



 Diary Dates & Events		Page
Community Café	June 13	3
Flicks in the Sticks	Sept 17	3
July Birches deadline	June 19	12
Parish Walk	June 14	7
Gardening Club Meeting	June 24	2
Gardening Club Plant Sale	June 6	2
Church Services	Sundays	5
Art & Craft	Thursdays	4
Root & Fruit Garden Festival	June 6	4
Coffee & Books	Thursday/ Saturday	7
Table Tennis	1st Tuesday	4
Parish Council – Much Birch	June 4	6



Stepping Out in the Parish:  
The walking group tackling Athelstan's Wood via the Herefordshire Trail on 17<sup>th</sup> May. Read more on page 12.



An informative talk on Allensmore Nurseries was given by Jack White at the Gardening Club meeting on 20 June.



Read more about the activities of the gardening club on page 3.

LITTLE BIRCH VILLAGE HALL PRESENTS

# MURDER ON A BUDGET & LAST TANGO IN LITTLE GRIMLEY

One act comedies by David Tristram

£15 ticket includes light supper & show  
9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> & 11<sup>th</sup> July  
7.30pm start  
18+

Tickets available now  
Contact Tonya 01981 540898 or Margaret/Derek 01981 540374

## Jobs for the garden in June

Our good old British weather gave us a bit of everything during May and the cold nights made many plants reluctant to grow even in the protection of the greenhouse. Much to my surprise my parsnips germinated I am pleased to say – they can be a problem in widely varying temperatures. We had our first meal of early potatoes on May Day bank holiday weekend, grown in a small tub in the greenhouse. Enough small tubers grew such that we were able to enjoy three servings each. The row in the garden, despite having been nipped by frost, are now flowering so I will be having a look to see how they are progressing soon with a view to sampling a few at Spring bank holiday. A pair of blackbirds are raising a family in our shed and regularly join me on the vegetable patch when I am working and carry off large beakfuls of worms. Two robins try to grab what is left, each one obviously supplying a different nest as they fly off in different directions. The Cuckoo is in good voice again this year – we first heard him on the 20th April. Sadly no House Martins again this year, and only a couple of Swallows seen flying over the adjacent field when occupied by cows.

- Dead head roses regularly cutting to a leaf beneath the flower.
- Feed tubs and other containers, and hanging baskets with high potash fertilizer (tomato feed is fine).
- Spend some time dead heading all flowers as this will encourage them to provide a display for longer.
- Support sweet peas which should be well under way now – again, cut flowers for indoor use and dead head, not giving that little pea pod a chance to form.
- Foliage from fading bulbs will be yellowing by now and if not done already it can be cut off.
- Plant out Dahlias.
- Tomatoes grown as cordons should be tied to supports and side shoots should be pinched out. Allow 7 trusses on indoor tomatoes and 4 outside before pinching out the growing tip.
- Harden off and plant out tender crops such as aubergines, courgettes, sweet corn, squashes and tomatoes.
- For succession keep sowing small quantities of radish, salad leaves, Spring onions, French beans, kohlrabi, beet and mangetout.
- If early potatoes are growing in some form of container or in the ground wait until the flowers open and then carefully examine a root to see how the potatoes are progressing. I think for best results they should not exceed the size of a hen's egg.
- Sow carrots for over wintering
- Remove any mouldy strawberries so that the spores do not spread to nearby fruit.
- Protect brassicas from butterflies
- Remove blanket weed from ponds, leave on the side for 24 hours to give creatures within it an opportunity to get back in the water. The weed can then be composted.
- Keep the bird bath topped up with fresh water.
- One for the children – record the wildlife in the garden and note the plants that insects visit. This will help in choosing future plants.

Many herbs produce flowers that are particularly attractive to bees. These include oregano, thyme, chives and borage. As well as their popularity in culinary use, the flowers are attractive and they provide bees with much needed supplies for the hive/nest.

**Derek Scrivens**

## Gardening Club News



**Plant Sale: June 6th - Saturday** - will be what has become our annual Plant Sale at LBVH. 9.30 - 12.00, with cakes and refreshments. Put this in your diary, and if you have any plants you can donate to the sale we would be very grateful. Proceeds from this event help finance our lovely talks by our guest speakers.

