

The Black Mountains Group Benefice

NEWSLETTER

May 2022



**The Parishes of Clodock & Longtown with Craswall,
Llanveynoe, St Margaret's, Michaelchurch Escley & Newton**

Part of the Abbeydore Deanery
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www.bmgparishes.org.uk

Min
50p
donation



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(Vacant)

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BLACK MOUNTAINS GROUP BENEFICE

Since Nicholas' retirement we have had a different member of the Abbey Dore team pen our "editorial spot" each month, reflecting the changes that have taken place in the Deanery. We now have only four full time clergy, supported by non-stipendiary and retired clergy and Angie, our curate, and Geri, our missioner. Along with all the parishes in the Deanery we have formed into "clusters" of three parishes, in our case, the EAST; Michaelchurch, St Margaret's and Newton and the WEST; Clodock, Craswall and Llanveynoe. Our pattern of services has changed with different priests taking services at different times and places than we have been used to and we are beginning to develop DIY, aka Lay Led, services as well. The pattern evolves. We are working through a period of change and new growth and direction BUT we have two priests, Luci Morris from Cusop and Mark Godson from Ewyas Harold who are looking after our two clusters. They are there for our six Parishes and their contact details are on the cover of the newsletter. Though we have our Deanery Coordinator, Anne, looking after all the admin and day to day organization of the Deanery Mark and Luci are there for us and can be contacted directly whenever we need them.

Jubilee what might you offer in gratitude for her faithful service?

'When life seems hard, the courageous do not lay down and accept defeat, they are more determined to struggle for a better future.' – *Queen Elizabeth II.*

Blessings
Revd Luci Morris

MAY READINGS

Sunday May 1st

New Testament Acts 9: 1-6 (7-20)
Gospel John 21: 1-19

Sunday May 8th

New Testament Acts 9: 36-end
Gospel John 13: 22-30

Sunday May 15th

New Testament Acts 11: 1 -18
Gospel John 13:31-35

Sunday May 22nd

New Testament 1 Kings 8: 35-40
Gospel Luke 11: 5-13

Sunday May 29th

New Testament Acts 16: 16-34
Gospel John 17: 20-end

From the Clergy

I have in sincerity pledged myself to your service, as so many of you are pledged to mine. Throughout my life, and with all my heart, I shall strive to be worthy of your trust.' – *Queen Elizabeth II*

Seventy years ago, at just 25 years of age, our Queen pledged her life to our service during her coronation speech. No doubt she had been coached for the role of Queen since childhood, but there's a difference between being trained adequately for something, and it being your vocation. I think after such a long reign, during which she has proved herself worthy of our trust, it is clear this has been her vocation.

The Cambridge Dictionary defines vocation as 'a type of work that you feel you are suited to doing and to which you should give all your time and energy', and 'it may also be a divine call.'

In recent years our Queen has spoken more openly about the importance of her faith. It is her faith that has given her strength during times of tragedy and loss, both personal and national. It has given her wisdom to navigate complex changes in the life of our nation and the place of the royal family within it.

By finding her identity in Christ, she remains humble and, whilst clearly having a very sharp mind of her own, doesn't grab centre stage but focuses instead on being part of the royal family and serving her country and commonwealth.

And what might be her legacy? The Queen sets a high bar for us all. She inspires each of us to consider how we may use the influence we have to make a difference. We all have opportunities to serve others in our families, our communities and beyond. As we emerge from the pandemic; as we watch with horror Russia's war on Ukraine; as we face up to a climate crisis which is already having an impact across the world, now is the time for us to use our influence for good. As we prepare to celebrate Her Majesty's Platinum

Deanery Update

The last few months have seen our Clusters (groups of parishes working together) begin to take shape and flourish. This has happened due to the energy, enthusiasm and commitment of very many people within our parishes and there's always room for more!

If you want to know more about what's going on within the Deanery, the 10th May is your opportunity! Come along to St Peter's Hub, Peterchurch at 7.30pm to our Gathering where we'll be sharing some of the things that are happening and letting you know why we'd love you to get involved.

We are also delighted that Bishop Richard will be in the Deanery between 14th and 16th May as part of a series of events launching the Golden Valley Pilgrim Way. He'll walk a circular route from Hereford Cathedral via Madley, Tyberton and Dorstone Churches (amongst others!). Full details of the route are on the website. Pilgrims welcome for part (or all!) of the route with overnight accommodation available in churches. Just let us know you're coming.

For young people, our Grow Strong group will be holding three sessions during the summer term, starting on May 7th. Get in touch if you'd like to join in – it's for Years 6 – 9. For those with children in Primary School, why not find out where your nearest Messy Church sessions are and pop along to find out what goes on. We're also running two "Stay and Play" groups for Mums and Tots each week. These take place between 10 and 11.30am in Madley on Wednesdays and in Kingstone on Thursdays.

Over the coming months as you pass your local church on Saturdays, you might spot a wedding. After the last couple of years we're so pleased that lots of couples are choosing to share their special day with us. Huge thanks are due to the church wardens, organists, bellringers and lots more behind the scenes who make our churches beautiful, inviting and welcoming.

The popular Tyberton Talks have moved to the Summer period and have lots on their programme including the author Jay Griffiths on 21st May 2022. Looking ahead to June, we welcome John Bell to the Deanery. He'll be running some workshops at St Peter's Hub in the afternoon on June 7th, and then speaking at Tyberton that evening at 7.30pm. You can find out more about these events and book to attend via Eventbrite. *Anne Lloyd Deanery Mission Coordinator 01981 620145 www.abbeydoredeanery.org abbeydoredmc@gmail.com*

HEDGEROW COMMUNION

Ascension Day Thursday 26 May 2022

8pm meet outside the Bulls Head, Craswall. Walk to Cats Back [2.5 miles]

A simple communion by an unsuspecting hedge along the path

9.01pm Sunset

9.30pm Stargazing on the Cats Back

Walk back to Bull's Head or ask someone to pick you up from the Cat's Back car park at a time to suit you.

