

Grafham Gossip



Deadline for the February issue: by 9am on Monday 15th January 2024

Editor's note...

Here's the last issue of 2023! I hope it finds you in good health and ready to enjoy the run up to Christmas! There are lots of events advertised in and around Grafham for you to choose from, so make sure to note them on your calendars.

Please send in your contributions in good time for the next deadline - by first thing - 9am on Monday 15th January. The next issue will be February 2024!

Wishing you all a Happy Christmas and New Year!

Editor@grafhamgossip.co.uk



Monday 18th December 7pm

A fun evening of Christmas carols and curry! What's not to like?

The Cinnamon will be putting on a two course buffet for £25 which includes a £5 optional donation to the church.

Between courses we'll sing some Christmas carols together and enjoy festive cheer.

Feel free to come along as a group or on your own.

To book please call:

Shamim at the Cinnamon 01480 812211/811316



Children's Christmas Party

Sat 2nd December 2 - 4pm

See poster on page 6

Limited numbers, please book by email:

misscgberry@yahoo.co.uk

Christmas Giving

3rd December 9.30 am

All Saints Grafham

A special service to celebrate Giving



Donations of Christmas goodies welcomed to be distributed to Godmanchester Foodbank

More details in View from the Pew, page 2

Christmas Market

Sun 3rd December

1 - 5pm

Grafham Village Hall

Gifts - Drinks - Cakes -

Christmas cards -

Decorations

Drinks served in

The Grafham Trout

See poster on page 6

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Season's Greetings

Travelling Nativity 2023



Grafham's Nativity set will be travelling round the village again this year, from **Sunday 3rd December**. The Travelling Nativity box contains knitted nativity figures to play with plus books, jigsaws and games suitable for preschool and Key Stage 1 children.

The box goes from house to house. This is available free to anyone in Grafham. All you need to do is call or text Jill Tyack on 07892 720 835 and book it for a night.

The nativity figures will end up in church on **Sunday 24th December at 3pm** for our traditional and popular Crib Service. If you have not been before why not give it a go - it is short and 'user-friendly' and you can be sure of a very warm welcome!





Paperback book sales continue in the porch. Thank you for your donations, they provide a valuable source of income for our church. A payment box is attached to the bookshelf.



All Saints Church, Grafham

Grafham, Ellington and Brampton Services

1st Sun	3rd Dec	09.30	Morning Worship	Grafham
		11.00	Holy Communion	Brampton
Friday	9th Dec		Messy Christingle,	Ellington Village Hall
2nd Sun	10th Dec	09.30	Holy Communion	Ellington
		11.00	Morning Worship	Brampton
		18.30	Taizé	Grafham
Wed	13th Dec	09.00	Morning Prayer with Duncan,	Grafham
3rd Sun	17th Dec	09.30	Morning Worship	Ellington
		11.00	Holy Communion	Brampton
Mon	18th Dec	19.00	Curry & Carols at	The Cinnamon, Grafham
Tues	19th Dec	19.00	Carol Singing in	The Mermaid, Ellington
Wed	20th Dec	19.00	Carol Singing in	The Black Bull, Brampton
Wed	20th Dec	09.00	Morning Prayer with Duncan,	Grafham
Sat	23rd Dec	16.00	Christmas Carol Service	Grafham
		17.45	Christmas Carol Service	Ellington
4th Sun	24th Dec	09.30	Holy Communion	Grafham
	Christmas Eve	09.30	Morning Worship	Brampton
		15.00	Crib Service	Grafham
		17.30	Christmas Carol Service	Brampton
		23.00	Holy Communion	Ellington
Mon	25th Dec	09.30	Holy Communion	Grafham
	Christmas Day	11.00	Holy Communion	Brampton

5th Sun	31st Dec	11.00	A Said Service of	Holy Communion	Brampton
1st Sun	7th Jan	09.30	Morning Worship	Grafham	
		11.00	Holy Communion	Brampton	
2nd Sun	14th Jan	09.30	Holy Communion	Ellington	
		11.00	Morning Worship	Brampton	
		18.30	Taizé	Grafham	
Wed	17th Jan	09.00	Morning Prayer with Duncan,	Grafham	
3rd Sun	21st Jan	09.30	Morning Worship	Ellington	
		11.00	Holy Communion	Brampton	
Wed	24th Jan	09.00	Morning Prayer with Duncan,	Grafham	
4th Sun	28th Jan	09.30	Holy Communion	Grafham	
		11.00	Morning Worship	Brampton	
1st Sun	4th Feb	09.30	Morning Worship	Grafham	
		11.00	Holy Communion	Brampton	

For a full list of services for all three churches visit:
<https://eastleightonstone.com> and click on **Calendar**.

Have a look at: https://www.facebook.com/East_Leightonstone too.

