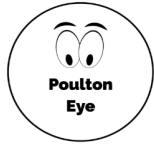




THE POULTON EYE



COMMUNITY - NEWS - INFORMATION



Welcome to the March edition of the Poulton Eye

Although March means that we can officially talk about Spring - the month also marks the start of British Summer Time (BST). At 1am on the last Sunday in March, clocks 'spring forward' by one hour. Although this change has no effect on the length of each day, sunrise and sunset each appear an hour later in the summer.

First introduced to the UK in 1916, in WW1, the idea was to make the most of daylight on summer mornings. During WW2, Britain introduced Double Summer Time - two hours in advance of Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) - for the summer and in winter, clocks were kept one hour in advance of GMT - all to increase productivity.

Britain returned to BST when the war ended and in 1972 the British Summer Time Act was passed. It said that clocks would change in late March (subject to the date of Easter) and late October. Twenty years later, in 1992, the UK aligned clock change dates with the EU, meaning that all EU clocks would be changed on the last Sunday in March and October.

The idea that summer time brings increased productivity is controversial and is hotly debated. Some countries near the Equator don't change their clocks at all because there is little variation in the hours of daylight throughout the year. In 2019 the European Parliament backed a proposal to end the practice of changing the clocks, but the legislation has since stalled. Watch (get it?!) this space...

Rosie and Lizzy - poultoneye@gmail.com

In this month's Edition

Cotswolds WW2 Airfields

Artificial Intelligence at a Crossroads

Herb of the Month... Garlic

Weasel Words

Spring Update from the Farm

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MESSAGE FROM THE RECTORY



Dear Friend

I am writing this on Valentine's Day (14th February) and – for once – have remembered it and bought a card (phew!). Valentine's Day reminds us of romantic love and many gestures will be made this day – a kiss, an engagement perhaps, a hug or cuddle. Couples will open their arms to embrace each other this day, and hopefully on other days as well!

It's also Ash Wednesday when the church turns to thinking about the sacrifice that Jesus Christ made on the cross. 'He opened wide his arms on the cross', says a prayer we use in church.

Arms spread wide is the classic gesture of welcome, affection and love. It's great seeing children at the school gate running towards their parents and carers who have their arms open wide to receive them back at the end of the school day. In the parable of the Prodigal Son, we are told that the Father 'threw his arms around' the errant son when he returned (Luke 15:20). The father's arms were wide open in welcome when they were most needed.

In this time of Lent, we recall that arms spread wide open is the necessary posture of crucifixion. It's only because Jesus was willing to open his arms wide on the beams of the cross for us, that we can be assured of a welcome in God's heavenly kingdom.

On the last day of March – Easter Day - we shall celebrate Jesus' triumph over death and give thanks for the promises made known to us that – however far away we might feel from God – he is waiting with his arms right open to welcome and embrace us.

We need the faith of little children to run towards arms open wide.
Yours as ever - John

The Rectory, Ampney Crucis, Cirencester, GL7 5RY | 01285 851309 | ampneyrector@gmail.com | www.ampneychurches.info

LENT LUNCHES

You are invited to join us for a Lent Lunch (homemade soup, cheese and a roll)
at The Rectory, Ampney Crucis – opposite the Village Hall

12.30 on Tuesday 27th February
12.30 Wednesday 27th March

Donations towards Youth and Children's Work in the Cotswolds.

Please let us know if you are planning to join us. You will be very welcome. Thank you.



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CHURCH DATES FOR MARCH

Sunday 3rd March 3rd Sunday of Lent	8am 10am 10am 6pm	Holy Communion Parish Communion Word & Worship Prayer & Praise - contemporary songs, prayer & teaching	Ampney Crucis Down Ampney Harnhill Fairford Church
Sunday 10th March Mothering Sunday	8m 10am 10am	Holy Communion Parish Communion Word & Worship	Poulton Driffield Harnhill
Sunday 17th March 5th Sunday of Lent	8am 10am 10am	Holy Communion Parish Communion Word & Worship	Ampney St Peter Ampney Crucis Harnhill
Sunday 24th March Palm Sunday	8am 10am 10am	Holy Communion Parish Communion Word & Worship	Harnhill Poulton Harnhill
Thursday 28th March Maundy Thursday	7pm	Holy Communion with Foot Washing	Ampney Crucis
Friday 29th March Good Friday	10am 2pm	At the Foot of the Cross The Final Hour	Down Ampney Poulton
Sunday 31st March Easter Day British Summertime Begins	8am 10am 10am 10.30am	Holy Communion Easter Communion Easter Communion Easter Communion	Ampney Crucis Down Ampney Driffield Ampney St Peter

South Cotswolds Team Ministry

2024 LENT TALKS

Exploring the Grace of God

7pm on Wednesdays at Poulton Church

7pm Wednesday 21st February

A Saving Grace

The Reverend Canon John Swanton, Team
Rector

7pm Wednesday 13th March

There but for the grace of God...

7pm Wednesday 28th February

Falling from grace...

7pm Wednesday 20th March

Goodness gracious me!

The Very Reverend Andrew Zihni
The Dean of Gloucester

7pm Wednesday 6th March

The Grace Network

The Rev'd Adrian Beere

**The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all. Amen.**



Cotswold Friends

**Reducing isolation and
supporting independent living**

Cotswold Friends needs you!

Cotswold Friends provides Community Transport across Cirencester and needs more Volunteer Drivers.

Local charity Cotswold Friends has been providing Community Transport to elderly and vulnerable people in the North Cotswolds since 1978 to combat loneliness and isolation.

