





## ***A View from the Vicarage***

Alleluia! Christ is risen! The good news is wonderful news and it's no April Fool's joke. April 1<sup>st</sup> is Easter Sunday, when we come together to celebrate the resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. This is what we are all about as Christians. This is what God's eternal love did for us. It is indeed a great day of celebration!

I was, I must admit, highly tempted to write an opening which would have shocked most people by me declaring the resurrection to be a complete fabrication and utter nonsense, but soon realized what effect that might have on some. Believers and those who know me would have been shocked and deeply, deeply saddened to think that I had abandoned my faith! Those who have no use for God and His Son in their lives would have been shocked and delighted, I suppose, that I had finally "seen their light." Everyone would have been relieved or disappointed when I then declared it to be an April Fool's joke. And the resurrection is no joke!!

Can you just imagine how such amazing news would have been shared if they had today's communication technology? Mary would have tweeted, "Went to anoint Jesus' body. Stone rolled away. He's not there. Angel said, 'He's risen!' Come and see." Imagine receiving that tweet. If you liked Jesus and were happy, you might retweet it to as many people as possible and they would do likewise, thus ensuring the good news spread like wildfire. If you didn't like Jesus (and He certainly had enemies!), then you might reply saying, "Rubbish! Grave robbed. Resurrection doesn't happen." And His enemies would make sure that one spread equally fast.

Then the news media would get involved. Reporters and camera-people would flock to the scene, desperate to find eyewitness accounts, trying to out-scoop everyone else covering this incredible story. The ultimate goal? To get Jesus live on video. Would Mary have had the presence of mind to film him on her smartphone? Would Peter or John have remembered to bring theirs when they rushed to the tomb? Which one in the upper room would broadcast Jesus' appearance in that locked room? How would the world have reacted?

How would you have reacted to the news? You are sitting in your home, watching a reporter live from Jerusalem standing outside an empty tomb telling you about this man Jesus—a Jewish teacher who went around the countryside telling people about God and His love for them. The reporter goes on to say that on Thursday, authorities arrested Jesus and brought him before the Temple rulers and then to the Roman Governor Pontius Pilate to be condemned to death. Jesus was severely whipped (how He survived that is in itself unbelievable!) and then taken outside the city to be hanged on a cross. His body was then buried in a tomb and sealed with a large stone. Everyone thought His story ended then and there, but suddenly on Sunday morning people who came to the tomb found it empty! Eyewitnesses claimed there was an angel who said that Jesus was no longer dead but had risen to new life! They were certainly convincing and sure of their story. But we found others who counter-claimed that it was simply a case of graverobbers stealing the body.

At this point, what would you have believed? Not knowing Jesus and not being anywhere near Him to know about Him or what He taught, we might have been sceptical, right? We likely would have responded, "Unless I see Him and I touch the marks in His hands and side, I won't believe He's really risen from the dead." The Bible tells us that was Thomas' reaction when the other disciples told him that Jesus was alive and had actually appeared before them when Thomas wasn't there. What if there was a video record of that first appearance in the upper room? Would that have convinced you? I think it could because you would see it with your own eyes and see His interaction with those around Him to prove He really was alive. But there would be sceptics who might scoff, "I don't think He was really dead; maybe just unconscious when they buried Him in that tomb."

But we also live in an age of modern communication dominated by the phrase, "fake news!" Can you imagine? Both sides would charge the other with being the bearer of fake news, and the debate would go on and on. Just like it has for two thousand years! We have hundreds of eyewitness accounts recorded in the Bible and even in secular sources to verify the life and death and resurrection of Jesus, but so many still refuse to believe it. Before I became a priest, I was a history professor teaching in universities. My job was to search the records and piece together all the stories to find out what happened. The facts, in my opinion, speak for themselves. Jesus is the Son of God who came to live as a man, to teach us the way to God and then to die on the Cross, taking the punishment our wrong-doings deserve, so that we might be freed from our eternal death penalty to enjoy eternal life in God's Kingdom.

But facts are cold. I invite you to read the story. Immerse yourself in it and feel the depth of God's love for you. He loves you so much He was willing to sacrifice His own Son that you might receive His mercy and grace, thus enabling you to enter into His eternal Kingdom when the time arrives. Come to church (the celebration starts April 1 at 11:15am at St Chad's and carries on for 50 days!) and experience God's love. Come and be part of His wonderful family. That's what Easter is really all about. God bless you.