The Brampton 11.00 Sunday service is live-streamed every week and can be accessed via the **You Tube site**

To join the mailing list for the Parish Newsletter, visit:
<http://www.eastleightonstone.com> and click **News**

Contacting the clergy:

Duncan Goldthorpe 01480 459246 or 07907 694177

rev.duncan.goldthorpe@eastleightonstone.com

Keith Wood Churchwarden, Brampton 07802 368 659

wardens@eastleightonstone.com

Sue Roberts Churchwarden, Brampton 07980 889904

wardens@eastleightonstone.com



View from the Pew

Now in mid-November as I write, with a little over a month to go, thoughts are turning to Christmas. Our most important message this month is that we are thinking of those families who need our help most.

As last year we are planning 'Christmas Giving' to invite donations of festive goods for Godmanchester Foodbank to distribute to those who are struggling financially. While many of us enjoy all the good things to eat at this time of year, some cannot afford such pleasures.

The Godmanchester Foodbank would welcome donations of items such as Christmas puddings, mince pies, Christmas cakes or slices, biscuit selections, sweet selection boxes, children's sweet sacks or anything else Christmassy to eat. We are told that the foodbank distributes these goods by 11th December but also welcome donations at other times. Please note that food items must be well within their sell by date by Christmas.

At Grafham Church we will welcome these donations at our first Sunday service on 3rd December at 9.30am. However, Hazel would be happy to receive donations at her home if readers cannot get to the service. Please contact her on 07870 307388.

Godmanchester Foodbank will be really grateful we are sure.

In other news the bacon and sausage buttie breakfast at Brampton was well received and enjoyed before the 5th Sunday service, thanks to the Fellowship Impact Group.

An Act of Remembrance and the commemoration of Grafham's new war memorial was led by Duncan on 11th November. An Act of Remembrance also took place at Ellington the following day. We are grateful to Brian for playing the last post and reveille on both days.

Curry and Carols will take place at the Cinnamon on 18th December at 7pm. Do contact the Cinnamon in good time to book your place as seats are limited. This is a fun evening and not to be missed!

Our Carol Service will be on Saturday 23rd December at 4pm followed by the usual mulled wine and Christmas cake. The Crib Service is the next day, Christmas Eve at 3pm. A Christmas service of Holy Communion takes place on Christmas day at 9.30am. We wish all our readers a happy and peaceful Christmas and a healthy and happy New Year.



PARISH NEWS November 2023



Brampton Road

The Cambridge County Council is looking at the possibility of converting Brampton Road from Van Diemens Way to the nature reserve into a Cycle Way / Footpath / Bridleway. The Parish Council will be consulting with all residents shortly on this.

War Memorial

Grafham Parish Council are pleased to announce the new War Memorial is now in place. A service of blessing was undertaken by Rev. Duncan Goldthorpe on Armistice Day followed by a two minute's silence and the last post. This event was extremely well-attended. The Parish Council would like to express their thanks to everyone involved and special thanks go to:

- Social and Fireworks Committee for funding this project.
- To Lee Farrer & Sons, builders, for their excellent construction skills.
- Brian Homewood for playing the last post.



Dogs - Children's Play Area, Brampton Road

The Parish Council are aware due to the positioning of the new climbing wall, residents out walking their dog/s are unable to stand at the entrance to play the area with their dog and clearly see the children playing in the play area. The Parish Council have taken this onboard and have installed a 'dog tie' just inside the gates for dogs to be securely tied up allowing residents to be with the children whilst playing in the play area. Please note dogs are NOT allowed to run free in the children's play area and should be securely tied up at all times using the new 'dog tie'.

Gigabit Broadband

Gigaclear held a county-wide Q&A Teams meeting on 27th September, which was well-attended, with most questions relating to requests for updates on if/when individual villages and streets will be provided with full-fibre. Grafham is scheduled to achieve 70% of properties ready for connection by February 2024, with some properties ready earlier. Anyone who has registered an interest will be notified by email as soon as their property is ready for connection. There is then a typical installation time of 3 - 6 weeks. Latest tariffs can be found on the [Gigaclear website](https://gigaclear.com/home-broadband) (<https://gigaclear.com/home-broadband>)

MVAS

For October, the MVAS were located in the two 40 mph buffer zones, monitoring traffic into the village from Buckden and Ellington.

The next meeting is on Tuesday 5th December at 7.30pm in the Village Hall.

Cllr Ian Gardener

Chairman, Grafham Parish Council

For more information about your Parish Council see the village website:

<https://grafham.org.uk/index.php/parish-council/> or contact a member of the parish council or the parish clerk, details below.