They began to expand into Cirencester and surrounding areas (from Rencdomb to South Cerney, Sapperton to Poulton and many places in between) after the pandemic and have seen the demand for the service grow year on year. Their incredible team of volunteers take clients anywhere they'd like to go; for medical or social appointments – to see family and friends, to the hairdresser, shops, doctors, or the hospital. And they'd love you to get involved.

Becoming a Volunteer Driver is a wonderful way to meet new people, bring a smile to someone's face, get more involved in the community and be part of the inspiring team of Cotswold Friends volunteers with events throughout the year to celebrate one another.

You can give as much or as little time as you have, from a few hours a month to several hours each week – it can be very flexible.

If you'd like to find out more or to apply to become a volunteer, please contact their lovely Volunteer Manager on 01608 697007 or email volunteering@cotswoldfriends.org

DOWN ON THE FARM

A Spring Update

Welcome back to our series where we dive into the rustic and ever-dynamic life of our local heroes, Charles and Ed. February has been a mixed bag of weather on the farm, from fleeting dry spells to the more familiar wet blankets that drape the fields. Despite the challenges, our farmers have been anything but idle. Let's take a peek at what's been happening!

Weather Woes and Wins

The month kicked off with an unexpected gift - a brief spell of cold, dry weather. Seizing the opportunity, Charles managed to drill some corn in patches that had previously succumbed to the wet. Durum wheat also made its debut underground and is now peeking above the soil. Sadly the dry spell was short-lived, and the farm is back to battling the elements.

Beyond the Fields

When the heavens open up, and the fields become lakes, what's a farmer to do? For one of the farm workers, it's the perfect time for learning, embarking on a course to expand his agricultural horizons. Ed, on the other hand, has been channelling his inner influencer, giving talks on regenerative farming and the importance of integrating livestock with arable systems. With thousands of followers on Instagram and several awards under his belt, Ed's expertise is in high demand, drawing crowds from as far as the Isle of Wight and even Northern Ireland last week. But let's not forget that the cattle still need their daily feeds and bedding, not to mention the ever-glamorous task of dung moving.

Health Checks and Elite Status

The farm recently underwent its TB and health scheme tests, crucial for maintaining their cattle's elite health status - a badge of honour mostly adorning pedigree herds. This status not only makes their cattle more marketable but ensures they're healthy. Thankfully, the tests confirmed what Charles had anticipated, keeping their elite status secure.

Looking Ahead

Despite the current wet conditions, plans for spring are already taking shape. Charles, ever the optimist, is eyeing the post-February 14th period to kickstart spring crop planting, weather permitting. There's much to do, from spring barley to the vibrant Phacelia and a healthy dose of peas, all waiting for their turn to be sown.

Topical issues – Red Diesel

EU attempts to remove the subsidy on diesel for farmers, the 'red diesel' subsidy, has caused riots in France, Germany and the Netherlands with significant political impact as many European farmers find themselves aligning with the far right, as these are the parties supporting their arguments most strongly.

Unlike European farmers, The UK has not been threatened with a similar price hike. Charles's operation would face a doubling the fuel costs should the current subsidies be revoked. He uses over 100,000 litres of diesel a year in his tractors and combines so you can work out the sort of sums we are talking about. In case you were wondering, it's called red diesel because there is a dye inserted so officials can ensure it is used in farm vehicles only. It stains the tank red so a quick inspection will reveal if you are using it in your domestic vehicles, which is strictly verboten. There is no technology which permits avoidance of diesel currently for heavy machinery and lorries, so there is not the option to switch to another fuel source at the moment. Ad Blue has made a big difference to the environmental impact. Charles uses around 2000 litres of Ad Blue a year.

A Final Note: Lambing Season and your dogs

As we wrap up this month's update, let's not forget the seasonal rhythm of farm life. Lambing season is on the horizon. Charles and Ed remind us to be mindful of our dogs. As previously reported in The Poulton Eye, dogs launching themselves at pregnant Ewes can result in miscarriages.

Rosie Arkwright in conversation with Charles Horton

That feeling when you finally wave them off, for the second time



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COTSWOLD AIRFIELDS IN WW2

There are several Aviators in our village, plus direct descendants, and since Poultonians seem to have an insatiable appetite for all things aeronautical I am in conversation today with residents James Marks and RAF Group Captain Mike Wood during this article about our local airfields in World War 2.

There were 23 RAF airfields in Gloucestershire during World War 2 and 17 of them were on the escarpment that forms The Cotswolds, as well as Faringdon and Brize Norton in Oxfordshire.

All 17 Cotswold locations are within 17 miles of Poulton (as the crow - or aircraft - flies) with many being much closer eg: Down Ampney (photo, right) South Cerney, Bibury, Windrush, Aston Down and Kemble. These were the most important but there were also airfields at Barnsley, Chedworth, Southrop and of course Fairford. Many of these were based on the standard RAF triangular design of three runways where the longest was about 6000ft long and usually orientated in a south-westerly direction into the prevailing wind (see Poulton Eye January page 12). For exhausted RAF crews returning in WW2 from long arduous flights, sometimes at night, this largely unavoidable arrangement resulted in numerous crashes (usually fatal) due to misidentification of the intended airfield. From the air all the airfields' runways looked the same and many were intentionally disguised anyway to hinder enemy aircraft, let alone the dummy or "decoy" airfields upon which the Luftwaffe had launched 322 attacks by the end of 1941 compared to 304 on genuine ones. Despite that, it has been estimated that as many as 52,000 RAF personnel died on UK home soil during WW2 from various causes, the majority not due to enemy action, many crews being lost as a result of airfield misidentification problems such as unexpected obstructions on the approach paths (electricity pylons and cables, church steeples, radio masts, and of course hills themselves).