Rev. Don Alcock  
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# Messages...

## **Norton in Hales Cricket Club**

Well here I write with only 5 weeks to the start of the Cricket season and I look out and see Snow everywhere. It is difficult to imagine that anyone will be playing.

This year the first team will be playing in Div 2 North Staffs South Cheshire League and the opening game is on April 21st v Sandyford. We welcome to our shores Angus Henderson from New Zealand who will be playing and coaching the juniors. There will also be the usual suspects. We hope to put some excellent games of cricket on and invite all villagers to come over and have a friendly drink and a chat at the bar. Every other weekend the second team will be playing.

Simon Belfield will be coordinating the junior section at the club this year. All stars cricket will start on Fri 11th May 6-7 for girls and boys 5-8. We have entered a U8s team this year. We have a registration Night for new players and juniors on 6th and 13th April. We look forward to an excellent season. Roly

## **Norton Investment Club**

Parishioners may be interested to know that we have an Investment/Share Club that meets every month in the Hinds Head. We are "THHIC" - The Hinds Head Investment Club - and have been active for over 3 years with currently 12 Members. We know a little about shares but are happy to welcome new members who can bring their own knowledge and expertise. So far we have been quite successful with our portfolio in profit by over 30% over the time we have been active. So if you are interested in a monthly not-too-serious social get-together in the pub, usually the 2nd Monday of the month, but in April and May it will be the 3rd Monday because of bank holidays, then please come along or to learn more about us contact Dick Walton at [suedickwalton72@aol.com](mailto:suedickwalton72@aol.com) or 01630 654734.

## **Dog fouling around the village**

Recently we've received a number of reports of dog fouling around the village, especially on Main Road close to the school. Leaving dog faeces in public areas is extremely unpleasant and unnecessary. Nobody wants to have to clean dog poo off theirs or their children's shoes, scooters, prams etc. Most dog owners are responsible pet owners and do pick up after their dogs but are unfortunately let down by those who fail to take responsibility. Please let's try to make Norton in Hales a dog poo free village, and remember to take bags with you when you walk your dogs so that we keep the village beautiful for everyone.





# Norton in Bloom Newsletter

## April 2018

### Norton in Hales Open Gardens

Norton has put on 'Open Garden' events in the past and these proved very popular, so it has been decided to organise a similar one in 2018. We would like it to be a Norton Parish event, so publicity will not be extended outside the village.

The In Bloom group would like to ask people who would be willing to open their gardens to get in touch. The date of the event will be **on Sunday 24th June**. Gardens throughout the parish are sought and they are not expected to be 'Chelsea' standard! The gardens can be of any size and could even just contain one planter. Some people may just want to give access to just their front gardens, so if you have ever had an award in the annual front gardens competition in the past, how about volunteering?

A plan of the open gardens in the parish will be produced and transport arranged to the more outlying gardens. One problem with opening your garden is that you do not get to see any others, so we will try and arrange for those taking part to visit them on the day before.

Please get in touch with Ann Holland on 07976 613632 or any member of In Bloom to register your interest.

### Jobs for April

- 1 Keep weeds under control
- 2 Protect fruit blossom from late frosts
- 3 Tie in climbing and rambling roses
- 4 Sow hardy annuals, herbs and wild flower seed outdoors
- 5 Start to feed citrus plants
- 6 Increase the water given to houseplants
- 7 Feed hungry shrubs and roses
- 8 Sow new lawns or repair bare patches
- 9 Prune fig trees
- 10 Divide bamboos and waterlilies

### Learn more about Bats!



The village in bloom group have an evening bat walk lined up for the beginning of September. This will start in the centre of the village and progress to Forge Farm where it will be rounded off with a BBQ. We are pleased to have a bat expert, Andrew Cristinacce, to lead the walk and we hope that he will bring along some bat detectors to enable us hear the bat calls. More news on this later on, but as most people do not know anything at all about bats, in preparation for the walk, Andrew has kindly agreed to give an illustrated talk on the subject on **Thursday 24th May at 7.30pm** in the village hall. The only charge for the talk will be £1 for a compulsory cup of tea! Please put his in your diary – *a reminder will be published at the beginning of May.*

The Norton in Bloom group meets at The Hind's Head every month.

This year meetings will take place on the second Thursday in the month at 7.30pm. New members are very welcome.

