Your Parish MAGAZINE

What's on in Seer Green & Jordans April 2021



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From the Editors

Our April magazine is filled with bright Spring Events and articles from both villages which we hope that you will enjoy. We also have a goodbye from Cassa Messervy, our vicar. We wish her and the whole Messervy family well in their new parish. There are tributes to Cassa in the magazine. but perhaps the most touching tributes have been from people who do not come to church who found her

popping up as a volunteer in Jordans shop, at the School Fair or at the Picture House - Cassa embodying the church warm and welcoming in the community. The church will be well led while we look for someone to replace her and we hope that you will be able to join us in the church very soon.

Carol Wright, Sue Puttergill. and Phil Moody

Next Month's Magazine

Please send all contributions for the **Mav** issue to:

editorseergreen@gmail.com by 7 April. Diary dates for the next two or three months would be very welcome.

Articles should be 300 words max and photos should be jpeg format, preferable 300 dpi.

Please note any items submitted may be edited for space, content or style.

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Thought for the Month



I hate goodbyes, do you? I think this is something many of us struggle with, which is why we have developed special goodbye celebrations and rituals that provide a structure to help us through these transitions. Of course, one of the hardest aspects of the pandemic has been the inability to say proper goodbyes, from moving house and leaving jobs to attending funerals. All these endings have lacked the special meals, gifts, speeches and hugs which make them bearable. We have found creative ways around these difficulties (thank God for Zoom!), but I think there will also be many postponed farewells where we can be together and mark an ending properly.

Of course, as the saying goes: 'in every ending there is a new beginning'. The new beginning is such an important part of the story that we mustn't lose sight of it, particularly with the pain of parting and anxiety about the way ahead. This will be my seventh Easter in the parish. It is, I think, an appropriate point to be ending my time with you, as the great narrative of the Easter story reminds us of the ending of Good Friday and the ultimate new beginning of Jesus' new life on Easter Sunday and the hope that gives us.

Unfortunately, due to the ongoing restrictions, I will not be able to say a proper goodbye to you all. We hope to be able to come back this summer for a bit of a 'knees up'. I have written a thank you in the Church news section, so here I would like to leave you with a blessing: 'May the God of love bless you and keep you; may he make His face shine upon you, and give you peace, this day and always. Amen.'



Cassa Messervy - Vicar

Church Events I News

Tribute to Cassa



I would like to pay tribute to Rev Cassa as she prepares to leave us here in April. Cassa has been a wonderful friend and colleague to me and to many these past few years.

It is coincidental that I, too, am leaving my post in May this year. This has nothing to do with Cassa leaving, nor with the covid crisis, hard as this has been on us all. I have been Rector here for seven years and a minister in the Church of England for nearly forty years, so it is high time for me to retire.

As the Rector of the Benefice. I have responsibility for the two churches in Seer Green and in Chalfont St. Giles.

It has been a great privilege for me to hold this position since 2014, and I leave with some very good memories indeed of my time here with you all.

There will be a time of vacancy until my successor as Rector, and indeed Cassa's successor as Minister in Seer Green, can be found. This is due partly to the Church of England's wheels turning rather slowly, but also because ministerial roles come with a move into the community, into a house, and into a community role.

During the time of vacancy, there is a good church team in place in Seer Green, backed up by clergy and lay people in Chalfont St Giles who will more than keep the wheels turning here until your new Minister arrives. Until that time, my prayers and my best wishes to you all.

Rev Ian Brown - Rector Chalfont St. Giles with Seer Green and Jordans



A fond farewell to Cassa

Christ-like, contemplative, compassionate and courageous in the service of God is what the Diocese seeks - Cassa has certainly been that and so much more, during her seven years as our vicar.

She shows great love, care and understanding for all of us, whatever our age, and we all love her. A teacher by background, she has taught us lots - not just about the Bible, but how to live like Christ, encouraging us to take active parts in church life and share our faith with others in very practical ways. She plans worship thoroughly, ensuring we are all catered for, and marks the church's seasons in imaginative ways. She is much sought after for personal services which she takes with such sensitivity.

