

Church & Village News

Baconsthorpe • Barningham Winter • Edgefield • Hempstead
Matlaske • Plumstead • Saxthorpe with Corpusty

November 2022



Saxthorpe Church by Moonlight
Photograph by Roger Last

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Copy Date third Wednesday of the month
16 Nov / 18 Jan no issue in January

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Print Barnwell Print Ltd, Aylsham 732767

Postal Subscriptions
£15 per year Corinne Youngs 577263

To download previous editions visit:
www.churchandvillagenews.org.uk

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Hempstead	Paul Sanders	713217
Matlaske & Barningham	Sara Buxton	577207
Plumstead	Nick Fulford	577433
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www.baconthorpe.org



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CBP010719

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Assistant Curate Reverend Judy Rosser 587584
Lay Minister Gill Peat 734226
Authorised Worship Assistant Dr Alain Wolf 577292

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	Harry Steel	07711 890360
B Winter	Amelia Courtauld	577250
	Rebecca Hill	07960 739593
Edgefield	Emma Cletheroe	587049
	Angela Turner	587292
Hempstead	Airlie Inglis	577440
Matlaske	Thomas Courtauld	577250
	Duncan Wood	570293
Plumstead	Eleanor Faulkner	577868
Sax with Corpusty	TBC	

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Safeguarding concerns please contact the Police on 999 or Diocese of Norwich Safeguarding Team
safeguarding@dioceseofnorwich.org or
01603 882345

What's On

NOVEMBER

Fri 4	10.30am	Hempstead Coffee + Catch-Up	Village Hall
Sat 5	6.00pm	Corpusty Bonfire	Village Green
Thur 17	7.00pm	Corpusty Village Hall Committee Meeting	Village Hall
Fri 18	7.00pm	Hempstead Quiz Night	Village Hall
Sat 19	10.00am	Baconsthorpe Craft Fair	Village Hall
Sun 20	4.00pm	Hempstead Nativity Play Meeting with Pizza	Village Hall
Fri 26	6.00pm	Baconsthorpe Pop-Up Pub	Village Hall

Clash Diary

Dec 3	Corpusty Coffee Morning
Dec 3	Edgefield Fuel Fund
Dec 4	Matlaske Christmas Party
Dec 8	Hempstead Music
Dec 9	Baconsthorpe Quiz Night
Dec 10	Edgefield Festive Evening
Dec 10	Hempstead Christmas Party

Holt Library

9 Church Street, Holt NR25 6BB 712202
 Tues 10am-7pm / Wed 2pm-7pm
 Fri 10am-7pm / Sat 1pm-4pm

Post Offices

Baconsthorpe Mobile Post Office Van
 Wednesdays 10.00am Village Hall

Corpusty Stores 587726
 Monday-Friday 9.00am – 12.00noon

Itteringham Shop 587325
 Monday + Thursday 9.00am-1.00pm

If you are arranging an event please check with
 Corinne Youngs that there is not already an
 event being held that day 577263 / corinne@
 ayoungs.com

Mobile Library Van

24 Nov / 22 Dec / 19 Jan / 16 Feb

Matlaske	11.40	NR11 7AQ	Old Post Office
Plumstead	12.25	NR11 7LG	Walnut Farm
Edgefield	1.55	NR24 2AL	The Memorial
	2.15	NR24 2AX	The Street
Corpusty	2.45	NR11 6QP	School
	3.40	NR11 7BU	Great Farm Cott's
Saxthorpe	4.10	NR11 7BL	Old Post Office
Corpusty	4.30	NR11 6QJ	Adams Lane
	4.50	NR11 6QL	16 Council Houses

17 Nov / 15 Dec / 12 Jan / 9 Feb

Hempstead	3.40	NR25 6TL	Telephone kiosk
Baconsthorpe	4.05	NR25 6LE	Hare & Hounds
	4.20	NR25 6LG	Old Post Office
	4.40	NR25 6LJ	Council Bungalows

Times and dates sourced from Norfolk County
 website: <https://bit.ly/2AJdSGA>

Parish Council Websites

Baconsthorpe	http://baconsthorpepc.wixsite.com/baconsthorpepc
Edgefield	https://edgefieldparishcouncil.norfolkparishes.gov.uk
Hempstead	https://hempsteadpc.wixsite.com/hempsteadpc
Matlaske & Barningham	http://matlaskeparishcouncil.norfolkparishes.gov.uk
Plumstead	https://plumsteadpc.wixsite.com/plumsteadpc
Saxthorpe & Corpusty	https://corpustyandsaxthorpeparishcouncil.wordpress.com

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 Apologies if contributed material is not published due to space constraints. All facts are believed to be correct at the time
 of going to press.