On the 18th of August 1940 RAF Sergeant Bruce Hancock was airborne in an unarmed Anson training aircraft over Windrush airfield west of Burford on his last solo flight before qualifying. Suddenly a Luftwaffe Heinkel III bomber appeared, probably en-route to Cheltenham, dropped ten bombs on the airfield, and fired on the Anson. Hancock waited until the bomber was above him then deliberately flew upwards into it, both aircraft crashing to the ground at Blackpits Farm. There were no survivors. Bruce was 26 years old. A memorial to his heroism stands there today. Like most of the wartime RAF airfields and their surroundings, there were numerous other crashes at Windrush - in just 5 months after June 1940 there were no fewer than six fatal accidents (including Bruce Hancock) and by the end of the war there had been 24 (most were fatal).



Less than three years later 22yr-old Flight Lieutenant John Henry Marks (later DFC) was also training at Windrush as well as Faringdon, Little Rissington and Kemble, prior to joining RAF Bomber Command on Lancasters in 1944 whereupon, in six weeks in early Spring, he flew on twelve raids to Germany during which over 400 aircraft were lost including 94 at Nurnburg on March 30th. John flew a further 21 missions and was awarded his DFC the same year. Little did he know that almost 80 years later his son would be living in Poulton and co-writing this article today. His log book shows participation in the 1000-bomber raids and numerous others, as well as

POULTON DEFRIBRILLATOR DETAILS

The yellow defibrillator is located on the outside wall of the village hall, on the pub side.

The code is C159X

COTSWOLD AIRFIELDS IN WW2

marking targets as the Master Bomber with the RAF's Special Duty Flight (Pathfinders) at Binbrook and also in preparation for D-Day on June 6th. James continues with this story *My Dad's parents lived in Solihull and had asked if their son ever flew over them high above. In early 1945 an opportunity arose for him to answer this query by flying his Lancaster very low indeed over their house not once but three times before his Mum came out to investigate. He'd already taken avoiding action to miss pine trees in the garden that bordered on Malvern Hall school. That night his Dad told him he was not impressed, had shaken loose his ceiling lights, Mr.Adams down the road had had a heart attack, and screaming girls had evacuated the school. This all ties in with stories told after the war by the Canadians my Dad had flown with who said he was the only one to have fathered his own children - the others had all adopted children because my Dad's scary flying had made them impotent!*

In 1944, Down Ampney was a major hub of activity prior to D-Day on June 6th. Quite apart from all the training flights beforehand, 46 Dakota aircraft (C-47's) with 7 Horsa gliders took off on June 5th and by the end of the next day a further 47 Dakas had done so together with 37 Horsas. The story of Down Ampney's involvement in WW2 is way beyond the scope of this short article but David Berryman's excellent book "Gloucestershire Airfields in the Second World War" (CountrySide Books ISBN 978 1 85306 949 9) - amongst others - gives much more detail and we are indebted to David for much of the information in this article. Today you can still see the remains of Down Ampney's runways and taxiways and a memorial to those who lost their lives - walk past the entrance to Down Ampney church along the footpath in a SE direction until you come across the perimeter of the old airfield. On the way back remind yourself of the events here in WW2 by viewing the stained glass window in the church itself. I asked Mike to elaborate for us:

Down Ampney airfield, first operational in February 1944, hosted no fewer than 3,500 personnel and was a major jumping off point for British troops involved in both the 6th June 1944 D-Day (Operation OVERLORD) Normandy landings, as well as the ill-fated Arnhem drop (Operation MARKET GARDEN) later in September 1944.

One of my old squadrons, No.48, together with No. 271 Squadron, flew Dakota aircraft in support of both the D-Day 6th June and the Arnhem Airborne operations. Indeed, it was during the Arnhem operation that a Flight Lieutenant David Lord, of 271 Squadron and already a DFC recipient, was awarded the Victoria Cross in performing one of the bravest acts by a British airman during the whole of WW2. Attempting to re-supply the beleaguered paratroopers of the British 1st Airborne Division, seeking to secure the bridge at Arnhem, he decided to make a second "pass" over the Dropping Zone (DZ) despite his aircraft being on fire and with its starboard wing about to fall off. Although this second run was successful and all the supplies reached the paratroopers, his aircraft crashed with no survivors, save for one lucky Air Dispatcher who was thrown clear of the aircraft on impact with the ground.

Operation MARKET GARDEN is commemorated on the second Sunday in September each year at either the All Saints' Church, Down Ampney, in a service led by The Reverend Canon John Swanton, our local vicar, or at the Memorial Stone at the end of the former runway. This year 2024 marks the 80th Anniversary.

In a brief article such as this we can do no more than scrape the surface of all that happened in WW2 at these numerous Cotswold airfields but we hope our intention of raising interest in them has succeeded.

The RAF Down Ampney Association would be a good place to start further study, as would the others in Berryman's list of Acknowledgements in his book. Take a visit for example to Bibury airfield (see right) with its W and SW-facing runways up on a plateau, passing Poulton Fields Farm en-route from Poulton (see the fascinating article on page 7 of February's Eye) up and down vale and arrive at what is now home to The Classic Motor Hub north of Ablington. Visit their website to find a very interesting article about "RAF Bibury during World War Two".



Come and Try Your Hand at Bell Ringing!

