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December 2023

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60p

# Eastcombe, Bussage & Brownhill Newsletter

Welcome to the last issue of 2023! To receive a digital copy of the newsletter FREE every month, contact [eastcombebandedbnews@gmail.com](mailto:eastcombebandedbnews@gmail.com).

Printed copies 60p from **Eastcombe Stores & Post Office, Frith Community Café & Chalford Parish Centre**. The newsletter is also available to customers of **Head First & The Lamb Inn**.

Please send items for the January issue to [eastcombenewsletter@btinternet.com](mailto:eastcombenewsletter@btinternet.com) **by 13th December**.

NEW  
DATE!



## TAKING THE PLUNGE!

**Eastcombe resident and great granny, Jacky Hunt, decided to make her 82nd birthday memorable - by making a sky dive!**

On Sunday November 5th, Jacky and her grand-daughter, Yasmin, drove to Old Sarum Park, Salisbury, home of GoSkydive.

It was a lovely sunny day, and they set out early, having to be there for 8.30am. After an hour of instruction, Jacky, her instructor Matt, and 7 other pairs took to the skies, ascending to 10,000 feet. Then the door opened, and two by two they tipped out - into thin air. Jacky describes how they dropped 'like a sack of spuds' until, after seconds, the parachute opened and they 'whooshed back up'. She and Matt then drifted down over Wiltshire countryside that looked like 'a beautiful patchwork quilt', Matt pointing out landmarks such as Stonehenge and Salisbury Cathedral before they coasted in for a gentle, safe landing.

Jacky described it as an wonderful experience, and would recommend 'professional, efficient and welcoming' GoSkydive to anyone considering making a jump. She may do it again for her 83rd birthday!



I wait.  
I watch.  
I hope.  
Advent



BACK BY POPULAR DEMAND

## BROWNSHILL CHRISTMAS POP-UP BAR

More Details on **PAGE 5**

**THURSDAY 21st DECEMBER**  
6pm onwards

**ST MARY OF THE ANGELS CHURCH, BROWNSHILL**

## NEWSLETTER DEADLINES...

The deadline for the January newsletter is earlier than usual.

**Please send items by 13th December.**

From Jan 2024, the newsletter deadline will be **17th of each month**.

THANK YOU  
FOR ALL YOUR  
SUPPORT IN  
2023!



## EASTCOMBE CHRISTMAS LIGHTS 2023!

Join us on **1ST DECEMBER** to unveil Eastcombe Primary School's Christmas windows—and to light up the Eastcombe Christmas tree.

**The fun starts at 6pm at the school**, with refreshments & Christmas singing, after which a **lantern-lit procession will make its way to Eastcombe Green**, where **Father Christmas will switch on the Eastcombe Christmas tree lights!**

Enjoy Christmas music with the Hilltop Band & the Shanty Singers, & mulled wine & cider (& food) at The Lamb Inn.

**ALL WELCOME!**



## 2023 & ALL THAT...

# 2023

### It's been a packed year on the hill!

From warm welcomes to Screens on the Green, super speakers at the Hilltop Gardening Club and Eastcombe WI, tasty recipes, tips on 'Going Greener,' nature notes and gardening advice, footpath, school and council updates, village histories, Name That Views (how many did YOU get right?), deer damage at Eastcombe allotments, tree protection orders, Keep it Locals, Days in the Life and Who's Whos? village quizzes, April fools (sorry!), tips on helping hedgehogs, opportunities to volunteer, concerts and events to attend, including the hilltop Open Gardens for the National Gardens Scheme, Frith Community Café every Wednesday morning and the chance to join others outside at the People's Patch in Brownhill.

Timetable changes saw fewer buses climbing our hill, the sunny Coronation celebrations in May saw a packed Eastcombe Green, while July's wet Wine Walk meant fast drinking to avoid dilution. There were Gnome Hunts, church, Twinning Association and BisCAN events. The A419 was resurfaced and the Chalford cables were stolen again.

2024 could see electoral changes on the hilltop, as Bisley-with-Lypiatt and Chalford vote for different MPs, while, on a happier note, we look forward to the flying of the new Eastcombe flag.



Happy Christmas & here's to 2024!



## BisCAN: Spend Less to Save the Planet!



Want to reduce your carbon footprint and help save nature? Spend less! Everything we buy has a carbon cost, so the more we spend, the more harm. It's why rich countries do more harm than poor countries; the average impact of a UK resident is over 6 times that of an Afghan.

According to a 2020 [report](#), in 2015, 'the world's richest 10% were responsible for around half of global emissions, with the top 1% responsible for 15% of emissions, nearly twice as much as the world's poorest 50%, who were responsible for just 7% but will feel the brunt of climate impacts, despite bearing the least responsibility.'

A report by the Cotswold National Landscape (AONB) found Cotswolds residents' carbon footprint to be 26% higher than the UK average. So, how can we help? Spend less! Don't fly as much, use a smaller car, turn the thermostat down a degree or two, eat less meat and dairy. Spend less (and save money)!