In preparation for the Annual Show on Saturday 5th September our next speaker on the **24th June** will be a talk by Phil Dennis entitled:

**Preparing for the Annual Horticultural Show from a Judges point of view.**

Phil is a vegetable and flower grower and a specialist, so it should be very informative and will give us all useful tips as we prepare for the Show.

Free to members: £5 for non-members. Refreshments served from 7.00pm. Talk starts at 7.30pm.

Looking forward to seeing you at our meetings  
**Lesley - Chair of KT & LB Gardening Club**

Contact email: [ktlbgardeningclub@gmail.com](mailto:ktlbgardeningclub@gmail.com)

Follow us on:

**Facebook**.com/kingsthornandlittlebirchgardeningclub

**Instagram**.com/Kings\_thorn\_little\_birch\_gc

### Aconbury Parish Meeting

Aconbury Parish Meeting is in need of a new Chair as the current chair is leaving the parish. Meetings are in October & April, include tea and biscuits and are enjoyable. If you might be interested please contact Elisabeth Taylor on 07864 629193

**Garden Maintenance & pruning**  
**Planting Schemes**  
**Weed/Moss Control**  
**Garden Waste Removal\*\***  
**Kyle - 07850921889**  
**thejollygardener2502@gmail.com**



**FLICKS IN THE STICKS** at Much Birch Community Hall

Flicks is taking a break for the summer and will return in September with a new season of films

Next screening:  
**Thursday 17th September, Film - TBC**

For further information about other films and screenings visit [www.artsalive.co.uk](http://www.artsalive.co.uk)

FLICKS IN THE STICKS

**Join us at the**  
**Community Café**  
**@ Much Birch Community Hall**

**Saturday 13 June 2026**  
**10:00 - 12:30**

and every 2nd Saturday of the month  
**11 July**  
**No café in August**  
**12 September**

For more information or if you are in need of transport contact Lydia on 01981 540323 or [socialfabric@hotmail.com](mailto:socialfabric@hotmail.com)



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Call our Support Line:  
**0808 802 0070**  
 Or text:  
**07786 203 130**

## Local Information

### Little Birch Parish Councillors

- Cllr Steve Coles
- Cllr Tom Palfrey
- Cllr Chris Atkinson
- Cllr Nick Deacon
- Cllr Kate Dillon

Molly Walters (Parish Council Clerk)

✉ [lbpcclerk@gmail.com](mailto:lbpcclerk@gmail.com)

🌐 [www.littlebirchparishcouncil.org](http://www.littlebirchparishcouncil.org)

### Footpath Officers



For any queries about footpaths contact:

### Little Birch & Aconbury

Chris Fowler

☎ 07931 292998

Email ✉ [chrisfowler1@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:chrisfowler1@hotmail.co.uk)

### Much Birch and Kingsthorpe:

David Irwin

☎ 07766 135068

Email ✉ [david.irwin13@btinternet.com](mailto:david.irwin13@btinternet.com)

### Photography Group



We're a friendly local group with a common interest in photography.

Come and join us:

Contact Sally Nichol for more information

☎ 07803 032928

[sally.nichol@btinternet.com](mailto:sally.nichol@btinternet.com)

### Table Tennis



Come and join us to play  
on the 1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday of the month!  
Little Birch Village Hall 7pm to 9pm  
Only £3 which includes refreshments!

Contact  
Patricia Kelly

☎ 07890 480576

### Little Birch Village Hall Committee

- Lesley Chapman (Chair)
- John Ellis-Braithwaite (Treasurer)
- Cathy Ellis-Braithwaite (Secretary)
- Linda Maden (Hall bookings)
- Kate Dillon (Parish Council Rep)
- Geoff Nichol (Maintenance)
- Iris Lloyd (Gardening Club)
- Jane Bolam (Drama group)
- Sam Davies (Committee member)
- Tonya Barnett (Drama Group)

The Birches Newsletter Editor:

John Ellis-Braithwaite

Email ✉ [editorial@birchesnews.org.uk](mailto:editorial@birchesnews.org.uk)

### Local Social Media Groups

Find out more in these groups:



