities are kept in excellent and safe condition. She has played a major role on the Horticultural Committee organizing a May Day plant stall,

which has helped raise funds for the hall over many years, and our annual Horticultural Show which brings together many parishioners in friendly rivalry.

Through the selfless giving of her time, all members of our community have benefitted from Meryl's commitment. The hall's facilities are enjoyed by pre-school children through Music with Mummy, for older children there is a junior drama group, junior choir, junior dance classes. For adults there is our village choir, amateur dramatic group, yoga classes, art group, Warhammer group, ballroom and line dancing groups, cinema group, community lunches plus weddings, discos, private parties, Xmas fayres and many other community activities.

Well done Meryl on winning this much deserved award.

CHRISTMAS WINDOWS 2023



Hi Everybody,

Santa and I want to give huge thanks to everybody for their wonderful windows for '23, we've had messages of how much fun people have had going round.

Our winners are:-

Joint 1st Prize:- The Marshall and The Edmonds families, Tilly & Katie Aries.

Joint 2nd - The Wright and The Bellis families, Gilly Otlet.

Joint 3rd - The Foote and the Bourns families, Sheila Chapman.

Well done to everybody who entered or who just enjoyed the Trail.

We would like to give huge thanks to Acton Aid for funding this event again this year.

Go to www.ironacton.info to see photos of the windows, the answers and the results.

Happy 2024

Alabaster Snowball



REWILDING A CORNER OF THE PARISH

Sometimes you read a book which changes your outlook and approach forever after. 'Rewilding' by Isabella Tree was one such book for us. It tells the story of how 25 years ago her family in Sussex decided to leave behind intensive agriculture and let nature reclaim their land. The successes they have seen in species return and biodiversity gains are hugely impressive. Reading it shifted our minds for good that "untidy" is perfect for nature and that a diversity of habitat is what nature and we need.

Last year our ideas of how we could use the fields bordering our garden better were finally able to move towards reality as we came across a grant scheme: Trees for Climate, which funds the planting of native trees and their maintenance in the crucial first 3 years of growth. In January of this year aided by a dozen volunteers (many employers allow 3 volunteering days a year) and led by the Forest of Avon Trust team we were able to plant a 1000 native trees. There are 11 species of native tree including hornbeam, field maple, whitebeam and black poplar as well as more shrubby species such as hazel, spindle, crab apple and goat willow all protected from deer damage by biodegradable wax tree protectors and coir mulch mats held down with bamboo pegs. In between the trees are also various open areas, where the grassland should with time develop a greater diversity of flowers and insects.

We chose the areas to let wildlife expand outwards from the existing populations in Chilwood and provide a wildlife corridor between the railway line, Chilwood and the Frome Valley Walkway. The Chilwood boundary remains the same with no public access into the new trees, but wildlife will not observe these boundaries and we hope in time that the young woodland will complement and enhance the public experience of wildlife when walking in Chilwood and along the Frome Valley walkway.

The saying goes "When you plant a tree you plant it for the next generation" and we hope that this small project will enhance and benefit nature and our community in the decades that come. Sonya and Tim Grubb and Barbara Naish (Algars Manor).



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LAVAZZA

TORINO, ITALIA. 1895

ACTON AID

Summer 2023 will be memorable to Acton Aid, and to the many who attended our Parish Meadow events – Mash on Friday and Russell Watson & Friends on Saturday 1 July. For Friday, we booked a return of the hugely popular Queen cover band; the **opening band was Joey The Lips**. An inspired new booking. They played a wide range of music to enormous applause - **Joey will be back this year. Also, new for 2024, a great Elton John cover band.**

Every penny raised by us at our Events goes solely to benefit the Parish. Separately, each year we allow a Charity to seek collections from our summer audiences, in 2023 it was the highly respected St Peter's Hospice for whom a huge total– well over £4000 was raised. St Peter's are very grateful.

We chose to have a fallow year from our usual Beer Festival but anticipate a return this Autumn.