Letter from the Rector - Reverend Canon David Longe

577252 / 07881 950294 / rector@matlaske.org.uk

Dear All

The Hebrew scriptures are rich in story, some are history, some are metaphor and some a mix. I wanted to share the story of Na'aman and Elisha (2 Kings 5), which, I believe, is one that illustrates the danger of greed in the face of grace, and that the transcendent nature of God is beyond our boundaries and quarrels. This is a timely message as we see divisive politics at play, continued turmoil in Europe, and concern over how the beautiful Earth is cared for. The story runs thus:



Na'aman was a great commander in the army of King Aram of Damascus. In one campaign he captured a girl from Samaria (the area around modern-day Nablus) which was ruled by the King of Israel. Despite his victory Na'aman suffered from leprosy and all felt sorry for him. The girl (wrongly unnamed in our story) was sympathetic and told Na'aman's wife that Elisha, a prophet in her home town, could heal him. When Na'aman told King Aram this, the king was delighted and sent Na'aman to see the King of Israel. Na'aman took clothes and treasure as gifts.

But the King of Israel was upset – was he upset because of the defeat he had suffered or because he thought it was he who should cure Na'aman? We don't know. However, Elisha hears that Na'aman needs help and sends a message asking him to bathe in the River Jordan 7 times.

Na'aman is angry and arrogant, saying, "I thought that for me he would surely come out and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God and would wave his hand and cure the leprosy! And are not the rivers of Damascus better than [these]." Na'aman's servants tell him not to be so stupid: "if the prophet had commanded you to do something difficult, would you not have done it? ...all he said to you was "wash, and be clean"?"

Na'aman washes and is cleaned. Thrilled, he offers Elisha the gifts, but Elisha dismisses them saying "I will accept nothing!" Na'aman leaves knowing that it is God through Elisha who has healed him.

So to the twist: Gehazi, Elisha's servant, wanting the treasure and clothes runs up to Na'aman and asks for them. When Elisha finds this out, he is furious and says "the leprosy of Na'aman shall cling to you." And so Gehazi leaves Elisha with leprosy "as white as snow".

What does this teach us: that greed in the face of grace will never lead to happiness or that God is not the God of one people – Israelites or Syrians – but God of all Creation? God's ways are not our ways: they are transcendent, wholesome, leading to life, not destruction. Jesus showed no partiality. God cares for all: the River Jordan brought healing to Na'aman, as our care for Creation will bring healing for us.

With my prayer that we can transcend all quarrels and care for all around us,

David



The Benefice of Matlaske Church Services for November

2nd

Wednesday

6.30pm

All Souls Service

Edgefield

All who have recently been bereaved are welcome to this quiet service of prayer and contemplation.
Preacher: Revd Canon Stella Green, previously lead chaplain at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Kings Lynn

6th

3rd Sunday before Advent

8.30am

Eucharist

Edgefield

10.30am

Eucharist

Hempstead

13th

Remembrance Sunday

8.30am

Eucharist

Barningham Winter

10.45am

Remembrance

Baconsthorpe, Barningham Winter, Edgefield, Plumstead

20th

Christ the King

10.30am

Eucharist - followed by drinks

Saxthorpe

Preacher: The Bishop of Norwich. Bishop Graham began life as an ecologist and was appointed lead bishop on the environment by the Archbishop of Canterbury in June 2021. He is a keen beekeeper and has written about spirituality and landscape.