[bisleyeastcombeoakridgecan@gmail.com](mailto:bisleyeastcombeoakridgecan@gmail.com)

INTERESTED IN  
LOCAL HISTORY?

Join the  
**Eastcombe & Bismore  
Local History Group**  
on Facebook.

Eastcombe Post Office c.1910-18, Eastcombe Green

**CHALFORD MARKET**

CSSC  
Chalford Sports & Social Club

CRAFTY & DELICIOUS @ CHALFORD

Indoor Christmas Market

Sunday 3rd December  
10am-1pm  
Chalford Sports & Social Club

**GO GREENER:**

**REMEMBER TO RECYCLE  
THIS CHRISTMAS!**

You can now recycle **FAR** more than  
you think!

Visit [www.terracycle.com/en-GB/](http://www.terracycle.com/en-GB/)  
to find out more.

**Bisley, Eastcombe &  
Oakridge Climate Action  
Network**

## CHALCAN NEWS:

# ChalCAN

- The Biodiversity group will be planting a 120m hedgerow at Bussage School, which should contribute to wildlife habitats on the site.
- The Transport group has progressed installation of bike racks at the Frith Youth Centre and started to explore the possibility of an e-bike rental scheme in the village.
- We are also supporting the new Community Composting Scheme group: if you're interested, contact Karen: [kjpmail66@gmail.com](mailto:kjpmail66@gmail.com).

## 12 Steps for a Greener Christmas:

- Gifts galore:** Buy (or make) local, fair trade, eco-friendly or 2nd hand gifts. Give a pledge or treat.
- The tree:** Rent a tree, buy one with roots for re-use, or if it's cut find one that's FSC certified. Avoid buying an artificial tree (but re-use one if you have it!).
- Lights and decorations:** Switch to LED lights; try handcrafting or baking your decorations.
- Wrapping:** Use easily recycled paper, hessian, tissue or fabric. Tie with ribbon.
- Christmas cards:** Make your own, send e-cards, send ones with the FSC mark, or send plantable cards.
- Crackers/advent calendars:** Buy eco crackers or make your own. Re-use last year's advent calendar.
- Pass on the plastic:** Look for eco logos on goods (Fair-trade, Rainforest Alliance, FSC, Palm Oil Free).
- Christmas Food:** Cut down on meat; buy local produce; plan meals to reduce waste.
- Cheers:** Look out for organic and/or locally produced wines and beers.
- Wear it well:** Buy clothes ethically made from sustainable fabrics, buy pre-loved or swap with friends.
- Save Energy:** Don't over-do the heating, turn off lights and get a smart meter.
- Focus on what matters:** Family, friends, for some an important religious festival... not stuff!

**Keep in touch with ChalCAN:** join our mailing list, or if you are interested or can help in any way, contact [info@chalcan.org.uk](mailto:info@chalcan.org.uk). Follow us at on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/chalcan) or check out our website: [www.chalcan.org.uk](http://www.chalcan.org.uk)

## CHALFORD PARISH COUNCIL NEWS: DECEMBER 2023

Chalford Parish Centre, 50 Gerald's Way, Chalford, Stroud, GL6 8FJ;  
01453 887204; [info@chalford-glos.gov.uk](mailto:info@chalford-glos.gov.uk) [www.chalford-glos.gov.uk](http://www.chalford-glos.gov.uk). [Facebook](#).



**Our MP Siobhan Ballie** is holding a drop in, first come first served, surgery at the Parish Centre on Friday 15th December, 10am to 1pm. Siobhan would love to see you to raise a concern or just to talk about local or national matters. Seating will be available and the venue is on the ground floor.

**Grant Awards:** It is that time of year again! If you are a local organisation in need of funding you may be eligible for a small grant from the Parish Council. The deadline for applications is 31<sup>st</sup> January 2024. Grant rules and the application form are available from the Parish Centre or via our website.

**Play Rangers:** Despite the wet weather, Play Rangers ran a successful event on The Old Common on Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> November. We hope everyone enjoyed themselves despite getting a bit wet!

**John Taylor's Foundation:** The John Taylor's Foundation is a local charity that issues small grants to assist with the cost of books, tools or equipment for students going on to Higher Education (excluding A Levels) or those undertaking apprenticeships. If you are under 25 and live in the Ancient Parish of Bisley (includes all of the civil parish of Bisley with Lypiatt, most of Bussage and part of Chalford), please apply in writing to The Trustees at [john Taylors foundation@gmail.com](mailto:john Taylors foundation@gmail.com) stating your full name, age, address, university course or employer. The Trustees meet twice a year in March and September to consider applications.