Pray for a cloudless sky, despite the power of prayer bring wet weather gear, good walking shoes, binoculars and a head torch.

Please join us for all or part of this unique event

The other day I spoke with someone who told me of a conversation they had with a friend who said they did not go to church because they felt they could not experience the divine presence; instead, they meditated and walked. Many feel the same way so a few of us here in the Abbeydore Deanery are exploring what we have called 'Hedgerow Communion'. We hope to have one Hedgerow Communion a month; typically, but not always, on ancient feast days or special days like the solstices. A Hedgerow Communion will be in nature, will involve a very simple communion by an unsuspecting hedge with silence and reflective music. Each event will usually include a walk, an activity, and may well end up in a pub.

John Donne the great poet and preacher spoke of creation being the second book of revelation. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the great Protestant theologian, spoke of the church losing its way if it did not live in community, and Karl Rahner, the great Roman Catholic theologian, said the church would disappear if it lost its sense of the mystical. We hope to demystify and understand more the central feast and ritual of the Christian faith but, most of all, this enterprise is all about experiencing creation, human and non-human community for all ages and Divine, mystical presence. Bring your own spirituality: It's for all comers of all ages, especially seekers, questioners, doubters, lovers of life and radicals.



Platinum Jubilee Events



**Jubilee Garden Party - Saturday 4th June
The Cornwall Arms Clodock**

SEE P9 FOR FULL DETAILS

THE JUBILEE WEEKEND! SAVE THE DATE!

BANK HOLIDAY WEEKEND

Thursday 2nd, Friday 3rd, Saturday 4th & Sunday 5th June

Don't miss this exciting weekend as we celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee

Thursday 2nd June

9.45pm Nationwide Beacon Lighting. Our own beacon to be lit on Hatterall ridge Join the Pyrotechnic Party!

Friday 3rd June:

Nationwide Church Bellringing
Bells rung in Michaelchurch and Clodock

Saturday 4th June:

Cornwall Arms Jubilee Garden Party (trickling into Barbecue Evening.....?)

Sunday 5th June:

- 10am Clodock Church Thanksgiving Service
- 12.30 Nationwide: The Big Lunch:
Longtown Village Hall and Marquee (*sponsored by Longtown Group Parish Council*). Bring your own picnic and drinks, Black Mountain Singers, Thursday Club Raffle
- 3pm Children's Sports and Games (*organised by Longtown School PTA*), with Fancy Dress Competition etc. in adjacent field
- 4-5pm Tea and Cakes in Longtown Village Hall (*organised by Longtown & District WI*)
- 7-9pm Family-style Ceilidh with caller and live music.
£5 per adult, children free.
Bar organised by The Crown Inn
- 11pm Bar closed. Hall closed



To celebrate the Platinum Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II, Longtown Salem Baptist Chapel will combine its Anniversary date (always the first Sunday in June) with a Special Celebration and Thanksgiving on 5th June 2022 at 6.30pm. Crickhowell Community Band will bring their music to provide for SONGS OF PRAISE. It will be a first visit, an amazing opportunity to welcome such to our village. Revd Joy James will lead the Gathering which will include other various contributions. She will also dedicate the extended Garden of Remembrance (Graveyard) and the new fence around it, including the adjacent multi-purpose area provided for outdoor activities. Refreshments will be provided so please come along and enjoy a special time on a special date. EVERYONE WELCOME.

Ruth Pritchard & Wendy Pritchard-Lockett

Forthcoming events

**Longtown Library
now open,
Every first Wednesday of the month
2.30 - 4.30 pm
Swap books, tea and chat!**

Next open on 4th May



Longtown School PTA Community Coffee and Natter!!

Friday 6th May 2022, 8:30-10:30am

Longtown Village Hall

Everyone welcome for Teas Coffees Cake and a Natter!!
We have preloved books and School uniform to look through.

Donations only, at your discretion.

**ALL profits will be going towards raising money for some
Children's Kitchen Cooking Equipment
at Longtown School.**

Please spread the word about this event, friends family
neighbours etc.

If anyone would like to donate a cake then please talk to
Ruth Sevenoaks on 07837 687886

NATIONAL MILLS WEEKEND

SATURDAY 7TH & SUNDAY 8TH MAY

Five traditional mills hope to be opening locally
for this year's National Mills Weekend, Covid and
other problems permitting.



Clodock Mill: open Saturday and Sunday 2.00–5.00pm
The mill will be working. Drinks and cakes using flour from
the mill will be available.

Fair Oak Farm, Bacton: open Sat 2.00-6.00pm
A lovely, working Herefordshire cider mill.

Olchon House Farm Mill: open Sat 11.00am -5.00pm
This recently-restored farm mill should working on the day.

Pontynys Mill, Longtown: open Sat 10.00am-4.00pm
A fascinating local mill that ran four pairs of stones.

Rowlestone Mill: open Sunday 2.00-6.00pm
A working millwheel in a lovely setting, ideal for a picnic.

Entry is free but donations to selected charities are greatly
appreciated.

Please respect the advertised opening times. Wear sensible
shoes and a facemask if asked. Further information and any
updates may be found at www.clodockmill.com or
www.spab.org.mills

**LONGTOWN AND DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY
GOLDEN JUBILEE**

The Society will be celebrating its 50th anniversary at
Longtown Village Hall on **Monday 9th May** at 7.30pm.

