

# VILLAGE BUZZ



A MONTHLY MAGAZINE FOR VILLAGES NESTLING IN THE NADDER VALLEY

FEBRUARY 2022

BARFORD ST MARTIN, BAVERSTOCK, BURCOMBE, CHICKSGROVE, COMPTON CHAMBERLAYNE, DINTON,  
SUTTON ROW, TEFFONT EVIAS, TEFFONT MAGNA, UGFORD

F

E

B



**The Tawny Owl**  
Peter Thompson, page 6

R

U



**In Praise of Home**  
Paul Cordle, page 10

A



**Looking after our hedgehogs**  
Hedgehog Man, page 23

R



**Madagascan Adventure part II**  
Mike Groom, page 18

Y



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## What's been around comes around...

Ben Jeans – Compton Chamberlayne

**After a few post-Brexit years in the dark, some light has finally been shed on the mechanics of how the government is going to plug some of the the financial gap left by the loss of farm subsidies.**

From an arable perspective, the big focus is on soil health and carbon sequestration and I'm relieved to see that many of the actions we have been trying for a few years are going to be incentivised (albeit to a frustratingly small extent): direct drilling (sowing a crop without any any cultivation), growing winter cover crops or 'green manures' in between cash crops, and incorporating grazing livestock and their manures into the arable rotation. Much of this was essential fertility-building practice in my great-grandfather's era, before the advent of the Haber-Bosch\* process

To an extent farming is coming full circle after the specialisation and monoculture fashion of the late twentieth century.

and synthetic nitrogen fertiliser production, so to an extent farming is coming full circle after the specialisation and monoculture fashion of the late twentieth century. A new generation of farmers (in my view rather piously) are classing themselves as 'regenerative' (the word 'sustainable' is no longer considered sufficient) for practising roughly what

was the norm two to three generations ago. With the current stratospheric fertiliser prices, all the talk is of reducing inputs and building soil health to avoid this lower input model negatively affecting yields. Of course, the byproduct of raising soil organic matter is the taking of carbon out

of the atmosphere and there is a rapidly evolving carbon trading industry opening up where farmers could potentially benefit from being a part of the climate change mitigation story. ➔



\* **The Haber-Bosch process** is a process that fixes nitrogen with hydrogen to produce ammonia — a critical part in the manufacture of plant fertilizers. The process was developed in the early 1900s by Fritz Haber and was later modified to become an industrial process to make fertilizers by Carl Bosch. The Haber-Bosch process is considered by many scientists and scholars as one of the most important technological advances of the 20th century.

On patrol

On most lowland arable farms, the quieter winter months are a time for machinery maintenance, training, planning (budgeting, record-keeping, form-filling, box-ticking...) and perhaps some time away. With our dairy and sheep enterprises however, workloads peak while the stock are housed so there is never a quiet time; at the very least cows have to be milked twice a day, every day and you can guarantee that if a problem occurs, it will coincide with Christmas. This duly happened on 23rd December when an armoured underground cable supplying power to our slurry separator failed. The consequences of this vital machine being out of action were huge; images of the festive period spent on a 'painting the Forth Bridge' type job involving tractors and vacuum tankers racing around trying to keep up with the heavily defecating herd ran through my mind. Fortunately, some handy improvisation with a tractor-powered generator and some neat electrical work acted as a suitable, albeit very expensive, temporary solution and we are currently breaking concrete to attempt a permanent fix but it was a reminder of the precariousness of livestock farming.

On the plus side we are busy loading out a 1000 tonne contract of spring distilling barley\* sold at record prices. These high prices, however, will be needed to cover our rapidly inflating costs of

production, not least machinery. Indeed, I have just shaken hands (not even metaphorically) with a friendly tractor salesman on a new machine to replace our high-houred frontline tractor. Painful stuff and this will be the first new tractor we have bought since 2003 – we don't like depreciation so we tend to hold on to our machines or buy second hand...

I am half-way through my first year as the regional AHDB (Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board) Arable Monitor Farmer. We have hosted a number of meetings on-farm and I've attended many associated events off-farm and the honest discussion and sharing of knowledge, successes and failures of like-minded farmers and other industry professionals has been hugely inspiring. Whilst very exposing and unnerving, – one of the most useful tools is the benchmarking group where a number of local farmers meet up to openly compare detailed standardised cost-of-production figures and try to identify their strengths and weaknesses. Sounds a bit dull when I write about it though so I'll call it a day and load the grain lorry that's just pulled into the yard! — BJ

**Ben Jeans manages his family's arable and dairy farm on the Wiltshire Downs between Compton Chamberlayne and Broad Chalke in partnership with his father, Andrew.**

\* **Spring barley** is used much more widely across both brewing and distilling. Spring barley varieties tend to suit the Scottish climate well to produce good extract and better predicted spirit yield than winter barley varieties can achieve.



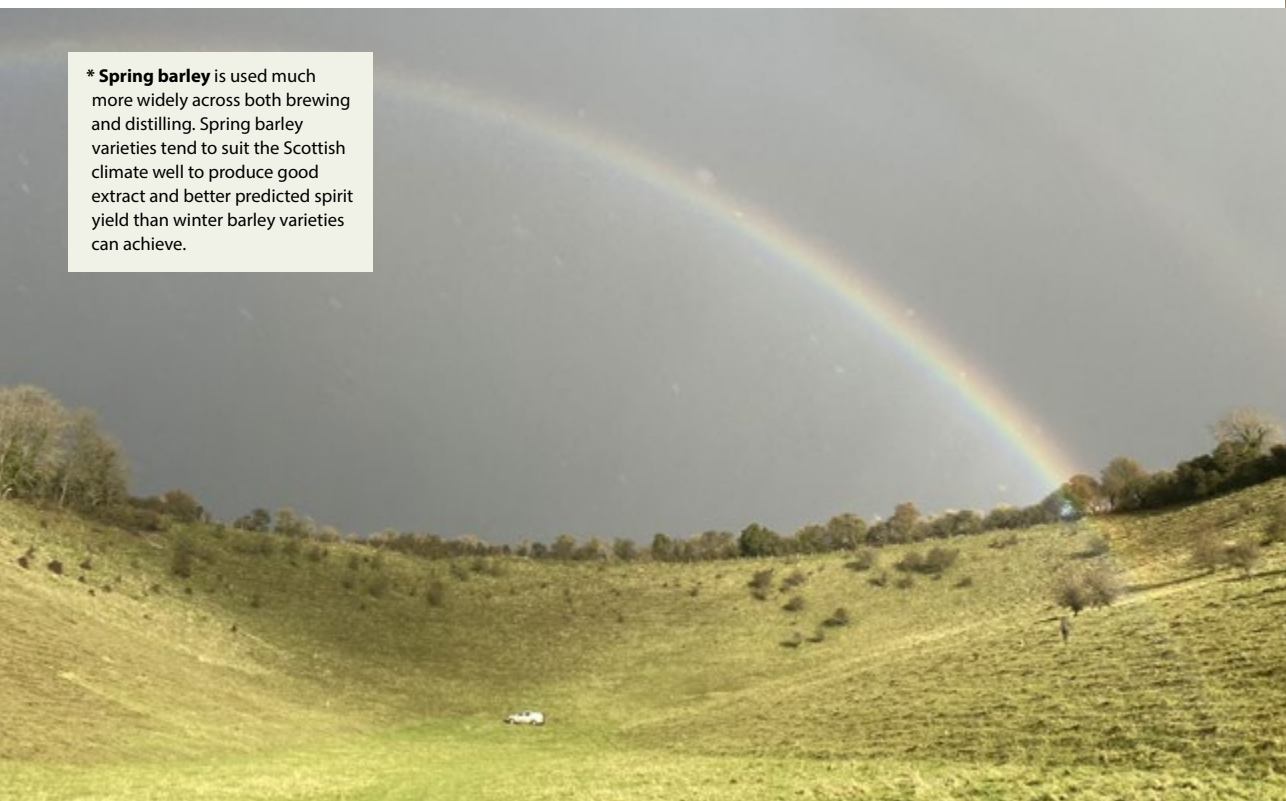
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Species of the month

