

**February 2021**



Let's try to be as optimistic as we can. The sun is visibly climbing higher and tentative signs are here of improvements we can expect as Spring advances. We can see snowdrops as we walk around the village - always to be looked forward to. But look and observe more closely. There are the first green shoots to be seen when you look down. Apart from snowdrops the leaves of the celandines are unfolding and the first flowers on the primroses are exploring the sun; yes still few and small but you notice every day makes a difference. In the hedges others are stirring; the cuckoo pint is unfurling the first leaves and the dog mercury is beginning to show the small buds of its very small, insipid flowers. Buds are swelling; again hard to see much but the hazel leads the way with the catkins.

Nature has no perception of Covid; it does what has done for thousands of

years. Another season comes around. Soon the leaves will be out, as will blossom and many flowers. Then nature will slide into summer, autumn will be not far behind, then winter and around and around.

What about us? This time last year most of the world had no inkling of what was to come and we are still somewhat nervous about what 2021 will bring. We do have reason to be optimistic now so let's wish that this time next year we will be in a much better place.

Thank you to all our residents who have been looking out for those that have needed help. Massive thanks go to all key workers and so many others that have kept the nation going.

**Your editors,  
Steve and Michael**

# Bickleigh Improvement Plan

The Parish Council is keen to explore what more could be done to enhance the appearance of the village and would welcome the views of villagers.

Since the new Parish Council was established at the end of 2019 we have, amongst other things, replaced the village notice boards, commenced the refurbishment of the old telephone box, and recruited a lengthsman, Robin Maynard, who has done a terrific job in keeping the village drains and gullies as clear as possible, especially on Bickleigh Hill. However, we now wish to hear from villagers as to what they would like to see improved next.

To this end a meeting is to be arranged in February to discuss ideas and agree how best to proceed.

Under the current restrictions the meeting will have to be held on Zoom. Should you wish to attend the meeting or if you just want to let me have your own thoughts or ideas please email me [clivemwilliams@sky.com](mailto:clivemwilliams@sky.com).

I look forward to hearing from you.

**Clive**

## Bickleigh Village Hall



**Available to hire for  
private functions**

**£10ph with kitchen  
£8ph without**

**Contact Lauren Hockley  
01884 855022**

## SL Chanin Carpentry

All aspects of carpentry  
undertaken

Professional friendly service

Fully qualified and insured  
(City & Guilds)

01884 855060 / 07708 975156

[www.slchanincarpentry.co.uk](http://www.slchanincarpentry.co.uk)  
[stuart@slchanincarpentry.co.uk](mailto:stuart@slchanincarpentry.co.uk)

Find us on Facebook

# Letter from the Rector

I was sat at my desk recently on a particularly gloomy day. I picked up my black bound notebook and it opened on the first page. Suddenly my day brightened for there I saw a little sticker of Father Christmas. I was immediately taken back several years to the parish where I served my curacy - to a Christmas lunch with all the school.

I remember the event clearly. As I was walking around chatting I noticed on one of the tables all the children were getting ready to pull their crackers.. One little boy saw me approaching, and without a sound held out the end of a cracker towards me – inviting me to pull. We did and he won the business end of the cracker. He delved inside, picking out a hat, a joke, and a sticker of Father Christmas. He beckoned me closer and without a word placed the sticker on my jacket. The sticker I later transferred to my notebook.

It was a simple act, done without fuss. But what he was really doing was inviting me into his circle of friends, he wanted me to be part of it – no longer the vicar who comes in to take assemblies but a friend.

It was a memory that helped to warm a chilly late January day with a smile. And it reminded me how often small and what might appear insignificant acts, often coming from the unexpected, can give us a glimpse of the kindness and love that enriches and makes this world a better place. Bringing a little glimpse of 'light' into what maybe 'dark' times.

Harold Macmillan, the prime minister from 1957 to 1963, was once asked by a journalist what was the most challenging part of his job as leader. His reply was: "Events, dear

boy, events". Well that has certainly proved the case since I moved here to take up the post of rector last March. All of our lives have been knocked unexpectedly sideways. As we continue in the third lockdown, with no sign of anything approaching normality, even with the rolling out of vaccines, we can still feel fearful, frightened and isolated. The darkness of the event can so easily encircle and enclose us.

Just then the beacons, or possibly only pinpricks, of 'light' come to us in the response of those around - friends, neighbours and our communities.

We have witnessed so much light shining into the darkness of this last year - in the response of communities in helping each other and the most vulnerable. The dedication of NHS and care staff, especially over recent weeks and months when they have been stretched to the limits and beyond.