**Frith Wood tree work:** Due to squirrel damage, remedial work to 12 trees near the public right of way alongside the PC owned section of the wood is being carried out by our Arboriculturist w/c 11<sup>th</sup> December. SDC officers have visited the site, and, at time of writing, planning permission is due to be granted. The footpath bordering the wood from Tanglewood Way to The Frith will be closed for the duration of the works.

**Footpath Volunteers:** We hoped to paint the metal entrance barriers to the Bussage and France Lynch playgrounds yellow to aid visibility, but will have to wait until it's warmer and drier! If you know of work that the Volunteers could do on Parish footpaths or walls, let us know. We welcome new volunteers to our Thursday morning sessions. You don't have to be available regularly, and you don't need to be super-fit – if you can use a spade you're probably OK. Please contact the Parish Office (01453 887204) to find out more.

**Dog Owners:** A reminder, please pick up after your pets and deposit dog poo bags in a bin. Thank you.

**Parking:** A polite request to refrain from parking on the verges; the wet weather makes them very susceptible to damage and it takes a long time for the grass to recover.

**Friday Lunch Club:** Do come along and join the lunch club at the Frith Youth Centre every Friday 12–2pm. Home-made soup, bread, cheese and biscuits, tea, coffee and cake await you! This is a lovely social event, and a great way to meet new people. A few more volunteers are still needed to help out as the club has become so popular! If you would like to get involved, please get in touch.

Please contact us using the details above if you have any questions, concerns or suggestions.

**We would like to wish everyone a very merry Christmas, with our best wishes to you all for a happy and healthy 2024.**

### BUSSAGE PRIMARY SCHOOL

#### Tranquility Garden Development:

We are delighted that work to re-develop our old spiritual garden has started! Over the past few years, the garden had fallen into disrepair and it was no longer safe to access this much-loved part of our school. The PTA did a considerable amount of fundraising and the children have been fascinated to watch Mr Mason at work and the digger rumbling around. Vast changes are already visible!



**Explorer Dome:** In early November, Years 1 & 2 learned about the human body and enjoyed experiencing how the digestive system worked!

**Community Carols: 4th December at 6pm:** Please join us in the school hall.

**Open Morning: 5th December at 9.30 am** – We have another open morning for parents of children looking for Reception class places. No booking required, although parents can phone the school to do so if they wish. Please spread the word to anyone in the local community and beyond who might be looking for places for their child. We also currently have places in Year 2, 3 and 4 classes.

**Hall Lettings** – Did you know our school hall is available for hire? A great place for clubs, choirs, meetings or children's parties, evenings and weekends. Please contact the school office on 01453 883205 for details of cost and availability.

### EASTCOMBE PRIMARY SCHOOL

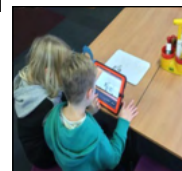
We are delighted to share our **OFSTED Report** with you. The judgement given to Eastcombe Primary School overall is 'Good', with an 'Outstanding' judgement for personal development. See the full report on our [website](#). Highlights include: 'The school provides a wealth of memorable experiences to bring pupils' learning to life', 'This is a friendly, nurturing and welcoming school' and 'The school's support for pupils' personal development is exceptional'. Thank you to our school family and wider community for their contributions and much valued support.

**Looking for a primary school place for September 2024?** We can show prospective parents round at mutually convenient times. Ring the school office on 01452 770227 to make an appointment.

**Vacancy for After School Play Leader:** As part of our new **Wrap Around Care Offer** starting January 2024, we are seeking an After School Play Leader to join our friendly, motivated team! Hours are 15:15–17:15 Mon–Fri term time (could be flexible); salary band Grade 4 £22,620 PA, pro rata. If you could be a good role model for our children and would like to be part of this exciting new initiative, please contact Becky or Jo in the office for more information.

**Computing:** Using iPads and the iMotion app, Hedgehog Class worked in groups to create their own stop-frame animations. They loved it and can't wait for their next lesson.

For more information, visit [www.eastcombe.gloucs.sch.uk/](http://www.eastcombe.gloucs.sch.uk/), email [admin@eastcombe.gloucs.sch.uk](mailto:admin@eastcombe.gloucs.sch.uk) or call 01452 770227



## Eastcombe Baptist Church

A service is held every Sunday morning at 10:30am at the church in Dr Crouch's Road, Eastcombe.

### DISTRICT COUNCILLOR'S NOTES

**SDC Finance:** The Council's medium-term finances are in good shape, unlike councils such as Birmingham and Slough that are facing bankruptcy. The financial strains on all councils are in part due to reductions of 40-50% in central government support since 2010. Thanks to careful management, SDC will be able to maintain all local services for at least the next year. A single year settlement from Government is again expected, but the details will not be confirmed until late December. Council Tax is expected to increase again by 2.99%, less than the rate of inflation, which will require further efficiency savings.

**Climate Emergency Assessment:** Stroud District Council's tackling of the climate emergency are joint 8th among councils in the UK, up 2 places from last year and the highest ranking of any council in Gloucestershire. The assessment was carried out by Climate Emergency UK.