4.00pm

Nativity Get Together with Pizza

Hempstead Village Hall

26th

Saturday

4.30pm

Toys & Tins with Christingle

Saxthorpe

Please do bring presents for those in need which will be taken to the Salvation Army

27th

Advent I

8.30am

Eucharist

Matlaske

10.30am

Advent Carols

North Barningham

3.30pm

Christingle with Tea & Cake

Edgefield

4th Dec

Advent II

8.30am

Eucharist

Plumstead

10.30am

Eucharist

Edgefield

NB: There is no Wednesday Eucharist in November as there is a service in Edgefield that day.

HELP WITH ENERGY & HOUSEHOLD COSTS

If you know anyone who need help with their energy costs please contact
Revd David Longe: 01263 577252 rector@matlaske.org.uk

Cromer Food Bank can help with both food provisions and with household bills.

The Matlaske Benefice Support Fund can help with the above and other issues.

Baconsthorpe

200 Club

£50 R Hall, £25 W Peck, £10 H Steel, £5 L Rix, £5 W Peck, £5 M Day

Did You Know?



In January 1976 Baconsthorpe took the full force of a 105mph hurricane force wind which left a trail of destruction. The worst effect of that night was surely felt by Mrs Eileen Cheney and her husband who were woken in the night to discover that little was left of the upper storey of their house and that the wind had in fact ripped off the roof and deposited it in the garden next door! The bedroom had been demolished



Hazel Martin
07879 414577

leaving the house gaping dangerously as bricks and mortar crashed down the stairs. In true British fashion Eileen and her husband spent the rest of the night downstairs playing cards! They were later joined that night by the family next door with their six children. My thanks go to Joy their daughter for supplying me with the amazing pictures which appeared in the press. A new house was built on the site on Stonefield Road eighteen months later.



Exciting and Important News

A nativity play is being planned and I am hoping that lots of young people will come along with their parents to our first meeting to find out more about this event. Not only will there be free pizza but there will be a chance to find out more about the play and to let me know if you would like to take part. If anyone has any items of clothing or useful items that they think could be used in the nativity play please call me on 07879 414577. Who knows what you might have tucked away in that dressing up box! Perhaps bales of straw, a sheep, a donkey, gold, frankincense and myrrh!!! The meeting is on Sunday 20th at 4pm in Hempstead Village Hall.

Church Cleaning

A huge thank you to the trusty team who arrived on Wednesday October 12th to help in this very vital activity. At last, the bats are being tucked in to their beds for the winter so the task becomes a little easier! We had two surprise visitors while we were there, Kim and Don Brettingham who had arrived all the way from America to visit the church as one of Kim's ancestors is buried in the churchyard. Kim is apparently an avid reader of our newsletter!! We go worldwide!!

A Warm Welcome

We would like to give a very warm Baconsthorpe welcome to Chris and Toni who have just moved in to 7 Stonefield Road. We hope that you will be very happy and will join us at the Pop-Up Pub at the village hall on the last Friday every month.

Congratulations

Our warmest congratulations go to Harry Steel pictured being awarded the Prince of Wales certificate for raising the most money for Norfolk churches on the 2021 cycle ride.



Village Hall News

Thank you to everyone who supported the Table Top Sale in September. It was not as busy as we had hoped for but as a first attempt at a new venture, we felt it was worthwhile and we will try doing another in the Spring.

We continue to make improvements to the Village Hall, with new lighting and a new shed. The latest addition is a new baby changing unit in the accessible toilet.

Craft Fair – Saturday 19 10am – 4pm A great range of lovely crafts will be on sale just in time for Christmas. Do come along and find something unique as a gift, or just for you!.

Pop-Up Pub – Friday 25 6pm Curry night! We look forward to seeing you from 6.30pm for food.

Christmas Quiz Night – Friday 9 December from 6 30pm. A festive quiz is being run by Emma. £7 a head to include food. Always a great evening. Book with Emma on 07884 432412

Baconsthorpe Village Hall CRAFT FAIR

Saturday 19 November
10.00am – 4.00pm

A great opportunity to
find a unique Christmas Gift

Piers Warner



Baconsthorpe Potato Harvesting photo by Norman Allen

Barningham Winter

The days are getting shorter, so just a warning that it is sugar beet season again. Please be aware of the beet harvesters, tractor and trailers and the lorries that cart the beet to the factory - also of course mud on the road. On some of the smaller roads there might be a delay whilst the lorries are being loaded.