Facebook

Much Birch Parish Group

Little Birch Parish Group

King's Thorn & Little Birch Gardening Club



Instagram

King's Thorn Little Birch Gardening Club

### Art and Craft Space



Have an art and craft afternoon away from the hustle  
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☎ 07803 032928

[sally.nichol@btinternet.com](mailto:sally.nichol@btinternet.com)

## Church Services in June



**Sunday 7th** – 1st Sunday of Trinity  
9.15 a.m. at Llandinabo – Matins  
11.00 a.m. at Little Dewchurch – Holy Communion

**Sunday 14th** – 2nd Sunday of Trinity  
9.15 a.m. at Much Birch – Holy Communion  
11.00 a.m. at Little Birch – Morning Worship

**Sunday 21st** - 3rd Sunday of Trinity  
9.15 a.m. at Much Birch – Morning Worship  
11.00 a.m. at Little Birch – Holy Communion in Traditional Language

**Sunday 28th** – 4th Sunday of Trinity  
11.00 a.m. at St John the Baptist, Llanwarne (the old church) – Holy Communion to celebrate the birth of John the Baptist, followed by lunch.

### A message from Revd. Mark : The cost of War

Hi Everyone,

We seem to have entered a time when the number and scale of conflicts across the globe are threatening to escalate into something approaching what we had during WW2.

My thoughts today turn to the question of who is paying for this colossal waste? Think about the tanks destroyed in Ukraine, or the Iranian Navy ships, or the number of missiles fired and drones constructed and used, let alone the bullets and shells and other machinery of war. The world spent about \$2.7 trillion in 2025 on weapons. That is a huge figure; if we think of the world's population as about 8 billion people, that works out at \$3400 per person. Now that is not a lot for someone of Elon Musk's ilk, but for the millions of people who are living on less than \$2 a day (again estimated by the UN to be around 10% of the global population), it would make a big boost to their lives.

Yet, we seem to be stuck in the old ways. If you have a bomb, then we must have a bigger bomb, etc. And so we miss the chance for everyone to have life and life in all its fullness. Now that last bit comes from St John's Gospel. Jesus, talking about sheep and sheepfolds, points out that we are to flourish, to fulfil our God-given potential and that those who prevent us from doing so are working against the will of God. It is one of the reasons that there has always been a pacifist thread in the Christian tradition.

So when we look at the amount we spend on weapons and think of ourselves as global citizens, then there are some interesting problems to wrestle with and no easy answers to be found.

Revd. Mark

## Little Birch Parish Council Chairman's Annual Report - May 2026

I'm pleased to present this year's Chairman's Report for Little Birch Parish Council. It has been a year of changes for the Parish Council. Most notably, we have had two changes in the position of Parish Clerk. I'm very pleased to welcome Molly Walters as our new Clerk, and we look forward to her bringing some much needed continuity and support to the Parish Council going forward. We have also seen a change in our Parish Lengthsman, Gareth Jenkins, taking on the role. With his help, the Parish Council was able to make full use of Herefordshire Council's drainage grant, clearing a number of ditches in key areas across the parish. With great work, Councillors Steve Coles and Nick Deakin have already put forward an application to Herefordshire Council for more drainage work for 2027. For a number of years, the Parish Council has worked hard to keep increases in the precept as low as possible but in recent year the Council has experienced a significant increase in costs, these include the Clerk's salary and additional lengthsman work. Some of this work has been matchfunded requiring contributions from the Parish Councils expenditure. This has left us with very limited reserve and after careful consideration, the Parish Council made the decision to increase the precept from £8,000 to £10,000 per year. This was not a decision taken lightly, but it is necessary to ensure the Parish Council remains financially stable and able to meet its responsibilities. Extra pressure on the finances has come from new requirements under Assertion 10 in the Annual Governance and Accountability Return, which focuses on digital and data compliance. This has meant setting up a new website and email system for the Parish Council. Councillor Tom Palfrey has taken the lead on this, working with the relevant Governmental approval registrant to make sure the Parish Council website is fully compliant. So we would like to thank Tom for taking on the responsibility to do this. Another issue the Parish Council now faces is a change in election procedures, which means that if we need to appoint a new councillor, it could come at a considerable cost to the parish. I would also like to recognise the excellent work of Chris Fowler, our Parish Footpaths Officer. Chris continues to do a fantastic job keeping the footpaths in Little Birch and Aconbury clear and accessible. He has overseen the replacement of unsafe stiles with self-closing gates, making routes more accessible for everyone. Working with the Much Birch Parish Footpaths Officer, Chris has also produced a map of local footpaths, which we look forward to displaying on our new notice board. In addition, he has organised a number of parish walks this year, all of which have been very well attended. Thank you, Chris, for your continued dedication and hard work. I would also like to thank Councillor Toni Fagan for her regular attendance at our meetings and for her informative and helpful reports, which are greatly appreciated by the Parish Council. Finally, I would like to thank my fellow councillors for their time and commitment, and everyone in the community who contributes to parish life.