The evening will open with a talk by Jenny Houston, our
President, on our early years.

This will be followed by a presentation by Martin Cook and
Neil Kidd, "Longtown Castle at War," which is based on
the evidence from the recent dig and their research.

Refreshments will be available. Please wear a mask.

E-mail NeilKidd2000@yahoo.com for details.

**VOWCHURCH & DISTRICT GROUP PARISH COUNCIL
May 11th 7.00 for 7.30**

Annual parish meeting for residents of
Vowchurch & District Group Parish Council

Guest speaker Bill Quan, Herefordshire NFU Chairman

May 18th Tea Set 2.30 - 5.00

Newton Church Hall

LONGTOWN THURSDAY CLUB

We shall be having two meetings in May, both in
Longtown Village Hall from 2pm to 5pm:

- Thursday 12th May
- Thursday 26th May

New members are always welcome. Please get in touch
with Hazel Pugh, **01873 860803** or Pauline Jones, **01873
851782; jonespauline@pobroadband.co.uk**

NEWTON ST MARGARETS WOMEN'S GUILD

Thursday 12th May, 2022 at 7.30pm

Newton Parish Room HR2 0QR

Penny Platts is kindly returning to entertain us this time with
tales of their adventures in China. Bring and share supper.
Guests are very welcome.

Tel 07794 920729 for further information.

EVENTS IN LLANVEYNOE CHURCH

Friday May 13 at 6 p.m.:

Chris Begley will give a profusely illustrated talk on his daredevil
exploits in the sky and on mountains: a talented and engaging
speaker, he will enthral his audience. Only £5 for adults: children
free. Coffee, cake and helmets provided: bring your own
seatbelts.

Sunday May 29 at 3 p.m.:

An invitation to the Black Mountains Benefice and beyond to
join us in a brief service, led by Revd Frank Rodgers, to celebrate
Donald Phillips' 60 years of service to Church and Parish.
Donald has agreed to tell a few short (not tall) tales about the
highlights and lowlights of his time as Sacristan, Verger and
Churchwarden whilst we enjoy tea and snacks provided by the
Llanveynoe Ladies.

Friday 8th July: Progressive Supper. 6.30pm onwards. Details
of venues to follow.

PAX SINGERS: Concert and Tea. Date in Aug/ Sept to be decided.

Sunday September 18 at 6 p.m.:

Save the date! Harvest Festival service followed by Supper at
Mountain Mayhem, courtesy of Fred and Vicki Phillips.

Peter Tribe

Longtown & District WI theWI
**Spring Plant Sale
& Afternoon Tea**
in support of Women's Aid
**WEST MERCIA
WOMEN'S
AID**
SUNDAY 15th MAY
2:30 - 4:30 pm
Longtown Village Hall
together with
**Longtown School PTA
Car Boot Sale**
Boots £8 - must be pre-booked - contact Ruth on
07837687886 - money raised for new playground markings
CAR BOOT SALE CAR BOOT SALE CAR BOOT SALE

THE OLD CHAPEL, NEWTON HR2 0QN

All WELCOME for BREAKFAST

on **SATURDAY 21st May 2022** between 9am and 12md

Bacon and Egg Butties, Coffee and Cake

Donations for Christian Aid

Eat under the Oak or take away available. Tel 07794 920729

Concerts for Craswall

International Piano Quartet perform

Mahler, Fauré and Brahms

Saturday May 28th at 5pm

Dore Abbey, Abbeydore HR2 0AA

Mahler, Piano Quartet in A minor

Fauré, Piano Quartet No.1 in C minor, Op.15

Brahms, Piano Quartet No.1 in G minor, Op.25

Wu Qian (piano), Roman Simovic (violin), Milena Simovic (viola) & David Cohen (cello) perform two of the most famous piano quartets in the repertoire, Brahms Piano Quartet No.1 in G minor, and Fauré's Quartet No 1 in C minor.

Best known for its rousing finale, the famous Rondo alla Zingarese (Gypsy Rondo) Brahms G minor Quartet is one of his earliest great works in the medium. It is paired here with the beauty and passion of Fauré's Quartet in C minor.

Alongside is a rarely heard curiosity – Mahler's contemplative Piano Quartet No 1 movement, the tantalising torso of a work never completed.

More information/tickets from our website

<https://concertsforcraswall.org/live-music/>

or call 01981 510112

The 10th April saw our Stockjudging team kicking off the rally preparation. They came away with 3 Firsts, 2 Seconds and 3 Third places, as well as some more respectable scores. Well done: you have one very impressed secretary.

We are busy with all sorts of competition preps at the moment, culminating in the HFYFC Rally on the **21st May** at Dorstone Court. It's an ideal opportunity to come and see what YFC is all about, to catch up with friends, and to have an enjoyable day out.

Phil Powell, CYF Secretary

07468 411649 / pPhillip_blackbill@live.co.uk

LONGTOWN & DISTRICT WI

At our April meeting we welcomed Michele Blackmore who gave us an interesting and enthusiastic talk about her decision to move to the Herefordshire Countryside 7 years ago and buy a plant nursery. Originally supplementing the business by selling plants at weekly markets, Madley Plants is now a thriving nursery which contributes to the local community by providing a venue for local craftspeople and charitable organisations to showcase themselves.

Michele also enjoys encouraging the next generation by providing gardening sessions with the local primary school.

She demonstrated making up a beautiful contemporary planter with alpine plants and herbs for a display that will last the whole summer.