### Public Spaces Protection Orders (Dog Control):

Rules which protect the public, dog owners and their pets will remain in force following a public consultation. Dog owners are required to pick up dog faeces, keep dogs out of areas signed for no dogs, e.g. children's play areas, keep dogs on leads in designated areas such as allotments, cemeteries, canal towpaths and cycle tracks, and put dogs on leads when directed to do so by an officer. Exemptions exist for assistance dogs. Owners breaching rules could be liable for a £75 fine, or court prosecution with a fine of up to £1,000 if dog faeces is not picked up. Please remember to keep dogs under strict control anywhere near livestock.

Please contact me on District Council issues:

Martin Brown, Green Party, 01452 770878  
[cllr.martin.brown@stroud.gov.uk](mailto:cllr.martin.brown@stroud.gov.uk)

## EASTCOMBE VILLAGE GROUP

**Village Quiz & Ploughman's Supper:** The quiz on Saturday 25 November was great fun. Organised by Chris and Scott Sissons, there were some challenging questions and a delightful ploughman's supper provided by Helen Watkinson and her team. Thank you all for an enjoyable evening.

### Eastcombe Christmas Light Up: Friday 1

**December:** (See details on the front page). Wooden tree decorations will be available on the Green on the night, and at Eastcombe Stores and the Lamb Inn a few days in advance, with donations going to The Long Table. Please come and enjoy this joyful introduction to the Christmas season. **Thanks** to everyone at the school, Clancey Gardiner at Middle Hill Farm, Will Hardie of Adept Garden Maintenance, Bisley-with-Lypiatt Parish Council, Mike and Debbie at Eastcombe Stores and Sarah at The Lamb Inn.

**Burns Supper – Friday 26 January:** Join us for the traditional piping in of the haggis and a 2 course menu. Tickets on sale from Monday 8 January at The Lamb Inn. Do wear some tartan if you have it!

**Next meeting: Monday 8 January, 7.30 pm, Eastcombe Village Hall annex.** Amongst the items we will discuss is how to make best use of funds. Do come along to share your views.

Peter Scott: [peterhscott@btinternet.com](mailto:peterhscott@btinternet.com)

## St Michael's & All Angels, Bussage

Visitors welcome. Our services this month are:

- **Dec 10th: Holy Communion, 9.30am**
- **Dec 17th: Morning Prayer, 9.30am**
- **Dec 24th: Holy Communion, 10pm**
- **Dec 10th: Parish Christmas Concert at Eastcombe Village Hall, 2.30pm** (see poster). Suggested donation £5 per ticket, to include refreshments. Please reserve tickets in advance: [bussagechurchwarden@gmail.com](mailto:bussagechurchwarden@gmail.com). All welcome!

On other Sundays and Christmas Day there are services in different parts of the Benefice. For details visit [www.bisleybenefice.org.uk](http://www.bisleybenefice.org.uk) or sign up to our mailing list: [pewslipsbisley@hotmail.com](mailto:pewslipsbisley@hotmail.com).

For weddings, funerals & baptisms, contact Revd Sue Murray: [vicar@bisleybenefice.org.uk](mailto:vicar@bisleybenefice.org.uk)



## Eastcombe Scout & Guide Group Community Carols

Wednesday 6th December – 6pm

Eastcombe Scout & Guide HQ

Come and join us for some seasonal carols and a performance from the Gloucestershire Mummies

## EASTCOMBE WI:

November's meeting was the AGM, with reports of all our activities this year. We have 28 members and it has been good to see some new ones. Our Lunch Club, Scrabble and Craft Club are thriving and we have had wonderful speakers. Money has been raised for Focus, helping oncology patients in Gloucester and Cheltenham, and £1,500 for the Sue Ryder hospice in memory of a past member. There was a vote of thanks to our Committee, who do a great job of organising everything.

We then held our annual auction of donated wrapped gifts for funds to keep our institute going from strength to strength. We now look forward to our Christmas Event and a successful 2024.

Eastcombe WI are a friendly group of women who enjoy friendships, good speakers and outings. Most meetings are open to visitors for a small fee (our next open meeting is in January). New members are welcome. Meetings take place on the 3rd Tuesday of the month at 7.15pm at Eastcombe Village Hall, and usually include some form of entertainment.

For more information please contact the Secretary, Glenys Sharpe, on 01453 886298.





## THE STUART SINGERS BRING JOY TO CHARITIES

The Stuart Singers annual Christmas concerts take place on Friday 8th and Saturday 9th December at Holy Trinity Church, Minchinhampton, starting at 7.30pm. Join this mixed choir of 50 voices for festive songs, carols and songs from the musicals.