A great leader and colleague, Cassa consults fully and then trusts people to get on with the job; ensuring our milestones are celebrated by everyone.

Cassa arrived at a time of change as the benefice was introduced; she and Rector Ian Brown handled this with delicacy. She leaves at a time of even greater change, with the pandemic forcing us into live-streamed on-line services and Zoom meetings. Cassa has been amazing in keeping up with the Government's changes and adapting our church life to cope with them. Through all of it, she has gone out of her way to keep in touch with and care for us all and her family, and continued as school-governor and Assistant Area Dean.

How has Cassa achieved so much? Her favourite Psalm (121.2) says: 'My help cometh from the Lord' and as she goes on in that strength, she will wish us prayerfully to do so too.

Thank you, Cassa. We will miss you, Myles, the girls and the dogs terribly. and pray God will be with you all as you move to Wychert Vale. Our loss is their gain.

Linda West

Contact us

Holy Trinity website

www.seergreenandjordanscofe.org

Cassa Messervy - Vicar cassamesservy@gmail.com

or 01494 672496

Church Wardens and General Enquiries

Jane Spoerry 01494 677328 Janine Dunnell 07525 322955

Cassa in Jordans

Cassa, our Parish Church Vicar, is leaving to take up the position of Rector of a benefice which is fortunately not that far from here.

As she climbs up the ladder in our Diocese, I think how lucky we have been that she chose to start her journey with us, a small parish in South Buckinghamshire.

I chaired a Zoom meeting of community groups in Jordans recently, and without exception the appreciation of Cassa's presence in our village rang out.

It might be volunteering in the shop, coming to the Village Fair, joining the Nursery School for Christmas and Easter Celebrations, instigating 'Living Well in the Golden Years' aimed for the 'seniors' or 'Engage' for the 'juniors', coming over to

join us at our wonderful Centenary Celebrations, The Picture House or joining us at the Rotary tea ... Cassa was there.

Her smile, enthusiasm and genuine love of community life in Jordans always shone out and will not be forgotten.

Cassa as our vicar, as our inspiration, as our friend - we will miss you.



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A Thank You from Cassa

As the Messervys prepare to leave this wonderful parish of Jordans and Seer Green, we would like to say a huge thank you to you all.

Thank you for your friendship and neighbourliness. Thank you for being communities that value care for others, support for community projects and a good 'knees up'!

It has been a privilege to live and minister among you, and we will treasure our memories of the nearly seven years we have lived here. You will all remain in our prayers, and we will look forward to coming back to visit in the near future.

Finding a new vicar for Holy Trinity

First, we pray. We pray for God's guidance as we consult with our church members and our communities. We also pray that God will be preparing the person He will send to us, that they will be nudged to start looking for a new opportunity in their ministry.

Secondly, we consult with as wide a group as possible. We have sent out questionnaires to the church members, to see what is important to them, both in the characteristics of the new vicar, and the activities and support we would like from a vicar. We have interviewed a variety of people from different age groups, and different levels of involvement in the church services and activities, to dig a bit deeper and to get a better understanding of the requirements. We also invited a variety of community groups in both

Jordans and Seer Green to Zoom sessions, to understand what they would like from the church, and how we can support each other.

We have consolidated the feedback to look for the most important shared requirements, and have provided this to Chalfont St Giles to include in the 'Benefice Profile' which describes the parishes of Chalfont St Giles, and Seer Green and Jordans for the new rector position in Chalfont St Giles. The rector needs to be appointed before we can start recruiting our new vicar.

Our next step is to review the feedback to look for the priorities in supporting the church members during the vacancy, and to partner with our communities in the two villages.

Janine Dunnell - Churchwarden

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Church Calendar - April 2021

Services in Holy Week

1 April 6pm Maundy Thursday Service

2 April 10am All-Age Easter Experience (Contact Janna for

Zoom details)

2pm Meditation by the Cross

4 April 10am All Age Easter Day Service.

This will be Cassa's last service with us before she moves to take up her new post as Rector at Wychert Vale and will be followed by Farewell Coffee and a Chat on Zoom.