Our customary **Fireworks Night** event was a sell-out and a great success in spite of poor weather. We keep pricing low, provision of food & drink at affordable prices is obviously valued. It all helps to make an entertaining social event for families – and ends well in time to get little ones to bed.

We raise funds for Parish benefit, whether for groups or individuals. We've helped the Parish Council with funding for the MUGA project in the Parish Meadows. Individuals have been helped, as well as Christmas gifts to pensioners, funds to assist the Parish schools and handbell ringers. We support the ladies who provide periodic lunch events in the Parish Hall. We congratulate all those ladies! We always support Iron Acton MAY DAY – and hope that it can be run again this year. We are constantly looking out for worthy local needs - please tell us if you have a suggestion, it's too often the case that those in need don't ask for themselves.

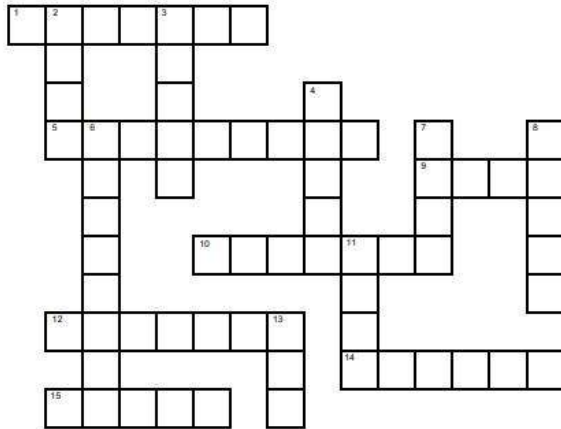
In 2023 we uplifted our 'Proms' event by securing a famous tenor, Russell Watson, this was a huge success! **For 2024** we are continuing to grow the event and have booked **the internationally famed soprano singer Lesley Garrett**. Not only a revered operatic performer (including the BBC Last Night of the Proms) but the very personable 'Yorkshire Lass' also sings a 'cross-over' repertoire of familiar songs. **New for 2024 the Orchestra will be Bristol Ensemble**. As you read this, tickets should already be on sale. 2023 sold out. **Buy yours early – at Early bird prices!**

Finally, as always, an appeal to all men of the Parish – **if not a member already, please join us** – The Lamb, 8pm first Thursday every month; it's fun!

Mike Sutton (Chairman 2023/4)

From Feb the Chair will be occupied by Will Marriage

Spring Crossword



Across

1. Lots of flowers on a tree
5. A brightly coloured flying insect
9. Bees live in this
10. There is said to be a pot of gold at the end of one of these
12. You may give someone special a bunch of these
14. Holiday associated with eggs
15. When a young bird breaks out of its shell



Down

2. A baby sheep
3. The umbrella in the picture has lots of these
4. Get the dustpan and brush out for a Spring one of these
6. Something you put up when it is raining
7. When it warms up the snow does this
8. Birds build these to lay their eggs
11. The sky is this colour
13. After winter you see more of this in the sky during the Spring

The answers to the crossword puzzle
can be found on page 26



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Christmas and New Year seem so long ago now don't they, but I will take this opportunity to wish you all a good 2024 and look forward to some less wet and windy weather in the near future. It was lovely to welcome so many of you to our Services over the Christmas period and look forward to seeing you again soon. Snowdrops and hellebores are bravely flowering which always gives hope for a lovely Spring to come.

We are often asked who St James the Less was so here is a potted history!

St James the Less is commonly believed to be the son of Alpheus and Mary, a cousin of Jesus' mother. He is therefore sometimes referred to as the brother or cousin of Jesus. He was one of the twelve apostles and as there was already James, son of Zebedee, our James was called the Lesser or Younger. James, son of Zebedee is sometimes referred to as the Greater as the church in Westerleigh.