Chris Atkinson  
Chairman, Little Birch Parish Council

## Much Birch Parish Council Details of meeting held on 7/5/26

The parish council held their May Annual Statutory and Annual Parish Council Meetings on Thursday 7th May 2026. The parish council elected their officers and sub committee members for the following year and heard an update, on Herefordshire Council matters, from the Ward Cllr Toni Fagan.

### DOG WASTE

The issue of dog waste and fouling of the parish footpaths etc. was discussed. The parish council would like to remind pet owners that they should clear up any pet waste and dispose of it appropriately. Bagged waste may be deposited into any roadside bin, or should be taken home to dispose of it in the black waste collection bin.

Please do not throw bagged waste into the hedgerows.

The next ordinary Parish Council Meeting of the Much Birch Parish Council will be held on Thursday 4th June 2026 from 7.30pm at the Much Birch Community Hall. All are welcome to attend.

Details of forthcoming meetings are in the column to the right.



## Much Birch Parish Council

### Councillors

**Cllr Alison Cook** (Chair) Jasmine Cottage, Wrigglebrook Lane, Kingsthorpe, Hereford, HR2 8AW, email: [thecooks@wyenet.co.uk](mailto:thecooks@wyenet.co.uk) Tel. 01981 540703

**Cllr Roisin Burge** The Old Hall, Barrack Hill, Little Birch HR2 8AX email: [roisinburge@hotmail.com](mailto:roisinburge@hotmail.com)

Tel. 01981 540724

**Cllr Chris Pickering-Grey** 4 Court Farm Barns, Much Birch HR2 8HT email: [chris@pickering-grey.uk](mailto:chris@pickering-grey.uk) Tel. 07712 813218

**Cllr Michael Agyeman** Little Willow, Wrigglebrook, Kingsthorpe, Hereford, HR2 8AU email:

[magyeman92@gmail.com](mailto:magyeman92@gmail.com) Tel. 01981 540840

**Cllr David Irwin** email: [David.Irwin13@btinternet.com](mailto:David.Irwin13@btinternet.com)

Tel. 07766 135068

**Cllr Steve Turner** The Underhills, Hollybush Lane, Much Birch, Hereford, HR2 8HX, Tel. 07768 206296 email: [turnersofcrossways@btinternet.com](mailto:turnersofcrossways@btinternet.com)

**Parish Council Clerk:** Mrs Alison Wright email:

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

**Much Birch Footpath Officer:**

email: [MBfootpaths@btinternet.com](mailto:MBfootpaths@btinternet.com) Tel. 07766 135068

### Dates for the forthcoming meetings:

04/06/26, 02/07/26, 03/09/26, 01/10/26, 05/11/26, 03/12/26 (no meeting in August).

All are in Much Birch Community Hall from 7.30pm.

Full minutes of the meetings can be found on the Parish Council website: [www.muchbirchparish.org.uk](http://www.muchbirchparish.org.uk)  
You can also find us on X (formerly known as Twitter) at <https://twitter.com/MuchBirchPC> and Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Much.Birch.Parish>



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## MEL'S MUSINGS and a Malt Loaf recipe!

I am all for comfort food (as my shapely figure will testify!!) and goodness me, haven't we needed comfort food recently, what with the depressing wars, Trump's face all over the news and the weather. Yes, The Weather. What more can we say, four seasons in a day, no four seasons in half an hour. Nature is so very confused, some birds have hatched young (how long they will survive is anyone's guess) and others are only just pairing up.