Over the past 30 years **the Stuart Singers has raised a mammoth £250,000 for local and national charities**, with donations in 2023 to Stroud and District Foodbank, Stroud Valleys Project and Kids Stuff, amongst others. Proceeds from the two Christmas concerts will benefit the Nelson Trust, a Brimscombe based charity helping to treat addiction and lives affected by multiple disadvantage, and Mindsong, a charity which uses music and song to reach people affected by dementia.



December is the time for giving, so come along on 8th or 9th December, enjoy a festive evening of song - and help support local charities!

Tickets are £12 and are available from M&B Stores, Minchinhampton, by scanning the QR code, or at [www.stuartsingers.com](http://www.stuartsingers.com). **Under 16s free with an accompanying adult on Saturday.**

Follow the choir on Facebook: [www.facebook.com/stuartsingers](https://www.facebook.com/stuartsingers). New members welcome!



## BOTTOMS UP in BROWNSHILL!



**Brownsill's ever-popular Christmas Bar will pop up on Thursday 21st December, at St Mary of the Angels Church, St Mary's Way, Brownsill.**

The bar will be open from 6pm and everyone is welcome. A selection of drinks (beer, prosecco, white and red wine, mulled wine) will be available to buy, plus non alcoholic alternatives. All proceeds go towards maintenance and upkeep of the church.

Please note that there is no parking near the church. If you're coming from outside the village, please park along the top road by the allotments, or in Beech Lane, and walk down.

Frith Community Café  
**Christmas Party**  
Frith Youth Centre  
**Wednesday 13th December**  
**10am - 12 noon**  
Seasonal Quiz, Raffle  
Carol Sing-along  
Mulled Wine & mince pies  
Fun & laughter  
**ALL WELCOME**

CSSC PRESENTS  
**CHRISTMAS PARTY**  
**2ND DEC / 7PM**  
**GET YOUR TICKET NOW**  
AVAILABLE FROM CSSC OR JANE ATTWOOD 07788 213434  
DRESS CODE SMART AND/OR SPARKLE  
7.30PM GALA BUFFET  
9.15PM LIVE MUSIC FROM THE CHIP SHOP BOYS  
**£35**  
MEMBERS £37.50  
NON-MEMBERS

## CHRIST-MATHS CHALLENGE!

*On the twelfth day of Christmas,  
my true love sent to me  
Twelve drummers drumming,  
Eleven pipers piping,  
Ten lords a-leaping,  
Nine ladies dancing,  
Eight maids a-milking,  
Seven swans a-swimming,  
Six geese a-laying,  
Five golden rings,  
Four calling birds,  
Three French hens,  
Two turtle doves,  
And a partridge in a pear tree!*



1. How many gifts were given altogether by my true love?
2. How many birds were sent by my true love?
3. How many people did my true love send to entertain me?
4. How many wings are in the song?
5. How many legs are in the song?
6. If I had to share all the presents with another person, how many would each of us get?

Answers in the January issue!

## BUSSAGE COMMUNITY & SCHOOL CAROLS



**Monday 4th December,  
6pm, Bussage Primary School**

Join neighbours, pupils and staff at Bussage School for our annual informal carol event, when the school orchestra and singers will help us celebrate Christmas in this popular **indoor event with an outdoor feel**. Festive mulled wine, squash and mince pies will be served.

For more information please contact the school or Alisdair Longwill (07837 364003).



Cirencester Science & Technology Society



Lecture Programme September 2023 – June 2024

**December 13th 2023**

Professor Chris Budd OBE: Professor of Applied Mathematics, Bath

**Topic: Why Does Rudolph Have a Shiny Nose?**

Open to all. Annual subscription £15, or £3 per lecture. Students free. Unless otherwise stated, lectures take place at 7.30pm on the 2nd Wednesday of the month in the Sir Emrys Jones Lecture Theatre at the Royal Agricultural University, Cirencester. Free parking.

Visit [www.cirensociety.org.uk](http://www.cirensociety.org.uk) for more details.

## IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE



**Wednesday 27 December**  
**Chalford Hill Primary**  
**School**

**Doors 3pm, Film starts 3.45pm**

**FREE!**

**but tickets must be booked  
in advance.**

Join us for the best Christmas film ever & a warm welcome with mince pies, mulled wine, our usual well stocked bar of drinks and snacks, cosy blankets and candlelight.

**This is a ticket only event to ensure safe numbers.**

**Tickets are available from our [Facebook](#) page (search for 'Chalfilm') from 1st December.**

## CHALFORD SPORTS & SOCIAL CLUB: DECEMBER EVENTS

- **2nd Dec: Christmas Party**, with Gala Buffet & 'The Chip Shop Boys'
- **3rd Dec: Christmas Market**, 10-1
- **15th Dec: Chalford Band** - 'Christmas on the Hill'
- **22nd Dec: Christmas Songs with Phillippa Lay**, & carol singing, 6pm
- **22nd Dec: Quiz & Curry evening.**

Visit [www.chalford-ssc.co.uk/](http://www.chalford-ssc.co.uk/) or our [Facebook](#) page for details of all events.