The apostles were divided into three squads. First led by Simon Peter, second by Philip and the third by James, son of Alpheus. Each squad had different roles and James' group managed the worldly affairs and dealt with the money and were the furthest away from Christ's inner circle.

He is rarely mentioned in the bible but is thought to be the author of the book in his name. He is also thought by some to be the brother of Matthew as Alpheus was the name of his father mentioned in Mark's gospel when he was still called Levi. Mark mentions him as one of the twelve apostles once. He lists three different James, son of Alpheus, the Greater and James's brother of Jesus. Matthew also has James's son of Alpheus listed as one of the twelve apostles. He is thought to have been present at the crucifixion and to have been one of the first to witness the risen Christ as mentioned in 1 Corinthians 15;7.

Little is known of his later life, but he is thought to have become Bishop of Jerusalem and was stoned or beheaded for his beliefs. James the Less' patronal festival is held on May 1st. He is depicted carrying a fuller's club, a carpenter's saw and a book. He is also the patron saint of apothecaries, druggists, dying people and milliners. Quite a selection!

He is not well known so it is good to have our lovely church named for him, so he is not forgotten.

We are now looking forward to Easter with Ash Wednesday this year falling on Valentine's Day. All our services will be posted on the website, Facebook page and notice boards so please look out for them and come and join us.

Our services are now Wednesday 10.00am and Sunday 9.15am. Second Sunday Family Service 10.00am. Please look on noticeboard or website for any changes

There is always someone available should you wish to talk or let off steam about anything worrying you. Details on notice board in church porch. The church is usually open every day during daylight hours for quiet reflection and prayer.

Nessa Jarman (Administrator)

www.fromesidechurches.org.uk Tel. 01454 776518

Churchwardens:

Carol Groom 01454 228712 carolgroom@hotmail.com

Annette Bishop 0751672250 denisannette2020@outlook.com

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Our members wish to say a **BIG THANK YOU**
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We are only too aware of many helpers -eg our own family members, and friends.

But we also wish to not overlook all those others who have given assistance.

Your help is greatly valued and very much appreciated.

So though not a personal letter – we don't want to miss anyone –
but to **everyone**, a big public

Thank You

IT'S A MARVEL WORLD!

I am in the middle of a marathon, luckily not the running sort! I am no superhero. My couch to 5K victory has dwindled lately and my running shoes lie, taunting me menacingly, at the back of my wardrobe. I really hope that I will be reignited with the curious desire to heave my cumbersome frame around the village again this year. If that cosmic event occurs; the earth will echo with the thump that will reverberate around! Assume the tremors are just me circling round our pavements again, not a visitation by Thor! For now, there is much more 'Couch' than 5K going on in my life. The marathon, I am undertaking, has been designed by our last child at home. Believe you me I have fought and groaned at her idea, as much as if I was about to train for the running sort of long-distance agony.

It all began with her friend's birthday trip to the cinema, when our youngest was introduced to her first Marvel film. Throughout 2023, she watched all 33 movies (some more than twice!) and all the associated TV series. As autumn days drew us back inside, our dear daughter firmly announced her plan to make us commit to watching all the Marvel movies chronologically. I protested long and hard. But clinging, as I do, to every treasured childhood moment as the sand slips faster and faster away, I was always going to concede. It didn't stop me being very grumpy about it, and seeking diversions, if a free evening had her relentlessly pressing us to watch one! Our Marvel training began. It was, as I suspected, a chore. Before the films were watched there were lengthy precis of the plots surrounding these crazed superheroes, and the links between stories. I had to concentrate. She knew which films we would probably dislike but from these there would be no escape. Our marathon limbering up had to embrace every little step for her challenge to fully succeed. No short cuts on the Netflix bus to bypass the arduous path ahead and catch the other films some miles down the road! GROAN.....