As we emerge from lockdown, we need to ensure that what defines us is not the pandemic but the response to the pandemic. We need to be defined not by the darkness but by the light.

A response that is that 'light' may be so difficult on the hard and rocky journey that has been and will no doubt continue to be our earthly life. But we are never alone on that journey. Jesus Christ, the light of the world, weeps with us, works for our healing, and invites us to walk in his light. He is right there with us, in the midst of everything. And we can see Him in the most unexpected ways – even in the gift of a sticker from a small boy.

**Paul**

# Let's Be Positive!

I've gathered together a small collection of stories of kindness, happiness and joy, from around the world and closer to home.

I'll start with Sebbie, who has learning and physical disabilities. He's been giving out biscuits to local police officers in Staffordshire, collecting food from local foodbanks for his neighbours and doing numerous other good deeds. He's only 17, but said, "I really believe random acts of kindness are a superpower – I just happen to be lucky that it seems to be my superpower."

How about the police officer in Massachusetts who purchased a Christmas dinner for two families after being called to arrest them for shoplifting. The shopkeeper reported that the two women with two young children were caught not scanning all their groceries. Seeing that they didn't have enough money to feed their families he bought them gift cards worth £200 with his own money.

Or there's Alice a nurse who early one morning found her car very frozen. A kind gentleman noticed her NHS lanyard and told her to get in the car whilst he scraped all the ice off her windows whilst she sat inside feeling both warm and appreciated.

I was also impressed when I read in the news that bird collections across the world have united to reintroduce a tiny kingfisher. The Guam kingfisher was last seen in the wild in 1988 after the population plummeted due to the accidental release of brown tree snakes into its habitat in the 1940s. There are now only 150 birds remaining in zoos and private collections so the plan is to breed these birds and create a population which could sustain in the wild. Although the birds cannot be

reintroduced to their original habitat because of the snakes, scientists have identified some remote islands where they believe it could thrive.

Here's a tale to melt any heart: customers of a coffeeshop in Ontario got together to raise enough money to help an employee go back to university.

Vishnu works at Tim Hortons and really goes the extra mile with every customer he meets. According to customers, he fist-bumps you, he provides weather reports and makes you feel special.

Vishnu was studying IT at university but had to drop out because of financial difficulties. When a group of customers heard about it, they set up a GoFundMe campaign and raised over £20,000 showing how people really can make a difference.

And closer to home, Tiverton in fact, how about the inspiring teenager Courtney Penfold who marked her 18th birthday by using the £602 she received in gifts, by heading to Morrisons to buy food and supplies for CHAT, Tiverton's foodbank.

Courtney said, "I am fortunate to come from a brilliant family and have lots of presents and a Christmas dinner put on the table, so I just wanted to make Christmas as special as I could for other people."

And finally, it cheered me up that the best number 2 song of all time, Wham!'s Last Christmas (just pipping Vienna by Ultravox!) finally made it to number 1, 36 years after it was released.

Until next time – stay positive!

**Clive**

Dealing with The Black Stuff...

**Robin Maynard of Bickleigh  
THE EXE VALLEY CHIMNEY SWEEP**

Fully insured for professional sweeping of solid fuel appliances and open fires. Certificate issued for insurance purposes. CCTV surveys if required.



*It is against company policy  
to employ small children*

01884 855597 / 07980 146076  
exevalleychimneysweep@btinternet.com

## Kerry Peters

**1-to-1 swimming lessons  
for ages 5 years +**

Water confidence / Learn to swim  
Stroke improvement  
Swim technique for triathletes  
Adult with child lessons

ASA Level 1 and 2 qualified,  
DBS checked, fully insured

Call me on 01884 855856  
or text 07968 889673

# Village Library and CHAT collection

A quick note to say that Polly and Thom have relaunched their library now located in the porch way of the village hall and have also restarted the CHAT food and grocery collection by their gate

West Country Wedding Flowers

*Mrs Polly Thompson*

Individually Designed Wedding  
Bouquets, Headdresses, Buttonholes  
and Sprays to suit all budgets.

Flowers for Church and Reception if  
required. Also Private or Corporate  
Functions To make an appointment  
for me to visit you at your home,  
daytime, evenings or weekends.

Please contact me on 07772 070818  
or pollysflowers@yahoo.co.uk

**Submissions to the Bickleigh  
Bugle are very welcome! Email  
us by the 20th of the month at  
bickleighbugle@outlook.com**