

Lurgashall News

MARCH 2026



Highlights



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It was one of those March days when the sun shines hot and the wind blows cold: when it is summer in the light, and winter in the shade.

Charles Dickens, Great Expectations

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CHURCHWARDENS

Amanda Worrall, Hillgrove House, GU28 9EW 01428 707436
Rob Holgate holgate.family@btinternet.com 0738758 2100

St. Laurence Church Cleaning

Enjoy lively conversation and a great work out in a beautiful village location .

Church cleaning 1 morning a month for an hour .

Contact: Judy Pavia 01428707265

Church Services for March and to Easter 2026

1 March <i>2nd Sunday of Lent</i>	10.00 am	Lurgashall	Holy Communion <i>Canon Nigel Nicholson</i>
	10.30 am	Northchapel	Holy Communion
8 March <i>3rd Sunday of Lent</i>	10.00 am	Lurgashall	Holy Communion <i>Rev Jack Mulder</i>
15 March <i>4th Sunday of Lent</i> <i>Mothering Sunday</i>	<u>11.00 am</u>	Lurgashall	Service for Mothering Sunday <i>Canon Nigel Nicholson</i>
	10.30 am	Ebernoe	Mothering Sunday Service <i>Dr Tom Carpenter</i>
22 March <i>5th Sunday of Lent</i>	10.00 am	Lurgashall	Holy Communion <i>Rev Richard Lloyd</i>
29 March <i>Palm Sunday</i>	10.00 am	Lurgashall	Holy Communion <i>Rev Jack Mulder</i>
	10.30 am	Ebernoe	Holy Communion
3 April <i>Good Friday</i>	<u>11.00 am</u>	Lurgashall	Good Friday Service <i>Canon Nigel Nicholson</i>
5 April <i>Easter Sunday</i>	10.00 am	Lurgashall	Easter Sunday Service <i>Canon Nigel Nicholson</i>
	11.00 am	Northchapel	Easter Sunday Service
	10.30 am	Ebernoe	Easter Sunday Service



St Laurence, Lurgashall
Sunday, 15th March at 11.00 am
A family service taken by Canon Nigel Nicholson

Easter Services

at St Laurence, Lurgashall

Palm Sunday

Sunday 29th March at 10.00 am
Sung Communion taken by Rev Jack Mulder

Good Friday

Friday 3rd April at 11.00 am
A special service taken by Canon Nigel Nicholson

Easter Sunday

Sunday 5th April at 10.00 am
Family Communion taken by Canon Nigel Nicholson,
with easter egg hunt!

From the Churchwardens

As March arrives and the days gradually lengthen, we find ourselves in the middle of Lent, a season of reflection, renewal, and anticipation. Lent offers each of us the opportunity to pause, consider our lives, and prepare our hearts for the joy of Easter. It is a time to draw closer to God and to one another, embracing the spirit of self-examination, prayer, and community.



Flower displays are on show in St Laurence's for most of the year, so visitors looking around the church in Lent may be surprised to see no flower arrangements on the windowsills. The absence of flowers throughout this period is due to a long-held tradition amongst Anglicans and Catholics that no flowers should be displayed in churches during Lent, to signify a 40-day period of solemnity, penance and preparation for Easter representing the days Jesus spent in the desert.

We do, however, celebrate Mothering Sunday in the middle of Lent and that *is* a day for flowers. Historically, it was a day when people returned to their 'mother church' - the main church or cathedral in their area - for a special service. This pilgrimage allowed families to reunite, and it became a time for children working away from home to visit their mothers. Over time, the day evolved into a celebration of motherhood, where children would present their mothers with flowers, cards, and small gifts to show their appreciation and love. Today, Mothering Sunday is a cherished occasion for families to come together and honour the important role of mothers in their lives. This year it falls on 15th March, and we will be holding a special service at St Laurence's taken by Canon Nigel Nicholson, where there will be beautifully prepared posies for the children to give to their mothers.