11 April 10am Morning Praise Service

11am Coffee and a Chat on Zoom

18 April 10am Retirement Service for Reverend Ian Brown

11am Coffee and a Chat on Zoom

4pm Family zoom service

25 April 10am Holy Communion

11am Coffee and a Chat on Zoom

Weekdays in April

Tues 9am Morning Prayer on ZoomThurs 9am Morning Prayer on Zoom

10.30-11am Coffee and a Chat on Zoom

11am Study group on Zoom

Events

3 April The Great Seer Green Easter Egg Hunt,

contact Janna for details.

All our services will be streamed on our YouTube channel: **shorturl.at/ qzBCY**

If you would like to come along to any of the events on Zoom, just ask Janine and Jane (our churchwardens) for the details, or Janna, our Children's and Families' Minister.

Donations to Holy Trinity

If you would like to make a donation to the work and upkeep of Holy Trinity Church, there are many quick and easy ways to do so.

Go to our website: www.seergreenandjordanscofe.org and scroll down the homepage to 'Online Giving' and follow the link.

Or go to shorturl.at/gnzRX

Or you can activate our Online Giving page by using the QR code.

Donations in cash/cheque may be delivered to our treasurer at 58 Chalfont Road. If you can Gift Aid your donation, please add your name and address.

If you would like to join our planned giving scheme, please speak to our treasurer Audrey Hardy on 01494 672592.



Thy Kingdom Come - Ten Days of Prayer

As in previous years, Holy Trinity will be participating in the Church of England's "Thy Kingdom Come' prayer event from the 13-23 May. This year's event aims to give people the opportunity to be refreshed and restored after the difficulties of the pandemic. Do look out for more information next month.



Baptisms, weddings and funerals

Funeral

22 February Pamela Gardner

Our Charity for April - The Li Tim-Oi Foundation

Li Tim-Oi was the first woman to be ordained as a priest in the Anglican Communion, on 25 January 1944. She was ordained by the Bishop of Hong Kong and South China, the Right Reverend Ronald Hall, in order to regularise her administration of Holy Communion to refugees in Macau during the Sino-Japanese war. This anticipated by some 30 years the formal authorisation of the ordination of women anywhere in the Communion.

From 1958 to 1974, under the Chinese communist government, she was compelled to work on a farm and then in a factory. She spent her final years as a non-stipendiary assistant priest in Toronto, Canada.

The Li Tim-Oi Foundation, Registered Charity No.1027837, was

established in her memory to empower Christian women as agents of change within their own cultures. The Foundation provides grants to women candidates in the Two-Thirds World to train for Christian mission and ministry, as well as for many other kinds of work, including as adult literacy advisors, community workers, health workers, finance directors and theological educators.

Donations may be made online at Li Tim-Oi Foundation - Donate now https://cafdonate.cafonline.org/5639#!/DonationDetails or by sending cash or cheque to the Honorary Treasurer, Seer Green PCC, Mrs Audrey Hardy, 58 Chalfont Road, Seer Green HP9 2QP, marking the back of the envelope 'Li Tim-Oi' and, if you can gift aid it, your name and address.

Experience Easter

As we cannot gather in person, due to current restrictions, we would like to invite you to our interactive Zoom session at 10am on Good Friday (Zoom Meeting ID: 854 3029 2022, Passcode: easter).

This 30 - 40 minutes session is particularly aimed at 3-11s and their families, and will explore the events of Easter, with activities for you to join in with at home.

Please contact Janna if you want to join in to book your resources pack to accompany this special easter activity.

07764-490960 / Jannaholder@talktalk.net

The Great Seer Green Easter Egg Hunt!



₹aster Weekend 2021

In 2020, the Great Seer Green Easter Egg Hunt had to be cancelled due to the Coronavirus pandemic. In 2021, it's back - but adapted to adhere to current government guidance, restrictions and social distancing rules.

You can take part from 10am on Easter Saturday until 4pm Easter Sunday (3-4 April).