Anyway, having got that lot off my chest, I will go back to comfort food. By sheer accident I came across a really quick, and frankly totally delicious recipe for malt loaf. For those poor souls who have never tasted malt loaf, it is a cross between sticky bread and moist (am I allowed to say that word?) fruit cake. Now, it may not be common knowledge, but my other half has quite a soft spot for malt loaf, and sometimes, I have to admit, I need to get into his good books, so I made sure I had the ingredients and threw them all together, and VOILA!! The first day – well you have to taste it while it is still warm to make sure you have got it right!!! - it was crispy and lovely; the second day beginning to get really unctuous and sticky and by the third day WOW, how to limit ourselves to only one slice a day, spread with delicious butter. Now, being of generous spirit and having got all of you wanting to eat malt loaf I have appended the recipe. It is so simple, takes longer to weigh out the ingredients than make, and certainly longer than it takes to eat it. Please try it unless you unfortunately have dietary limitations, in which case next month I will try and find a recipe for dry rice crackers, or something similar!! ENJOY!



### Malt Loaf Recipe



- 100g All Bran
- 1 mug black tea (250ml) soak T.bag in hot water for 10 mins or whilst preparing ingredients
- 200g each of Self Raising flour, soft brown sugar, mixed fruit.
- tsp baking powder (I use half) and a pinch of salt.

Soak All Bran with the tea until going soft, (a good 5 mins or so) stir a couple of times then add all dry ingredients. Finally add one beaten egg and a large tbsp treacle. Mix. Put into a lined bread tin and bake at 180 degrees for 50 mins. This will get stickier by the day. Serve with butter.

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on 07849 637242  
[www.birches.news/lbvh](http://www.birches.news/lbvh)

### Coffee & Books at LB Village Hall Held in the morning of the first Thursday and third Saturday of the month



Not on June 4



Next one will be on June 20

## Wildlife Walk

Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> June at 2:00 pm

Starting from Much Birch Community Hall

Join us for a gentle, informative walk led by  
**Andrew Nixon**  
who has had a long career working in Conservation.

After the walk, refreshments will be served  
back at the community hall.

### Further details:

Chris Fowler • 07931 222998 • [chrisfowler1@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:chrisfowler1@hotmail.co.uk)  
David Irwin • 07766 135068 • [david.irwin13@btinternet.com](mailto:david.irwin13@btinternet.com)



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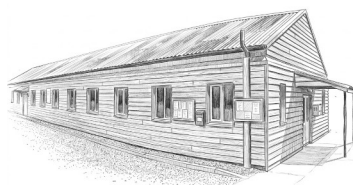
### ◆ Appointments

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- ✔ Appointments available.



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Message us on WhatsApp  
Appointments available

## Little Birch Village Hall – diary date



A date for your diary: Wednesday June 10th is the LBVH AGM. We cordially invite you to join us for this AGM and hear the update on the refurbishment of the toilet and bar areas. Refreshments will be provided from 6.45pm. Come and support your Village Hall and meet the committee.

Look forward to seeing you.

Lesley, Chair of Little Birch Village Hall

## Root to Fruit GARDEN FESTIVAL

6th June 2026 • 10:30am - 4pm  
Steiner Academy Hereford, Much Dewchurch, HR2 8DL

*Free entry & parking!*

- gardeners' q&a • lunch •
- live music • artisan market •
- cake • coffee • ice cream •
- children's activities •
- local food produce •
- plants • talks •



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For further information please contact the **Secretary Sylvia Jones** on **01981 540980** or email : [mbchsec@gmail.com](mailto:mbchsec@gmail.com) or visit the website: [www.muchbirchcommunityhall.org](http://www.muchbirchcommunityhall.org)

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Local girls rowing at  
Eton Dorney Lake



On May Bank Holiday Emily Jones, Lottie O'Connor and Lola Wyatt all took part in the National Junior Rowing Championships at Eton Dorney Lake. Emily and Lottie gained bronze medals in the pairs skull event representing Hereford Rowing Club. Lola gained a third place representing Hereford Cathedral School in the coxed four final.