There was as I suspected much violent fighting, shiny Lycra with unpredictable portals spawning enemies and heroes in equal absurdity. Unremitting nonsense. I have never been a fan of anything science fiction. I like my story lines to reflect real human emotions and feelings, where I can feel my way around inside. I am not impressed by the emptiness of swirling planets, demonic aliens and weapons flung at will, massacring the masses in horrific endings. Silly and very LOUD! I was jolly glad when Christmas film season arrived, giving me a much-needed, super-hero break. I can't quite believe she dared suggest watching Thor instead of Elf and the Incredible Hulk instead of The Holiday; but on this she absolutely did not win. After a lovely Christmas wrapped up with ribbons of love and togetherness, I found the start of January highly charged with deep emotion. It always terrifies me that the jaws of January gape open with everything unknown to come. I wrestle with huge anxieties and taking the path into the year ahead is like starting out on a dark night without a lantern in hand. Except of course that I have all those I care most deeply about right by me along the way which grounds me and helps me push open the door, once more.

Ironically there was no going out anywhere at the start of this new year as Covid paid an unwelcome visit. We were putty in our daughters' hands. Laid out, feeling too ill to do anything; 'Let's get on with our Marvel mission!' she gleefully recommended, I felt too

lously to argue. I knew I would at least nod off when the going got unbearable. As Hulk ripped through his clothes with green insanity and Thor wielded his boomerang hammer with terrifying precision, I let my heavy, virus- laden eyes close. But the jarring call 'Wake up Mum – you can't miss this' was so unpleasant, jolting me like the on-screen lightning effects. I tried hard to stay focused. To be fair, Thor was quite a nice something to focus on (A comeuppance for my dearly beloved who enjoyed every moment of our daughters Mermaid- fixated era!!). As evenings in succession saw us ticking off a few more movies, I felt something shift. This wasn't training anymore; I was jogging along now at a slightly more comfortable rate. I don't think I will ever like the preposterous action, but I was beginning to psychoanalyse these superheroes. I am far more interested in what makes them human than any of this 'Super' nonsense. Most importantly 'The Avengers' was a real turning point. Putting six, complicated, angst -ridden, superheroes together to use their strengths to save the world, was an enlightenment. Although on the surface it was all flying hammers and shields, green and every shade of monster ripping humanity apart, all fired by enough electrical overload to make our national grid look like a tealight, there was more to these characters than all that hogwash. To be able to work together, they had to acknowledge their own weaknesses and begin to understand each other's frailties. Only then were they strong enough to avenge evil. The more they confess, the greater the understanding and the stronger they are together; when the super is replaced with the human, then heroes are born.

I feel genuinely warm towards the Hulk wanting to reach out to him. His inner battle to avoid his own anger is humbling and I can see so much struggle and torment in his eyes. His vile behaviour, once green, is entirely divorced in my mind from the man who tries to suppress it. That man is tender and loving and open with a terrifying knowledge of his own flaws (always provoked by injustice). It is a telling moment when he enlightens Captain America who is urging him to not get angry; 'That's my secret, Cap: I'm always angry' His inner battle is buried deeply within him, tormenting him always.

Captain America himself is less complex, his plight simply a timing issue. Frozen for 70 years at the end of WW2 he is spat back into a world where he often feels disconnected, an outsider looking through glass. School was my glass house and I, it's time traveller. It's a lonely place. I really hope he can make the communities he needs to reconnect back into life. I have been forewarned. I am going to have to have at least one box of tissues at the ready when, in a future film he, the young vibrant, hero will meet his aged WW2 love Peggy, in her care home. Love never dies.