This year there are three Easter Egg Challenges, all with yummy prizes to be won. Do one, two or all three!

Easter Egg Challenge 1 - Find the 10 Easter Story Eggs

Easter Egg Challenge 2 - Find the 10 Cheeky Chicks

Easter Egg Challenge 3 - Find the 10 Animal Easter Eggs.

Use your smartphone to navigate round the village with eggs to find, QR codes to scan and activities to take part in. Limited paper copies will be available if you do not have access to a smartphone.

Check out www.sgeasteregghunt. weebly.com for more information on what is involved, instructions on how to take part and how to enter to win prizes! The website will be active from 1 April, but the event will only be live from 10am on 3 April. There is no set charge for this activity, but donations are welcome via the website.

We are also hoping to run an event in Jordans too. For more information, please contact Janna on 07764 490960, or jannaholder@talktalk.net.



Village Events I News

Get ready for SG SpringFest!

22 to 25 April 2021

The end of the long lockdown is in sight but indoor gatherings are still not allowed so instead of our annual Spring Show, we will be hosting SG SpringFest, a 4-day celebration of everything we most love about spring.



A wide-ranging programme of events will culminate in a spectacular Front Garden Trail on the afternoon of Sunday 25 April when everyone will be invited to wander around the village admiring other people's front gardens and chatting to the owners.

It's not just about gardening. Artists, craft makers and anyone creative will be encouraged to display their work in their front garden, or to make something special for SpringFest.

Your front garden doesn't have to be a horticultural masterpiece. You could simply show off your spring bulbs and blossom, plant up some pots or simply hang up some bunting.

If you would like your front garden to be listed on the trail, please find details on the SGG website. Your front garden or display should be easily visible from the path, pavement or road and you would need to be available in your garden from 2 to 4pm on the day. Everyone taking part will be asked to respect the current Covid guidelines.

Details of the whole 4-day programme and how to include your front garden on the trail, can be found on the website. It should be a lovely way to celebrate spring, meet your neighbours out of doors, and enjoy the beautiful front gardens and creativity that abound in Seer Green.

www.seergreengardeners.org



Our Living Village - Standing On the Shoulders of Local Heroes

Much of the research for the Our Living Village project begins with historical information captured over the years with great love and care by people who we like to think of as our local heroes.

For example, in Jordans we're fortunate to have a full record of the village's early years in "The Making of a Community" by Arthur L Hayward, a range of publications on the Meeting House, Old Jordans and the Mayflower Barn by Robert Huxter, the extensive Meeting House library managed so assiduously by Sue and John Smithson, and more recently the wonderful timeline created for the village's centenary celebrations by a dedicated team of residents.



For Seer Green, we've got the beautiful "Seer Green Then & Now" booklet compiled for the Queen's Silver Jubilee by a dedicated village group led by Abby Warburton, the Holy Trinity Church 140th Anniversary publication "Let's Celebrate Together", a wide range of research articles published by Geoffrey Sawyer, and the recorded interviews captured on CD by Brian Sims in his "Memories of Seer Green".

And just on our doorstep, the "History of the Beaconsfield Golf Club" by Gordon Tuck provides us with fascinating insights into the coming of the railway and the Du Pre family, who were for many years the major land owner in this area.

But we're still hungry to receive even more local information for this project from you! What do you know about the history of your house. your local family, the historic trades and occupations in the villages, or local community activities? Have you any local photos or documents that would enrich our knowledge and understanding of our villages in times gone by? And while we're at it. does anyone know what happened to the extensive research library of photos and documents that Brian Sims assembled while producing his "Memories of Seer Green?

Alan Kell - alan.kell@igsystems.co.uk

Seer Green Gardeners Triumphant Event!

The Great Big Virtual Village Supper took place on Friday 26 February at 7.30pm via Zoom and was very well attended. In normal circumstances the Village Supper takes place in the Jubilee Hall and could never accommodate so many guests!

The committee had worked very hard to deliver a fast paced, packed, fun evening.