Libby Davis

VOWCHURCH & DISTRICT GROUP PARISH COUNCIL

The **Annual Parish Meeting** will be held on Wednesday **11th May 2022** from 7.00pm in Escleyside Hall, Michaelchurch Escley. Parish Councillors very much hope you will be able to join them for light refreshments followed by the annual parish meeting. This is a great opportunity to meet and have a chat with your Councillors, have a say on village matters or raise any concerns you may have. There will be a short Chair's report and we will welcome the NFU County Chairman, Mr Bill Quan as our guest speaker. Electors of the parishes are all very welcome.

Please continue to report any defects via the Herefordshire Council website at www.herefordshire.gov.uk/roads-1/report-problems-road. Reporting issues this way will ensure everything is properly logged, assessed and allocated to the right teams as quickly as possible. You can check progress of a defect, or see if it has already been logged via the progress map on the council website www.herefordshire.gov.uk/roads-1/pothole-road-defect-progress-map.

The Public Rights of Way have recently been taken 'in-house' by Herefordshire Council but you should continue to report these via the council website. The volunteer footpath officers will continue to walk the routes but there may be a delay in addressing problems until the Herefordshire Council team are fully established.

Linda Cowles, Parish Clerk
01544 321906 / vowchurchparishclerk@hotmail.com

MICHAELCHURCH ESCLEY PRIMARY SCHOOL

Since getting all the children back into school, and interactions with other schools returning to 'business as usual', we have tried to get our children involved in as many inter-school events as possible, particularly sporting events. Over the past couple of terms, children from both key stages have taken part in football, netball and hockey tournaments.



FUNDRAISER

Plant Sale

10-1pm, Saturday 4th June 2022

Vowchurch Memorial Hall

Come & browse plants grown by our members. Exact stock not known until the day - but expect vegetable seedlings, hardy perennials and bedding plants.

Profits will go towards paying future speaker costs.

See more at: www.escleysidegc.wixsite.com/club



CALLING ALL ARTISTS, AMATEUR AND PROFESSIONAL

Do you draw and paint, make prints, do crafts of all kinds?

Then please get started and bring some work to show at **The Black Hill July Exhibition of Art, Design and Crafts**, Longtown Village Hall **2nd July 2022** in aid of the work of **Black Hill Community Ukraine Group**.

Further details from: jane@hoppyhops.plus.com and joycehvass@me.com



Local Newsround

CRASWALL YFC UPDATE

On the 3rd of April, our Ultimate Frisbee team came a very respectable 3rd at the WMA round. */Continued...*

The most recent of these was the School Games Finals held in Leominster where 2 teams from Michaelchurch, both from Year 5 and 6, played in the hockey and netball finals. It was a long and gruelling day for both teams as they took on the best teams in the county, playing up to 6 matches against schools far bigger (and therefore drawing on a much greater pool of players) than themselves. They acquitted themselves wonderfully however, with the netball players demonstrating real spirit and determination, despite not coming away with a prize. The hockey players likewise displayed a true fighting spirit and battled their way to the final of the Bowl competition, eventually winning it! It is safe to say that we were extremely proud of them all.

Not all trips out have been sporting however. Back at the end of March, Mrs Lane, one of our HLTAs, took a group of upper KS2 girls to an event called Here Girls Can – a girls only activity aimed at encouraging girls to maintain an interest in physical education as they progress through High School.

Like many schools across the country, we also took part in the Queen's Green Canopy, Diamond Jubilee tree planting project. The Queen's Green Canopy will create a network of individual trees, avenues, copses and whole woodlands in honour of The Queen's service and the legacy she has built. So, on the 24th March, the Queen's deputy Lieutenants of Herefordshire joined us to plant a very special tree in our school grounds with the help of children from each year group. We look forward to watching it grow.

One final piece of news is the re-launching of our free, 'Stay and Be Curious' stay and play sessions for children up to 5 years old, which will take place in our early years setting on Tuesdays at 1.15pm. If you are interested in attending, please contact our School Business Manager to at admin@michaelchurch-esley.hereford.sch.uk or on 01981 510208 to book a place. *Louise Crocker, Headteacher*



ART FOR VETERANS HEREFORDSHIRE

A4VH was formed in 2020 and became a Community Interest Company in 2021. The project provides free Art classes for Military & Emergency Service Veterans creating an inclusive supportive community group promoting new skills and well being.

The classes run every Thursday from 11am – 2pm at Hinton Community Centre, Hereford. All funds raised so far have been from kind donations, merchandise and art sales.

A4VH was created by Paul Crow (ex military, Artist and Director) Karen Bourke (former Art College tutor and A4VH co-ordinator) and Anna Knight (Artist and Art therapist) who combine to teach the students a variety of artistic skills including drawing, painting, printing, 3D clay work and graffiti – to name a few.

We are seeking to raise more funds for the on-going project, and thanks to the kind offer of Andrew and Rhiannon Boast at the Casa Lupu Restaurant, Peterchurch,

we aim to exhibit some of the students' work, leading to an auction of various generous donations provided on the evening of May 18th.

Tickets £5 to include nibbles and Raffle ticket.

Email - art4veterans@gmail.com for tickets or available at the bar.

NO MOW MAY ON THE CASTLE GREEN

In partnership with Village Pride, our community climate change group is leaving a patch of the castle green to grow throughout this month for No Mow May. Throughout the month, we will be checking to see what's growing and sharing information on what we find. We hope to see a wide variety of flowers that will provide vital food for all sorts of pollinators.

If you want to keep up to date in real-time, drop us an email at lifeclimatchange@gmail.com

David Gaston is the husband of Sue Gaston, the Head of Fairfield High School and Executive Head of Longtown School.

Using the donations raised by the schools, David has been driving the Fairfield minibus between the UK and eastern Poland, taking out aid and transporting refugees into Poland and Germany. Here is his moving diary ...