# THE TAWNY OWL

Peter Thompson, Barford St. Martin

**The tawny owl is our most common and widespread owl, being found across the whole Britain, but not at all in Ireland. It is also absent from the Northern Isles and rather bizarrely, from the Isle of Wight too, even though the owls that live along the coast of Hampshire can quite clearly see the island! I imagine it would only take them a matter of minutes to fly there, but water crossings seem to be anathema to them!**

The tawny owl is perhaps best known for its distinctive hooting call, that seems to accompany all scary films the moment anyone steps outside at night! Interestingly, the 'kewick' call is usually made by the female and the famous 'hoo, hoo-hoo-hoo' is made by the answering male.

The tawny owl is really a bird of wooded landscapes, including towns, as long as there are plenty of mature trees around. In the countryside they largely feed on small mammals, but also birds, bats amphibians and even earthworms. In towns they tend to take a higher proportion of birds, plucked from their roosting sites by sharp talons.

These sharp claws will also be used to good effect when protecting the nest site, especially if two or three downy youngsters are sitting in the tree hole or nest box. In fact the pioneering wildlife photographer, Eric Hoskings, (a childhood hero of mine) actually lost an eye trying to film owlets in a



PHOTO: PETER THOMPSON

nest site, when he was ferociously attacked by an irate parent.

Accordingly, nowadays bird ringers will kit themselves out with protective clothing, goggles and even a crash helmet when planning to ring young tawny owls!

What ringing has shown is that these owls are incredibly sedentary, with the average distance flown between ringing and recovery being only 1km.

Ringing has also showed us that tawnies can live a long life, with one bird reaching 23 years, 5 months, and 27 days (set in 2016).

As the tawny owl is a nocturnal species, it is heard far more than it is seen and accordingly it must be specifically surveyed to find out its status, as ordinary day-time bird surveys rarely account for them, unless they happen to be flushed from a conifer or ivy clad tree, where they are spending the daylight hours. It is estimated that there are around 50,000 pairs in the UK.



PHOTO: PETER THOMPSON

The tawny owl is an early nester and lays 2-3 large, white, round eggs in February or March and incubates them for 30 days. The nestlings will eventually fledge after 35-39 days, but remain dependent on their parents for two to three months afterwards.

The reason a tawny owl has such a rounded head with facial disks around each eye, is to allow the owl to direct sound waves to its ears which are hidden behind the feathers on either side of its head. They are slightly out of alignment with each other, giving the bird its exceptional directional hearing, while allowing it to pinpoint prey very precisely.

If you have never seen a tawny owl close up in the wild, and would like to, then here is a little tip. On wet and windy nights, tawnies will often resort to sitting on overhanging tree branches above a minor road or lane which runs through a wooded area. I imagine that this form of hunting

– predominantly using their eyes to spot a small mammal crossing the road – is adopted as their amazing hearing is somewhat limited by the noise of the wind and rain.

If you travel slowly along in a car late at night, once the other traffic has died away, you have a good chance of picking up an owl sitting patiently on its branch. Using a high-powered torch, it might even let you slowly get out of the car and take a good look at it, or perhaps even a photograph.

One bit of advice though, if you plan to do this, it might be sensible to have a 'plan B' if the police turn up and ask you what you are up to. 'Watching tawny owls', on a wet, windy and thoroughly miserable night, just might not cut the mustard with them!! — PT

Peter Thompson lives in Barford St. Martin and has worked in conservation and farming all his life. You might also be interested in reading his blog: 'Fresh Air Scribblings' <https://freshairscribblings.blogspot.com>



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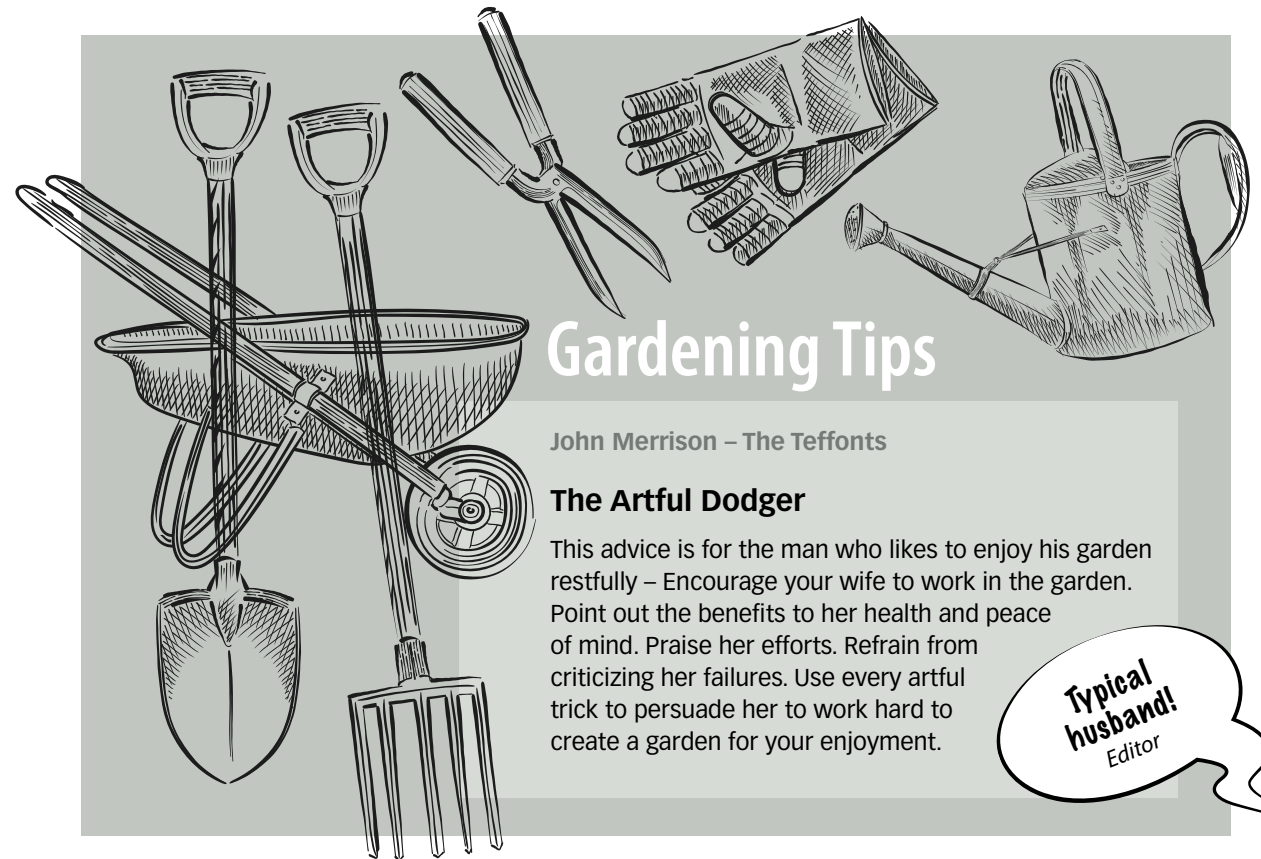
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## Gardening Tips