There were very informative gardening videos from members with expertise ranging from growing peppers to producing good compost. The theme was definitely about the environmental and mental health benefits of 'growing your own'!

The evening consisted of a gardener's question time, a fun and varied quiz, an entertaining Conveyor Belt Memory game (garden related of course!), a participatory craft activity, a beautifully presented Garden

Cocktail demonstration, all carefully planned and spread out through the event to give great entertainment.

Dinner was a delicious two course meal supplied by the Jolly Cricketers and enjoyed in friendship breakout rooms.

One of the last items was a tour of Philip (ex Chair of SGG) & Andrew's new walled garden in Worcestershire which is an amazing project for keen gardeners such as themselves. It fully justifies their reason for leaving us!!

Over £1000 was raised to go towards various projects to benefit the Village.

Congratulations to all involved!

Carol Wright - One of the Editors

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A day in the life of a Parish Clerk

Parish councils have been all over the news lately! Here in Seer Green we are lucky to have a very friendly and proactive parish council that makes a huge contribution to our village life.

Much of this is due to the unstinting service of Liz Bates, our Parish Clerk for 18 years. Clerks are often described as the "engine" of a parish council and our parish council is certainly turbo-charged by Liz.

I accompanied her on one of her weekly walking inspections of the village. She regularly checks the drains, ditches and gullies on our roads many of which were still badly blocked despite frequent complaints to Bucks Council. She was, however, delighted to see that contractors were clearing the ditches in Bottom Lane which should make a significant difference to flooding problems there.

Potholes are also the responsibility of the local authority. Liz conscientiously photographs and logs them but urges everyone to do the same as the more complaints they receive, the more likely they are to repair them.

The Councillors and Liz check the 68 lamp posts in the village to make sure they are in good working order, and also monitor any dangerous trees, over-hanging branches and overgrown hedges which may need

attention. The hugely popular play area in Green Meadow and the outdoor gym on the Recreation Ground are also the responsibility of the parish council.

Finally we checked on the cemetery which is beautifully maintained and overseen with great sensitivity by the Councillors and Liz who clearly loves her job. She never ceases to be amazed at the enquiries she receives, sometimes from people overseas who are trying to trace their ancestors.

My walk made me realise how lucky we are to have such a dedicated and long-serving Clerk along with such an attentive parish council.

To report potholes online: www.fixmystreet.buckscc.gov.uk

Fliss Coombs



Seer Green Gardeners

Last summer our spirits were lifted by the welcome sight of colourful wildflowers at the junction of Longbottom and Bottom Lane. These were planted by the Seer Green Gardening Society with the support of the parish council, Jordans Environment Trust and Bucks Council.

We were delighted with the response so a few more suitable spots have been identified and for the past couple of months the SG Gardeners have been busy preparing the ground for seed sowing. As well as the end of lockdown, we will have more eye-popping colour to look forward to this summer.

Our annual Village Supper made history this year by being our first mass event held online. Around 150 people tuned in for an evening of fabulous food from the Jolly Cricketers and a programme of home-grown entertainment. Thanks to the generosity of everyone who took part, we raised over £1,000 for our project funds and other good causes.

We look forward to seeing many of you again during SG SpringFest at the end of April, more details are on page 14 and on the website.

April in the garden

April is an exciting month in the garden. Bulbs, buds and blossom are bursting out all over, indoor sown seeds should be coming along nicely and it's time to start sowing outdoors, although the weather is unpredictable and frosts are still a distinct possibility.

- · Sow hardy annuals and native wildflowers
- · Plant primulas and polyanthus for instant colour
- Protect new shoots of hostas, delphiniiums and other leafy plants from slugs and snails
- Deadhead spring bulbs and bedding so they don't waste energy producing seeds
- Spray new leaves of roses to protect from mildew, rust and blackspot
- Divide and replant clumps of hardy perennials such as asters and daylilies

Catherine Tilley www.seergreengardeners.org



News from Seer Green CE School

During this term, the staff, pupils and parents have been extremely busy ensuring that all of the children have continued to receive a good education. On March 8 we were all excited and happy to be back to school.