We move through Lent into Holy Week, the week of Easter beginning with Palm Sunday, then to the reflective and solemn service of Good Friday and onto a busy day on Easter Saturday when all the flower arrangers in the parish fill St Laurence's with colour, scent and beauty preparing to celebrate the joyous arrival of Easter.

Nigel Nicholson will also be taking our Easter Day service, and the church will be overflowing with families and friends singing traditional Easter hymns, the happy sound of excited children on their egg hunt after visiting the lambs at the Kinnears' farm, and maybe even the chirping of chicks in church. We look forward to seeing you there.

This is the last 'letter' from me as, after 30 years on the PCC and 9 years as Churchwarden, I am retiring. During that time, I have worked with five different incumbents with interregnums between each. There is still no sign from the Diocese about a new vicar for Lurgashall, but our visiting clergy look after us wonderfully and you are all in good hands with Rob and the PCC.

Amanda



Can you spare some time to help?

Would you like to be a part of the team involved in the future success of the village shop?



Village Shop:

Volunteers are needed to work alongside staff in the shop for 2-hour shifts either weekly or twice a month. Enjoy serving customers and meeting other volunteers, neighbours and residents of the village. Full training given and if you are not able to commit to a regular slot we also have adhoc or holiday cover opportunities. Please email lvsvolunteers@gmail.com

Management Team:

Join the Steering Group or Board of Directors to help with management, finance and retail business projects. Administrative, retail, finance and IT skills helpful. To find out more, please email Sally Ohlson on sallyohlson@outlook.com

DON'T MISS IT!
LURGASHALL RECREATION
ASSOCIATION



THURSDAY, MARCH 26TH 2026

7pm for 7.30pm quiz start
Lurgashall Village Hall

Tickets £20.00 per person (excluding team host).

Up to eight members per team. For more information and to book your team slot contact Joanne Vaughan on 07802 946220. Without a team? We'll find one for you.

THE VILLAGE HALL 50:50 CLUB



Congratulations to February's Winners:

1st prize: Paul and Jacqui Eaton

2nd prize: Jane Rae

The 50:50 Club is one of the main sources of income for our Village Hall, and its contribution is vital to maintaining this important village asset. Please join and help your Village Hall.

Just call Steve on 077783357272 or email to

catherine.nicholes@hotmail.co.uk

Lurgashall Oil Buying Group

Northover Energy provided the lowest price for our February order of 26,000 litres order, at 55.95 ppl +VAT.



The next order will be placed at the beginning of March. Please let me know if you are interested in joining the Group.

Colin Robertson lurgashall.oil@gmail.com

Here for our community

Lurgashall Village Hall and its equipment are available for hire, with special discounted rates for residents of the parish.

The hall is great for children's parties, exercise and dance classes, family gatherings, meetings, film shows – in fact, almost anything you can think of!

Equipment for hire includes tables, chairs, crockery, cutlery, glassware and the ever-popular large urn!

Our rates are very reasonable indeed. To find out more, please go to www.lurgashallvillagehall.org or contact the Booking Secretary on lvhmc.bookings@gmail.com

VILLAGE LUNCH

The next village lunch will be on the 9th March. Just put your name on the list in the Shop. This closes on the Thursday before the lunch. Sally is away for the March Lunch so please put your name down to make sure Vicki has the correct numbers.

VILLAGE HALL

*Celebrate Spring
with a delicious
Afternoon Tea at the
Village Hall
on Wed. 25th March,
3-5pm*

Friendly & fun!