John Merrison – The Teffonts

### The Artful Dodger

This advice is for the man who likes to enjoy his garden restfully – Encourage your wife to work in the garden. Point out the benefits to her health and peace of mind. Praise her efforts. Refrain from criticizing her failures. Use every artful trick to persuade her to work hard to create a garden for your enjoyment.

Typical husband!  
Editor

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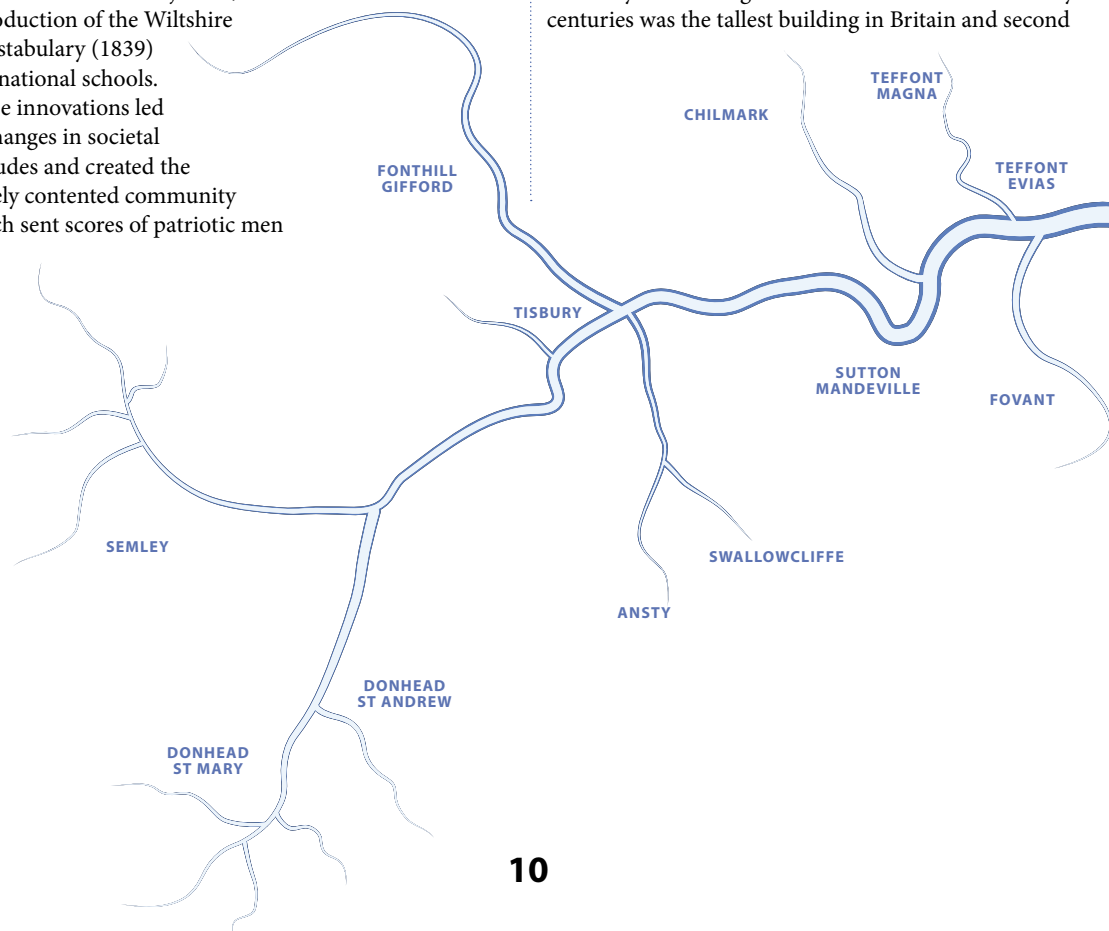
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## In praise of home

**I DOUBT MANY RESIDENTS OF THE VALLEY WOULD DISAGREE with the statement made in the property pages of The Times last year that Tisbury and the Nadder Valley are two of best places to live in 2021. We are indeed fortunate to live here and perhaps become more aware of this when we hear of the increasing number of hopeful buyers being disappointed by the lack of property for sale; market forces and Covid have seen to that. The Times article continued “This valley has thousands of years of history but is far from over the hill”. This short piece highlights some features of the valley and its history and may remind us of our good fortune. It will be continued in the coming months.**

Formed millennia ago, the valley has seen constant change: habitat and wildlife, settlement and the changing ownership and use of the land, water and quarries. Fluctuating economic and religious practices, draconian laws, political strife and, until the 17th century, war have presented continuous challenges to the valley’s communities. More settled times followed the great reforms and increased emancipation of the early 19th century<sup>(1)</sup> which also saw improved farming practices and administration of justice, the introduction of the Wiltshire Constabulary (1839) and national schools. These innovations led to changes in societal attitudes and created the largely contented community which sent scores of patriotic men

to fight in the two great world wars of the last century. Memorials to those killed<sup>(2)</sup> are found in our churches and churchyards. Largely unchanged, however, stands high ground to the North and South: in the North (Great Ridge and Grovely Wood) and, to the South, the escarpment to the chalk downland of Cranborne Chase. These two features direct the eastwards flow of the River Nadder, one of the five rivers which flow towards the great medieval city of Salisbury and its magnificent cathedral which for many centuries was the tallest building in Britain and second



The escarpment of the Cranborne Chase along which the old coach road runs.

only in Europe to Strasbourg cathedral. On this and other high ground we see the evidence of earlier times: Castle Ditches (above Swallowcliffe), Castle Rings (south of Semley), and Chiselbury Ring (above Fovant) all of the Iron Age (1200-600 BC).