Our first trip to Poland

Having arrived at Dover docks in the early hours of Monday morning, and been offered an earlier ferry than the one booked, a friendly face appears at the minibus window and it's owner proclaims that they are doing the same as me! They are Peter and Glynn from Norfolk who are driving a van and trailer packed with medical supplies to Lviv Hospital in Ukraine. We decide to drive together and after having departed from Dunkirk, wend our way through France, Belgium, Holland and Germany. We hit the outskirts of Berlin after a 7 hour journey and after parking up, I get a few hours sleep before setting off on Tuesday morning to complete my journey to Lublin. Peter and Glynn have headed off towards the border. I drop off the aid at Primary School 18 in Lublin in the late afternoon. They have several Ukrainian children there with more on the way so not only is the aid well received but they wonder if more might be available. I tell them we'll do our best to return on trip 2.

Wednesday. I am writing this from the refugee reception centre at the Polish/Ukrainian border close to Dorohusk, east of Lublin while I wait for a group to take on to the next stage of their journey. The centre is set up to receive large numbers of people who are then allocated transport for their onward journeys. To get here, I have driven to the border crossing hoping that the police will stop me! They do! And, to my great relief, are incredibly helpful, taking me to the centre and translating for me. I am given food and fresh coffee and asked to wait for a family of 10 that need to make its way to Berlin to meet up with extended family. Only, they can't be found. While I wait, I spend some time speaking with Ukrainians who want to know about travel to the UK.

The family haven't materialised but a new group of mothers, children and the elderly have arrived. It is hard to believe that these people have fled from a war in Europe in 2022.

And left loved ones behind. A policeman has come in, pistol on one leg and automatic weapon over his shoulder - and a toddler in his arms. A young mum has followed him in with a cabin suitcase, a carrier bag and a blanket. She looks exhausted, frozen to the core and dazed. A picture reflected on the faces of dozens of other mothers. They sit on suitcases or huddle around with young children hovering and teenagers looking at their phones anxiously. I glance over a shoulder at a screen; the owner is looking at an image of complete devastation presumably in a Ukrainian town. He mutters something to an older woman who looks at the screen and turns away. Lots of the women talk to loved ones on FaceTime. I can see men on the screens, some in uniform, waving at their children.

Thursday. After a chilly night in the minibus I head to a different reception centre recommended by my friendly policeman who even texted me last night to see how I'd got on. This place is a defunct Tesco store in Chelm about 20 miles in from the border. I introduce myself using Google translate and am ushered inside. Most of the building is taken up with beds. Some have privacy curtains; most don't. Bearing in mind the number of people that are here, it is very quiet apart from a small group of children playing. My passport details are taken and a Polish soldier tells me that there is a family of 10 needing to get to Berlin. So, this is where they ended up! I agree to take them and everyone seems surprised. Berlin is more than 500 miles away!

So, mum, four boys, five girls and another refugee appear outside ready for passport checks with the police. They climb on board with their few belongings and have to trust that a complete stranger is going to take them to a place they have never been to before and certainly didn't want to go to in these circumstances. The journey takes 12 hours, partly because we have to stop regularly for little children to go to the loo! Lunch is at MacDonalds (it's the only sit down facility) which brings some smiles to weary faces. Using Google Translate, Marina says that they cannot repay me for helping them. I tell them that there's no need to but then a little hand holds out a cuddly toy panda. I smile and gesture for her to keep it but the family push the girl forwards to me and she presses the toy into my chest. I type into Google that panda will stay with me in the minibus and I reverently place it against the windscreen.

We arrive at Berlin central station at 22:15, troop into the Red Cross reception centre and say our goodbyes. Each of the nine children solemnly shake my hand and mama hugs me like I've known her for years. I walk back to the minibus reflecting on what I have seen in the last few days and have to remind myself that, however bad I might be feeling, I am only an observer; millions of people are suffering unimaginably and will



Marina the Panda

continue to suffer the consequences of this war for the rest of their lives.

Back in England, a day earlier than planned to avoid the P&O ferry issue, I have been contacted by a Polish aid worker/paramedic who has been given my number by Adam, the friendly policeman. She offers to find out what they are short of in terms of supplies for the centre so we can target aid more effectively. She also offers to translate for me when I am back. The plan is to leave for Chelm again in the next few days.

Thank you to everyone who has donated money to enable us to undertake this course of action. Without your generosity and the generosity of millions of others, families will spend far longer at reception centres and have less of what they need to help them get through this terrible time. At the present time, we have funding to make at least two more trips, possibly more.

David Gaston

Our second trip to Poland

David and his co-driver Keith are heading back to Poland in the minibus taking aid requested by the centre David visited last time – dried food and folding chairs, warm coats and children's clothes. They have a contact at the border – Jo, a paramedic – and are still in touch with Adam, the Polish policeman.

25th March

So, we sail from Dover to Calais and drive through the night, hopefully getting to the Polish/Ukrainian border tomorrow afternoon. We plan to drop off the aid and then see if there are people who need transport. We'll take our lead from Jo (paramedic and aid worker) who has kindly offered to translate and the other centre staff.

We arrive a little after 6pm on Saturday 26th, 36 hours after setting off which, bearing in mind the detour to Hitchin in Hertfordshire to collect the folding chairs isn't bad. The journey is just shy of 1400 miles and includes an encounter with a Russian in England who wants to make clear that Russia really is saving Ukrainians from 'Nazis' who have apparently overrun Ukraine. I suggest that millions of displaced, bereaved, traumatised people appear to have a different view.