Sara Buxton
577207

Village Hall News

A reminder that our Festive Evening will be held on Saturday 10th December starting at 6.30pm. Food, drink and silly party games will be the order of the night. Tickets from Dawn Hulbert (587379) or Jim Frost (587110), £10 for adults, £5 for juniors. These always sell out fast, so don't dally! A big thank you to everyone who attended our Quiz Night. Lots of fun was had by all and a fair bit of knowledge shown!

Jim Frost



Richard Peaver
587486

Parish Council

After many years of service to the Parish Council, Harrie Morshuis has resigned his post to enjoy a well-earned retirement. We thank Harrie for all his efforts and wish him well. We therefore have a vacancy on the Parish Council. Could you provide a voice for people living in your community? Anybody interested in the role, please contact our Clerk, Amanda Yacoubian (edgefieldpc@yahoo.com).

We are very grateful to The Friends of Edgefield for meeting the cost of refurbishing the Silver Jubilee Bench and to the Village Hall Committee for their contribution towards connecting the guttering of the Village Hall to the pond. We hope this will increase water levels in the pond in the future. Further dates will be announced soon for the pond working party's sessions throughout the autumn, as there is still much work to do. We would be very grateful for help from anyone who would like to join us.

Mark Cook, Chairman

Edgefield Fuel Fund

The Trustees of the Edgefield Fuel Fund will distribute a payment of £25 per eligible* household in the Village Hall on Saturday, 3rd December, between 11am and 12 noon. No payments will be made outside these hours. Face masks will not be compulsory.

*To be eligible:

- (a) You must have reached the age of 60 years.
- (b) You must have been permanently resident in the Parish of Edgefield for five years and be a resident on the day of distribution.
- (c) You must apply in person.
- (d) The infirm or incapacitated may send a representative, who must bring a written authority signed by the person who qualifies.

Please note that the distribution of funds is at the discretion of the Trustees. Rude and abusive behaviour is not acceptable and is likely to result in a refusal to release a payment to an applicant or their proxy.

Eco Church

As part of the national Eco Church scheme, we are showing our commitment to care for others through our community and global engagement. Our church in Edgefield has recently twinned our lavatory with a community toilet project in Malawi. 2.3 billion people don't have somewhere

safe to go to the lavatory. Without proper lavatories and clean water, people are trapped in a vicious cycle:

They're likely to become sick through sanitation-related diseases. Illness means they cannot work or farm their land, so they earn less or grow less food. Children often miss school, because they are sick or busy collecting water. Girls often drop out of school when they start their periods if there are no lavatories or changing rooms. Parents have to pay for medicines or food, so they may fall into debt. Women and girls risk being attacked or bitten by snakes as they go to the lavatory in the open, especially if the culture dictates that they have to go out at night.

The principle of lavatory twinning is simple: you 'twin' a lavatory with one given to a community who are in need of a safe place to go to the lavatory. The money donated not only funds a toilet, but also helps support community education and sanitation programmes. Why not twin your lavatory? There is a one-off cost of £60. Visit www.toilettwinning.org. Choose a location (currently Afghanistan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Honduras, Malawi, Uganda, Ivory Coast) for the new toilet, and await your framed certificate! If you have already twinned your lavatory(s) in Edgefield, or do so in response to this article, please email me (lesleyrainsford@yahoo.co.uk) so that we can count up how many twinned toilets there are in Edgefield.

Lesley Rainsford, Eco Church Representative

Hempstead

200 Club

£50 D Durst, £25 J Matthews, £10 F Feilden, £5 R Carver, J Matthews, A Matthews

Coffee & Catch-Up Friday 4th 10.30 am - 12noon Village Hall

Welcome

To Ryan Batty and Rihanna Colburn who have moved into No 2 Hall Cottages. We hope that they will be very happy here.

Congratulations

To Sophie Mack. She is a member of the Under 11s Hockey team at Gresham's. They have won the regional IAPS finals and will represent Eastern England in November. Good luck!

Congratulations also to Mike Winspear and his partner! Mike wrote that on "Wednesday 5th October, 15 days overdue, we finally welcomed into the world my and Hannah Gore's (my partner) first baby boy, Aleksander Michael Christopher Winspear weighing in at 8lbs. Mum and baby are now back at home, the newest and youngest member of the Hempstead villagers."