Tea and homemade scones & cakes £3

Easter raffle with lovely prizes – 3 tickets for £2

March Events at the Village Hall

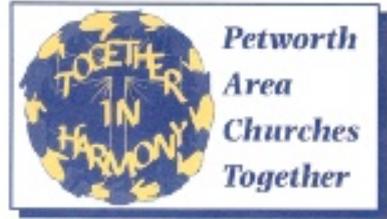
Every Monday, 6pm & 7pm	Pilates Classes with Eliza Wheeler
Sat 7 th , 10am–12pm	Mobile skip in hall car park
Mon 9 th , 1-3pm	Village Lunch – sign up at Shop
Tues 10 th , 6.30 for 7pm	Fête AGM – open to all
Wed 11 th , 2.30-4pm	Lurgashall History Archive open
Thurs 12 th , 7.30pm	Parish Council meeting
Thus 19 th , 6.30 for 7pm	Horticultural Club – Gardeners’ Question Time – don’t miss it!
Wed 25 th , 3-5pm	Spring Afternoon Tea – see above
Thurs 26 th , 7 for 7.30pm	LRA Quiz Night – a great night out!

<https://www.lurgashallvillagehall.org>

P A C T NEWS

Petworth Area Churches Together

Working together in harmony



NEWS FOR MARCH

Sunday 29th March- 3pm- Petworth Palm Sunday Procession.

Led by donkeys Ringo and Buster and the Petworth Town Band, the Palm Sunday Procession starts at the Sacred Heart Church, Angel Street at 3pm. It then wends its way through the Town Centre to arrive at St Mary's Church at around 3.30.

It is a great Walk of Witness through the town and well received by residents, visitors, shop keepers and staff. Palms are supplied for children and adults. Do come and join the Procession and sing some rousing hymns as well as hearing a short resume of the Palm Sunday Gospel story at three different points around the town.

The march will end at St. Mary's Church with tea and cakes. All are welcome to take part in this lovely traditional event. No booking necessary.

Gerald Greshamcooke@gmail.com

Pactpetworth@gmail.com .

<https://petworthareachurchestogether.com>



Saturday 6th June 2026

AGM – Tuesday 10th March at 7:00 pm

Although summer feels very distant, we're excited to announce that the Lurgashall Fete will take place on **Saturday, 6th June 2026**. Preparations are already underway to bring back all your favourite activities, along with some exciting new attractions. As always, we rely on your support to make this event a success, so please mark your calendars and Save The Date.

In the meantime, we invite everyone who has previously helped with the Fete—and anyone interested in joining for the first time—to attend the Fete Annual General Meeting. The AGM will be held at **Lurgashall Village Hall on Tuesday, 10th March at 7:00 pm**. We hope you can join us for an evening of planning and refreshments.

If you'd like to get involved with this year's Fete, please reach out to either:

Neil Harding – Tel: 07831 631457 email lurgashallfete@gmail.com

Andy Kinnear – Tel 07973 840699 email agent@barlavington.com

THE ORIGINS OF EASTER EGGS, BUNNIES AND BONNETS

Eggs

Eggs were traditionally associated with pagan festivals held at the spring equinox. The word 'Easter' derives from the festival of the pagan goddess Eostre who was associated with fertility and the rebirth of nature in spring. The birth was symbolised by the transformation of eggs from seemingly lifeless shells to living creatures, with eggs being offered as gifts or sacrifices. Eggs were soon being adopted by early Christians to represent the resurrection of Christ from the dead. Additionally, the egg's hard shell represented the stone blocking Jesus's tomb which had to be broken to enable him to be reborn in the resurrection, signifying the victory of life over death.

In early times, eggs were often in short supply or a forbidden food during lent, so that the hiding of and hunting for Easter eggs symbolised the end of fasting and good luck associated with finding a new-found food. Early Christians coloured eggs red at Easter to symbolise the blood of Christ, and this has evolved into other forms of egg decoration. The use of chocolate to make Easter eggs began in France and Germany in the early 19th century, where chocolatiers experimented with moulds of various shapes including eggs. With Easter already associated with eggs, it was a natural progression for chocolate to be incorporated into the Easter celebration. Thus, chocolate eggs became a favourite Easter treat worldwide and were used as the gifts in Easter egg hunts.