Our reception at the centre is in striking contrast to the worst of human nature that has brought Ukraine to its present state. We are greeted warmly by Jo who has been in touch throughout the last week and who greets us as old friends. She clearly understands how to prioritise; she arranges a meal for us immediately and then, acting as translator, introduces us to Renata, the centre manager. Their hospitality and generosity are overwhelming; despite everything they are dealing with every day, they have still found time to arrange accommodation for us. We have the run of the local sports centre! With beds, shower and a kitchen!

27th March

We are on the road with three mothers with young children and toddlers. Tanya and Nicholai have two boys and a girl. When it is time to leave, Nicholai, a bear of a man, kneels down to kiss and hug his children. His little girl puts her arms around him and cries. Everyone cries. Husband and



A child psychologist works with a little girl at a Reception centre using a folder of paper and colouring/drawing materials put together by Fairfield with a card inside made by the children at Longtown

wife embrace. It is unbearable. Nicholai turns, shakes our hands and says thank you. He will return to Ukraine now to fight. We have been travelling for barely 10 minutes when the phone rings. Can we return to the centre and pick up another family? We go back and collect a mother with her two teenaged daughters and then drive 20 miles to Chelm to the centre in the disused Tesco's to pick up a mother with her son and baby in arms.

Our first destination is Poznan, five hours and 310 miles away. From there we'll go on to Leszno, a further 50 miles, before returning to Dorohusk. Despite having young children on board, there is only the occasional whispered phrase from behind us. With the attack on Lviv, there is concern among aid workers that there will be a surge in refugee numbers particularly on the border at Przemysl, about 130 miles south of Dorohusk.

28th March

It is 4:21am and we are outside Chelm filling up the minibus with diesel ready for the morning. We dropped the last of the families off on a high rise estate in the city of Leszno at 7:30pm last night with a family that is sponsoring them and we have been driving back since. The second family we dropped off was at the Ukrainian Humanitarian Centre in Poznan. Mum, a very brave little boy and a baby. They look very small in the vastness of the makeshift hall. As we walk away, mum repeats *tacoiyou, spuseebu*: thank you, thank you in Ukrainian and Russian.

At the centre in Chelm this morning, two university students need to get to Berlin. Sasha and Vika have travelled from Kyiv. They are hopeful for the future in Ukraine and look forward to going home but for now they are making the best of the situation. Their parents have also left Ukraine and are in Poland.

For me it's a repeat of my trip two weeks ago. 500 miles each way. At least this time I know where to find the Red Cross centre and Keith is sharing the driving which makes life a whole lot easier! On the plus side, the weather is glorious.

29th March

We dropped Sasha and Vika at the humanitarian centre opposite Berlin Central station at roughly 11pm.

The centre is busy with people arriving, sitting at trestle tables eating, being supported with paperwork, gathering to leave on the next coach. Some people are asleep with heads on tables; others play cards or scroll on their phones. Children are playing. Aid workers are everywhere answering questions in Ukrainian, Russian, German, English. I speak to one of them, explaining what we are doing and ask if transport is ever needed to go the other way. She tells me it happens and that a few days ago a Roma family asked to be taken to Warsaw. However, there is no one tonight and other than taking my mobile number, nothing by way of coordination of movement is suggested. Which is a shame as it means we will drive an empty minibus back to Poland. In the meantime, Keith has ensured that Sasha and Vika have accommodation for the next two nights.

Sasha, who speaks excellent English, has talked to us frequently during the journey but mostly she and Vika have chatted, whispered conspiratorially (not that there is any need to, with our Ukrainian not being up to much) and laughed a lot. They have touched on their experiences of the war, their views and their hopes. Keith has joked with them and made them laugh. Now, in the centre, surrounded by the noise and the bustle there is yet another goodbye for the two young women to endure. Vika is silent but hugs me like every other person who has hugged me here; Sasha the same. The optimism, hope, laughter, banter are gone in an instant. We say goodbye and move into the crowd. When I turn to wave, Sasha is crying.

Weds 30th March

Andrei, Anya, Misha and Maxim have travelled from an industrial city in eastern Ukraine. Anya is a Maths teacher, Misha (11) is profoundly disabled and husband Andrei is his carer. Maxim (5) talks a lot, is a bundle of energy and could charm the venom from a cobra. He takes a shine to Keith and chats to him at every available opportunity; Keith dutifully nods, smiles and chats back in what he imagines are the right places. His Ukrainian is not what it might be. On the other hand, it's no worse than mine.

It is a very long journey to Munich, over 800 miles, plus Warsaw first for good measure. We travel through Poland, the Czech Republic, Austria and Germany – mostly in the dark. During stops we discover that Anya's mum and dad have been separated by the war. Mama is in Poland but I get the impression that she won't go further. When I ask Andrei about his parents he shakes his head and looks at the ground. I don't enquire further.

When we finally get to the hotel, the receptionist knows nothing about the family and when she finally figures out who they are, she makes it abundantly clear that they aren't welcome. The room hasn't been cleaned, she says. Anya and I say we'll clean the room. It won't sleep 4. I tell her that the children will sleep with the parents. You must all wear masks except in your room. Anya puts her hands on her hips and looks set to throw something. The receptionist gives up.

The room is small but well-furnished and will do the job. It has a fridge and hob. We take Andrei to the supermarket and then the bank to change American dollars to euros. The bank can't do it. We drive eight km to the nearest town with

a bank. I ask the bank clerk if he can change dollars to euros and he says yes. Great. What is your account number, he asks. I tell him I don't have an account with them. He can no longer change the currency. I ask him to suggest where we might achieve this difficult task and he says he doesn't know. I am taken aback by how unhelpful and uninterested he is. Neither Anya nor Andrei speak any German or English; being Ukrainian, they can't even begin to read anything because Ukrainian uses a variation on the Cyrillic alphabet. In Poland, every interaction regarding Ukrainians that I have witnessed has been kind, helpful and focused on finding solutions.