Ampney Crucis Church
Monday evenings
7.30pm

The Ampney Crucis bell-ringing team meet most Mondays during the year and are always ready to welcome people who would like to give bell-ringing a try. Bell-ringing is great exercise (and cheaper than the gym); can be done by people of all ages - but you probably need to be 8 and over. If you want to find out more, contact the Rector or just turn up - you'd be very welcome!

COTSWOLD AIRFIELDS IN WW2

In July 1940 ground parties would travel from South Cerney to Bibury to lay out gooseneck flare paths for night flying training. This was generally successful despite numerous accidents and was considered less risky than enemy bombers locating South Cerney itself. Then eleven days before Bruce Hancock's sacrifice at Windrush, RAF 87 Squadron's Hurricanes flew in from Exeter to Bibury to establish night fighters there to protect Cheltenham and Birmingham. The following night they shot down their first Heinkel bomber. Spitfires replaced them on August 19th, the day after Bruce's encounter at Windrush.

In 1943 RAF Bibury was fitted with a Standard Beam Approach system which enabled aircraft to land if necessary on instruments alone, night or day, whatever the visibility. The Beam Approach Training Flight (BATF) at South Cerney had moved from there to Bibury and although there were initially many accidents this work and technical knowhow became the precursor to Britain's lead in developing Blind Landing equipment after the war when it was key to that fitted into Concorde and the Hawker Siddeley Trident airliners.

Virtually all airline flights today are conducted under IFR (Instrument Flight Rules) where the pilot's normal *modus operandi* is to fly on instruments (either manually or through an autopilot). It's a bonus if he happens to see anything outside the flight deck window - but for landing in fog you need more than that. Back in the fifties and sixties when thick fog often draped cities like Paris, London, and Birmingham the ability to take-off and land in it automatically was important to avoid diversions. The Trident was the world's first airliner capable of a fully automatic landing and its technology was later copied into Boeing and eventually Airbus airliners - so when today the aircraft we're in lands in fog and we wonder how that is achieved, think back to Bibury in 1943



and the BATF. After 10 years on the Trident fleet I can attest that landing passengers safely in thick fog in almost zero visibility was both a privilege and a sobering experience brought home by the realisation that taxiing in after landing was even more challenging! Once in 1978 we did this six times in two days between Paris and LHR but then discovered that the M4 homebound was closed!

So the technological advances made during WW2, particularly in the field of aviation, indeed had to be made, are continuing to benefit us enormously almost 80 years later and it's incredible that less than 20 years

separated the Lancaster from the Trident (above). I think similar logic applies to the lives, effort, and money spent to put the first man on the moon in 1969 - the technology that had to be developed enables us to navigate our cars today by SatNav, telephone our friends by iPhone wherever we are, and enables hospitals to replace a faulty heart valve or even a complete heart. Quite extraordinary advances which surely would have come one day but not as soon as they did.

As incredibly tough as it was for so many and in so many ways, WW2 was not of course all doom and gloom, as I was reminded when flying a Trident back from northern Germany soon after my own flying career had started as a co-pilot/Navigator in 1968. The Captain I was flying with was about to Retire and had been a RAF Lancaster pilot in WW2 after being a rear-gunner. In his rear turret during the return from a raid in Germany he realised he had no communication with the rest of his aircraft which had suffered serious flak, lost two engines, and was about to crash-land probably in a foreign field full of very unfriendly men. He survived the impact which severed the turret from the rest of the aircraft and then made a hasty solo retreat to the nearest haystack where he bedded down alone for the night well out of sight. At dawn he nervously, and very carefully, treaded along the nearby lane keeping his head below the hedge until coming across a pub! This turned out to be the Rising Sun in Norfolk, and his mates who also had all survived had been in there since 6pm the previous evening!

In our warm and air-conditioned Trident we flew on in silence at 35,000 feet over East Anglia looking down at the same ground almost thirty years later, but 34,500 feet higher and in incomparably better circumstances.

Gordon Lee in conversation with James Marks and Mike Wood.



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ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AT THE CROSSROADS

An AI Research Scholar's Insight on China, Tech, and the Future

Diving into the world of advanced artificial intelligence (AI) and its geopolitical implications, especially with China in the picture, can feel like unravelling a complex sci-fi plot. Yet it's the day-to-day reality for researchers at **Oxford's Centre for the Governance of Artificial Intelligence**. One of those researchers is **Fynn Heide**, and we are talking to him because – although he doesn't live in Poulton – he is friends with the Maxwell family and as he does such a fascinating job – we have snuck him in under that pretext.

Fynn is a research scholar at the Centre, specialising in AI capabilities in the People's Republic of China. A lot of his time goes into keeping tabs on China's AI advancements, trying to peel back layers of secrecy to keep the rest of the world in the know. One of the main tasks of the centre is to make sure they know what people are up to so that if there are misuses of power, there are mechanisms in place to flag them early.

One big question he and the team at the Centre are tackling is identifying common ground between the West and China from which to base AI cooperation, especially in areas like fighting climate change, where combined global efforts will be far more effective than less cohesive actions.

I was interested to know what keeps Fynn up at night, with all the knowledge he is acquiring about advanced AI. Imagine AI systems so advanced that they dwarf today's tech marvels, including Chat GPT. They might take over sophisticated, high earning jobs - e.g. work that would currently take five lawyers to complete could be done by one, with advanced AI taking over the work of the other four. "What's currently happening", he says, "is that huge amounts of money are currently flowing into AI development - which means that much, much bigger systems are going to get developed in the coming years. These will be many, many, many times bigger than the current Chat GPT, and that might mean a very rapid increase in AI abilities and scope. It is quite plausible that we might hit a level where AI systems are capable of doing what a human would be capable of doing, and beyond".

