

October 2020



**W**e are sad to report the untimely death of John Greenslade. John was a passionate supporter of farming; he was involved in many initiatives and activities over many decades - from reinstigating the Mid Devon Show to encouraging young farmers into farming. Those who knew John have much to be thankful for over the years. Our thoughts are very much with his family at this time.

We wish Jill Brownlow very best wishes for her new move into Silverton and hope she will retain her long association with Bickleigh in the years to come. The planned events at the hall have been put on hold and it is hoped that they can be reinstated for the future.

It is pleasing to see the phone box being refurbished and look forward to a "grand opening" sometime soon. The Parish Council continues to take forward ideas to improve the general landscape; even small projects can make a difference but ultimately it is up to us all to value what we have and ensure we have a community in which we can be proud to live.

The tail end of summer will hopefully give us a good start to winter. Let's wish that it will be kind to us and we can largely avoid Covid. I'm sure if we need our willing band of volunteers to help in any way they will again rise to the challenge.

**Your editors,  
Steve and Michael**

# Elsie Chamberlain

Elsie passed away in July aged 99 and was well known to many in the village. She enjoyed being an active member of the village attending the Bickleigh Bowling Club, Gardening Club and the Women's Institute. She worked as a volunteer at the school, twice a week for many years reading with the children in reception and Class 1 until she was well into her nineties. Living close to the school she loved to hear the happy sound of children playing from her home in Bell Meadow. Latterly she moved into Tiverton where she was well cared for.

Our thoughts are with you Chrissie and your family at this time.



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# Parish Council update

I'm so glad I live in a world where there are Octobers. Don't you just love the changing colours all around you and the leaves falling from the trees. I'm in the midst of reading a really good book, recommended by my son, by Delia Owens called 'Where the Crawdads Sing' about a murder investigation in the marshes of North Carolina and came across this sentence – 'Autumn leaves don't fall, they fly. They take their time and wander on this their only chance to soar'. I like that thought.

To me, autumn is a time of preparation for next year and new beginnings. Animals fatten up for the winter ahead, squirrels stockpile acorns, and the trees shed their leaves to make them heartier for the coming cold. When nature reawakens in spring, this long rest will have served them well.

So, we should use this time to prepare for Winter and eventually Spring. The work done now lays the groundwork for success in the future. It's a solid base that allows later work to build up into something worthwhile. Let go of the old and clean out the clutter now, so you can invest your time in what really matters.

When Judith and I moved to Devon a few years ago we couldn't decide whether to live on the south coast or the north coast as we liked both. I recall vividly my father in law stating that living on the coast with a sea view was all very well, but the view was basically the same no matter what the season, whereas living in the country, the view was constantly changing. I am

reminded of his wise word when I look around Bickleigh, particularly at this time of the year, and witness the autumn in all its splendid God-given glory.

As regards activity in the village, we continue to make the best of a bad situation and be grateful for what we can still do. The Harvest service at St. Mary's was well attended under the circumstances and thanks to all those involved in making the church look most 'harvesty'.

A picnic was held in Joan's Orchard which, despite the social distancing restrictions and indifferent weather was a good chance to meet up with others who had been similarly restricting their social contacts over the summer in line with government guidance.

It's also good to see and hear the children back at school and we are grateful for all the efforts of the teaching and support staff in helping the children adjust to the unsettling requirements of the Covid restrictions.

Congratulations to Joe & Janet Ashworth and Steve & Mary Batt for winning the village sunflower competition with very fine specimens.

I'll leave you with another autumn quote, this time from Winnie the Pooh, "It's the first day of Autumn! A time of chocolatey mornings, and toasty marshmallow evenings, and, best of all, leaping into leaves!"

**Clive**

# Letter from the Rector

As a young boy in the mid and late 60s, we often visited my great uncle Reg and great aunt Gwen who lived just inside Wales at Caldicot. In the early days the journey involved a long wait for the Aust ferry over the River Severn or a long drive via Gloucester.

I recall being taken down to the Severn to watch the construction of one of the civil engineering marvels of the age – the Severn Bridge. This seemed to me to embody everything wonderful about the new age into which I was becoming aware. After it was opened I loved the journey to Wales, not just over the new bridge suspended high above the treacherous waters below but also stopping at the Aust services high on the cliffs with a viewing platform of the bridge and whole estuary.

A couple of years ago, Wendy and I had an hour or so to kill in the Bristol area so I proposed a nostalgic return visit to that impressive service station and viewing platform on the cliffs over the Severn. We found the building is now the offices of an insurance company and the viewing platform, now rarely visited, in a state of decay – a telescope blindly staring into overgrown brambles. It was a poignant reminder of how, in what seems such a comparatively short time, the great symbol of a new age is yesterday's forgotten relic – 'old hat' compared to its shiny new sister crossing. The bridge even became a Grade I listed structure in 1999.

It is only natural, especially in times like we are living through, that we need to cling to something permanent and unchanging to

give us stability. Maybe it is a sign of the times – when the old bridge was built Britain was only just emerging from the days of empire and about to look to our relationship with Europe as our future. Where does that future now lie – post Brexit and (hopefully) post-Covid. It is said to be an ancient Chinese curse: 'May you live in interesting times'.

For many our families and homes and communities provide that stability but they can all too quickly end up in a state of flux.

We may indeed live in 'interesting' times. From a Christian perspective they are also 'provisional' times. The times in which we wait for the ultimate fulfilment of all creation in the second coming of Christ. Times when we can never fully comprehend God's great and beautiful creation or discern His purpose for us. Revelation of His will is only ever be partial and is a great mystery to us.

This can seem very unsettling. But there is something solid on which we can anchor. The hymn writer Henry Francis Lyte wrote: 'Change and decay in all around I see; O Thou who changest not, abide with me.' What 'changest not' is the constant love of God throughout history. However many times we turn away from Him, that love remains the same, trying to find new ways to break into our lives, willing us to return to his welcoming arms. The Georgian cleric Augustus Toplady imagined it in terms of the gap in the solid rocks of Burrington Combe in the Mendip Hills where he sheltered one night during a violent storm. It inspired him to write: 'Rock of Ages, cleft for me, let me hide myself in Thee'.

**Paul**

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