Bunnies

All the foregoing may seem quite logical - but why Easter bunnies? You would not guess this one and it is not an April fool.

Originally, they were not rabbits but hares. There was a long-standing belief confirmed by



*Eostre (or Ostara),
the Pagan goddess of fertility
with hare
by Johannes Gehrts*

Pliny, Plutarch, Philostratus and Aelian that hares were hermaphrodites, providing a natural link to the Virgin Mary.

There was also a belief that hares laid eggs, which may arise from the similarity of its 'form' (resting place) to the nest of a lapwing, both of which appear in grassland in springtime. This led to the legend of an egg-giving hare, and in Northwest European folklore the 'Easter bunny' is a hare. According to this legend only good children received gifts of coloured eggs in the nests that they made in their caps and bonnets before Easter.

Bonnets



Poster for
Easter Parade

Keeping in line with the spirit of renewal in springtime, it became fashionable for Romans to wear new clothing on Easter Sunday after forty days during lent of wearing the same old ones. It was soon considered bad luck not to wear new clothing for the festival. In 1870, the Easter congregation from St Patrick's Cathedral in New York walked down Fifth Avenue in their finery in the first recorded Easter parade with the women in their colourful bonnets. This may have inspired Irving Berlin to write *Easter Parade* in 1933, immortalised in the film version starring Judy Garland and Fred Astaire in 1948. Certainly, the Easter Bonnet is a relatively new American invention and the tradition of making Easter bonnets seems to have gained popularity very quickly.

References

www.historycooperative.org/origin-of-easter-eggs

Wikipedia Easter Bunny

www.history.co.uk/articles/easter-bonnets-the

Robert Stedall ©



LURGASHALL HORTICULTURAL CLUB

Established 1983

MARCH 2026

Winter dormancy is over, light levels and warmth are increasing, and our green spaces are ready to burst back into life, encouraging us to get into our gardens more. Perhaps you feel like a tidy up – but try hard not to be too clean, leaving as much decomposing material as you can for all those beneficial insects and micro-organisms.

There is a balance to be struck - the desire to have a tidy garden whilst encouraging wildlife and supporting ecological balance & diversity. We as gardeners have developed spaces to our likes & needs, introducing a diverse range of plants and expecting them to always be at their best. To aid this we need to go back to some basics – soil health & structure, beneficial micro-organisms & biological control of pests & diseases. Encouraging birds into your garden by leaving seedheads will increase pest control too.



Even a small area left a bit more natural will benefit the rest of your garden.

Let the dandelions flower and seed – pollinators & birds will thank you, and every part is edible for us! They really are quite stunning too...



Dandelion?or Dahlia?.....Can you spot which is which?

Plant of the month:

Clematis arandii – incredible scented evergreen clematis flowering from March - May in sheltered sun or partial shade. Here seen planted under a window for scent.



March Seed Sowing

March is a good time to start sowing, especially if you have a frost free place to grow in.

Broad Beans are great started in pots or modules, and are very hardy plants outside. Started early they can really get going before blackfly appears which can devastate them.



Other veg to start indoors include **Spring onions, lettuce, spinach, early cabbage, calabrese, cauliflower** and many **herbs**. March is a good time to



sow **tomatoes** from mid-month, especially if you can keep them frost free during April nights. They need time to develop for a good crop, so the longer grow period the better (commercial growers start in January).

For me, sowing for Lurgashall Fête is over now, as I start to pot up and grow on. The slower growers were sown last Autumn to overwinter and the rest in February. My challenge is to have plants in flower or at least in bud for early June.

Mark



Jen's tips and ideas for March

Pruning:

As a guide: deciduous shrubs that flower July-October are flowering on current seasons growth, so these can be pruned in spring, removing previous year's growth and leaving 2-3 good buds, increasing airflow and removing all dead, diseased & damaged growth. For example: **Fuchsia, Hydrangea, Hibiscus, Lavender, Caryopteris**, and **winter flowering shrubs**.