High ground tended to be safe and dry, providing early ditched settlements additional protection from marauding tribes and wild animals. It also enabled travellers to avoid the dangers of the wooded, boggy and often impassable ground along the valley bottom. Along the northern ridge the Romans built a road on which soldiers, administrators and tradesmen of Rome’s great empire travelled. After their departure in AD 410, invading Saxon tribes arrived and it is to them that we owe the origin of most of our villages. They knew the sort of sites they were looking for and, unlike the Romans who preferred everything to be planned and predictable, tended to travel along river valleys and to clear wooded areas for small settlements based on communal agriculture and self-sufficiency. Along the southern escarpment is found, from a later period, the old coach road between Salisbury and Shaftesbury which was used until the threat of highwaymen on its lonely stretches became too great<sup>(3)</sup>



The univallate Castle Ditches, also known as Spelsbury, an Iron Age hillfort to the East of Tisbury Row. The cleared area is 24 acres, the highest ramparts are 40 feet high.

and a new road, now the A30,<sup>(4)</sup> was opened on the low ground in the 1790s. A major development transformed the valley bottom in 1859 when enterprising businessmen and engineers opened the railway line from Salisbury to Yeovil. The stations at Tisbury, Dinton and Wilton opened up distant markets for the sale of locally ground corn, quarried stone and other produce.

The River Nadder, derives its name from the Saxon ‘naedre’ or ‘snake’ and rightly so. The distance from its source beyond the Donheads (Head of the Downs) when measured on a map in a straight line northwards to Tisbury and eastwards to Salisbury, where it joins the greater Avon, is 17 miles but, in reality, it meanders wildly for a full 33 miles. Its course, joined by a number of springs and brooks, was from the earliest times the mainspring of the valley’s economy. It powered the once essential water mills and provided the warm flowing water and growth-enhancing minerals for the water meadows which were introduced gradually from the late 16th century and worked until the 1960s when the introduction of chemical fertilisers replaced the droppings of the humble sheep. Now the river provides quiet calm for the gentle pursuits of fishing, walking, birdwatching and painting. →



The arch at Fonthill Bishop built in 1745.



Old Wardour Castle looking North East.

The valley's man-made landscape is English countryside at its best and rightly designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Its farmland, woods, hedges and lanes, its medieval buildings and churches, the ruined castle at Wardour, its great houses, the lake and arch at Fonthill, its limestone villages and hamlets nestling in wooded combs, create views of rare beauty which is so appreciated by visitors. We should indeed be grateful to our predecessors who created it.

And yet much is at risk and we need to care for what we might easily take for granted. We should use our local shops and services for fear of losing them, support our local farms by our interest in the farming year and their conservation of the environment and wildlife, use and care for our bridleways and footpaths and, as importantly, put our minds to the future of our historic churches which are threatened by diminishing congregations and failing finances. For all its history our valley is a modern, well-connected haven, served by trunk roads, buses and trains and not too distant airports. It has good schools, fine shops and pubs and reliable community services. As The Times article said, "The valley has thousands of years of history and is one of the best places to live; it is far from over the hill". —PC



High summer on a footpath near Dinton.

#### Notes

1. The Catholic Emancipation Act 1829 and the Great Reform Act 1832. The former released Roman Catholics from restrictions on holding public office and commissions in the Navy and Army, the latter restructured our Parliamentary constituencies and improved representation of the people.
2. Amongst the 255 killed in the First World War was one woman, Nurse Annie Moores who was killed in May 1918 by a bomb dropped from a German aeroplane on the British military hospital, Abbeville in Northern France.
3. The road was described in 1448 as 'the best road from London to the West'. In 1658 the first post coach travelled on it from London to Devon. In 1752 it was 'the second principal road in the Kingdom' and was turnpiked in 1759.
4. The new safer road, made on the low ground, was numbered the A30 and metalled in the 1920s.

Recommended reading:  
**'Nadder, Tales of a Wiltshire Valley'**  
 by Rex Sawyer 1996, 2006  
 ISBN 0-946418-53-5 and  
 'British History Online' –  
<https://www.british-history.ac.uk/>

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# One of my favourite recipes

Barbara Duncanson – Compton ChamberLayne.

## Lamb and mint salad

This is a really lovely lamb salad and it is so easy to make.

### Serves 5-6

Cooking time: varies, overnight or up to 5 hours.

### Ingredients

- A good sized shoulder of lamb – 2-2½kg is ideal, this will feed 6 (at a stretch).
- 4 cloves of garlic, unpeeled
- 6 shallots, unpeeled
- 1 large carrot
- Sea salt
- 500ml of boiling water
- Bunch of fresh mint
- One pomegranate or a punnet of redcurrants and juice of one lemon



### Method

You can either cook it overnight for lunch, or all day for an evening meal. You cannot really prepare it in advance, as cold lamb is not very appetising.

1. Pre-heat the oven to 140° C/Gas Mk1. Brown both sides of the shoulder in the roasting dish, do not add any oil as the meat will give off some fat, and because of the shape it is not possible to brown it all over. You just want to achieve a degree of colour.
2. Remove the meat to a plate. Add the garlic whole, not peeled and the shallots halved but not peeled and the carrot sliced into chunks. Brown the vegetables in the meat fat for 2-3 minutes to give them some colour. You will not be eating these; they are only for flavour and as a trivet for the meat.
3. Put the meat back into the dish on top of the vegetables. Pour in the boiling water and sprinkle with sea salt.
4. Cover the whole dish with a tent of foil and tuck well to seal the edges, you want to keep the juices in. Place in the oven – one shelf up from the bottom.
5. Cook overnight or if cooking for 5 hours or less, increase the heat to 170°C. Forget about it completely and do not peek, you want it to stay sealed.
6. No more than an hour before, but no less than 20 minutes remove from the oven and take the meat out of the dish. Be careful, there will be a blast of steam when you lift the foil and also the meat will quite literally fall off the bone.
7. With two forks shred the meat into bite-sized bits. Then pour over the juice of two-thirds of the redcurrants and the lemon juice or the juice of half a pomegranate.
8. To finish, quickly toss in the remaining redcurrants or the seeds of half a pomegranate (bashing the outside of the skin over the meat with a wooden spoon really does work as the easiest method!) over the meat. Toss in the mint and a sprinkle of salt and serve.
9. It is fine served warm rather than hot, **but do not allow it to get cold.** If you need to prepare it a bit in advance, shred the meat, cover with foil and keep in a warm place. Serve with either wraps or crispy lettuce leaves.