Contact details for Grafham's Parish, District and County Councillors

Grafham Parish Council Parish Clerk, **Lisa Hazel** clerk@grafhampc.org

Ian Gardener Chair 01480 812821 i.gardener@grafhampc.org **David Russell** d.russell@grafhampc.org

Patrick Curran p.curran@grafhampc.org **Carole Baber** c.baber@grafhampc.org **Jo Dunn** j.dunn@grafhampc.org

Sunil Gogna s.gogna@grafhampc.org **Diana Thomas** d.thomas@grafhampc.org



Grafham's County Councillor

Ken Billington 07725 764889

ken.billington@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

14 Cranfield Way
Brampton, Huntingdon
PE28 4QZ



Grafham's District Councillor

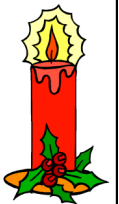
Stephen Cawley 07925 741167

stephen.cawley@huntingdonshire.gov.uk

34 North Road
Alconbury Weston
PE28 4JU

Thank you very much

to everyone who has sent in news, views, photos, letters, stories, recipes or contributions of any sort. Without you there would be no Grafham Gossip! Also, a very big thank you to our advertisers, to our conscientious delivery team, Parish Council and to everyone else who has helped supply and distribute the Grafham Gossip to every house in the village throughout the year. Here's wishing you and all our readers a Happy Christmas and a successful New Year!



Ed

“Has the bin man bin Mam?”

Alternate Wednesdays

Blue Bin - Recycling and Black Bin - Refuse

Every other Thursday Green Bin - Garden Waste



Changes this month December						
Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
				1	2	3
4	5	Blk	7	8	9	10
11	Blu	G	14	15	16	17
Blk	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	Blu	G	29	30	31



January Changes this month						
Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
1	2	3	Blk	5	6	7
8	9	Blu	G	12	13	14
15	16	Blk	18	19	20	21
22	23	Blu	G	26	27	28
29	30	Blk				

For waste and recycling services, visit www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/bins or call 01480 388640 between 8.45am and 5.00pm

The TING bus - no bus stop required

The TING bus will collect you from any address within the service area. Journeys must be pre-booked, but this can be done on the day of travel, by ringing 01157 773 187 or by downloading the Vectare DRT app. Buses operate Mon-Sat except bank holidays. First pick-ups are available from 06:00 with last drop-offs by 20:00. The fare is £2 each way (£1 for under 19yrs.) Concessionary passes are accepted 09:30 to 23:00 Monday-Friday and at all times on Saturdays.

If you plan to travel with a wheelchair, pushchair, suitcases or shopping trolley, then book via telephone so that a larger TING vehicle is assigned to you. There are a limited number of buses operating, so book one week in advance to avoid disappointment.

If more riders use the buses, we can make a better case to expand the service. View the TING service map and read details on the Vectare website:

<https://localbus.vectare.co.uk/ting>



Useful Phone Numbers

- All emergencies **999**
- Police non-emergencies **101**
- NHS - help for your symptoms **111**
- Hard of hearing textphone service **18001 101** or for emergencies **Text 999**
- Huntingdon Police Station **01480 456111**
- Anti-terrorism Hotline **0800 789 321**
- Action Fraud **0300 123 2040**

Wildlife Trust



Wildlife Trust for Beds, Cambs & Northants

Wed 10th January at 7.30pm

www.wildlifebcn.org

Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust

Huntingdonshire Local Group

The Huntingdonshire Local Group of the Wildlife Trust is pleased to welcome Jo Thomas at Brampton Memorial Hall.

Jo has worked for the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust (WWT) at Welney since July 2022 and before that she worked for Natural England, the RSPB and the Wildlife Trust where she was based at Grafham Water for 8 years.

Jo is Waterscapes Manager at the WWT and she tells us that her aim is to bring about positive changes by supporting landowners, farmers and community groups to enhance, restore and create new wetland for biodiversity and other benefits such as flood management, drought resilience, carbon storage and improved water quality.

The Welney site is renowned for its influx of Whooper and Bewick swans and pochard overwinter and it is also a haven for hare, among many more wildlife. Jo's talk will illustrate how her concepts are already benefiting the wonderful wildlife in our region.

Everyone is most welcome to attend. Booking is not necessary. The charge is £3.50 and payment is by cash or card.

We meet at Brampton Memorial Hall, Thrapston Road, Brampton, PE28 4TB.

For more information please contact George: 01480 450809 or georgecottom@virginmedia.com

Winter Walk Sun 21st January at 10.30 am

We are pleased to announce an addition to our planned programme of winter events.

This will be a winter walk to be held at Lady's Wood, Upwood. The walk will be led by our own Martin Baker, who is the warden of Lady's Wood, as well as being a long serving committee member. The aim is to look at trees in winter and Martin will guide us on how to identify them, when many of the more obvious clues are no longer available! This is intended to be a family walk, with Martin also filling us in with snippets of general information on the history and management of the wood.