A week later they returned to the venue where Emily gained a bronze medal in the women's junior 14 single skull race and Lottie achieved a bronze medal in the women's junior 14 pairs skull race. We have three local girls, who are all good friends, competing at national level and all doing well. You should all be very proud and we wish you continued success, you all deserve it.

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Join Alison Allan for Pilates – sessions are taught as small group classes and as individual 1:1 sessions.

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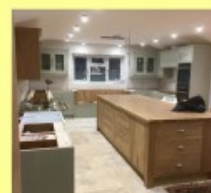


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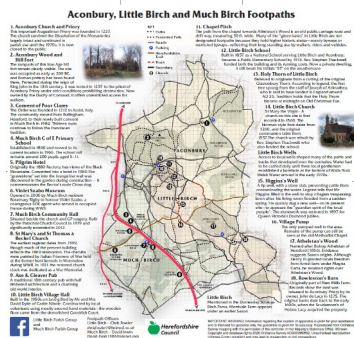
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## Parish Footpath Map



We're delighted to announce that our newly designed Parish Footpath Map is now complete — the result of almost a year's planning. The map has been purchased jointly by the Parish Councils and is now proudly displayed on the noticeboards at both the Village Hall and the Community Hall.

**You can also find the map on the back page of the June online edition of The Birches.**

The map covers Aconbury, Little Birch, and Much Birch and highlights public rights of way, the Herefordshire Trail, and many places of historical interest.

We hope you find it useful — please feel free to take a photo and use it to help guide your walks. In the near future, each noticeboard will also feature three local walks of varying lengths, with directions available via QR code.

Special thanks go to Peter Rymill for his excellent graphic design work.

Chris Fowler and David Irwin

## May Parish Walk

On Sunday 17th May, twelve walkers and no dogs joined this month's walk. The weather had been variable all weekend so we set out under leaden skies from the Much Birch Community Hall. Having crossed the A49 we were soon away from the traffic and walking down the Hereford Trail. Down and up there are no flat walks in Much Birch. Just passing the Little Birch church we were approached by fellow Trail walkers asking for some advice about the Trail. We then climbed down the hill and up into Athelstan's Wood past the Beeches and Wellingtonias. We were a few weeks too late for the wood anemones but could see the remains of wild garlic and blue bells in some of the clearings. We are so lucky to have access to Aconbury and Athelstan's wood, both owned by the Duchy, who allow us to freely roam through these delights. Coming out of the wood we had to make our way across a field with no easily visible footpath because of cropping, which is a common issue at this time of the year. Then we marched down Rough lane before crossing another footpathless field. Luckily the fields around Strickstenning Hall are without cows and so we were entertained with fields covered in meadow buttercups.

After a walk of 6.7km and 200m of climbing especially for Sophie we rested our legs and chatted about the walk over tea and cake back at the Hall. Luckily no waterproofs were needed on this walk.

Between Chris and myself we try to hold a Parish Walk each month varying from Little Birch to Much Birch. Do come and join us for a walk and a chat

David.

## Defibrillator Locations IN A LIFE THREATENING EMERGENCY CALL 999

AEDs are available to use locally in case of sudden cardiac arrest. A defibrillator is an easy to use, medical device that analyses the heart's rhythm and if needed, delivers an electrical shock (defibrillation) to help the heart establish an effective rhythm.

- **Allensmore** Locks Garage
- **Backney** on the garage wall at Market Gardens Cottage
- **Bridstow** on the outside of the village hall
- **Garway** on the wall outside the Garway Moon pub Harewood End at Harewood End Inn on outside of the pub at the back in the beer garden.
- **Little Birch** on the outside of the village hall
- **Llanwarne** on the wall by steps leading up to the village hall
- **Much Birch** on the outside of the church hall
- **Much Birch Axe & Cleaver** on the side of the pub
- **Much Dewchurch** outside Steiner School, first building after the church
- **Peterstow** at the Yew Tree pub
- **Sellack** on the outside of the parish hall (key code needed)
- **St Weonards** old BT phone box off the A466 between the church and Forge Cottage
- **Wormelow** at the Cricket Club & Carrot & Wine shop Wilton on wall at the BP garage on the roundabout

## June's Meadows and Music

June has arrived in The Birches, bringing the true peak of summer. Our local lanes and verges are alive with colour, as common spotted orchids and yellow bird's-foot-trefoil put on a magnificent show. These wildflowers are bustling hubs for pollinators, alive with the hum of bumblebees and the flutter of meadow brown butterflies.