Have you got a good recipe?

If you have a favourite recipe that you would like to share with our readers, please email: [gill@village-buzz.co.uk](mailto:gill@village-buzz.co.uk) AND SEE YOUR RECIPE IN PRINT!



## Focus Point

FROM THE BEGINNING OF JANUARY, I kept careful watch over a particular bed in my garden, looking for the first snowdrops to poke their tips up through the frozen earth. At this time of year, it can sometimes feel as if winter is never going to end. We think of the words of Mr Tumnus, 'It is winter in Narnia, and has been for ever so long.' Sometimes our lives, too, can feel like a never-ending winter. Perhaps we are frustrated by ongoing restrictions on our freedom, perhaps a relationship has broken down, perhaps we've lost a loved one. Like the poet Christina Rossetti, we may be 'sore in doubt concerning Spring':

*I wonder if the sap is stirring yet,  
If wintry birds are dreaming of a mate,  
If frozen snowdrops feel as yet the sun  
And crocus fires are kindling one by one:  
Sing robin, sing:  
I still am sore in doubt concerning Spring.*

The appearance of snowdrops, 'venturous harbinger[s] of Spring' as Wordsworth wrote, is evocative in stirring in us the hope and optimism which characterise spring. However dark, however cold the weather, we know that spring is on the way. It's a given that spring will follow winter – it always does.

If our lives are feeling dark and wintry, we can trust God to bring us into the light of spring. Just as spring brings new life, so Jesus came into the world, died on the cross and rose again to bring new life to all who put their trust in him. As the days lengthen, the weather warms up and the snowdrops give way to daffodils and tulips, let us give thanks for Jesus, the light of the world, who brings hope to the darkest places.

**Canon Judy Anderson,  
Licensed Lay Minister**





DATE	6 February			13 February			20 February			27 February			2 March			6 March		
SUNDAY	4th before Lent			3rd before Lent			2nd before Lent			Next before Lent			Ash Wednesday			Lent 1		
SOUTHERN AREA																		
Ansty	11.15	MBCP	LAY	11.15	PC	GS	11.15	HCBCP	GS	11.15	AAC	MH	-	-	-	11.15	MBCP	
Compton Chamberlayne	09.30	PC <sub>T</sub>	GS	-	-	-	11.15	SoW	JA	-	-	-	-	-	-	09.30	PC <sub>T</sub>	
Fovant	08.00	HCO <sub>2</sub> T	GS	-	-	-	-	-	-	09.30	PC	MH	-	-	-	08.00	HCO <sub>2</sub> T	
Sutton Mandeville	18.00	EBCP	GS	09.30	PCO <sub>2</sub> T	CF	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	18.00	EBCP	
Swallowcliffe	11.15	PC <sub>T</sub>	GS	18.00	EBCP	GS	08.00	HCBCP	GS	11.15	MBCP	LAY	11.00	HC <sub>T</sub>	MH	11.15	PC <sub>T</sub>	
NORTHERN AREA																		
Barford St Martin	11.15	AAC	MH	09.30	McW	LAY	09.30	HCBCP	CF	09.30	AAC	EB	09.30	HC	EB	11.15	AAC	
Baverstock	09.30	HC	SE	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Chilmark	11.15	AAC	EB	09.30	AAS	EB	11.15	AAC	CF	11.15	MPr	LAY	-	-	-	11.15	AAC	
Dinton	09.30	AAC	MH	11.15	AAC	EB	09.30	AAC	TF	09.30	McW	JA	-	-	-	09.30	AAC	
Teffont Evias	09.30	AAS	EB	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	09.30	AAS	
Teffont Magna	-	-	-	-	-	-	11.15	AAC	TF	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
WESTERN AREA																		
Chicklade	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Hindon	09.30	PC	JN	09.30	AAC	JN	18.00	EBCP	JN	09.30	PC	SE	11.00	HC <sub>T</sub>	JN	09.30	PC	
Fonthill Bishop	17.00	EBCP	JMH	08.00	HCBCP	MH	09.30	MBCP	JA	-	-	-	-	-	-	17.00	EBCP	
Fonthill Gifford	08.00	HCBCP	JMH	11.15	MBCP	JMH	08.00	HCBCP	JN	11.15	MBCP +AMP/APCM	JMH	-	-	-	08.00	HCBCP	
Tisbury	09.30	AAS	JMH	09.30	PC	JMH	09.30	PC	JMH	08.00	HCBCP	JMH	10.00	HC	JMH	09.30	AAS	
				18.00	RS	TF	18.00	EBCP Choral	JMH	09.30	PC	JMH	19.30	PC	JMH/JA			

## SERVICES

- BCP** Book of Common Prayer
- CW** Common Worship
- HC** Holy Communion (said)
- PC** Order 1 Communion (with hymns)
- HC (or PC) O<sub>2</sub>T/C** Order 2 Communion, traditional/contemporary
- PC<sub>T</sub>** Order 1 Communion, traditional language (with hymns)
- PCO<sub>2</sub>T** Order 2 Communion, traditional language

- FC** All Age Family Communion
- AAS** All Age Service
- M** Mattins or Morning Prayer
- MPr** Morning Praise
- E** Evensong or Evening Prayer
- RS** Reflective Service
- SoW** Service of the Word
- AAC** All Age Communion

## CLERGY

- CF** Colin Fox
- EB** Elaine Brightwell
- GS** Graham Southgate
- JA** Judy Anderson
- JMH** Juliette Hulme
- JN** Jo Naish
- MH** Mark Hayter
- SE** Simon Evans
- TF** Tina Fox

Do you need a little time and space to stop and think?



## Healing and Wholeness

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# A MADAGASCAN ADVENTURE

Michael Groom – Teffont

One man's unexpurgated safari diary, continues as it was written.

PART II



**Friday 3 November:** 05.00 a glorious morning – my shaving water arrives 15 minutes early and a small snake emerges close by – glad the tent was properly secured last night!

An entourage crosses the beach – Bernis, Gerard and Francia – with a substantial breakfast and coffee. The marmite makes the third delivery. An elder from a nearby village squats and watches, ever hopeful!

Little do I realise – this is to be a tougher day than yesterday. We paddle some 60kms downstream, passing through an impressive gorge for most of the day and stopping for lunch, after six hours in 50°C, at about 13.30 near a fine waterfall. I have to be heaved ashore, I'm knackered. It is vital to keep on drinking as much as possible throughout the day and maintain a sense of humour.



Ring-tailed lemur attentively looking on

Lessons start – the Malagasy language is a mixture of Indonesian, Malaysian and Arabic – and many speak a form of French, but I have doubts about my comprehension.

