

The Birches



Community Matters Newsletter – May Edition

Kingsthorpe, Much Birch, Little Birch, Aconbury & Wormelow

 Diary Dates & Events		Page
Concert of Songs for Spring	May 8	5
Community Café	May 9	6
Flicks in the Sticks	May 21	3
June Birches deadline	May 22	12
Parish Walk	May 17	7
Gardening Club Meeting	April 29	3
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	May 7	6

David's multi-maraton run for a good cause.

Read more on page 9.



More than 30 local 'early birds' who participated in the Dawn Chorus Walk on Easter Sunday were rewarded with, a wonderful sunrise, beautiful birdsong and bacon butties to make a fitting end.

Read more on page 8



Would you like to play a part in the running of Little Birch Village Hall? – See page 3 for more details!

The Birches Newsletter is also available online at www.birches.news

Jobs for the garden in May



Writing this in mid April, the early Daffodils have faded, and Tulips are taking pride of place while trees and hedges have their new fresh green leaves in abundance. Our wild area has lots of English Bluebells and Cowslips blooming. In the veg. garden, the early rhubarb is doing well while there are good quantities of carrots, parsnips, Brussels sprouts, a couple of leeks, red cabbage and spinach, plus onions and potatoes in store. Hopefully this will keep us going during the 'hungry season'. We are waiting to hear the Cuckoo, whilst a couple of Swallows have been seen swooping around the cows in the adjacent field.

Here are a few ideas for May:

- Keep weeding.
- Cuttings for deciduous shrubs – fuchsias, hydrangeas, lavatera can be taken during this month.
- 'Spring clean' house plants by wiping dust off smooth leaves with a damp cloth and use a soft brush for hairy leaves.
- Tender plants and young plants raised under cover can be gradually hardened off.
- Aphids can be controlled with organic insecticide if infestation is severe else leave them to ladybirds, lacewings, ants, wasps and birds.
- Divide large clumps of daffodils and snowdrops.
- Plant up hanging baskets and containers. If you have a greenhouse, and have room in it, keep them in for a few days to help them establish. In any case keep them sheltered.
- Listen to weather forecast for frosts.
- Sow 'next year's flowers' – wallflowers, foxgloves, honesty, sweet William.
- Thin seedlings when they have their first true leaves. Sow runner beans, dwarf beans, cucumbers, courgettes and squashes (not forgetting that heaviest marrow for the horticultural show).
- Those of you with a greenhouse should do all you can to keep the temperature down as it can rise from a comfortable warmth to well over 100 degrees in a matter of minutes when the sun emerges from any clouds or shade. Open all vents and damp down and particularly if the greenhouse is small it will benefit from shading material or paint.
- Sow small quantities of quick maturing veg. – baby carrots, raddish, salad leaves, Spring onions and spinach.
- Protect carrots from carrot fly with insect proof mesh
- Keep bird baths clean and topped up with fresh water.
- Bird food should not include whole nuts or bulky items.
- Check ponds for tadpoles. Provide a shelf/ramp for them and of course other wildlife to escape.
- Plant scented flowers such as nicotiana, evening primroses and buddleja to attract moths, butterflies and bees. In fact any mauve/purple flowers will attract a wide range of insects.
- When buying plants, single flowers are better than double flowers, as food is generally more accessible for insects from singles.

Derek Scrivens

Gardening Club News



Our next meeting is on : Wednesday April 29th.

The talk this month will be delivered by Pamela Singer. Pamela (of the former Forest of Dean and Valley Trust) will talk about "A tale of 2 rivers - the Spectacular Severn & the Wistful Wye" . This promises to be an interesting and informative talk, with a smattering of fun facts thrown in! Do join us - members free; £5 for visitors. Refreshments from 7.00pm - talk starts at 7.30 in LBVH.

Advanced notice: May 20th. There will be a talk by Jack White from Allensmore Nurseries. The Garden Club had a very informative visit to Allensmore last year, and we were so impressed by Jack's knowledge that we asked him to come and talk to use further, giving us his wealth of knowledge of this highly successful local business. So, put it in your diary!

June 6th - Saturday - will be what has become our annual Plant Sale at LBVH. 9.30 - 12.00, with cakes and refreshments. Again, 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 visitors.