Overhead, the bird nesting season reaches its frantic finale. Listen out for the rich melodies of song thrushes, while swifts perform masterful aerial acrobatics above. It's the perfect month to step outside and enjoy the natural wealth right on our doorstep.

## Do you have something of interest to the community which you would like to appear in the next edition of The Birches?

The deadline for the May edition is  
**Friday 19th June 2026**

You can contact the Editor at the following email address:  
**editorial@birchesnews.org.uk**

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Email : [editorial@birchesnews.org.uk](mailto:editorial@birchesnews.org.uk)

# Aconbury, Little Birch and Much Birch Footpaths

## 1. Aconbury Church and Priory

This important Augustinian Priory was founded in 1237. The church survived the Dissolution of the Monasteries largely intact and continued in parish use until the 1970s. It is now closed to the public.

## 2. Aconbury Wood and Hill Fort

The ramparts of this Iron Age hill fort remain clearly visible. The site was occupied as early as 200 BC, and Roman pottery has been found there. Protected during the reign of King John in the 13th century, it was rented in 1257 to the priest of Aconbury Priory under strict conditions prohibiting destruction. Now owned by the Duchy of Cornwall, it offers unrestricted access for walkers.

## 3. Convent of Poor Clares

The Order was founded in 1212 in Assisi, Italy. The community moved from Bullingham, Hereford, to their newly built convent in Much Birch in 1984. Thirteen nuns continue to follow the Franciscan tradition.

## 4. Much Birch C of E Primary School

Established in 1860 and moved to its current location in 1966. The school roll remains around 200 pupils aged 5-11.

## 5. Pilgrim Hotel

Originally the 1880 Rectory, has views of the Black Mountains. Converted into a hotel in 1980. The "gravestone" set into the lounge bar wall was discovered in the garden during construction - it commemorates the Rector's male Chow dog.

## 6. Violet Szabo Museum

Opened in 2000 by Much Birch resident Rosemary Rigby to honour Violet Szabo, a courageous SOE agent who served in occupied France during WWII.

## 7. Much Birch Community Hall

Situated beside the church and GP surgery. Built by the Parochial Church Council in 1979 and significantly extended in 2012.

## 8. St Mary's and St Thomas à Becket Church

The earliest register dates from 1599, though much of the present building reflects the 1869 restoration. The cherubs were painted by Italian Prisoners of War held at the former hunt kennels in Wormelow during WWII. In 1921 the restored church clock was dedicated as a War Memorial.

## 9. Axe & Cleaver Pub

A traditional 18th century pub with half timbered architecture and a charming old world interior.

## 10. Little Birch Village Hall

Built in the 1950s on land gifted by Mr and Mrs David Dyke of Castle Nibole. Constructed by local volunteers using mostly second hand materials—the wooden floor came from the demolished Goodrich Court.

### KEY

- Paths
- Permitted Path
- Roads
- P Parking
- Herefordshire Trail
- Track
- Boundary
- ⊕ Church

## 11. Chapel Pitch

The path from the chapel towards Athelstan's Wood is an old public carriage road and drift way, measuring 30 ft. wide. Many of the "green lanes" in Little Birch are not designated footpaths because they hold higher historic status—mainly byways or restricted byways—reflecting their long standing use by walkers, riders and vehicles.

## 12. Little Birch School

Built in 1857 as a National School serving Little Birch and Aconbury; became a Public Elementary School by 1913. Rev. Stephen Thackwell funded both the building and its running costs. Now a private dwelling, it still bears his initials "ST" on the weathervane.

## 13. Holy Thorn of Little Birch

Believed to originate from a cutting of the original Glastonbury Thorn. According to legend, the first tree sprang from the staff of Joseph of Arimathea, who is said to have landed in England around AD 35. Tradition holds that the Holy Thorn blooms at midnight on Old Christmas Eve.