## LOVE YOUR POINSETTIA!

Ok, maybe we don't all love poinsettias, but they have become a traditional part of Christmas with over 8 million sold in the UK every year. However, they can be a bit temperamental; here are some tips to help them last to Boxing Day and beyond.



- **Keep them warm:** Native to Mexico, poinsettias don't like our winter climate. Avoid buying from a market stall or the front door of the supermarket, and keep wrapped up and warm in transit.
- Before buying, **check** that the soil is not too wet or dry and that the small central flowers (not the large colourful bracts) are still tightly closed.
- **Position** your plant in a consistently warm (15-20 degrees), bright, draught-free spot.
- **Water** (ideally with soft water such as rainwater) only when the surface of the compost becomes dry, and mist regularly if the room is dry.
- If you manage to keep your poinsettia alive for more than 4 weeks (well done!) it will appreciate a monthly liquid **feed**.
- **After flowering**, re-pot and prune back to about 10cm. It will grow into a lush green plant which will do well outside in the summer.

So, love your poinsettias this Christmas and they will give you a lasting display. With many now sustainably produced in the UK, they make a good alternative to short-lived cut flowers imported from abroad.

*The Eastcombe Gardener*

## HILLTOP GARDENING CLUB HAPPENINGS...

[www.hilltopgardeningclub.org.uk](http://www.hilltopgardeningclub.org.uk)

It was one of those special meetings: on 7 November, there was a large attendance to hear extraordinary botanist Dr Mike Jones talking about the travels of David Douglas, plant hunter, both from research and his own experience.

If anyone was intrepid and determined through whatever was thrown at him, feisty Scot David Douglas was just such a character. At Glasgow Botanic Gardens, he met with William Hooker, Professor of Botany, later Director of Kew, who became a personal friend. In 1804 the Horticultural Society of London was formed by, amongst others, Joseph Banks a formidable botanist who had sailed with Captain Cook to Australia. The society invited David to go plant hunting on their behalf. The first journey took him to America to find fruit, in particular, travelling by foot, horse drawn carriage and paddle steamer. A 2nd expedition in 1824 took him to Oregon, by boat round the tip of South America. He travelled 10,000 miles collecting specimens and seed. Douglas usually travelled alone, with minimum baggage, but carrying 20kg of paper for pressing and transporting plant specimens, as well as binoculars, gun shot and dried buffalo meat. Hardships were extreme, the terrain difficult, and he lost the sight in one eye due to snow blindness. His collections were also not always brought back safely when boats sank or storage failed.

Douglas gave society talks until the Horticulture Society sent him on another expedition, to California and Hawaii. En route, the boat got caught in a whirlpool and he lost his notes and plants, then, in Hawaii, he fell into a bull pit and was gored to death. He was 34. In his lifetime, he collected 880 species of plant specimens and seed, including key conifers Sitka Spruce and Douglas Fir, which form the basis of forests across Britain.

**NEXT MEETING: Tuesday 5th December, at Eastcombe Scout Hut, 1.45pm.** Pat Carpenter leads a workshop on **Wreath Making**. **Booking in advance only** - to enquire about tickets, contact Jenny Exley: 07515 409990

## IVY ROBERTS, AGED 103: AN AMAZING ACHIEVEMENT!

by her daughter, Lyn.

The 103rd birthday of my mother, Ivy Roberts, was celebrated on Friday 20th October 2023 with a tea party for a few friends. Born in the Midlands, Ivy has lived in Eastcombe for over 35 years.



Whilst at high school, a friend, Gladys, introduced Ivy to her cousin Eric Roberts. Ivy and Eric married in 1941, followed by a few days honeymoon in Malvern. After secretarial college, Mum worked for GWR in Birmingham, but on my father's return from a Prisoner of War camp in Germany and his de-mob from the army, she transferred to the London office, where they rented a bedsit near Paddington in order for my father to complete his engineering degree.

Later, my parents lived in Quinton, Birmingham, and I was born there at Queen Elizabeth Hospital in 1957. My father transferred to London, and in 1961 we moved to Chalfont St Peter, about 20 miles west along the M4 corridor. In 1988, they moved to Eastcombe to be closer to the family, with Ivy becoming an active member of the local community, including a member of WI, the Garden Club and the Whist Club.