Look forward to seeing you at our meetings
Lesley - Chair of LBGC

Contact email: ktlbgardeningclub@gmail.com

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at Much Birch
Community Hall

Thursday 21 May - H IS FOR HAWK 12A

A true story based on the memoir of Helen Macdonald. When Helen's beloved father passes away, she is knocked sideways by grief and loses herself in memories of their time birding and exploring the natural world together. She becomes obsessed with the idea of training her own goshawk, and so she brings the fearsome bird Mabel home to her life as a graduate fellow at Cambridge.

A record of a spiritual journey, H IS FOR HAWK is a story about memory and nature and how it might be possible to reconcile death with life and love.

Tickets £5 (£4 under 16s)

Refreshments including hot dogs and ice cream
available from 7pm

Tickets available in advance or on the door (cash or card
payments accepted)- for further info or to book tickets please
email muchbirchflicks@hotmail.com or call 01981 540097

For further information about films and screenings visit
www.artsalive.co.uk

FLICKS IN THE STICKS

FLICKS IN THE STICKS

Bookings & Hall Manager required for Little Birch Village Hall



Due to our current manager retiring from the role after over 8 years of loyal service to LBVH, we require a new manager with effect from the AGM in June, when Linda Maden leaves the post. The role involves:

- Taking bookings and dealing with the bookings from initial contact to completion of the booking.
- Invoicing for hall rental and liaising with the Treasurer on financial matters and other hall expenses.
- Liaise with the cleaner before and after the booking
- Maintain the online calendar of events and bookings
- Other duties include liaising with the cleaner for coordination of general cleaning

The holder of the role will also be a member of the LBVH Management Committee.

There is a job description which can be obtained from Lesley Chapman (Chair of LBVH). Tel. 07834 771838.

I'm sure Linda will be only too willing to discuss the role with anyone who is interested. It is a vital role for the Hall and for the community, so I do hope there will be someone who will be able to help to run the Village Hall, with the very strong committee that we have. We are also open to splitting the role as a job share.

Lesley Chapman, Chair of Little Birch Village Hall

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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

🌐 www.littlebirchparishcouncil.org

Footpath Officers



For any queries about footpaths contact:

Little Birch & Aconbury

Chris Fowler

☎ 07931 292998

Email ✉ chrisfowler1@hotmail.co.uk

Much Birch and Kingsthorpe:

David Irwin

☎ 07766 135068

Email ✉ 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

Table Tennis



Come and join us to play
on the 1st 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

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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Contact Sally Nichol

☎ 07803 032928

sally.nichol@btinternet.com

Church Services in May



Sunday 3rd May – 5th Sunday of Easter
9.15 a.m. at Much Dewchurch – Holy Communion
11.00 a.m. at Little Birch – Holy Communion

Sunday 10th May – 6th Sunday of Easter
9.15 a.m. at Much Birch – Holy Communion

Thursday 14th May – Ascension Day
10.30 a.m. at Much Birch – Holy Communion
1.00 a.m. at Little Birch – Morning Worship

Sunday 17th May – 7th Sunday of Easter
9.15 a.m. at Much Birch – Morning Worship
11.00 a.m. at Little Birch – Holy Communion in
Traditional Language

Sunday 24th May – Pentecost
9.15 a.m. at Llandinabo – Holy Communion in
Traditional Language

Sunday 31st May – Trinity Sunday
11.00 a.m. at Llanwarne – Joint Benefices
Communion Service

St. Mary's Church work day.

Thank you to Verity, Alex, Ellen, Mel and Mark, Phyll and John, Steve, James and John for all the work that they did at St. Mary's on our work day. A great deal was achieved, pruning, weeding, mowing, levelling the area where the boiler room used to be and a dry hedge construction were all done outside. Inside there was a lot of clearing up to be done after loose render had been removed from the walls. We had a break for a delicious shared lunch and at the end of the day two trips to the tip ensured that everything was looking clean and tidy. Thank you to all of you, your time and effort is much appreciated and it has made a real difference.

John Caton

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A message from Revd. Mark

Hi Everyone,

We have had some lovely decorations in our churches over the first part of the Easter season. People have donated flowers and the time to arrange them, cleaned and polished our churches, swept away the cobwebs and tidied the hymnbooks.