Lessons focused on the importance of being unique and belonging. The children created these lovely displays using their hands to demonstrate that as individuals they all come together to be part of their class.



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Jordans Picture House

Since we are all confined I've chosen two films that can transport us further afield. The first is available through Amazon Prime, the second can be found in the film section of BBC iPlayer.

To begin...The Light Between the Oceans: 2016 (12A) director - Derek Cianfrance. With Alicia Vikander & Michael Fassbender.

Having served on the Western Front Tom seeks solace as a lighthouse keeper on a small island off the coast of Australia, which he is soon sharing with a new wife in a loving marriage. A baby washed ashore presents this childless couple with a moral dilemma and the decision made will have lasting ramifications. 'What would you do for love' is asked more than once of several people, soaring emotions are beautifully matched by enormous sky and sea.

Now if I say Skandi some will think Noir, if I say youth football team the room might empty.

Stay with me...Britt-Marie Was Here: 2019 (12) director - Tuva Novotny. With Pernilla August & Andres Mossling. Swedish with clear subtitles.

Brit-Marie is a 63 year old, clean & tidy housewife in a loveless marriage, her circumstances change dramatically and she finds herself coaching a youth football team in a no-hope town.

This is a gentle comedy drama in the feel good tradition of Richard Curtis but happily less schmaltzy. Give it a try.

Charlotte Baggins

An audience with Armando lannucci

On Monday 22 February, a year since our last screening, Jordans Picture House organised a ZOOM Question and Answer session with Armando Iannucci. Over 60 people participated and it was a highly enjoyable event, which also raised £540 for the Wycombe Homeless Connection.

Armando, an accomplished speaker, is the Director of "The Death of

Stalin"(2017) (screened at JPH in April 2018) "The Thick of It" (TV Series 2005-2012) and "The Personal History of David Copperfield" (2019) as well as "Veep"(2012-2019) and "In the Loop (2009). He was nominated for an Oscar and won 38 other awards and 63 nominations. He used to live in Chalfont St Giles.

Described in his introduction as a "sparkling polymath" Armando answered a number of questions from the assembled Zoom audience on his work as a writer, film director and on his life experience.

In a response in part to the Trump era, he commented that increasingly the rules of behaviour were now routinely ignored and Trump's statement that he could shoot anyone and get away with it demonstrated a cavalier disregard.

This, Armando commented, made comedy more difficult as rules provided a framework against which behaviour could be judged. Later he commented that the only way to survive as an individual against extreme oppression was to be able to make fun of it.

"Watching the political process at the moment, one's instinct is to laugh because the alternative is to cry. That's where I come from, really. I believe people today are genuinely frustrated because they don't understand how so many clearly able people, concentrated in one locale, can't sort things out." -Armando lannucci

Alan Sealy



Armando on the set of "Death of Stalin" with cast members.

Turn on the subtitles

Jordans School regularly send us their Newsletter and this piece seemed fun.

Did you know that turning on the subtitles on your television can double the chances of a child becoming good at reading. Isn't that incredible? So next time your child is watching TV or the tablet, there could actually be an opportunity to improve their reading skills at the same time! Research has shown that it can double the chance of your child

leaving school as a proficient reader. Stephen Fry is leading the campaign. See https://turnonthesubtitles.org/.



Seer Green Allotment Association

With the continuing lockdown, the Seer Green Gardeners Virtual Village Supper at the end of February which several Allotmenteers participated in was a welcome and enjoyable distanced social occasion. Our thanks to the organisers for a fun evening! Other than that event, there is nothing to report on our social side of things.

But, with Spring knocking on the door, we have been busy sewing seeds and chitting our potatoes in readiness for planting. Below are examples of the produce to come:



Chitting potatoes, parsnips, kale of various sorts and marigolds – we use these as a natural way to deter pests such as beetles, slugs and leaf hoppers amongst other pests rather than use pesticides, so being eco-friendly. Garlic is growing apace on several allotments and copious amounts of rhubarb leaves are

bursting out of the ground – nothing like a delicious rhubarb crumble to look forward to!