Everyone is most welcome to attend. Booking is not necessary. **Please meet in the car park at the end of Meadow Lane, Upwood. GR TL251825.**

For more information please contact George: 01480 450809 or georgecottom@virginmedia.com

Part of the Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire Registered Charity No: 1000412

Coronavirus Keep up to date by visiting:

- <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus> and
- <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>



Delivering your electricity



Talking Shop: Our Shop - Use it or Lose it

Winter and Christmas are getting closer

As we reported last month January, February and March are the most challenging months for the shop. With our new opening hours and staffing model our plan is to be open every day, see below. We are also going to try out some new initiatives to benefit Grafham residents and hopefully encourage more local traffic in the shop. The first of these is our January Sale. See another item below!

Place your order for The GFB!

The order form for the new **Grafham Festive Bag** is in the shop. We have already had quite a few requests for the **GFB**. The bag includes apple juice, a bottle of seasonal beer, fruit cake, Christmas candles, Good Morning, Grafham coffee, Saints and Sinners marmalade and chutney and some local artisan chocolates. The GFB will cost £37.50 which will represent a 10% saving over the normal price of these items **and** you get a lovely free jute bag! The **GFB** will be a raffle item at the Christmas Market and can be pre-ordered from the shop. The jute bag will also be available to buy as a standalone item.



10% off January sale

Hopefully by the time you read this you will have received a joint flyer from the shop and The Grafham Trout. As part of the flyer you should receive a 10% off voucher which will be valid from the 1st – 31st January 2024. All you need to do is spend at least £10 at the shop to get 10% off. That's easily done with one or two bottles of wine, or three 'gottles of gear.' There will be some items excluded e.g. stamps and newspapers as the shop makes no money from these. Full terms and conditions will be on display in the shop.

Christmas and Winter Hours

If you had not worked it out already Christmas and New Year's Day fall on a Monday, so subject to volunteer availability our planned Christmas hours are

24th Dec Sunday.....	10am – 2pm
25th Dec Christmas Day.....	CLOSED
26th Dec Boxing Day.....	CLOSED
27th Dec Wednesday.....	10am – 2pm
28th Dec Thursday.....	10am – 2pm
29th Dec Friday.....	10am – 2pm
30th Dec Saturday	10am – 2pm
31st Dec Sunday	10am – 2pm
1st Jan New Year's Day.....	CLOSED
2nd Jan Tuesday.....	8am - 4pm

In the New Year we plan to remain open Monday - Saturday 8 - 4pm but in January, February and March we will open at 10am and close at 2pm on Sundays and Bank Holidays.

Thank you for all your lamb orders

The last and biggest batch went to the butcher at the end of November and as a result of everyone's support a donation of £11/lamb will be made to the shop

AGM

The shop AGM passed without any hitches, accounts were agreed, the committee re-elected and there was also a lively discussion about the future of the shop and the Village Hall site.

Good Morning, Grafham Coffee on its way

We were a bit over-eager last month in announcing the impending arrival of our own special coffee. Various problems with shop email accounts - thanks for fixing, Chris - meant there was a delay in finalising the label design.

As is traditional with these things there are some fine flowery words to describe the coffee. Apparently it has 'indulgent taste notes of chocolate, butter, peanut and caramel!' Those of us that have been lucky enough to try it, think it's 'good, strong, tasty coffee, just the way it should be.'

Halloween Scavenger Hunt

Sixteen eager Grafham youngsters participated in the Scavenger Hunt organised by Belinda. The inquisitive children were asked to complete a six question quiz, and to put all the clues together to spell the word "Spooky." Successful scavengers were rewarded with a melting milk chocolate pumpkin and a jelly bean activity pack.



Record Shop Queues on Bonfire Night

Another great innovation from co-chair Debbie, was the introduction of parent-friendly* LED Glow Sticks and Bracelets for bonfire night. Queues were more than 10 deep and well over a hundred and fifty were sold.

Parent-friendly = they were silent and could be turned off, unlike children!

New Hay Chocolate Bars and Frogs



One of our committee spotted that some rather luvverly (whoops Eliza Doolittle there) hand-made chocolates are being produced in a converted barn at Southoe. Hay Chocolates (haychocolate.com) do some very exotic and beautifully painted bonbons, these have a short shelf life so they are best ordered direct. However, they also do some rather delicious bars of chocolate and chocolate frogs which are now in the shop. Chocolate bar flavours include: Milk Chocolate Fudge, Café Latte Chocolate and Dark Chocolate Honeycomb.

Keeping Cool

One of the food hygiene responsibilities for those opening up the shop is to record the temperatures of the fridges and freezers to make sure every thing is in order. And there is no risk of food going off. A little while ago we spotted that one our freezers was not staying at the required 18°C, so we decided to switch the freezer off and have a think. An initial repair to the thermostat would cost c. £150 but until that was fixed it was difficult to be sure if there were not other problems costing another £200-300.