I mentioned Thor – not much to say about him; blond, gorgeous, heir to the throne; needed to learn a few things and did so quickly. The real story is with Loki his younger brother; a dark- eyed, brooding, beautiful boy, lured by throne envy/brother jealousy into the worst atrocities. Unrepentant, doomed. I was very judgemental at first. I couldn't believe his odious character is played by the jolly nice actor Tom Hiddlestone - unrecognisable! It took my daughter to put me straight, she already knew his story. Abandoned as a baby by the evil king of the frost giants, he is rescued and brought up as Thor's younger brother. A fact slammed into him in adulthood and the knowledge that he had always been a pawn to secure ultimate peace, a guinea-pig. Everything he believed real, now shattered. No wonder, he spirals into mental health catastrophe my daughter points out, chiding me to be more understanding! Hope glimmers at the end of the Avengers. Thor escorts Loki back to their kingdom, a prisoner but with possible hints

of a repatriation? They ascend skyward in an apocalyptic kaleidoscope of blinding space dust. But Loki leaves gagged with what looks like a Scolds Bridle. This is the only thing I can see. It jars the moment; the potential cruelty of power prevails. Loki needs a voice, to be heard and for his brother to love him unconditionally. Maybe then he can rise with pride and find good again. I am holding out for a Loki restored, but my daughter is holding out on me. For now, I must keep pounding the path, there's more to these superheroes than meets the eye and I've got 26 more movie miles ahead!

Lisa Hatherell

Spring Crossword



Across

1. Lots of flowers on a tree
5. A brightly coloured flying insect
9. Bees live in this
10. There is said to be a pot of gold at the end of one of these
12. You may give someone special a bunch of these
14. Holiday associated with eggs
15. Young birds do this when they break out of their shell



Down

2. A baby sheep
3. The umbrella in the picture has lots of these
4. Get the dustpan and brush out for a Spring one of these
6. Something you put up when it is raining
7. When it warms up the snow does this
8. Birds build these to lay their eggs
11. The sky is this colour
13. After winter you see more of this in the sky during the Spring



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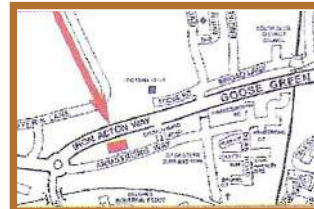
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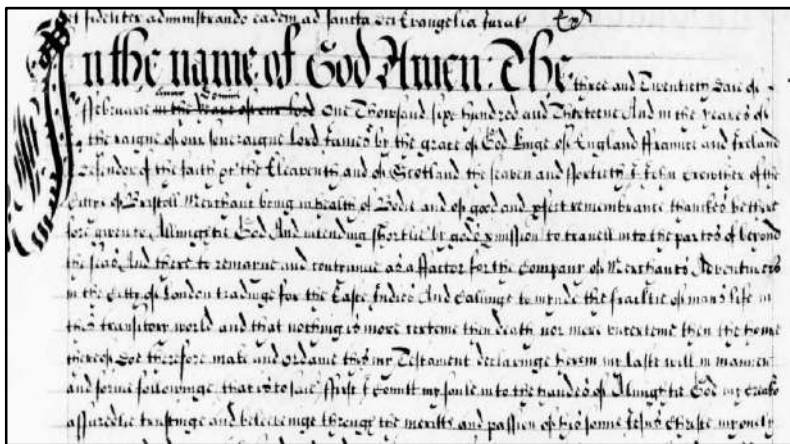
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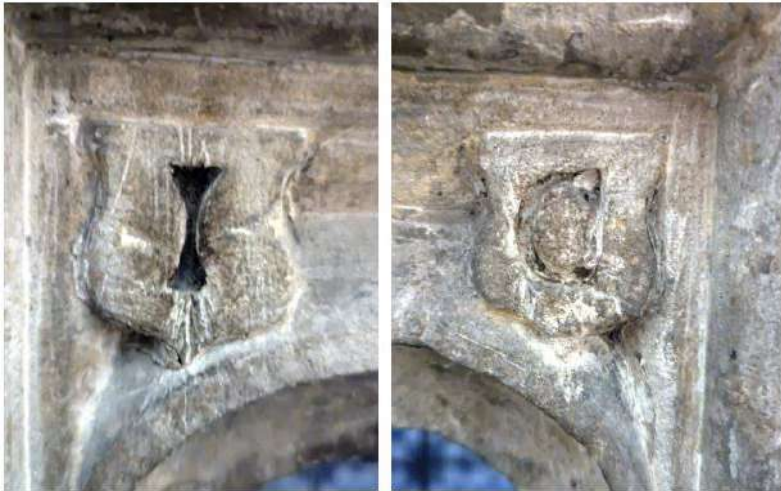
JOHN CROUTHER & RICHARD STEELE'S JOURNEY TO PERSIA