One of our members has created a wonderful opportunity for someone with physical disability to enjoy the growing of vegetables and is offering part of the raised bed below for their



use as a sharing tenant – it has been built especially to accommodate being used by a wheelchair user.

Anyone interested should contact our Chairman, Barry Richardson on 07931 773013 for further details.

Bronwen Collins

A local walk

A walk along footpaths and fields through the woods to Mumfords Lane. Back via Stampwell Farm and over the fields ending up by the railway line.

The second of Ali Cork's two hour walks.

From Jordans, set off down the path immediately to the left of Old Jordans and follow the path over the fields and into the woods. A choice of 3 paths and take the middle one - almost straight on. This takes you into Mumfords Lane. Turn right, continue over the humped back bridge and take the footpath on the right into the fields. Take the left hand path which leads straight up through the field and then on the footpath down to Stampwell Farm. Keep on the path to the left of the houses and up the hill passing the signs to the prayer walk on the left - good view to the right! - and down through the fields that run along to the railway bridge. Walk up to Potkiln Lane and home is in sight! Cross the lane, walk over the bridge, turn left onto the footpath through the woods and down to Long bottom Lane. Left along the road and the right up Wilton lane opposite the road up to the station. Jordans awaits you as does, a welcome cup of coffee from the shop on the Green!

When setting off on either walk I suggest you take map - Chiltern Hills East - Explorer 172. However the joy of this walk is that if you do get a little lost you are never far from home!

Enjoy them!

Ali Cork



Bluebells in Blue Cross Wood taken by Nigel Morgan

Tweet of the Month

'Eurasian skylark: Out-singing in his field'

Just as Vaughn Williams' 'The Lark Ascending' tops the classical music tables, the skylark ranks among our favourite songbirds. In February, friends heard them singing again in One Tree Field on the edge of Seer Green, so I set out to investigate.

Found on farmland, moors and heath, Alauda arvensis nests in a shallow depression on the ground. Ahead of the breeding season, the male stakes out his territory by singing, flying so high that the powerful, bubbling, joyful song seems to come from nowhere and everywhere, from the sky itself. 'Hail to thee, blithe spirit', as Shelley wrote, 'bird thou never wert.'

But with good binoculars you may spot him, and see him end his performance with a dramatic dive.

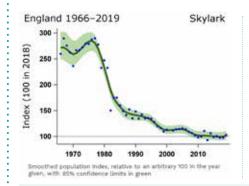


Daniel Pettersson, licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.5 Sweden license.

pulling up at the last minute and casually disappearing into the stems. Females select males based on singing rather than colourful plumage, which means both parents can wear streaky camouflage. The chicks scramble out of their ground-level nest before they can fly, and hide in the vegetation, fed by their parents for a few more days.

The skylark's song was heard at dawn by Romeo and Juliet – though, not wanting the night to end, she insisted 'it was the nightingale and not the lark'. Unlike Juliet, I hoped to hear it, and was not disappointed. Entering One Tree Field by the southern gate, I walked down the track, paused to sneeze, and a skylark burst from the stubble and ascended singing, followed by another further up the hill.

Unfortunately, changes in farming practices since the 1960s, e.g. winter-sown cereals that are too dense for foraging, have reduced successful breeding, and the skylark is now a red-listed bird (see graph of population decline 1966-2019). The RSPB has successfully piloted mitigation techniques at its Cambridge research farm and one hopes these are taken up by UK farmers under the post-Brexit agricultural rules.



Skylark song:

https://www.xeno-canto.org/ species/Alauda-arvensis

Population decline and farming: shorturl.at/kvR59/

RSPB - Hope Farm: shorturl.at/hFGPR

Nora Bennett

The National Film and Television school in Jordans

A film crew from the National Film School came to use our shop for filming on Sunday 28 February. Part of the Green was used on this beautiful day in a way that is far from usual! The rest of it looked just beautiful as it always does.

Ali Cork



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