A similar display freezer costs £1500 and we would have a real problem if the other freezer broke down. So at last we have decided it is worth the repair, this decision has been made a bit easier by a generous offer from the Parish Council of 50% towards the repair costs. Thank you PC!

www.grafhamvillageshop.co.uk 01480 810119

See back page for Winter Opening Hours

Website: www.grafham.org.uk

E-mail: editor@grafhamgossip.co.uk

RHS Top Gardening Jobs for December

As we approach the shortest day of the year in December you will need work to keep you warm outside, such as digging and tree pruning. Hopefully there are not too many jobs left to do this year so you will have time for some fireside garden planning.

- Check your winter protection structures are still securely in place
- Check that greenhouse heaters are working
- Insulate outdoor taps and prevent ponds from freezing
- Prune open-grown apples and pears (but not those trained against walls)
- Prune acers, birches and vines before Christmas to avoid bleeding
- Harvest leeks, parsnips, winter cabbage, sprouts and remaining root crops
- Trees and shrubs can still be planted and transplanted
- Take hardwood cuttings
- Keep mice away from stored produce
- Reduce watering of houseplants



There are more details on the [Royal Horticultural Society website](https://www.rhs.org.uk/advice/in-month/december) <https://www.rhs.org.uk/advice/in-month/december>

Short of something to read?



Grafham Church porch has a good selection of paperbacks, just leave donations in the blue tin. (Suggested donation £1) Donations of books welcome too, paperbacks only please.

Ellington Village WI

meets on the first Tuesday of the month

**Next date is 5th Dec
at 19.30 in Ellington Village Hall**

We welcome visitors with a charge of £5 - includes raffle ticket and refreshments

If you choose to join the WI, there is an annual subscription

Also monthly coffee mornings open to all **on the first Wednesday of the month**
10.00-12.00

I would like to say a very big thank you to everyone who donated items & monies for my

**MacMillan
fund raising event.**

The total raised is £410.

Thank you all so, so much.

It is greatly appreciated and all for a very good cause.

Tina Theodorou

Community Notices

Notices: no charge if no profit is made

Community Info, Free to good home, Help wanted.

Items For Sale: a donation towards printing costs please, to reflect the size of the advert/money made, if/when item are sold.

Profit making events: a donation towards printing costs please, to reflect the size of the advert.

For more details, email: editor@grafhamgossip.co.uk

Adverts

Business adverts are priced according to size and the space they take up on the page.

They start at £6.00 for a small box, payable in advance.

This money goes towards the cost of printing the newsletter.

Could you help?



We are short of tea/coffee makers for Little Fishes Stay + Play which meets in the Village Hall every Wednesday morning during term time.

If you can spare an hour, we'd be most grateful if you would join our tea rota!

Please contact Hazel 810326 or email:

editor@grafhamgossip.co.uk

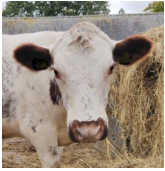


Please get in touch if you can spare an hour to help clean the church, even if only now and again. We are desperately short of helpers.



Contact:

editor@grafhamgossip.co.uk



Chewing the Cud with Rev. Duncan Goldthorpe

Rector of The Parish of East Leightonstone and Rural Dean for Huntingdon



All is calm, all is bright...?

As I write, I am surrounded by ideas and plans for a whole assortment of Advent and Christmas services, Messy Christingle talks and arrangements. Soon, my study will start to clutter up with the random props I have used along the way, all this paraphernalia will go back into the correct boxes before the New Year.

And yet, as I anticipate the chaos thwarting all my good intentions, I am smiling with gratitude. This time last year, the infection rate of Covid 19 was rising rapidly and therefore having learnt from the past few years, I have a contingency plan in place. I sit at my desk though with my heart warming at the prospect of sharing the comfort and joy of the Christmas message. This is especially important as currently our thoughts are consumed with the horrors of conflict and violence in the Middle East.

The Christmas story - God made flesh - was always intended to be explored through seeing it with our own eyes, touching it with our own hands, through getting messy and over-excited in the confusion, tiredness and wonder of it

At the same time though, what these last years have enabled us to glimpse more deeply, when all the paraphernalia has had to be stripped away and kept in its boxes, is the stark hope of that single light leading to the manger-side. When nothing else is clear but shrouded in darkness, the simple call of Christmas persists, that Light has come into the World and will never leave us.