What worries Fynn most is that we currently don't know of a reliable way to control systems with that level of capability. We might face challenges if powerful AI systems become available to everybody, including terrorists or people who want to cause harm and disruption, because such powerful systems increase opportunities for more powerful terrorist activity. Up to now, many terrorists don't have access to a PhD level bioscientist, for instance, but in the future, the creation of bioweapons in a small lab using advanced AI seems quite plausible. So Fynn and the team at the Centre need to be aware of developing capabilities all over the world, and then use this knowledge to inform policy makers and to ensure that the right protection and control protocols are established. So, for example, if someone types into Chat GPT or future iterations, "how to make a bioweapon", or similar, that should send a red flag to authorities to track the author of the request, and there should be a mechanism to ensure that the system doesn't give out such information. That's why the idea of making the workings of advanced AI available to everyone with an open system is fraught with danger and should be rejected.

What is Advanced Artificial intelligence?

Advanced AI refers to the development and application of artificial intelligence technologies that exhibit capabilities beyond basic or traditional AI systems. These systems are characterised by their ability to learn from data, adapt to new situations, understand complex patterns, and make decisions with minimal human intervention. Advanced AI encompasses a wide range of technologies and methodologies, including but not limited to:

Machine Learning (ML): AI systems that learn from data to improve their performance over time without being explicitly programmed for each task.

Deep Learning: A subset of machine learning that uses neural networks with many layers (deep neural networks) to analyse various forms of data, such as images, sound, and text. Deep learning has been pivotal in advancing fields like computer vision, natural language processing (NLP), and speech recognition.

Natural Language Processing (NLP): AI that understands, interprets, and generates human language in a way that is both meaningful and useful. This includes translating languages, generating text, and understanding human queries.

Reinforcement Learning: A type of machine learning where an AI agent learns to make decisions by performing certain actions and receiving rewards or penalties.

Generative AI: AI systems that can generate new content, including text, images, and videos, that resemble human-created content. Generative Adversarial Networks (GANs) are a popular example of this technology.

Explainable AI (XAI): Advanced AI systems designed to provide insights into how and why they arrived at a particular decision or outcome, enhancing transparency and trustworthiness.

Autonomous Systems: AI systems capable of performing tasks or making decisions without human intervention, such as self-driving cars, drones, and robotic process automation (RPA).

CUSTOM TRAVEL



It's already the March edition 🗓️

🕒 Time flies, but so can you

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ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AT THE CROSSROADS

But it's not all doom and gloom. The UK is stepping up big time, says Fynn, and building state capacity very fast to respond. The UK set up an AI task force and is now setting up an AI Safety Institute. It is investing way more than any other European country, but also in proportional terms seems to be investing more than the United States in their kind of equivalent institute. Given the GDP differential, it seems like the UK is really punching above its weight. The UK also organized the first international AI summit last autumn with really senior players from around the world, in order to address some of the pressing issues mentioned above about risk and safety. Fynn says the brightest spot in the last year for him, has been the UK Government's attitude to risk mitigation and the fact that we are (arguably) number 2 in the world for jurisdiction for advanced AI after the States.

Fynn also reminds us of the role the UK has played so far in advanced AI. Geoffrey Hinton is the British scientist who he refers to as the 'father' of the current deep learning paradigm which is being used by all the major companies working in advanced AI. Hinton and other scientists working in Cambridge, have created the infrastructure which means that the UK is far and away Europe's leading country for advanced development.

What about job losses as a result of advanced technology? "My current guess is that at least in the next decade there is going to be friction and there will be job losses that aren't going to be immediately matched by emerging tech jobs. So Government will have to step in there to help society make those kinds of transitions. But at the same time a lot of probably better remunerated jobs are going to crop up which will require engagement with AI systems and the UK is well positioned in this regard. We have a huge service sector with people who are very used to dealing with technology. We have the largest tech sector in Europe and the largest AI sector, and we major in other knowledge industries, biomedicine and advanced materials and one could imagine that across these areas, working together with more advanced AI systems is going to help, so actually, I'm less worried about the UK from a job perspective when it comes to AI."

So, I suggest we might need some more Geoffrey Hinton's to find great solutions to the more alarming aspects of advanced AI, and Fynn agrees that is part of the solution, but a really important element in making our future more secure is by giving policymakers insight into what's being developed early, and making sure they have the tools to understand the risk level associated with these different systems as they are being created so they can step in or have processes in place that ensure they will step in if certain thresholds are exceeded.

Fynn and all the other people working at the Oxford Centre for the Governance of Artificial Intelligence, highlight a crucial junction we're at with AI. It's about balancing the awe-inspiring potential of technology with the sobering responsibilities it entails. As we inch closer to creating AI that could redefine our world, the dialogue between countries, companies, and communities becomes more critical.

Rosie Arkwright in conversation with Fynn Heide

Justin Rundle

Painter & Decorator

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Local & Trusted



*Time is March-ing On - and so will the
clocks be...*

*In the meantime, we are looking ahead to
Mothering Sunday and Easter this month
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NATURE NOTES

Weasel Words

We were recently delighted to see a **stoat** (*Mustela erminea*) run across our patio one morning, a rare treat. We last saw one in 2020 during lockdown and before that about 5 years ago giving one an idea of just how shy these animals are. They obviously live nearby, most likely in a disused rabbit burrow of which there are plenty in Ashbrook Lane.