Six weeks ago, Anya would have been teaching Maths to a class of secondary age pupils; Andrei would be going through his daily routine of care for Misha. Maxim would no doubt come bursting through the door after school desperate to share the day's events. Now, they stand in a room in a hotel, in a sleepy Bavarian village 1000 miles from home, not even knowing how to change the only currency they have. They have a profoundly disabled child to look after, no transport and their experience of life until recently has been based around a major industrial city. If someone had deliberately conspired to make their new lives as difficult as possible, it's unlikely to have been worse than this.

So, the goodbyes are difficult – again. Maxim hugs Keith and won't let go. Andrei, who up to this point has been all manly handshakes, puts out his hand but immediately turns it into another hug. And when it's Anya's turn, she whispers 'thank you, thank you' over and over again.

I have a photograph of each family and group in order that I can show that I took them to where they needed to go. There is dignity, courage and defiance on the faces in each picture. But then we have to say goodbye.

When Maxim climbed into the minibus for the first time, he spied Marina the Panda, the soft toy given to me by a girl called Marina on my last trip. He asked if he could hold it. Later, I saw him fast asleep with the panda held tightly in his arm. I'm glad that they took to each other so well, because a minibus dashboard is no home for a Panda called Marina.

David Gaston

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GOLDEN VALLEY DAY CENTRE

March had started with temperatures at freezing followed by a lovely warm spell to be followed by freezing and a little snow but that didn't stop everyone coming and meeting friends and new members.

So far there has been a Quiz, Bingo and then our first meal for over 2 years our thanks to Sarah at Food for Thought for the lovely food and to Beryl for driving around Herefordshire to find the puddings. Hopefully we can start getting back to normal (whatever that is).

We have been collecting money for the Ukrainian effort and many thanks to everyone who has donated. Our first collection was given to Unicef via Marks & Spencer and the next collection was donated to Fairfield High school for their trips to the Ukraine to help refugees.

We have a new committee member, Olwyn Wellman has agreed to come on board; many thanks to her.

We are all now looking forward to Spring with its warmer weather and then our Queen's Platinum Jubilee Celebrations. I will try to keep you posted with what we have in store for our club.

Don't forget to get your green fingers working, or even your crafty ones if you have them, for the Village Hall Flower, Produce and Craft show being held on the 30th July.

We are always looking for volunteers and if you feel you would like to help us as a volunteer please ring Mrs Kath Gaze 01981 550579 . You don't have to do it every Monday. We are happy with any time available. It's just making Tea and Coffee. All Covid precautions are being adhered to. Feel free to drop in on a Monday between 10am and 12pm and you will be guaranteed a warm welcome.



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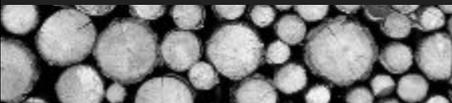
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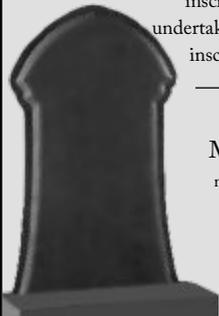
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Phone: 07964355422

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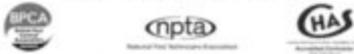
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Mon, Tues, Wed, Fri:	7.30 am - 5.30 pm
Late night Thurs:	7.30 am - 7.00 pm
Saturday:	7.30 am - 4.00 pm
Sunday (May - Oct):	10.00 am - 2.00 pm
(Nov - April):	10.00 am - 12 noon
Bank Holiday Mondays	10.00 am - 2.00 pm

Sunday Summer opening

Summer Sundays are back 10am to 2pm, time to climb the Cat's Back in daylight and back to us for a sit down and coffee at Hopes reading a Sunday paper at 10am

Shop Local 30

Easy breakfasts or quick suppers Macneil's smoked salmon from Worcestershire is delicious and the special cider cured one has just the right depth of flavour to compliment your homemade bread.

Macneil's honey cured ham or smoked duck breast will be a perfect accompaniment to a garden salad with a few toasted pine nuts.

Sixth year in the Top 100

We are chuffed to be listed in the top 100 for a sixth year in a row. This competition is a hard one. It starts with a twelve section self assessment, a mystery shopper visit followed by evidence collection, followed by this year another three hours online teams interview providing further evidence of how we operate. This is followed by a very long month's wait for the email to land and voila we are the only shop to be recognised in Herefordshire. Look us up here betterRetailing.com/top-100

LONGTOWN POST OFFICE

Saturday 9am ~ 11am & Monday to Friday 10.30am ~ 3.30pm

Pay your bills at our Post Office If an invoice has a barcode on it, it is likely it can be paid at the Post Office when you want, using cash, card or cheque (except Welsh Water). Keep track and you can **pay your council tax, BT, Water, nPower**, at the Post Office on a day you choose.

Taking a last-minute opportunity to travel or go on a work trip, you can pick up Euros at Longtown Post Office immediately and any other travel currency can be ordered for delivery for collection safely at the Post Office

Transition to Barcoded Stamps

Non-barcoded stamps will be phased out but will remain usable until 31st January 2023. Customers are encouraged to use their non-barcoded stamps before this date. Alternatively, non-barcoded stamps can be exchanged for the new barcoded version through the Royal Mail's 'Swap Out' scheme.