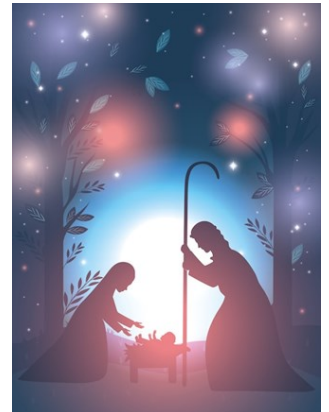
So may I invite you again this Advent and Christmas to trace out that Light and visit the manger and see for yourself - yes, with all the joyful aid of the sparkly props and excitement - but also in the silence of a world that is hurting.

There are carol services aplenty, candles to be lit, games to be played, community carols to be sung and more: do have a look at the programme, and know you are warmly, warmly welcome at everything taking place.

And if you, for whatever reason, are unable to come to a service but would like to share in the story or receive a visit from myself or the pastoral team over Advent/ Christmastide, please drop me a line - I and the pastoral team would be very glad to come and visit you at home.

With every blessing and much love for your journey to and through Christmas.

May Light shine - even in the darkness.



*Happy Christmas
Duncan*

A Hedgehog Highway in Grafham?



- The Parish Council have bought 50 of these hedgehog gateways to give away.
- If you have a place that hedgehogs use as a 'doorway' in your garden boundary, or if you would like to make one, these gates are a fun way of declaring your contribution to a hedgehog's right to roam.
- There is a box of them in the Village Shop, or I can drop one off if you leave a message for me.
- The plan is to make a map of where the gateways are so we can declare that Grafham has a hedgehog highway.
- So, if you take one would you mind leaving an address, or texting it to me on 07766 662197?
- If you would like advice or help to make a hole I can help.
- Let's create a hedgehog highway in Grafham.

Carole



Mulled Wine



- 1 bottle of red wine
- 60g/2oz demerara sugar
- 1 cinnamon stick
- ½ teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 1 bay leaf
- ½ teacup lemonade
- ½ teacup orange juice
- ½ lemon sliced
- ½ orange sliced
- 4 cloves
- 60 ml / 2 fl oz gin



Add the ingredients, except the gin, to a pan and gently warm, dissolving the sugar.

Try not to let it boil.

If needed, adjust the sweetness to taste, by adding sugar. Last of all, add the gin.

Fill your glasses, sit in front of the fire sipping the mulled wine and thinking of Christmas!

As usual, please remember to drink sensibly. Ed





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Community notices are free. Business adverts are priced according to size. They start at £6.00 for a small box, payable in advance.

This money goes towards the cost of printing the newsletter.

Cinnamon Bar and Indian Restaurant



Open 7 days a week
5pm to 10.00pm

01480 812211/811316

Thursday Night is 'Banquet Night'
(Dine in only)

1 Starter, 1 Main, 1 Side.
Any Rice or any Nan **£18.95**
King Prawn £2.50 extra

Bar Special Offer

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King Prawn or Mixed Kebab **£9.25**

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OUT AND ABOUT

(AN OCCASIONAL RUMINATION ON LIFE
IN AND AROUND GRAFHAM)

OCTOBER 2023



*Fall, leaves, fall; die, flowers, away;
Lengthen night and shorten day;
Every leaf speaks bliss to me
Fluttering from the autumn tree.
I shall smile when wreaths of snow
Blossom where the rose should grow;
I shall sing when night's decay
Ushers in a drearier day.*

Thus wrote Emily Bronte about the season we have entered and whilst I am a fan of this slightly gloomy time of year, I am quite staggered as to how quickly it seems to have arrived. The summer shot by in a whirl of holidays, visits to friends and relatives, minding grandchildren, gardening, barbecues and parties, DIY jobs, walking dogs, and on top of all that some occasional work in Cambridge. And then, out of nowhere here we are; October, preparations are already being made for Halloween, Bonfire Night (which will be over by the time you read this), and Christmas. How it happened I am not quite sure.

Yet summer didn't give up its place that easily and the early part of October was both warm and balmy with the sun seemingly desperate to cling on as long as possible. Eventually, the autumn equinox and corresponding tilt of the Earth reduced the amount of daylight available - the going back of the clocks didn't help either - and the weather finally came to terms with the season. As I write, we now find average daily temperatures back to the seasonal norm. It won't be long before we break out the coats, hats, scarves, and gloves once more and settle down to endure the endless dark days ahead.

This particular day, however, is sunny, and on the warmish side, and demands further inquiry! There are several jobs to be done in the garden such as grass mowing, hedge trimming, removing blanket weed from the pond, etc, but in all honesty, it's nothing that cannot wait and the day is far too fine to waste on that nonsense. There also happens to be a guest in the form of my daughter's dog who is making 'walky' eyes at me!

Without further ado, it's hat and coat on, lead connected to dog, walking pole in hand, and away we go! There is much choice in where we walk, but we settle for a gentle stroll along Brampton Road. As we walk away from the village, the hedgerows seem larger than usual and are heavy with bright red hips and haws which the birds will no doubt be thankful for when the weather becomes seriously cold and frosty. The dog, as usual, is mostly oblivious to this though she does raise her stubby snout on occasion to sample the air. Other than that, she continues to trudge gently along the tarmac with the odd stop to sniff and 'read' the messages left by other dogs.