## 14. Little Birch Church

St Mary the Virgin - A church on this site is first recorded in 1560. The Norman style font dates from 1260, and the original communion table from 1557. The church was rebuilt by Rev. Stephen Thackwell, who also funded the school.

## Little Birch Wells

Access to local wells shaped many of the paths and tracks that developed over the centuries. Water had to be carried daily until three local gentlemen established a borehole at the bottom of Walls Pool. Welsh Water arrived in the early 1970s.

## 15. Higgins's Well

A lip well, with a stone slab, preventing cattle from contaminating the water. Legend tells that Mr Higgins filled in the well to stop villagers trespassing. Soon after, his living room flooded from a sudden spring. He quickly dug a new well—on its present site—to appease the "guardian spirit of the local people". The stonework was restored in 1897 for Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee.

## 16. Village Pump

The only pumped well in the area. Remains of the pump can still be seen at the old Methodist Chapel.

## 17. Athelstan's Wood

Named after Bishop Athelstan of Hereford (1056). Evidence suggests Saxon origins. Although Henry III granted locals freedom from forest laws under Magna Carta, he retained rights over Athelstan's Wood.

## 18. Rowleston's Barn

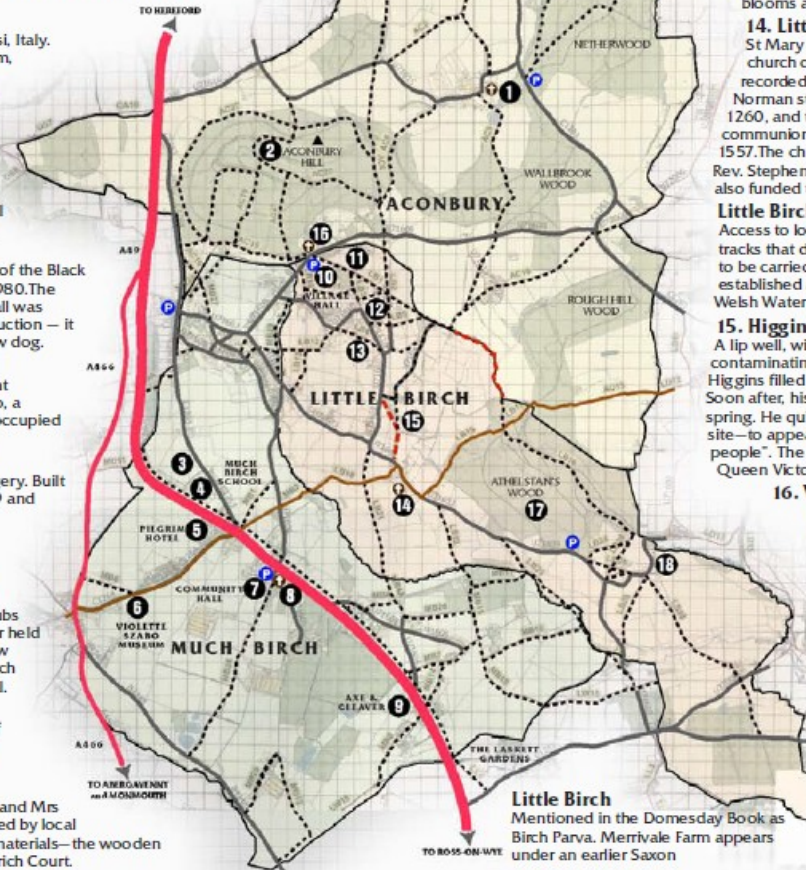
Originally part of New Mills Farm. Records show the land was released to Aconbury Priory by its owner, John de Lacy in 1275. The original barns date back to the early 1600s, when the Scudamore's of Holme Lacy acquired the property.



The ramparts of this Iron Age hill fort remain clearly visible. The site was occupied as early as 200 BC, and Roman pottery has been found there.



St Mary the Virgin - A church on this site is first recorded in 1560. The Norman style font dates from 1260, and the original communion table from 1557.



Little Birch Parish Group and Much Birch Parish Group

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Much Birch - David Irwin  
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