Save time, use our Post Office as your bank for personal & business accounts

- Using your bank card you can pay cash into most personal and business bank accounts
- Using a personalised paying in slip you can pay cash into your personal and business bank accounts
- Using a personalised paying in slip and an envelope you can pay cheques into personal and business accounts. We have the paying in envelopes, please ask us for spare ones if you are self-isolating and wish to prepare in advance

Every time you make an over the counter cash withdrawal at the Post Office until the 31st March 2022, 1p for each transaction is automatically donated on your behalf to The Trussell Trust.

Changing your mobile phone?

You can always top up your mobile phone credit at Longtown Post Office, plus we have SIM cards if you are going eco and buying a preloved phone.

Sadly no posties are based at ours, so if you want to chase a letter or parcel please call Royal Mail Hereford on 01432 346100



Hopes of Longtown – Open seven days a week 01873 860444

www.hopesoflongtown.co.uk / [@HopesofLongtown](https://www.facebook.com/HopesofLongtown) / info@hopesoflongtown.co.uk

join our Facebook group Hopes of Longtown and post community/charity events for free

Like our Hopes of Longtown business page to keep up to date with news

Tag us in your passion for food and community via [Twitter](https://twitter.com/HopesofLongtown) / [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/HopesofLongtown) / [Pinterest](https://www.pinterest.com/HopesofLongtown) / [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/HopesofLongtown)

MAY CHURCH SERVICES

1 May, Easter 3

9.30am Clodock Holy Communion

8 May, Easter 4

3pm St Margaret's Holy Communion

15 May, Easter 5

9.30am Craswall Holy Communion

22 May, Easter 6

11am Llanveynoe Holy Communion

29 May, Easter 7

11am Michaelchurch Holy Communion

6pm Clodock Evening Worship

JUNE CHURCH SERVICES

5 June, Pentecost/ Platinum Jubilee Weekend

9.30am Craswall Morning Worship

10.30am Clodock Jubilee Holy Communion

12 June, Trinity Sunday

11am Michaelchurch Morning Worship

3pm Newton Holy Communion

19 June, Trinity 1

3pm St Margaret's Holy Communion

26 June, Trinity 2

9.30am Craswall Holy Communion

MAY DIARY			Please see https://blackhillcommunities.net for events further ahead
Wed	04 May	2.30-4.30pm	Longtown Community Library
Fri	06 May	8.30pm-10.30pm	Longtown School PTA Community Coffee Morning and Natter, Longtown Village Hall
Sat	07 May		National Mills Weekend
Sun	08 May		National Mills Weekend
Mon	09 May	7.30pm	Longtown & District Historical Society Golden Jubilee celebration, Longtown Village Hall
Wed	11 May	7.00-7.30pm	Vowchurch and District Parish Council Annual Meeting, Esleyside Hall
Thu	12 May	2.00-5.00pm	Longtown Thursday Club, Longtown Village Hall
Thu	12 May	7.30pm	Newton St Margarets Women's Guild, Newton Parish Room
Fri	13 May	6.00pm	Llanveynoe Church: Chris Begley, illustrated talk
Sun	15 May	2.30-4.30pm	Longtown WI Plant Sale and Longtown School PTA Car Boot, Longtown Village Hall
Mon	16 May	7.00pm	Meeting: The future of Newton Parish Room, Newton Parish Room
Wed	18 May	2.30-5.00pm	The Tea Set, Newton Parish Room
Thu	19 May	2.00-5.00pm	Longtown Thursday Club, Longtown Village Hall
Sat	21 May		Breakfast for Christian Aid, The Old Chapel, Newton
Sat	28 May	7.00pm	Concerts for Craswall: Beethoven, Mahler & Brahms, Dore Abbey
Sat	28 May	10.00am-noon	Longtown Village Pride, Longtown Castle
Sun	29 May	3.00pm	Llanveynoe Church: Service to celebrate 60 years of service to the Church and Parish by Donald Phillips

BLACK HILL COMMUNITY NETWORK UKRAINE GROUP...

is working to assist those who have offered accommodation to displaced Ukrainians. You may have heard that if Ukrainians are not family or known good friends, then it is very difficult to get them into the UK. Our local group is working to help overcome these difficulties and to coordinate efforts.

We must assume that anyone arriving from the war zone will arrive with nothing. We have generous offers of accommodation and we are now looking for other offers of help. **Could you help with one of these important tasks?**

Welcome packs, Clothing, Language support, Pastoral support, IT – laptops/ mobile phones, Arts and culture including books and games, Sport, Transport, Food, Benefits advice. Please contact: Rhiannon Taylor on **01873 860749** make or an offer via <https://ukraine.blackhillcommunities.net/>.

Black Hill Community Radio

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Community 5

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<https://www.blackhillcommunityradio.org.uk>
or Ring Vicki on 01981 240248

Village hall contacts

Craswall Hall

Bookings: Janet Watkins 01981 510226
General inquiries: Christine Cleaton, cleatonfamily@btinternet.com

Esleyside Hall

Rachel Pritchard: 01981 510368
rachel.pritchard86@hotmail.co.uk

Esley & District Sports Pavilion

Kirsty, 01981 510682
www.esleysportspavilion.com
esleysportspavilion@gmail.com

Longtown Hall

Mark Ewins, 01873 860829
www.longtownvillagehall.org.uk
bookings@longtownvillagehall.org.uk

Newton Church Room

Mary Powell: 01981 510295
mary.powell37@btinternet.com

Golden Valley Safer Neighbourhood Team

Peterchurch Police & Fire Hub, Hereford HR2 0RU. 01981 550253

PC 3687 Jeff Rouse 07870 150972

PCSO 6378 Pete Knight 07773 053 919

peter.knight@westmercia.pnn.police.uk

Contact: 101 ext 4820 – Email: goldenvalley.snt@westmercia.pnn.police.uk