"In the name of God Amen: The three and twentieth daie of February anno domini one thousand six hundred and thirteen and in the yeares of the raigne of our soveraigne Lord James by the grace of God kinge of England, France and Ireland defender of the faith [...] the eleventh and of Scotland the seaven and fourthieth I John Crowther of the citty of Bristol merchant being in health of bodie and of good and of [per]fect remembrance thanks be [...] forever given to Almighty God And intending shortlie by [godes] mission to travel into the partes of beyond the seas And there to remain and continue as a factor for the Company of Merchants Adventurers in the citty of London trading for the East Indies And callinge to mynde the the frailtie of man's life in this transitory world and that nothing is more [] than death nor more [] than the [] there of doe therefore make and ordaine this my Testament..."



In 1613, John Crowther wrote this will before travelling to India with the East India Company naming his parents, John and Margaret Crowther. At that time John and Margaret were living at Yates Court, but soon after the family leased Algars Manor, (Chilwood as it was then known), from the Poyntz family and began a connection with Algars that would last over a century and see John have his initials 'I' (for Iohannes) and 'C' carved into a fireplace in the house.

The younger John Crowther re-appears in India in around 1614/15 where he is employed as 'factor' or trader in Surat, in Gujarat. It seems he sailed on the East India Company's four-ship 'voyage of 1613' (which actually sailed in early 1614) commanded by Nicholas Downton



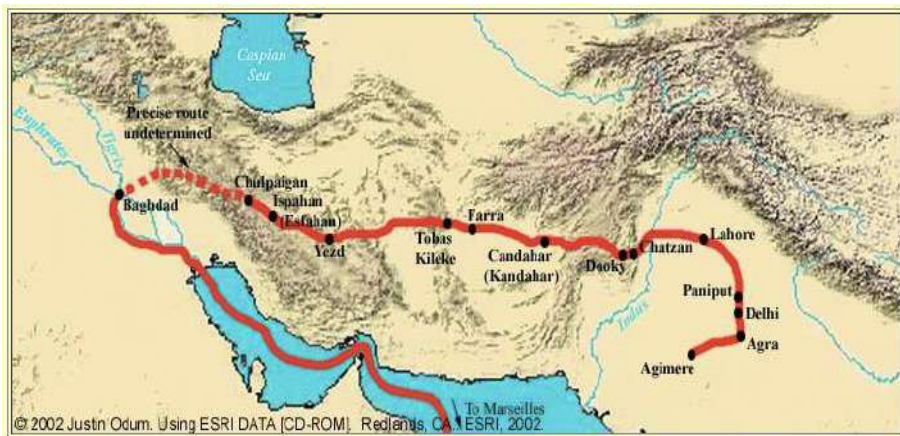
aboard the flagship 'New Year's Gift' (*'a ship of 550 tons built for trade or war'*) which was accompanied by the 'Merchant's hope', the 'Hector' and the 'Sallomon'

The English 'factory' (trading post) there had been established in 1613 when, seeing a trading opportunity, several merchants who had come out on the fleet commanded by Thomas Best refused to go back aboard and continue the voyage. One of the merchants, Thomas Aldworth became the first chief of trade in India and it was him, on 2nd January 1615, seeing the threat from the Dutch to English trade in Persia, commissioned Richard Steele and John Crowther (who was by now a factor in Surat) to observe the potential for buying Persian silk and selling English cloth. In a journey between Agra, the Mughal capital, to Isfahan, the Safavid capital they were to "inform themselves of the condition and hopes of trade of "the countries they pass through, especially between "Ispahan and Jask." They were also instructed to meet with the entrepreneur-adventurer Sir Robert Sherley who was in the service of Shah Abbas of Persia at Ispahan and ask his assistance in obtaining letters from the King of Persia for the "peaceable entertainment" of the Company's servants, ships, and goods.