They hunt by day, mainly for rabbits but also mice and voles as well as birds, eggs, fruit and - if food is scarce - earthworms. They are only around 30cm long with a coat of brown fur sharply delineated from the white underbelly and a distinctive tail, around 10cm long with a blacktip illustrated in the picture right.



They have a bounding gait, especially when actively hunting. They can kill a rabbit which is quite a bit bigger than them by biting the neck just behind the skull. They don't like exposing themselves and will hunt along ditches and hedgerows well out of sight since they are themselves vulnerable to foxes and domestic cats.

Stoats often take over the burrows of their prey, lining the burrow with the fur of its previous owners. They have territories which they mark with scent and scat and defend against other stoats of the same gender.

Males and females are solitary, living apart except in the spring when the males seek out females. Mating occurs in early summer but the fertilised egg does not implant in the uterus until early spring and gestation takes only 4 weeks before the young are born, blind and helpless. They are prolific breeders with up to 12 kits, though 4- 6 is more usual. They need to kill frequently to feed such a brood and like many carnivores if they find a large source of prey like a chicken run, they will kill far more than they can eat and store the rest, usually by burying it. We have seen a mother cross our garden carrying young in her teeth and apparently they will move their young more than once to avoid other larger predators like foxes.

Given it is so rare to see them, details of their numbers are limited but they appear to be doing reasonably well, though their numbers do fall when the rabbit population falls - as it has recently with rabbit haemorrhagic fever.



Stoats are members of the weasel or *Mustela* family which includes the English least weasel, the polecat and the pine marten.

We also have **least weasels** in Poulton but again these are rarely seen. They can be distinguished from stoats by the absence of the blacktip to their tail and an irregular boundary between the white belly and the brown / ginger topcoat (see picture left). They are quite a bit smaller than stoats, 15-20cm in length with a short tail of just 5 cm. It is said their head will pass through a wedding ring which makes one realise just how small they are.

This allows them to chase voles down their tiny burrows. Voles are their main prey, plentiful in Poulton but they will also take mice and the contents of birds nests. They can have up to two litters if food is plentiful with 3-6 kits per litter.

Surprisingly they are our most abundant predator, with an estimated 450,000 in the UK, being able to live in a wide range of habitats, both urban and rural. You are unlikely to see either a stoat or a weasel but they often leave their scat in prominent places marking out their territory. Both weasel and stoats have long thin scat with a twisted end, the stoats being about twice the size of the weasel's. The key identifying feature is the presence of tiny pieces of bone and fur which indicate this comes from a carnivore.

Kenneth Graham, has I feel, given the weasels unfair press, depicting them in his best seller "Wind in the Willows" as cunning and deceitful. Other cultures are more admiring. North American Indians, who traditionally respect the natural world revere the stoat, which is seen as a symbol of strength and determination as well as wisdom. It is seen as a protector of the natural world, which is quite apt I think. They can, at least in part, correct the imbalances which occur when natural predators like foxes are killed, leading to uncontrolled numbers of rabbits and mice.



CHAMBERLAIN WINES

Hello. My name is Mark Chamberlain, and I have lived in Poulton with my family for more than ten years. If we haven't met, you may have seen me walking the dogs around the village!



I am an Independent Wine Merchant. I have almost twenty years' experience in the Wine Trade, including living and working in Saint-Emilion. I have run my own Wine Merchant's business for more than a decade.

I list wines from all over the World, and in a wide range of styles: crisp, dry whites; richer, fuller bodied whites; pale and refreshing Provençal rosés; light, supple reds; full-bodied fruity reds; luscious pudding wines; an array of sparkling wines including some excellent Grower Champagnes; a selection of ports and sherries; classic Clarets, Burgundies, Riojas and Barolos; lots of interesting wines from off the beaten track. In essence, anything that I like and I think represents good quality and good value for its type and origin. I don't list anything I wouldn't drink. And I always try to be amongst the most competitively priced for the wines I list.

I don't have a shop, but I do offer a range of traditional Wine Merchant services – expert advice, naturally; free local home delivery (or I can send wine anywhere in the country using a reliable courier service); glass loan for events; gift boxes. If I don't stock a wine or style you're looking for, I will do my best to find it for you. In short, all you could want from a Wine Merchant, on your doorstep!

As I live in the village, Poulton residents get 10% off the list price of any order.

If you want to see a list of the wines I have currently, join my local email list, or have any other questions, please do get in touch: mark@chamberlainwines.co.uk or on the mobile, 07894 528 580.

All the best!

GARDEN NOTES

March is the month of wild garlic, which forms a green carpet on the woodland floor lit up by its highly attractive star-like white flowers. It is particularly fond of damp ground so can often be found alongside or near watercourses.



Bay and Rosemary are difficult acts to follow, but garlic is another mediterranean herb that is an essential part of the “mediterranean diet” brought to the UK in the 1950’s by the food writer Elizabeth David. With Easter falling in March this year, I have fond memories of my late father-in-law’s favourite Sunday roast: leg of lamb with rosemary and garlic, a dish he cooked for us without fail whenever we visited at Easter. No doubt inspired by his great culinary heroine David, the garlic was pungent and delicious. Mmmm.

Plant of the month: Garlic (*Allium Sativum*)

As its botanical name indicates, Garlic belongs to the allium family, a diverse group of herbs which includes onions, shallots, leeks and chives, as well as ornamental alliums that are so useful in the herbaceous border.