## CAROL'S COOKERY CORNER: EASY SHERRY TRIFLE

**A Christmas classic, made easy. Throw in frozen raspberries and ready-made sponge fingers—and you have the perfect pudding!**

Preparation: 30 minutes (no cooking) Serves 4 Vegetarian

### INGREDIENTS:

- 1 packet ready-made sponge fingers
- 200ml dry sherry
- 400g frozen raspberries
- 75g sachet custard powder
- 275ml double cream
- 50g caster sugar
- 50g flaked almonds, toasted



### METHOD:

1. Layer sponge fingers evenly across the bottom of a deep serving bowl. Pour over sherry and leave to soak for 5 minutes.
2. Sprinkle over 250g of the raspberries in an even layer.
3. Make custard and pour evenly over the sponge and raspberries. Refrigerate for 15 minutes, or until custard is set.
4. Meanwhile, whisk the cream with the sugar to soft peaks.
5. Once the custard is set, spoon over cream and sprinkle with toasted almonds.
6. Refrigerate for a few hours before serving, topping with the remaining (thawed) raspberries at the last minute.

**Eastcombe Christmas Lights**  
December 1<sup>st</sup> at 6pm  
Lighting Windows at The Primary School  
and then  
procession to light the Christmas tree  
on the Village Green



School Choir: Hilltop Band: Carols  
Refreshments at the School and The Lamb



## 8 STRANGE FACTS ABOUT THE HISTORY OF CHRISTMAS...

**Many Christmas traditions first became popular in the Victorian era:**

**1. Going with a bang...** When Tom Smith needed a way to market French-style sweets wrapped in paper, he added an explosive element, inspired by his brother and magic tricks he'd witnessed while working in the music halls. Launched in the late-1840s and known as 'Bangs of Expectation', Tom Smith's crackers sparked a whole new Christmas custom, later evolving to include jokes, hats, gifts and jewellery. [Tom Smith's Crackers](#) still exists today, supplying crackers to the royal family each Christmas.

**2. Victorian Christmas cards were the stuff of nightmares.** Invented by Henry Cole in 1843, by 1900 everyone was sending cards at Christmas. However, the festive illustrations favoured by the Victorians were a bit different to the penguins and snowmen on our cards today, with cards depicting such unusual images as a dead robin, children riding flying bats, a man being attacked by a bear, a mouse riding a lobster, and two small children being harassed by a giant wasp.



'May yours be a joyful Christmas' - unlike the robin's.

**3. Christmas gift-giving** took off in the Victorian era. The most popular gift was fruit or books, sparking a surge in seasonal publishing as authors sought to increase sales. For children, the rise of mass production meant that toys were now marketed to families of all means, not just the wealthy. Beer was also a popular present for young boys! Gifts would be put in stockings, left under the tree or placed by the fire, but weren't wrapped in paper until the 1870s.

**4. Christmas trees** became incredibly popular during the Victorian era and are often associated with Prince Albert. However, the idea actually first came to Britain from Germany with Queen Charlotte, wife of King George III, who hung baubles and gifts on a yew tree. Victorians started putting a star or an angel on the top of the tree, while people took to decorating their houses with foliage such as holly and ivy.

**5. Father Christmas and his coat of many colours.** Father Christmas has been part of British culture for centuries, as a jolly festive spirit. Over the years, he's been depicted in almost every colour, from brown, green and yellow to reflect nature, to purple and gold. In the Victorian era, he was often depicted in red and white, although this was not, as is popularly believed, anything to do with Coca Cola.

**6. Victorian Mince pies** bore little resemblance to the sweet treats we enjoy today. Filled with a mix of meat, fruit and spices, they were oval-shaped to represent either a coffin or the manger of the baby Jesus.

**7. Queen Victoria's Christmas dinner:** The royal family's festive feast was as lavish as you'd expect, including a boar's head, turkey, goose, plum pudding and mince pies, all served on gold plates. Oddly, the food was all cooked in Windsor before being transported by special train and yacht to Osborne House, Queen Victoria's holiday home on the Isle of Wight. Whether it was still hot when it arrived, we don't know.

**8. Food for all...** The idea of kindness at Christmas was important to the Victorians, with much poverty in major cities. In London in 1851, volunteers took over Leicester Square, decorating it with flags, flowers and festive lights, and staging a Christmas kitchen that dished out roast beef and rabbit pies, goose, potatoes, bread, biscuits, chestnuts, tea and coffee. It fed 22,000 people and got through 5,000lbs of plum pudding.





**VILLAGE HISTORIES...** Paul Beer has lived in Eastcombe and Bussage for many years and his memories evoke the hilltop of the 1960s to the 1980s.

**This month, Paul's recalls CHILDHOOD CHRISTMASSES ON THE HILLTOP.**

Christmas Day was always spent with our grandparents at Westcot, in the Randalls Green area of Chalford Hill. Nan Annie would cook a great lunch, with her home-made Christmas puddings for 'afters', and, later, a delightful evening meal. My ex-Navy grandfather smoked his pipe, kept a nice fire going, and in the evenings the flames sent shimmering light across the walls. This basic old Cotswold stone cottage had no luxuries, just a cold water tap in the kitchen, no bathroom, and an outside toilet, but it always felt cosy, its thick walls retaining the heat of the roaring fire. The sitting room was up a stone step through a low doorway with a latched door – built for shorter people hundreds of years in the past. There was a couch with wooden arms and my grandparents had armchairs either side of the fire. A thickly curtained doorway led to a short corridor with a shelf full of my grandparents' books, then the stairway. At the top of the stairs was a box room which looked out over the Chalford valley, then, up wooden steps led to larger rooms with sloping ceilings and our grandparents' bedroom. From the window you could see past a cottage in the lane below to fields and a farm on the other side of the valley, and over gardens and orchards across to Aston Down. You could see the orange wind sock on the airfield.