Leaving on 17th March with four servants, two horses and a camel, they made their way from Agimere to Agra and then joined the spice road to the northeast. Steele described their journey in vivid detail in his journal:

In the night, this road is dangerously infested with thieves, but is quite secure in the day. Every five or six coss [15,000-18,000m], there are serais [roadside inns], built by the king or some great man, which add greatly to the beauty of the road,

are very convenient for the accommodation of travellers, and serve to perpetuate the memory of their founders. In these the traveller may have a chamber for his own use, a place in which to tie up his horse, and can be furnished with provender; but in many of them very little accommodation can be by reason of the banians, as when once any person has taken up his lodging, no other may dispossess him. At daybreak the gates of these serais are opened, and then all the travellers prepare to depart; but no person is allowed to go away sooner, for fear of robbers. This made the journey very oppressive to us, as within two hours after the sun rose we were hardly able to endure the heat.



They arrived in Lahore on 24th April and stayed for almost a month to rest themselves and their horses before heading into modern Afghanistan where they were “much distressed for want of fresh water”, had to negotiate payment with the captains of the castles they passed by and fend off the ‘mountaineers’ intent on stealing from them. Candahar was bustling with caravans and traders forced overland by war with the Portuguese in the Indian Ocean and the two Englishmen left in the company of three Armenians and a dozen Persians on 23rd July for Farra, a small, walled town with a handsome bazar. Richard Steele, having ridden ahead, arrived at Ispahan on 15th September 1615 followed by Crowther on the 19th after a journey of six months.

Despite these hardships, it initially appeared that Crowther and Steele were to fail in their mission to get Sir Robert Sherley’s help. When Steele delivered his letters to Sir Robert he ‘*durst hardly read them, except now and then, as by stealth*’ and ‘*seemed much dissatisfied with the company, and with the merchants and mariners who brought him out*’. But later he took both Steele and Crowther to the Grand Vizier, Sarek Hogeia, whose scribes made draughts of three firmauns (royal decrees) all sealed with the great seal of the king; one for John Crowther to carry to Surat, one for Richard Steel to carry to England, and the third to be sent to the governor of Jasques.

Steele left Isphahan on 2nd December 1615 and headed for London (arriving 10th May 1616). Crowther returned to India later writing to the East India Company summarising his

journey back, a subsequent trip to Agra and the *“false report of my death”*. On his return, John incurred the displeasure of his superiors at Surat because he had given his papers not to them but to Sir Thomas Roe (the royal envoy to the Agra court of the Great Mughal Emperor, Jahangir, who, as an aside, describes Crowther as *‘a gentle, quiet, and sufficient fellow’*). Nonetheless, despite the bad feeling, he was sent on another trip to Brampore *‘with elephants’ teeth and other commodities’* to assist a Mr Bangam.

It was here that John died and going full circle to the will we began with, Nicholas Banggam was one of two people in Brampor who witnessed the will on 10th June 1617 when John must have been ill. Heat, parasitic water, disease and excessive drinking took a toll on English life in Persia and John could have been killed by any one of these. He himself described returning to Surat from Isphahan with a bout of dysentery: *“being troubled with a flux, overflowing of the spleen, and merciless cramp rending my veins in pieces, that I am scarce to write six lines without intermission”* and it may be this that killed him. John has no known grave in Brampor and five years later, in March 1622, his father in Iron Acton was still petitioning the East India Company for his son’s estate.