Our churches are open for anyone to visit and find a moment of peace, reflection and prayer, but their upkeep depends on the generosity of a few rather than the many. We have little bands of people in each of our villages who support these buildings, and for that, we are very thankful because, otherwise, they would soon fall into disrepair and would have to be closed.

Things are changing in the Governmental support as well. Up until last March, we were able to claim back the VAT on any repairs to our churches, but that scheme has ended, and a new scheme has been put in place. However, it is not clear how and for what we can claim and how much money would be made available, both for small projects and for big ones.

So, if you want to see these buildings remain open, well-maintained and a place where people can step away from the busyness of the world for a few moments, pop a note on the collection plate, use your phone to make a contactless donation or scan one of the QR codes. Every donation helps us to keep these wonderful, historical places open for anyone who pops in, for whatever reason they have.

With every blessing,

Revd Mark



St Mary and St Thomas a Becket Church, Much Birch

Concert of Songs
for the Spring
with

Gaudemus

Friday 8th May at 7.00 p.m.
in aid of church funds.

Donations welcome.
Refreshments afterwards in the
Community Hall.

Much Birch Parish Council Details of meeting held on 2/4/26

The parish council held their April ordinary Parish Council Meeting on Thursday 2nd April 2026. The parish council heard about further projects being planned to help improve local footpath access and work was nearly completed for an interactive footpath map, with QR code information. Also a dedicated website for footpath related topics was moving forward to completion. Regular parish walks, including a dawn chorus walk with breakfast, were taking place with all welcome to join in.

Parish drainage projects had also been carried out in the parish by the parish council appointed contractor. It was hoped that the works would aid local drainage and help keep water off the roads and prevent pot holes forming.

The next Parish Council Meetings of the Much Birch Parish Council, the Annual Parish and Annual Statutory, will be held, consecutively, on Thursday 7th May 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.

Ditch Maintenance

You may have noticed (and read above), some ditches around Kingsthorpe have been cleaned out. This was arranged by Much Birch Parish Council having received a grant from Herefordshire Council to cover the cost. This will hopefully ease problems with surface water when we have heavy rainfall.

A gentle reminder to those with a ditch on or adjacent to their property boundary that they are classed as Riparian owners and are legally responsible for maintaining them to allow natural water flow. If an adjoining hedge is being cut please remove all the debris to ensure the ditch is clear.

Much Birch Parish Council

Councillors

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

Cllr Roisin Burge The Old Hall, Barrack Hill, Little Birch HR2 8AX email: roisinburge@hotmail.com Tel. 01981 540724

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

Cllr Michael Agyeman Little Willow, Wrigglebrook, Kingsthorpe, Hereford, HR2 8AU email: magyeman92@gmail.com Tel. 01981 540840

Cllr David Irwin email: 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

Parish Council Clerk: Mrs Alison Wright email: muchbirchclerk@gmail.com

Much Birch Footpath Officer:

email: MBfootpaths@btinternet.com Tel. 07766 135068

Dates for the forthcoming meetings:

07/05/26, 04/06/26, 02/07/26, 03/09/26, 01/10/26, 05/11/26, 03/12/26

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
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>

Join us at the
Community Café
@ Much Birch Community Hall

Saturday 9 May 2026
10:00 - 12:30

and every 2nd Saturday of the month
13 June
11 July
No café in August

For more information or if you are in need of transport contact Lydia on 01981 540323 or socialfabric@hotmail.com



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Contact Linda Maden
on 07849 637242
www.birches.news/lbvh

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



Book of the month for May



The choice this month is a recent donation, "You Are Here" by David Nicholls.

Many of you will be familiar with his smash-hit "One Day" which was a global bestseller, not only popular but critically acclaimed.

This latest book is set in the landscape of the coast to coast walk from St. Bees, Cumbria to Robin Hood's Bay, Yorkshire, a challenge for long distance walkers. Julia Bradbury did it recently for T.V.

The Times calls it "Nicholls's most satisfying love story yet".

You will enjoy it, so dive in and be transported. You won't regret it!
Jennifer

Parish Walk

Sunday 17th May 2.00pm

Meeting at the
Much Birch Community Hall

Where there will be tea and cakes
following the walk.