Outside was a lean-to shed where my grandfather kept his tools, and a great rainwater tank near the front door. I remember the sound of water draining into the tank when it rained. There were 3 lawns and a very tall apple tree which gave shade in summer. At the end of the garden, next to the tall drystone wall, was a hazelnut tree. The path up from the gate was steep and bordered by great stones; standing up there felt like looking out from a castle. You sometimes heard the whistles of the steam trains and saw the smoke in the valley – a view later blocked by new houses.



Westcot, Chalford Hill

Every Boxing Day, my father would go over to Westcot on his motorbike to collect my grandparents, picking up my nan first, then returning for my grandfather, Ernest. The kitchen boiler and sitting room fire at Bracelands would be banked up for the continuing Christmas celebrations. Boxing Day in 1962 was very cold, and snow fell through the winter. I remember watching my father layer up to hike out to get things, or to deliver necessities to Westcot. My sister Teresa and I would take hot water bottles to bed, and our mother always warned us not to lie on them or they would burst. The windows iced up on the inside, and the only way we could see out was to place a warm hand against the pane to melt the ice to make a peep hole. Thick chunks of ice built up at the bottom of the windows as the ice thawed, then froze again. In those days the roads were gritted, not salted, and later that grit could block the drains. Each village had a council road man, and ours was Fred Beavis (later the chimney sweep), who would clear blockages and treat icy areas. In the autumn he cleared leaves from the pavements, and in summer the gullies in the verges.



Fred Beavis

With grateful thanks to Paul Beer & Muriel Brooks. Read more on [www.eastcombearchive.org.uk/](http://www.eastcombearchive.org.uk/)

**Hilltop & Valley**  
Stories from  
**Chalford Parish  
& Eastcombe**

**£10** Available from  
Eastcombe  
Stores, Chalford  
Parish Centre &  
Chalford Village  
Shop.

Chalford Parish Local History Group

**Sing Joy!**  
Celebrate Yuletide with the  
**Stuart Singers**

Holy Trinity Church, Minchinhampton

★ Friday 8th December &  
Saturday 9th December 2023  
at 7:30 pm

Beneficiaries:  
The Nelson Trust and Mindsong

Tickets £12 / Friends of Stuart Singers £10  
(under 16s free with an accompanying adult on Saturday)

[www.stuartsingers.com/](http://www.stuartsingers.com/)  
and from M&B Stores Minchinhampton

[www.stuartsingers.com](http://www.stuartsingers.com) [www.facebook.com/stuartsinger](http://www.facebook.com/stuartsinger)

**COULD YOU CONTRIBUTE TO  
THE NEXT NEWSLETTER?**

- An upcoming event?
- An article about your hobby?

Please send contributions to:  
[eastcombenewsletter@btinternet.com](mailto:eastcombenewsletter@btinternet.com)

**by NOON on 13<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER**

## WHAT'S ON in DECEMBER?

- 1 Dec:** Eastcombe Christmas Lights, from 6pm, Eastcombe Primary School
- 3 Dec:** Chalford Market, Chalford Sports & Social Club, 10am-1pm
- 4 Dec:** Bussage Community & School Carols, Bussage Primary School, 6pm
- 5 Dec:** Wreath Making Workshop, 1.45pm, Eastcombe Scout Hut/Bussage Primary School Open Day, 9.30am
- 6 Dec:** Eastcombe Scout & Guide Group Community Carols, Eastcombe Scout & Guide Hut, 6pm
- 8/9 Dec:** Stuart Singers concerts, Holy Trinity Church, Minchinhampton, 7.30pm
- 10 Dec:** Parish Christmas Concert, Eastcombe Village Hall, 2.30pm
- 13 Dec:** Frith Community Café Christmas Party, 10am-12 noon
- 15 Dec:** Chalford Band at Chalford Sports & Social Club

**13th DECEMBER: DEADLINE FOR  
JANUARY NEWSLETTER**

- 21 Dec:** Brownhill Pop Up Bar, St Mary of the Angels, 6pm
- 27 Dec:** Chalfilm, Chalford Hill Primary School, 3pm (3.45pm)

## NAME THAT VIEW! How well do you know our villages?



November's photo was the distinctive 'eye' tree that stands by the permissive footpath through Toadsmoor woods, above Bismore Bridge.

December's snowy photo is again taken in or around the 3 villages.

**Can you identify its location?**

The answer will be revealed in the January issue.