The family continued to live in the village and be buried in the church for another century. In the church, now sadly hidden under the carpet, are worn brass plaques to John’s parents, his nephew John and his daughter’s children. (see below)

Epitaphium Johanis Crowtheri,
Generosi, qui obiit Maij
5, A. D. 1624.
Si sine fraude fides, pietas no
ficta, modestum Os, prudens
genius, mens proba, larga
manus, Cura dei patriæ reddant
(post funera) famæ Vitam
Crowtheri nescia fama mori.

Epitaphium Margaretæ, Uxoris
Johannis Crowtherii,
Quæ decessit Oct. 21, A. D.
1630.
Conjux cara suo jacet hic
conjuncta marito,
Est Coelis unus stratus utriq.
torus:
Tali digna viro prudens, pia,
casta, pudica,
Viva fuit Christo, mortua nupta
suo.

Here lyeth the Body of John
Crowther, sen. of Chillwood, Gent, who
departed this Life 25 April, 1717, in the 77 year of
his age.

Also here lie the Bodies of three
Children of William Jones and
Anne his wife, of Chillwood.
Samuel Crowther Jones departed
this Life 29 Oct. 17[]9, aged 4 years
and 5 weeks.

The same nephew, in 1682, bought Chilwood for £370 from Lady Anne Poyntz and the family were to own the house until they sold it to a Mr Nelmes in around 1781.

Tim Grubb

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IRON ACTON BOOK GROUP

At our January meeting when we select our book choices for the coming year we were discussing how long our group had been in existence. We think about 20 years; indeed, the majority of our founder members are still here. During that time, we have read a varied range of books – some of which we would never have personally considered, but subsequently enjoyed.

Many people often ask what we are reading and would recommend. Hence, we thought it might be interesting to share the selection we made at our January meeting for 2024. Alongside is a list of the books we also considered.

Choices for 2024;

The Signature of All Things Elizabeth Gilbert

Still Life Sarah Winman

Lessons Ian McEwan

The Marriage Portrait Maggie O'Farrell

Any book with "Bees" in the title

Ideas: *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* by Christy Lefteri, *The Secret Life of Bees* by Sue Monk Kidd, *Grey Bees* by Andrey Kurkov, *The Bee Sting* by Paul Murray and *Of Bees and Mist* by Eric Setiawan.

Other suggested reads for 2024:

The Years: Annie Ernaux:

Brixton Beach Roma Tearne

The Rosie Project Graeme Simsion

Small Pleasures Clare Chambers

Any book by George Orwell

Wintering Katherine May

State of Wonder Ann Patchett

The Children's Book A.S. Byatt

Trespasses Louise Kennedy

Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow Gabrielle Zevin

Before the Coffee Gets Cold Toshikazu Kawaguchi

Dissolution C J Sansom

Any book by Charles Dickens

We have received requests from several people who would like to join the Iron Acton Book Group. However, there is a limit to our numbers because we meet at one another's homes. As a result we thought Iron Acton could support another book group. We would be more than happy to assist with the setting up of another book group. If you are interested in this venture please contact me or another member of the Iron Acton Book Group.

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VALENTINE'S DAY 1879

The inquest was opened into the death of 5-year-old Charlotte Tomlin, who died in tragic circumstances. It seems that poison had got into a pudding cooked by her mother. Four other family members also suffered from the effects of eating the pudding and were taken to Bristol Infirmary. The inquest was adjourned until some of the family were well enough to attend. Evidence for Charlotte's death came from her older brother, aged 10. He was 'much affected while giving his testimony, and cried so much that his statement was rather confused.' He was standing on the table in order to reach a from a cupboard when he found a parcel containing a white powder 'just like flour'. He told his mother of the discovery, who asked his sister to fetch the parcel. His sister took the parcel to her mother, who, believing it to be flour, mixed it with rest of the flour in the pan. Later all who had eaten the pudding suffered severe vomiting. Only the father was not affected as he was in bed having worked the previous night. Subsequent tests showed the cause of the poisoning to be arsenic. (*Bristol Mercury and Daily Post*)



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