David Durst

David Durst, a long-time resident of Hempstead, will be 100 on 8th November. A fantastic achievement! I'm sure he would be delighted to receive birthday cards at Letheringsett Hall, Church Lane, Letheringsett, NR25 7AR.

Norfolk Churches Trust Sponsored Cycle Ride

Hempstead has done it again - another fantastic year. Nine sponsored cyclists and two motorists took to the road and one person was sponsored to sit in the church to welcome visitors; between



Diana Spalton
711117

us we raised a stunning total of £5,046. A big thank you to Robin and Rose Carver, Emily Gurney, Airlie, Charlie, Lorne and Sylvie Inglis, Duncan and Catherine Lingard, Alexander Richardson and Ian Summers for their efforts and a big thank you to all those who so generously sponsored them. Thank you all for your support.

Hempstead Quiz Night
Friday 18th November 2022
starting at 7.00pm in the Village Hall

Come along for a fun evening of heckling and dissent!

Bring your own drinks and snacks.
The proceeds will help fund the Village Christmas Party in December

Tickets are £4 per head with teams of up to a maximum of 4 people

Contact Andy Wallis to secure your table
andywallis@rocketmail.com or 07810 862109

Hempstead Harvest Festival & Supper



On Sunday 2nd October, Hempstead All Saints hosted the Benefice Harvest Festival followed by Harvest Supper in the village hall afterwards. This was a truly community event with over fifty people attending both church and supper. Hempstead decorated the church and village hall and provided drinks for everyone, and in turn, generous cooks from all the other Parishes provided soup, bread, cheese and pate, and a large array of absolutely delicious crumbles!

The church collection and village hall donations amounted to £344, which the PCC has rounded up to £350 and sent to the Foodbank, along with all the food donations left in the church and all the apples, pears and vegetables which helped decorate the church. If anyone would like to make their own donation to the Foodbank, the bank details are: North Norfolk Foodbank, sort code 535073, A/C no 59565888.

Hempstead PCC has also decided to donate £500 to the Benefice's support fund for those in need within the benefice this year. This inspiring fund run by Revd David Longe, gives money to those who are struggling within our parishes, and who may need more support this winter in particular. Please apply to David on behalf of anyone you know who may be in need who lives in the Benefice.

Christmas Party

Saturday 10 December from 7pm at the Village Hall. Mulled wine and food provided. Bring your own other drinks. No charge, but please contact Lesley Lennox to book your place: text 07446 777660 or email lesley.lennox@project21.ltd.uk

Plumstead

Farewell

We bid farewell to Karen and David of Tudor Cottage who are off to pastures new. The village will be forever indebted to Karen for her wonderful sewing and artistry which has raised significant sums for the village. We thank them both for all their contributions to village life and wish them the very best in their new home.



Harriet Rossi
577239

Nativity

For all the budding Mary and Josephs out there, there will be a Nativity service at St Michael's church on 21 December, so please put this date in your diaries. More details to come in the next newsletter.

Pumpkin & Dahlia Festival

This much anticipated event is underway as you receive this newsletter. I'm sure it will be a huge success as always and the results will be published next month.

Matlaske

100 Club £25 R Baynes, £10 A Dykes, £ 5 L Kinsley

Welcome!

To the people who've just moved into Church Cottage – enjoy Matlaske!

Heritage Lottery Fund Bid

Work continues on this bid to improve facilities in the church and display its historic features better. We are exploring the various permissions required and what facilities are really needed, eg running water. We are also looking into whether the bid could fund a non-intrusive archaeological survey.



Duncan Wood
570293



Quinces at The Old Rectory, Baconsthorpe photo by Emma Youngs

Saxthorpe with Corpusty

Bonfire and Fireworks Return!