The walk will be about 4 miles long
to Athelstan's Wood
via the Herefordshire Trail.

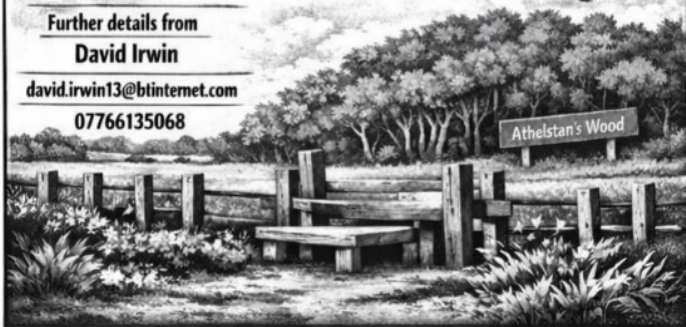
There will be some stiles to negotiate.

Well behaved dogs are welcome.

Further details from
David Irwin

david.irwin13@btinternet.com

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Update on Little Birch Village Hall



The new heating system is in and working well. The heaters are working well and are proving to be very efficient. Reports are that it's now too hot!!

The drainage trenches have now been completed, which means that meetings with builders have begun to discuss the start of the renovation of the toilet and bar areas.

It is hoped that this work will commence soon - please be assured that when it does it will not affect the running of the Hall, or any bookings that are made. The builders will work around us and we will choose times where it won't affect the day to day running of the Hall. We will keep you informed as and when things start to happen through this newsletter.

Lesley, Chair of Little Birch Village Hall

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For further information please contact the **Secretary Sylvia Jones** on **01981 540980** or email : mbchsec@gmail.com or visit the website: www.muchbirchcommunityhall.org

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David's Charity Marathon Runs

When you read this, think of me in the Lake District running around Lake Windermere. I will be running a marathon everyday for the first 10 days of May. Its exactly 26.2 miles around this Lake. Its not flat and they say its the second hilliest marathon in England! So whatever the weather, if its rainy, windy or hot and sunny, I will be running anticlockwise around the lake. The importance of running multi-day events is not the run but the recover: eating, drinking and eating some more. Some of this recover will always involve ice-cream both on the route and afterwards.

I am raising money for underprivileged young people to encounter a once in a lifetime outward bound experience at Brathay. Many of these young people have never been out of the city they live in. At Brathay they will provide everything that they need to be on the lake, up the mountains or going down the rivers and streams. If you look at the Brathay website (below) you can see what a life changing experience it can be for them.

Please consider donating to this incredible cause on: justgiving.com then type 'David Irwin Brathay' in the search box. For more info on the trust, visit: brathay.org.uk

With thanks, **David Irwin**



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Dawn Chorus Walk – Easter Sunday 2026

Not put off by the strong winds of 'Storm Dave' the night before, the annual Dawn Chorus Walk from Merrivale Farm at 5.30am (you read that right!) on Easter Sunday, saw over 30 people participate in a wonderful dawn exploration of Athelstan's Wood to listen to the birds singing their little hearts out at the joy of a new day.

Starting the walk off in two groups (this event gets bigger each year) we wandered into one of the fields of the farm, admiring the gorgeous moon on one side and on the other side the rise of the sun. One of the first bird song heard was the skylark, swiftly followed by an owl.

During a gentle walk through Athelstan's Wood, whilst admiring the wild garlic and bluebells that are starting to appear, we also heard song thrush, wren, chaffinch, wood pigeon, green wood pigeon, crow, blue tit, goldfinch, robin, pheasant and the knocking of wood peckers, and witnessed a raven carrying twigs for a nest.

With thanks to Bob Mason, Adrian Hodges, Gervase Mangwana and Viv Quinn, who helped everyone to identify the myriad of bird songs heard throughout the walk. Also, thanks to Chris Fowler, the Little Birch footpath officer who works tirelessly to ensure that our footpaths throughout our village are accessible to everyone.