We spend hours improving our vocabularies and I learn my Malagasy please and thank you! Of great importance is "Veloma Tompoka" – a very polite goodbye. Much amusement all round.

There's not so much birdlife in this area, but I see my first lemurs (much like monkeys) for which Madagascar is famous. There is continuing evidence of mass burning of the countryside – what a disaster.

As we leave the gorge behind, there is a great feeling of tranquillity, with paddles gently stirring the water and coucals calling across the river, interspersed with some lovely, high-pitched songs

from Kamba (which means twin). He does have real style sitting there in the stern, paddling rhythmically hour after hour.

I am hellish tired when we pitch camp on another beach just before darkness falls at 6.45 p.m. Oh no – is it real – that damned chicken suddenly appears shrieking from one of the canoes and almost instantly a buzzard circles overhead. Sensible bird soon buggers off – he would have been welcome to the wretched chicken – I had the skin and bones for supper! Good sleep in a little tent – they fail to erect the large one – too much breeze.

**Saturday 4th November:** We are now down to an altitude of 90ft. At 05.45 we load up and get off to an early start, to RV (we hope) with Fama the driver – I am told – by 12.30.

It is a magical morning, peaceful with a cool breeze. The river ferry passes by, collecting passengers and cargo at numerous "bus stops" along the river bank, en route to Belo Tshiribihina. Lessons continue and we record a Malagasy song whilst large flocks of ducks take off in all directions. There are plenty of teal, my favourite to eat, which I understood had been severely over-shot but we have no gun.

The subsistence existence of these river folk is evident everywhere, some existing on just a few tobacco plants! Madagascar has plenty of water but lack of organisation and the happy-go-lucky attitude of the inhabitants ensures the primitive nature of life.

We enter another gorge – more beautiful than yesterday. A major feature is a large cliff with colonies of bats and unseen parrots calling. No crocodiles are seen but we are entering their territory.

The early start helped but it is now 11.00, damned hot again and my backside is beginning to feel raw! Bernis's estimate of 5-6 hours ends up at 8 hours non-stop by the time we reach our RV with Fama,

just before 2pm in searing heat – thank heavens he's there, I had had my doubts especially when recalling my late father-in-law's oft repeated statement, "Michael, time and distance mean nothing to them".

A charming group of villagers greet us on the river bank and offer us the shade of their huts in which to have our belated lunch. This is enjoyed amid considerable curiosity. A lovely elderly lady provides me with a large, warm bottle of "THB" for the equivalent of 60 cents. Bliss, after eight hours and at least 50kms. I would not want another day like this – it is too much for a white man in his 60's, just out from a northern hemisphere.

Our hostess, provider of the finest "THB", has a most intelligent young son who is so keen to help us. He writes down his name and address for me – if only there was something one could do to help him make greater use of his intelligence; anything sent out by mail from England would never reach him here. Their lot in life is cast, I fear – but it could be worse.

The Nissan is once again loaded up precariously and off we go. "Veloma tompoka", you kind people. We wave a fond farewell to Robert and Kama as they begin their six-day poling of the canoes back up river against the current. They really are fit.

We stop twice to fix the shifted load, then pass two circumcision ceremonies at which we do not stop, although invited.

I'm told it's only 10km to Belo sur Tshiribihina – joke – we continue to stop and start and finally in the dark arrive on a river bank.

"Where the hell is Belo", I ask? "Ahh.... the other side of the river" says Bernis. My sense of humour has evaporated and I become aware that we are to cross the river on the most amazingly dilapidated creation calling itself a ferry. At the same time, I am advised that one of the boatmen was killed by a crocodile yesterday evening. →



There is no ferry captain. I have now reached the point of complete exasperation and take command.

"Find the captain", I tell Bernis. A large, fat man comes waddling down the hill from the overcrowded bar. It is now 7pm.

"We cannot cross now as I have another booking at 9pm," he says in French/Malagasy.

"No bloody fear" I say in a sudden burst of fluent French, "We cross now, then you return for your next booking and make twice the price".

Big fat captain waddles back up the hill where a deal is struck with Bernis and by some miracle the Nissan manages to find itself aboard this wreck.

The 30 minutes chug-chug crossing takes about an hour and we finish up in Belo alongside the jetty but the wrong side to! Fama is amazing he manages – just – to turn the Nissan round on the "ferry" very nearly toppling into the crocodile-infested river and manages to discharge the vehicle down two thin planks on to the river bank.

What a day and what a ghastly hotel – no alternative. I am now quite certain that this safari is in bad shape and badly equipped – I need to reorganise things immediately. Bernis is told to meet me at 09.00 to discuss new plans.

A cold beer and some large warm gambas (eaten with dread of future squits!) are followed by a very uncomfortable but welcome bed. Two large noisy fans circle languidly above on so-called full speed ahead, thereby ensuring some sleep – in fact oblivion!

**Sunday 5th November:** 04.15 the cockerels' reveille sounds. 05.00 no fans, a power failure – can't see as no windows in the bedroom – thank heavens for my tent light beside my bed. Slumber until 06.00 then write up my log – yesterday was a day never to be forgotten and hopefully not to be repeated.

The map confirms we covered over 150km of the river in the last three days. I love my hat as much as the blue plastic chair!

The safari is reorganised to reduce distance and frequency of camping. The river is recrossed and we stop at what I understand to be a "payage" to enter a hideously uncomfortable "highway" of about 2 metres width riddled with potholes which should lead us to Morondava. Good income for the village. Roads in Kenya were a luxury compared to this.

We pass more evidence of burning – now known as the "war zone". We encounter a raucous party mid-morning beside the road. Soil is flying into the air – it's the grave diggers. Then the awful stench of the rotting corpse – they really are a very primitive people. They dig up their ancestors every seven years and have a party together!

Finally, passing through rice fields we arrive in the ramshackle town of Morondava and the sanctuary of

my hotel the "Baobab". The hotel is situated between the beach, a road and a mangrove-lined river. The smell reminds me of Belize in British Honduras 40 years ago.

The crevettes, calamari and crab are out of season I'm told – bullshit – no delivery. I order a lobster for dinner and some delicious smoked marlin for lunch with a scrumptious cold beer. "Vous travaillez ici?" asks the barman following my queries about the seasonality of shellfish.

"Non – Angleterre et France" I reply, tapping the side of my head. "Ahh" he nods – he agrees he knows the difference between a season and a delivery. Writing up my diary, en route.

At that moment a tight-fitted bottom approaches the bar with that knowing look – eyes back to the menu fast – the bottom leans over the balcony rail and examines the catfish with one eye and me with the other – no fear! The bottom moves on to a sharply dressed Moroccan type – bon chance!!

I climb up to my bedroom passing the same woman who was cleaning the same room 1½ hours ago – oh well it's hot but I have the respite of some ancient air conditioning – a change from last night. The lobster was excellent.