Not only is March the month when wild garlic is at its peak, it is probably the last opportunity to plant garlic cloves in the kitchen garden. To reach its full potential garlic needs to be exposed to frost, so it can be sown from the autumn onwards. March is also a good time to plant out other members of the allium family, such as shallot and onion sets, spring onion seeds, or perhaps a pot of chives for the kitchen windowsill. Garlic keeps very well over winter and it is only when the days get longer that the cloves start to sprout, as if to say that they would rather be back in the ground than in the kitchen.

‘Eat no onions nor garlic, for we are to utter sweet breath’

While eating garlic is good for one’s health, it does have the unfortunate side-effect of causing bad breath. Shakespeare’s character Bottom in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* was aware of this and was keen to encourage his fellow actors not to eat onions or garlic so that their breath would not put off their audience.

In the same way French food, pickled onions and even a packet of cheese and onion crisps are best avoided before setting out on a hot date. If you do consume garlic before going out, eating lemons, parsley or mint can help sweeten the breath.

One well known quality of garlic is its ability to ward off evil spirits, and in particular vampires. In Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*, Lucy makes extensive use of garlic as a form of protection from visits from the vampires, including the wearing of garlands made from wild garlic flowers. She even goes to the extreme of smearing her window sashes with it.

I am not aware of any local vampires, nor would I want to use garlic as a room freshener, but garlic’s strong smell is said to deter a wide range of harmful insects from the kitchen garden, and is particularly effective planted alongside brassicas, tomatoes and potatoes, and carrots as a companion plant.

Medical uses of garlic

Rather like rosemary and bay, garlic is something of a cure-all. The use of garlic can be traced back to the ancient Egyptians where garlic is documented on papyrus scrolls as a medicine, and garlic bulbs were found in Tutenkhamun’s tomb.

Garlic has anti-bacterial, anti-viral, and anti-fungal properties and its strong smell is said to deter parasites and biting insects. It is said to prevent colds and may help regulate blood sugars and lower cholesterol.

Ed’s mother used to give his family ‘Liqufruta’ whenever they showed signs of becoming ill. This vile tasting cough medicine includes liquid garlic oil as its main ingredient. Ed still suffers flashbacks!

Culpeper’s *Complete Herbal* suggests a long list of health benefits for garlic, including “... helps the biting of mad dogs and other venomous creatures, kills worms in children, cuts and voids tough phlegm, purges the head, helps the lethargy ...” so a daily dose of garlic might be particularly useful in modern day Poulton!

Ed Piggot

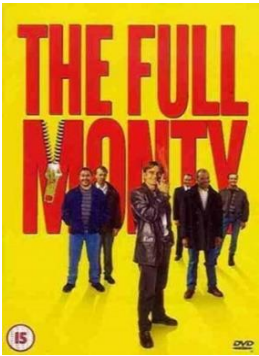
THEN AND NOW - THE OLD VICARAGE

A howling gales brought down a tile from near the top of the Church roof recently, necessitating a slightly tricky repair. Whilst up there, I couldn't help but spend a minute or so enjoying the fantastic views to be had. The light at the time was beautiful, so I carefully took a few photos, which I thought I'd share.



In March, the Village Hall will be hosting its' regular events as usual, namely:

- kicking off each month with the **Village Coffee Morning – Books, Bickies & Beverages (BBB)** on **Saturday 2nd March**
- followed by **Film Nights** on the first and third Tuesday evenings – **5th and 19th March** – email poultonone&nines@gmail.com for more information or to be added to the mailing list.
- plus the weekly **Post Office & Pantry**. If you have postal or banking needs we'd encourage you to support this local Outreach service run by Matthew from Shrivenham Post Office. It's open on **Tuesdays from 1.30 to 3.30pm** and alongside, volunteers from the village serve coffee/teas & cakes so you can enjoy a “cuppa” at the same time.



But also in March, we're holding a special **Friday Film & Food Evening** on Friday 15th March.

This is an event we host from time to time – it's an informal evening to watch a familiar “classic” film with food and drinks available.

The film is the 1997 comedy drama **The Full Monty**.

As there will be limited seating **please do book in advance, see opposite for more details**.

Best wishes from the Village Hall Team - *Hilary, Rachel, Nicki, Helen, Sue, Neil, Judy, Carolyn, Kristina*

Books, Bickies & Beverages – “BBB”

Village Coffee Morning

First Saturday of the Month

10.30 to 12.30pm - Saturday 2nd March

Pop in for a pot of coffee or tea and homemade biscuits

Meet other villagers and visitors

Browse the selection of good quality pre-read books, including Children's titles

We accept donations of paperback novels (not too many & in good condition please!)

Hope you can join us



Poulton Hill ESTATE

Buy award-winning English wine direct from the Cellar Door

Did you know that our Cellar Door is open Tuesdays - Fridays? You can pop in to browse our selection of award-winning Cotswold wines and spirits and purchase at a special discounted rate.

We also offer a range of gift options to share with family and friends.



Think Local, Drink Local

www.poultonhillestate.co.uk

Opening times

The Cellar Door is open from 09:00 - 16:00 Tuesday to Friday and 11:00 - 15:00 Saturday.

If you wish to visit outside these hours, it may be possible by appointment. Please call 01285 850257

FROM THE CELLAR DOOR

Forget gin, vermouth is the cool spirit for 2024

Poulton Hill Estate's Courtney Gillibrand on the launch of the new Phoenix Vermouth and a special offer on an Easter Mixed Wine Case

Mothering Sunday and Easter both fall in March this year and Poulton Hill Estate can help to make these celebrations extra special.