It's back with a bang! After two fireless years the Corpusty & Saxthorpe Bonfire makes a welcome return to the Village Green on Saturday November 5th. But volunteers are needed to ensure that it is a great night for all and raises as much as possible for Macmillan Cancer Support and local groups. The event fell victim to covid restrictions, leaving a big hole in the north Norfolk social calendar (but not the village green



John Birchall
584290

grass). It has been revived by the voluntary Bonfire Committee, but help is needed on the day, especially in the evening with collecting donations and manning road closures. The procession begins at 6pm with the bonfire and fireworks from 8pm. Please help this great money-raising event if you can. Contact Ciaran Chapman on 07703 535235.

School Thrilled to be 'Good'

Ofsted Inspectors have confirmed what parents already knew by giving Corpusty Primary School official recognition as a 'good' school. The two-day inspection, which looked in depth at all aspects of the school, found it to be 'good' in all areas. They found a 'calm and orderly environment' in which 'no one is a stranger.' The curriculum was recognised as being ambitious, getting children off to a good start in Reception and 'prepares children to confidently move to the next stage of their education. "I am so proud of all the children and every member of staff," said Head Jacqui Lound. Younger children can join Little Acorns, the school's free stay and play carer and pre-school group for 0-5 years old. It runs every Monday from 10.00am to 11.30am during term time and no pre-booking is needed. For more details contact the school: 01263 587320, office@corpustyprimary.org.uk.



Standing Room Only at Village Hall

The recent Back in Time event was a great success; two film showings with standing room only and a lot of visitors with stories to share.

Wild Flowers

A couple of small patches of bare earth have appeared at the village hall, one by the notice board and the other underneath the lamp post. In the spring we plan to sow cornfield annuals - cornflower, corncockle, poppy, corn marigold, etc. We've also mown and raked over a small area of ground near the main entrance and have sown yellow rattle which will weaken the grass in the hope of encouraging the existing wild flowers to flourish, some pretty, others not quite so but all good for our insects and bees. A handful of crocus bulbs have been planted on the grass slope in front of the village hall and early in the new year, when the snowdrops flower, we will be planting some of them on to this slope. Looking forward to a colourful and buzzing 2023!

Village Hall

It's been slow progress but it looks as though wi-fi will be connected in the village hall by the time you read this news; another asset for the hall.

The village hall committee will be meeting again on Thursday 17 November, 7pm at the village hall. Please note that Diane Oliver, who handles bookings for Corpusty & Saxthorpe Village Hall, has new contact details and should be contacted on oliverd1@mail.com

The Village Gardener

To Plant a Garden is to Believe in Tomorrow



November... the rather hard-core neighbour to October. Fortunately, as I write this, we still have enough light hours in the day. October has given us some absolutely stunning beautiful days but the nights are drawing in and when November kicks off that's when it all gets somewhat more testing. The trick I feel is to get as much light as is possible, however grim a day may look from the inside looking out, it's never quite that bad outside and the fresh air and sense of achievement if you do get some tasks

done in the garden goes a long way to balance out November's tyranny. I recently read a charming piece on coping with low light levels in the winter months by a Danish writer (and who else are going to know more about winter light deprivation than the Danish!). He suggests we become more cat like and follow the sun through the day and let's face it, cats are the biggest proponents of self-care there is! So perhaps try and seek out those little suntraps round your house and garden so that when there is any sun you are absolutely making the most of it. Try and work with what you do have, so if the veg patch needs a weed, grab a moment when the sun is out and save shed and greenhouse work for the rather more challenging weather days.

Fortunately, there are lots of reasons to be out and about in November! The most cheerful of reasons is that November is the best month to get your tulips in the ground. Whilst most gardening books recommend planting tulip bulbs twice their own height deep it's actually better to plant them far deeper than that, more like 8-12 inches deep. This will ensure that your bulbs are more likely to come back strongly next year without reproducing which could mean you get a weaker show the following year. Whilst I admit it is more hassle, I think it's worth the effort. At this point I will have to confess that we do have the most fantastic gadget which attaches to a cordless drill which completely takes away the tedium of bulb planting, less romantic than the ideal of bulb planting but if you have over 4000 bulbs to plant a year as Mick does at the Garden where he works then romance doesn't cut it - but power tools do.