**Monday 6th November:** Overnight I have decided this safari needs to be curtailed but as yet am undecided by just how much – let's see what happens today. I had relied on a recommendation from a Malagasy in England and found an unknown but likeable man, but Bernis is not a professional, his gear and transport very dodgy and the country not easy.

Neither the banks nor the hotel accept Mastercard (having been told they did). The only cash possibility would require at least a five-hour wait at a local bank and then what, I ask myself? Therefore Bernis will need to cover if necessary – until, I wonder.

It is decided to set off for two days to Belo sur Mer and the islands – sounds good – and then move further south and return to Isaolo Park – that's the plan!

The road, so called, is absolutely horrendous. Sand, vast pot holes, water-logged in places, numerous fords, narrow, overshadowed by claustrophobic scrub and often blocked by ox-carts. The Nissan does not like water, nor does she like having her engine turned off. She is becoming a dodgy starter. One good thing is to be clear of Morondava, which I dislike. The load is still most inefficiently stowed and the equipment sub-standard – how can this safari continue?

We have considerable difficulty finding our way over the salt flats on the approach to Belo. On entering the causeway leading to Belo, I see ahead a large group of men gathered in the centre of the road.

"Stop" I tell Fama.

We stop – a young man approaches and waves us on. I am slow off the mark, but not Fama – in true



happy-go-lucky Malagasy fashion he stamps on the accelerator. In front of us, the crowd of men open up like the opening of the Red Sea and whomp we crash into a deep and water-logged hole which has obviously been cleverly created by these 50 strong men.

An ugly scene develops – much waving of fists and shouting. Keep calm I say to myself – do not interfere – as the arguing reaches a crescendo I turn to Bernis – "tell me?" "They want 70,000 arias, I have offered 50,000" he says. I smile at the angry faces – some smiles return and Bernis becomes 70,000 arias lighter. The gang heave us out – we turn around – I am not going to Belo – the gang heave us out again and we head off south for Manja.

After an hour there are mutterings to the effect that we are entering a dangerous area and bad security. Great news! – it's only about an hour to sunset and we are a good three hours from Manja.

This is very definitely not an area in which to camp for the night. I take heed of advice given me by the ex-Ambassador back home. I decide to turn back to the salt flats, to a salt miners' compound I had noticed and

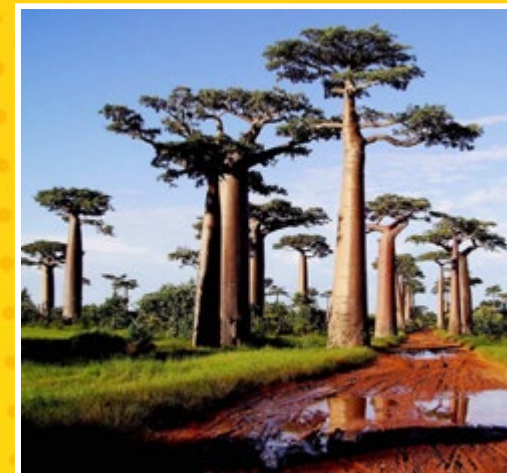
where, I hope, we should be able to find some form of security for the night. Fortunately we make it just as the sun goes down.

The head of the compound is friendly and sympathetic and we are granted "asylum" together with

three other 4WD's containing Germans, who had had difficulty with the salt flats earlier on. A large German woman approaches me: "There are three huts here and we have taken them all so there is nothing for you". "Great, you fat German so-and-so" I say to myself and smile when she further announces there is no running water.

Dammit I was only seeking space for my mini tent, which is finally erected beneath a massive baobab tree. The poles for the larger tent have been left behind.

In the dark I sit at my table, at a very low ebb and "enjoy" some bread and mangoes! No, this is not going to work. I call up my friend Patrick in Tana on the satellite telephone (great piece of kit for out here) and subsequently establish that flights to Tana from Morondava have been cancelled until Thursday and there are none at all from Manja. →



Majestic baobab trees



Decision taken – discretion is the better part of valour – we will drive back to Morandava in the morning and abandon the safari and I shall fly back to Tana on the next available light aircraft.

All my instincts and intuition tell me that to continue south is likely to lead to a disaster. The Nissan, the equipment and the men are just not up to this sort of thing and I am certainly not young or fit enough to really rough it in the bush and stand up for myself in bandit country.

The mini tent is tiny. Sleep is far away – images of 50 men fuelled with 70,000 arias of local rum ransacking the compound are ever present. At 1am there are shouts and lights – false alarm. It was some wayward person on a motorbike within the compound. Buzz buzz the mossies are around – God I hope the Malarone works.

**Tuesday 7th November:** At 2am there is severe thunder, lightning and rain. No thank you, it makes no sense to remain beneath this baobab tree.

I transfer to the luxury of the front passenger seat of the Nissan and join Fama, who is snoring heavily in the back, with intermittent farts.

No sleep – quite chilly – at 4am rest and sleep are abandoned – a car creeps in – it's been stuck in the salt flats all night. I wait for a bread roll and some coffee and insist on a local guide to join us and lead us out of this hellish place. Evidently the full moon is playing havoc with the tides. The headman agrees, which is fortunate and with impeccable local guidance we are on our way back to Morandava at 06.00 arriving there, very well shaken, at 09.00 – good going. Then my luck changes!

There is a flight back to Tana in the afternoon. Good. I check into a small American-owned hotel called Chez Maggie. A good shower, shave and lunch (no crabs,

calamari or crevettes yet again – this time the fishermen are not fishing at the moment; too busy drinking rum!).

I say farewell to Bernis, Gerard and Fama – I do like them so much. Bernis is hugely apologetic. The flight arrives in Tana on time and room 603 is once again available to me in Hotel Colbert. I'm back in civilization, pollution, noise and everything else but who could complain especially after last night.

**Wednesday 8th November:** My luck continues. I have a flight to Mauritius in the afternoon and a flight back to England on Saturday. I collect the sapphires I had bought earlier and the topaz stone I had bought for Lauren is confirmed as genuine. I collect my passport, arrive at the airport and fall asleep in departures.

I had faxed the hotel in Mauritius, Les Pavillons – supposed to be the closest hotel to the airport, but surely the most distant, to let them know I am arriving ahead of schedule. When I arrive, it is FULL! After lots of huff and puff, I have a room and crash midst a sickeningly sweet aroma. It's a honeymoon suite and the bed is 9ft square.

I find myself in a honeymooners' "paradise", scores of hand-clasped lovers, silently chomping in the dining room, before spending an "idyllic" day horizontal on one of the hundreds of sun loungers lining the beach. Not sure I don't prefer Miandrivazo!

**Saturday 11th November:** After 12 hours and then three quarters of an hour circling over London, Air Mauritius finally hits the runway. My passport is checked by an immigrant in Terminal 3. "I said you were daft," says Lauren as I emerge, surrounded by immigrants from around the world. It had not been my last hurrah! — MG

**Garlic Wash Recipe (Slug deterrent)**

Open your kitchen window because it's going to get garlicky!