We pass the remnants of a medieval moated compound on our right - now complete with an information board - and walk with a warm wind at our backs and a blue sky above dotted with tufts of cloud that push ahead of us. I also note that the oak trees are groaning under the weight of acorns - I later discover that we are likely to have a 'mast year'; that is a year with an over-abundance of acorns, seeds and nuts. Some time ago, this would have been good news for smallholders who would let their pigs roam freely amongst the trees to feed on the acorns. It does seem a terrible waste, but I don't know of anyone in the village who currently keeps pigs in their back garden!

No matter, the hound and I continue to plod along the road which gradually begins to dip downwards. We walk by a passing point in the road (popular with fly tippers) and a public footpath heading off around the edge of a field, but we carry on down the road and are almost at the bottom of the slope when we suddenly leave the tarmac and crawl (in my case) through a gap in the hedge, and then briefly cross some fifty yards of open land before arriving at the edge of Brampton Woods.

I stop and turn to look about me. The field has long been ploughed up and autumn hues of brown, red and yellow are beginning to show amongst the fields, hedgerows and trees. Dog and I dive into the wood and scramble down one side of the old railway cutting and then up the other. I duck under the remnants of a wire fence and we find ourselves on a slightly muddy track.

We bear roughly eastwards and the dog suddenly finds herself in stick heaven. Many broken twigs and small branches litter the floor and she doesn't know which of them to attack first. She eventually settles on a two-foot length of old branch and with paws holding down one end she starts chewing it into smaller fragments.

It is noticeably cooler and darker in the wood though with the sun beginning to sink in the west the light manages to penetrate the gaps in amongst the trees and lightly dabs the trunks with a lamina of pinkish light. I simply stand and stare at this remarkable lighting effect until the dog makes her presence felt once more and I am obliged to move on.

As is normally the case, we come across absolutely no one and trudge on until we come to the end of the track and turn left onto an open ride. Before exiting the woods, the dog makes her way to a small rushing stream and has a good drink - probably to get rid of the bits of wood stuck in her mouth - before racing ahead of me. She stops now and then turns to make sure I'm still behind her. I attempt to run at her which makes her take off at pace. I then try to chase her - great fun as far as she is concerned - and she runs at me before jinking left and then right at the last moment before racing off once more. We continue like this for a few minutes until I have to stop to recover my breath. She, of course, is still full of energy and never gets why the game has to stop. As far as this dog is concerned life is just one continuous play session.

After some fifty yards or so, we come to a crossroads and join what appears to be one of the main rides. Looking to the right I can see the ride running off into the distance whilst ahead of me a smaller ride continues into the woods. The woods run to some 132 hectares in total and according to the local wildlife trust is some 900 years old making it the second oldest stretch of woodland in Cambridgeshire (though I can't imagine that any of the current crop of trees are anywhere near that age.)

This information is of no interest to the dog whatsoever and having been here several times before, she immediately turns left onto a westerly heading. After another hundred yards or so, we re-enter the wood once more and eventually strike a track right at the margin where the trees run up against a field. We turn left intending to get back to where we entered.

If it were spring, the ground would be littered with bluebells and wood anemones adding much-needed colour to the predominantly brown/green backdrop. As it is, there is a gothic almost funereal feel to the wood now with its increasing darkness, decaying leaves littering the floor, dew-dipped spider webs stretching across branches, and the smell of decomposing wood permeating the air.

Continued on page 11



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The Heron Family

The Heron is probably one of the easiest of UK birds to identify with its long legs and S-shaped neck, standing patiently on the water's edge or flying languidly along a river its neck folded double and broad wings barely flapping. This most ancient of birds (fossil records indicate its possible presence some 34 million years ago) has colonised the world but has only 72 recognised species. Only absent from desert areas and the coldest regions of the planet, the family also includes Bitterns and Egrets. Classification of individual species has been and still is difficult, but the distinctive neck, long, pointed bill and long legs define the family. Plumage can range from white to flecked dark brown to many vibrant colours, particularly in the tropical species. This diversity can also apply to the size of the bird, with the Goliath Heron standing 1.5m tall whereas the Dwarf Bittern is no bigger than Wood Pigeon.

Wholly carnivorous, most species favour wetlands, rivers, streams and coastal areas as hunting grounds. Food is limited to the size of animal that the bird can swallow whole, but all is grist to the mill with insects, fish, amphibians and reptiles, small mammals and young and even adult birds being on the menu. Various tactics are used to catch prey with both passive ambush and active hunting techniques used. One of the more unusual methods is used by the Black Heron, which makes a tent of its wings near the waters surface attracting the fish into the shadier area for an easier catch. But this is surpassed by a technique used by a few American species; they go fishing. Using, for preference, a piece of bread, the bird places the morsel on the water and waits patiently until a hungry fish investigates. The bird then bags their meal.