Moving onto the next best cheerful task for November and that's bare root planting. We have always planted bare root trees partly out of economic necessity and partly because we believe it's the best way to establish trees or hedging, whilst an awful lot of patience is required and at times copious watering. I am now thinking of the time when we were pulled in by a 50% sale of hornbeam bare root hedging right at the end of the bare root season and it didn't rain for three weeks after we planted them, but either down to good luck or sheer hard work and a lot of

watering cans we didn't lose one and five years later we have the most beautiful hedge. Bare root is worth persevering with, the trick is to not even remotely let the roots dry out before it gets in the ground and to be patient. It will be worth it!

Now for the least glamorous but possibly most worthy tasks for November, proper Brownie badge territory! First up is to clear out the green house and give the windows a wash especially if you are growing in there over winter, as with lower light levels you need to ensure as much light as possible is getting into your greenhouse. Next up is to give all your pots and seed trays a good wash and brush up, on the face of it, it is a horrible task but it's such a good one to get done and the loveliest of moments when it gets to spring time and everything is clean and tidy and all set to go. Finally, we get to the potting shed, on a less than salubrious day here we will empty out the shed give it a good sweep and tidy and re-pack everything back in it. This means you get to give everything an eye over to see who needs cleaning up or sharpening or passing on, it's also such a good time for a stock check before the Christmas wish lists get written!

Before this month's question I wanted to give a friendly reminder to check over your bonfire sites before the 5th, just in case it's already been taken as a good cosy spot for hibernation. Here we tend to gather a heap of wood and cuttings in one place and then completely dismantle it and move it to another site just before we light it (just in case). Our hedgehogs have already had a tough time this year. We don't need to add to it!

This month's question is from Anne Lewis who is concerned about her north facing paving that was really treacherous last winter with the build-up of algae and leaf debris. Anne understandably doesn't want to use a pressure washer as she doesn't want to damage the mortar between her paving slabs and she also doesn't want to use chemicals. Fortunately, we do have a solution! But it is a more laborious one (but worth it) if you pick up a bag of sharp sand from the builders' merchants and literally scrub the pavings with the sand and a stiff bristled broom (think of it as rather aggressive exfoliation!) you will not only remove the algae but also leave a slightly abrasive finish which should be much more non-slip - hope that helps!

Do keep the questions coming in! Email us at redmaple@btinternet.com. As ever, the most interesting question will be published next month.

Michelle & Mick McCarter





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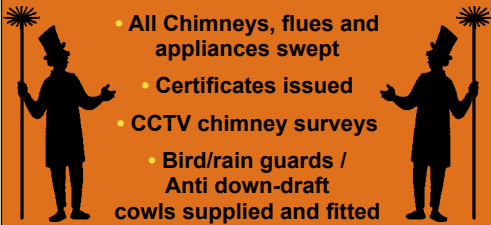
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Nature Watch – The Rook, *Corvus frugilegus*: Friend or Foe?

Arthur Pentney



Perhaps not the farmer's favourite bird, but I rather like rooks. Both garrulous and gregarious by nature, they seem to be holding their own when other species of birds are in decline.

Rooks can easily be confused with crows, as they are both from the same family. The best identification to confirm it is to observe from the base of and below the beak. If this area is white and bare, then you are definitely looking at a rook. Those distinctive, croaky, tuneless "caws" announce their presence to us in no uncertain terms, and if large

groups of them are not congregating socially in the rookery, they will surely be zooming around together in the sky or poking around on recently cultivated fields looking for sustenance.

It's in this later case that they receive a bad reputation as it is assumed all they are eating is newly sown grain. Listen to this childish jingle from those far off years when corn was so expensive it had to be planted by children, by hand, grain by grain. So, the youngsters chanted

Four seeds in the hole

One for the rook

One for the crow

One to rot and

One to grow

Our rook then is perceived as something of a villain, whereas they are probably ridding the field of unwanted wireworms and similar undesirables, as the rook is omnivorous and will eat just about anything.

It is a country bird – they eschew towns and built-up areas, preferring open land with groups of trees in which to construct their rookery. Schoolboy myth from my generation deemed these selected tall trees to be unclimbable, the nest always being right at the top of the tree, and a large rookery can comprise dozens of these nests all close together. We have one such rookery close by us here, and it is quite enjoyable both to watch and hear these birds go about their daily lives, seemingly to be doing alright. Friend or foe? More friend, I reckon!