Take two full bulbs of garlic and add them to approximately 2 litres of water in a large saucepan. Boil until soft and squash with the back of a fork to release as much juice as possible. Sieve out skins and bits so a cloudy liquid concentrate remains. Dilute approximately 2 tablespoons of this liquid to 5 litres of water in a sprayer or watering can. Spray or water your plants once a week; higher dosage and more frequent applications may be needed in wet weather.

Quantities are not exact and can be altered as necessary to suit your needs.



**In the 1950s, the population of hedgehogs in the UK was around 39 million. Today's estimates put that figure at about 1.1 million in England, 1.5 million in the UK, with a loss of 50% just in the last decade.**

Virtually all their natural habitats have disappeared during this time, due entirely to human activity. A knock-on effect of this habitat loss is that badgers too are suffering from food shortages and as a result have taken to eating them. Adult hedgehogs, on average, roam about two miles during the night and prefer to rootle in gardens, where there is more food available, rather than grassy fields.

It is really up to us to safeguard our precious remaining hedgehogs – such a vital part of our countryside fauna, so here are some ways in which we can easily help to protect and increase our local population.

**Fences**

Obstacles such as fences create barriers to travel, so a few small holes about 6 inches (150mm) square, strategically spaced at ground level along the fence, will be enough to form a corridor for them. Ideally, these should be established wherever there is a fence to permit freedom of movement for local hedgehogs.

**Slug pellets**

These are highly poisonous to many animals, including hedgehogs. They don't eat the pellets but ingest the dying slugs and snails, resulting in an extremely painful death. Instead of slug pellets, try Garlic Wash – see recipe above – it really works!

**Our cars**

These are responsible for the majority of hedgehog deaths on the roads. Earlier sunset times during the autumn and spring are a particular problem as people are driving home from work just as hedgehogs are out and about crossing roads. Please drive with care in potential hedgehog areas.

**IMPORTANT ADVICE:**

If you see a hedgehog out and about during daylight hours at any time of the year, they are not enjoying the sun, they are starving. Any hedgehog weighing under 700 grams will not survive hibernation so if you are concerned, catch it and put it in a high-sided box then seek immediate help from:

**Wiltshire Wildlife Hospital at Newton Toney.**

**Call 07850 778752 or 01980 629470 (24 hours)**

**Build a shelter**

Help hedgehogs to survive by building a shelter in your garden. A small wooden structure in a corner of the garden will work well. Better still, build a log house – a perfectly camouflaged dwelling suitable for any garden.

**How to build a hedgehog log house**

Split a good-sized heavy log in half using a chainsaw\* and hollow out the two halves. Cut out a 6 inch (150mm) square doorway at one end (see pictures below) and put the two halves together again. Tuck away in a corner of your garden and do not disturb.

\*IMPORTANT: Please follow all safety instructions and wear correct protective gear when using a chainsaw.





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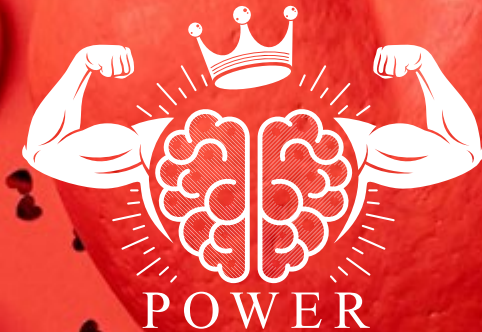
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		2					9	4
	4						3	7
						6	5	
	6		8			7		
		8			9		1	
		1	7	3				
		6		7	8			3
	3		5					
	1	9			4	5	6	



## St Valentine's Day Brain Gym

### HOW TO PLAY SUDOKU

The objective of the puzzle is to complete the grid so each of the rows, columns and 3 x 3 sub-grids contains the numbers 1 to 9. The challenging part of the puzzle is that each number can only appear once per row, column, or sub-grid.

SOLUTION ON PAGE 27

## Letters to the Editor



Dear Editor,  
 Let us hope that the appointment of a new Bishop of Salisbury will provide leadership on some of the problems facing rural parishes. Particularly pressing are the dwindling congregations allied to the ever increasing demands of the Diocesan share, 85% of which goes to fund the cost of Clergy. Many people think that our churches are funded by Government or the Diocese or some other umbrella organisation. They aren't: they are funded by their local communities. If you want the church to be there for future Baptisms, Weddings or Funerals you may want to consider contributing on a regular basis to your local Parochial Church Council.

Yours faithfully  
 Richard Willan

**HAVE YOUR SAY!** – We invite our readers to write in on any interesting topic that they would like to share with our Village Buzz readership. Just email us – including your name and full address to: [letters@village-buzz.co.uk](mailto:letters@village-buzz.co.uk)



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**Solution to:  
 St Valentine's Day Brain  
 Gym on page 25**

3	8	2	6	5	7	1	9	4
6	4	5	9	1	2	8	3	7
1	9	7	4	8	3	6	5	2
5	6	3	8	4	1	7	2	9
4	7	8	2	6	9	3	1	5
9	2	1	7	3	5	4	8	6
2	5	6	1	7	8	9	4	3
8	3	4	5	9	6	2	7	1
7	1	9	3	2	4	5	6	8

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## Advertising & article submission deadline

### Wednesday 16 February

File formats we prefer to work with –

**High resolution Acrobat PDF or high resolution JPEG (300ppi)**

To maintain the highest print quality we only accept high resolution images.

In other words: Images must have a minimum resolution of 300ppi (pixels to the inch).

Any problems please give Jan a call on 07881 288027.



# VILLAGE BUZZ

A MONTHLY MAGAZINE FOR VILLAGES NESTLING IN THE NADDER VALLEY  
**FEBRUARY 2022**

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Tel: 0300 456 0104  
homes4wiltshire@wiltshire.gov.uk  
Housing Options/Homelessness homeless@wiltshire.gov.uk  
Tel: 01722 434233

##### **Parking**

Tel: 01249 706131  
parking@wiltshire.gov.uk

##### **Pest Control, Noise and Pollution, Environmental Health**

Tel: 0300 456 0107  
customerservices@wiltshire.gov.uk

##### **Planning**

Tel: 0300 456 0114  
developmentmanagement@wiltshire.gov.uk

##### **Rubbish and Recycling**

Tel: 0300 456 0102  
customerservices@wiltshire.gov.uk

##### **Schools Admissions**

Tel: 01225 713010  
admissions@wiltshire.gov.uk

##### **School Transport**

Tel: 01225 712852  
educationtransport@wiltshire.gov.uk

##### **Can't find the service you require?**

##### **Contact Customer Services**

Tel: 0300 456 0100