Thanks also goes to Sue and Emily Mason, who served up wonderful bacon butties, tea, coffee and toast for everyone on their return to the cow barn at the farm. Whilst the cows were tucking into their breakfast, we sat on bales of hay in the same barn, us chomping on our breakfast of bacon butties, toast and welcoming hot beverages and some of the cows being complete divas and pushing some of their feed away. The event also raised £260 for St Michael's Hospice.

Once again, a delightful way to start an Easter Sunday: a romp through our woods, listening to the wildlife and admiring the floral and fauna, and just basically, enjoying our countryside. This is an event that should always be in your diary.

Joanna Egelton

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Seniors Pilates is at Little Dewchurch Village Hall Mondays 11.15am to 12.15pm

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

Pilates is a great way to keep your body feeling agile and energised. The movements focus on posture, alignment, core strength balance and flexibility.



Tai Chi Movements for Wellbeing

tmw is at Little Dewchurch Village Hall Thursdays 10.45am to 11.45pm

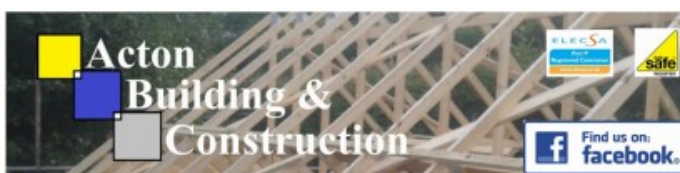
Join Alison Allan for Tai Chi movements for well being. A beautifully flowing and carefully selected sequence of movements designed to enhance and promote our physical and emotional wellbeing. The movements, which have origins in Tai Chi, Chi Kung and meditation are simplified and can be performed standing or seated making it accessible to everyone.

Book Now for Pilates or tmw:

Phone icon: 07947 011707

Globe icon: www.perfectbalance.life

Email icon: alison@perfectbalance.life



Email: richard@actonbuilding.co.uk

Mob: 07863134329

Local established building company with over 30 years experience

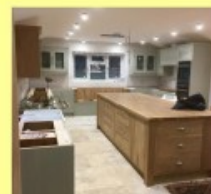


New builds, extensions, renovations, barn conversions . Projects taken from design to occupation. All works fully guaranteed.

Kitchens and bathroom specialists.

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Athelstan's Wood – We Need Your Help

Do you walk regularly in Athelstan's Wood?





I'm **Chris Fowler**, Footpath Officer for Little Birch, working with the Duchy of Cornwall's Head Forester to secure funding for an accessible circular trail in Athelstan's Wood.

This much-loved woodland is open to all, and we want to ensure it can be enjoyed by people of all ages and abilities.

Planned Improvements

- Expanded car park at the southern entrance
- Improved track surfaces throughout the wood
- Repairs to **Ruff Lane** for easier vehicle access
- Benches and level resting points on steeper sections

These changes aim to make the 1.5-mile circular route accessible for:

-  Buggies
-  Mobility scooters
-  A range of wheelchairs
-  Anyone with limited walking ability

How You Can Help

To strengthen our grant application, we're gathering comments from people who already enjoy the wood. Please tell us:

- How often you visit
- What you value most about the woodland
- The benefits of making it more accessible to the wider community

Your comments will help us build a strong case for funding.

Please email your comments to:

Chris Fowler
Footpath Officer for Little Birch
chrisfowler1@hotmail.co.uk

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


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 22nd May 2026

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

Would you like to advertise with us?

11 editions per year (No August newsletter)
1/16 page £4.20 per issue or £42 per year
1/8 page £4.80 per issue or £48 per year
1/4 page £5.40 per issue or £54 per year

Email : **editorial@birchesnews.org.uk**



**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 •

Friends of Steiner Academy Hereford is a registered charity. No 1135990

Much Birch Old Charities

This village Charity was created over 100 years ago to be of benefit to those living in the Parish of Much Birch who are currently experiencing financial difficulties. The objective of this charity is to help children, young people or the elderly with one-off grants. Such as:

- Baby: Nursery equipment, medical devices, prams, cots
- Children: School books, sports equipment,
- Young people: Books/tools for school/uni/apprenticeship
- Adults: Mobility aids, emergency repairs,
- Elderly: Physical aids, wheelchairs, replacement white goods

In order to request an application form to apply please contact:

Rev Mark Johnson – email: revmark100@yahoo.co.uk

Tel: 01981 540390