The UK has five species regularly breeding here; the Grey Heron, the Eurasian Bittern, the Little Egret, the Cattle Egret and the Great White Egret. Of these the latter three are recent colonists with the Little first breeding here in 1996, the Cattle arriving in 2008 and the Great White in 2012. Another species has bred here occasionally but given its rapid advance across western Europe since the Second World War, the Purple Heron will no doubt soon join the list of residents.

Our two 'older' species are both 'stars' in UK conservation. The Grey Heron is the subject on annual assessment of breeding, carried out by the British Trust for Ornithology. This nest counting survey was first carried out in 1928 and is the longest continual survey of any breeding bird in the world. The Bittern has been the focus of major conservation efforts. In 1997 there were 11 males recorded calling, or 'booming' in the whole of the UK. Much work was put into reverse this decline, including £1.5 million pounds of funding from the European Union, with a target of 100 boomers by 2020. In 2022 over 220 booming males were recorded.

Here at Grafham Water all five breeding species have been reported, and whilst the Bittern is a shy bird that favours hiding in reedbeds, it's well worth a visit to see if you can spot one of these elegant fishermen.



Grey Heron



Little Egret

Gregory Belcher

Senior Reserves Officer, Wildlife Trust BCN

Photographs
by Gregory Belcher



Wildlife Trust for
**Beds, Cambs
& Northants**

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It is not surprising that this period of the year has a melancholic quality about it and why, perhaps, many folk find it quite depressing and long for the lengthy, sunny days of spring and summer.

It has also turned noticeably chilly and I shiver slightly and turn up the collar. Time to head homeward, methinks. The dog has resumed stick chewing duties, but I give a quick shout and she comes running. The track runs by the western edge of the wood, so the remaining sunlight at least helps to illuminate our way.

We are almost back where we started from when there is a sudden rustle from up ahead and I spot a muntjac leaping into the undergrowth. It is feeding time for many of the woodland animals and as we emerge from the wood it is interesting to catch glimpses of hares, kites, buzzards, magpies and the ubiquitous grey squirrel going about their business and searching for food.

It is also time for dog and I to go searching for food too. We cross the field margin and come out once more onto Brampton Road. With the daylight rapidly disappearing, we both get a bit of a move on. A faint sliver of moon is visible in the early evening sky as we retrace our steps. A car passes us at one point, but other than that we

seem to have the road to ourselves pretty much, and a little while later we find ourselves passing the village sign and into Grafham itself.

We turn into Van Diemens Way at which point I stop to look at the glow of warm welcoming light issuing from the Grafham Trout. For a moment I wonder if I really have time for a...? "Well, of course you do," says the dog - she really is quite skilled at telepathic communication. I take her recommendation and instead of carrying straight on, we swing right and make our way to the pub. After all, it's been a long walk and we are both in need of rest and recuperation.

As we approach, we can hear and then see a goodly number of souls inside. As I open the door, a blast of warm air hits me and we leave the chill behind. Various folk say 'hello' and stroke the dog. She drinks copiously from a bowl of water and is then offered a dog biscuit by the bar person while I am poured a fine pint of foaming ale. I go and sit by the window and watch as night begins to draw her dark cloak about the world. Inside the 'Trout,' I snuggle into the chair. The dog sits next to me and I ruffle her fur before taking a long draw of beer. It's cosy in here. There is a gentle babble of conversation and occasional laughter. All is well with the world and it seems that autumn does have its compensations after all.

Tea & Chat?



Tea & Chat will be held at
Grafham Village Hall on
Thursday 30th November
from 2.30 - 4.00pm



We will be running a cake stall at the
Grafham Christmas Market in the Village
Hall on Sun 3rd Dec, from 1 - 5pm

We will not be meeting up in December, so the
next two Tea & Chats will be held on

Thursday 25th Jan 2024

Thursday 29th Feb 2024

We look forward to seeing you at these events

Happy Christmas!

For more details contact:
Sandra 07931 129 772

Mondays 6.30pm - 8.00pm

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Winter Opening Hours

Mon to Sat 8.00 - 4.00

Sun 10.00 - 2.00 (except 3rd, 10th & 17th Dec
when open until 4.00)

Bank Holidays 10.00 - 2.00

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For Christmas Opening Hours, see page 5



Winter Opening Times (Through until March 2024)

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Thurs - 18:00 - 22:00

Fri - 18:00 - 22:00

Sat - 14:00 - 22:00

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Deadline - 09.00am -
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for the February issue

(There is no separate issue for January)

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