**The next two meeting is the 12<sup>th</sup> April.**

### Hodnet Hall Gardens

The Bloom Group has been offered a private tour of Hodnet Hall Gardens on **Friday 11<sup>th</sup> May** – meeting on the Church entrance car park at 2pm. The cost will be £7 per head.

A visit in May will give fabulous rhododendrons, lilacs, azaleas and bluebell all within the 60+ acres of gardens.

RSVP please to:

malcolm.mcdonald@btinternet.com



# Norton Nature Notes

20<sup>th</sup> February to 20<sup>th</sup> March 2018

Chris Green

I am writing this on the first day astronomical spring (the Vernal Equinox) and the recent snow has just melted following another blast of cold from the east. The two cold snaps we have experienced since the end of February have certainly affected our local wildlife. During the 'Beast from the East' many of us in the village noticed an increase in birds visiting the garden, including some species that we would rarely see so close to our homes. It has also brought mortality. I have seen two Lapwings dead along the hedgerows and Andrew B discovered a Dunlin in his front garden. This wader is most commonly found in estuaries throughout winter and moves to its breeding ground from April. The Dunlin gathers in huge flocks but can occasionally be seen further inland among Lapwing and Golden Plover. The strength of the winds we faced at the end of February may have forced this bird off track and it sadly perished in the harsh conditions. We have also had several warm sunny days this March though and I took great pleasure in watching some bees gather pollen from crocus that had fully opened.

This is a good time of year to compare Hawthorn and Blackthorn trees which are both starting to burst into life. The flowers of the Blackthorn appear before the leaves and can be seen now as scarlet lumps all along the branches. They are noticeable at the same time that bright green leaves start to show in clusters along the hedgerows – this is the hawthorn. The cold weather has held them back but it will not be long until many of the hedges surrounding the village are bursting with white flowers. Once pollinated by insects the flowers will produce a crop of sloes for Autumn picking. The herbage along woodland edge and hedge bottom is now growing rapidly. As the drifts of snowdrop we have enjoyed die back and the bulbs left are starting to fatten you may notice, as I did on a recent walk, Lesser Celandine, Common Violet, Dogs Mercury and the leaves of Cuckoo-pint. By the stepping stones at Partons Pool the leaves of Wild Garlic, or Ramsons, can now be seen – it will be a few weeks until the delicate white flowers show. On my last visit there was still no frogspawn in Partons Pool but Jem contacted me (25<sup>th</sup> Feb) to say that frogs had again returned to his pond in the middle of the village and frogspawn could be seen.

Sue M at Betton and Carol and Bev both had Snipe visit their gardens during the cold weather – a rare sight. These are fantastic little birds with a splendid striped head plumage and long bill. They are a small, secretive wader that probe mud for insects and worms. When disturbed they fly up and then zig-zag down to a favourable position. The birds reported took the opportunity to forage in gardens – the weather forcing them out of a habitat in which they feel most comfortable. The Jack Snipe is a smaller and less common relative of the Snipe and Richard J flushed one from a drainage ditch on the 28<sup>th</sup> February.

Fieldfare and Redwing were low in numbers in early February around the village but soon made an appearance during the several days of harsh weather. Malcolm M had 24 fieldfares in his garden, Richard J up to 100 in a mixed flock in the fields surrounding his house, and Carol and Bev had them visit the apples and pears they had put out as food. These thrushes remain in mixed flocks out in the fields and hedgerows away from urban areas in search of berries and worms during their stay here over the winter, but when the weather is particularly challenging they come and forage in gardens.

During March Roger P sadly reported a dead Brambling in his garden showing the symptoms of Trichomonosis and another not looking too well. Roger also reported that he has not seen as many Redpoll and Bullfinch this year. Nigel and Sally P watched a large flock of Lapwing in the field near Partons Pool which were in turn being watched by one of our resident Buzzard, who was sat on a fence post. Dick W reports seeing up to 5 Brambling in his garden and 12 pheasant all together under the bird feeder, making the most of spilt seed. Malcolm M has also seen Brambling in his garden this month.

I welcome the song of the Skylark, for me it marks the end of winter. I heard my first burst of song from a bird hovering over a field out towards Oakley Hall on the 3<sup>rd</sup> March. The Skylark remains in Britain all year round but is rarely noticeable until they become territorial and make the decision to ascend, hover and produce a variable song that radiates for a long distance. On an overcast day they are hard to see, but when you do catch the song spend some time trying to spot them – the male will ascend into a song-flight which can last for over half an hour.

I look forward to hearing of your own wildlife sightings this spring.