If you are looking for a special gift for your mother this Mothering Sunday, we have a new product launching. Poulton Hill Estate's Phoenix Vermouth is our first-ever vermouth and we are so excited to share it with you. It is named after the Phoenix grapes, which are blended with Bacchus and Seyval Blanc to make the vermouth, as well as the mythical bird that is a heraldic symbol associated with nearby Cirencester.

Vermouth as a drink is becoming cool again, with some drinks experts predicting it will overtake gin as the craft drink of the moment. It is a core ingredient in classic cocktails such as the martini, manhattan and negroni, but it is also good to serve neat over ice as an aperitivo.

Poulton Hill Estate's Phoenix Vermouth lives up to the fresh new image for the spirit, and the bottle and label reflect this trend. This complex and well-rounded semi-sweet vermouth is robust enough to enjoy on its own or as an addition to cocktails. It has notes of orange and vanilla at the forefront with a hint of botanicals, and a gentle warmth with its refreshing and caramelly notes. And like its mythical namesake, we hope that this vermouth will help the spirit to rise again in popularity.

You will be able to purchase our new vermouth from the Cellar Door and from our website.

Special offer on our Mixed Wine Case for your Easter celebrations

Our Easter Mixed Case has wine for every meal over the Easter period. Our Phoenix 2022 has the perfect balance of acidity and fruit that will pair perfectly with your fish on Good Friday. Our Arlington Red is a great match with lamb and beef for your Easter Sunday meal.

Included in the case with the two bottles each of the Phoenix and the Arlington Red, is a bottle of our award-winning off-dry Arlington White and our Rosé, which both make for easy drinking and pair excellently with cheese.

The recommended retail price for this case is £111.47 but you can pick it up for just £99.99 from our website (www.poultonhillestate.co.uk) or by visiting us at the Cellar door in Poulton.

Buds and bougies

In the vineyard, we have finished our winter pruning and are keeping an eye out for the first signs of new life in our vines. This time of year is when we also have to keep a close eye on the weather forecast. We need to protect newly emerging buds from any late frosts, which will kill them off. If frosts are predicted, we light our bougies (potted paraffin wax candles) that we place in rows in between the vines to warm the air.

Wine tasting events

If you want to come to visit us, our Cellar Door is open Tuesday to Saturday, but we also host monthly wine tasting events. We take you through our history, how we manage the vineyard and the processes involved in growing our grapes. You can then sample our award-winning Bulari English sparkling white wine, and two of our still wines, Arlington White 2022 and our Rosé 2022. Tickets cost £15. For more details of dates and times, or to book your place, visit www.poultonhillestate.co.uk/events.

Courtney Gillibrand



Poulton Village Spring Clean

Why: Please help keep our village and the surrounding countryside looking beautiful by joining us in collecting all the rubbish - especially the plastic - which unfortunately accumulates every year

When: Saturday March 2nd 1.30 – 4pm (Sunday afternoon as last resort if the weather is really atrocious on Saturday)

Where: Meet in Village Hall at 1.30 pm to collect litter picking gear and your allocated route map

How: Come wearing your own high visibility, weather-proof clothes, and gardening gloves. We will provide litter pickers and bags. The council will collect the rubbish left in the village hall car park on Monday.

Safety: You are responsible for your own safety. Picking is most safely done in groups of 2 or 3, all on the same side of the road with one looking out for traffic.

Tea: We will be providing tea and cakes afterwards in the village hall

Want to help? Please email robin.spiller123@gmail.com so I can plan and ensure we cover all the routes.

Can't be there on the day? If you cannot make Saturday but would like to take part, please email me and I can arrange for you to collect litter pickers and bags any time in the preceding week.

Hope to see you there! Robin S

Poulton Eye Newsletter	Poultoneye@gmail.com Editors: Rosie Arkwright, Lizzy Roughton
Poulton Village Website	www.poultonvillage.co.uk
Poulton Facebook Page	https://www.facebook.com/groups/959278000806216/?multi_permaLinks=4503302606403720
Poulton WhatsApp Group	Please contact Rachel Hutchinson to be added to group; 07557 006623
St Michaels and All Angels Church, Poulton	Vicar: The Rev'd Canon John Swanton 01285 – 851309; ampneyrector@gmail.com Church Wardens: Lizzy Roughton - pryorlizzy@gmail.com ; rosie.arkwright@icloud.com
Village Hall	Available to hire for parties, wedding breakfasts, clubs or meetings - kjclapton@gmail.com
Playing Field & Allotment Charity (PFAC)	pfactrustees@gmail.com
Post Office	In the Village Hall. Tuesday 1.30 – 3.30
Parish Council	Chairman: Simon Collyer-Bristow scb@crfc.co.uk Clerk: Heather Harris poultonclerk@gmail.com
District Councillor	Lisa Spivey: lisaspivey4@gmail.com
Poulton Action Group (solar farm)	poultonactiongroup@gmail.com .
Refuse Collections	Food bin weekly Friday 7am. All other bins & bags on alternate Fridays.
Poulton Football Club	www.poultonfootballclub.co.uk
Poulton Cricket Club	Club Secretary: Will Bathurst w.m.bathurst@gmail.com www.poultoncricketclub.co.uk/
Poulton One and Nines	Films in the village hall every 1 st and 3 rd Tuesday of the month. Contact poultononeandnines@gmail.com
Books Bikkies & Beverages	Village get-together 1 st Saturday of each month, 10.30 – 12.30 Poulton Village Hall Judith – 01285 851230
The Falcon Inn	www.falconinnpoulton.co.uk email: bookings@falconinnpoulton.co.uk 01285 850878

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