DON'T prune Evergreen shrubs yet, as they will not have enough root reserves from winter to stimulate new growth. If renovation is needed, wait as late as possible in Spring when new growth is really pushing out.

Last chance for shrub & climbing roses to be pruned – take care not to damage any new shoots.

Hydrangea Pruning Focus:

Giving at least 3 seasons of interest, Hydrangeas are worth spending time getting the pruning right. They flower on the previous year's growth so it's vital to leave buds that are now emerging. But it depends on the variety as to how much you leave:

The popular **H. arborescens Annabelle** can be pruned for football sized lime-white flower heads: reduce a third of stems completely to ground level (weakest and evenly spaced), then prune remaining to 2-3 buds from the ground = more energy into fewer buds. ➔

For a bushier plant with many smaller flowers: remove a third of stems (weakest) to the ground and prune the remaining stems to half. *Remember to support new growth BEFORE it gets too large and floppy!*



Pru in Hydrangea Annabelle

Hydrangea lacecaps & mopheads: remove all dead, damaged & diseased growth, remove up to a third of the older less productive stems to the ground to encourage new strong shoots for the following year, then remove overwintered flower heads to the first strong pair of emerging buds.

Veggie Bed Prep:

As the ground warms up, we can start preparing for sowing new crops in our veggie plots. The temptation may be to dig deep and turn the soil but try not to disturb the fine balance of soil structure and micro-organisms... remove deep perennial weeds, hoe off annual weeds, and rake gently to create the tilth you require for seeds. Remember the majority of crops prefer firm, undisturbed soils topped with organic matter.

To dig, or not to dig? The soil needs improving with organic matter each year.

NO- DIG RHS: *“No-dig beds consistently exhibit rising fertility over 5+ years, with reported increases in soil carbon by up to 20%. This significantly enhances water retention and nutrient availability, making no-dig plots notably more resilient during drought years”*

Other jobs:

- **Plant Summer flowering bulbs** as the soil warms such as **allium, gladioli, freesia**. *(If anyone is interested in bulk buying, please do get in touch as there are good offers for large quantities which I am happy to help with)*
- **Lift & divide perennials** as soon as possible, and create large natural looking swathes rather than individual dotting – the effect is far more pleasing, and can be punctuated with a single feature plant or artwork.
- **Create wildlife sanctuaries:** A great way to dispose of all your winter & spring prunings is to create a “*dead hedge*” which offers shelter for birds, insects & mammals, plus can look fantastic. Just layer your cuttings between upright stakes and add to each time any pruning is carried out. It will gradually settle & rot down, creating an even more diverse habitat.



GARDENERS' QUESTION TIME



Lurgashall Village Hall

Thursday, 19th March, 2026 6.30 for 7pm

Free Entry * Wine & Nibbles * All Welcome

OUR PANEL OF EXPERTS:

JEAN GRIFFIN Garden expert for BBC Radio Kent/Surrey/Sussex

Jean studied horticulture at Studley College, Warwickshire and the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. She was head of Horticulture and Special Needs at Brinsbury College. She has worked for BBC radio since the 1970's, and describes herself as a 'plant-a-holic'!

Areas of expertise – plants and gardening for the disabled.

MARK SAUNDERS Head gardener at Fittleworth House

Mark has been a professional gardener for 43 years, the last 27 as head gardener at Fittleworth House. He is an experienced lecturer, photographer and member of the Professional Gardeners Guild and National Dahlia Society executive committee.

Areas of Expertise – general gardening and Dahlias

TIM HORNER Waratah Design and Construction

Tim is a professionally qualified garden designer with over 20 years' experience in the landscaping industry. His company Waratah Garden Limited designs and builds award winning gardens for private clients throughout SE England. Having worked on projects from large country house gardens to slick London roof terraces, he has an extensive knowledge of landscaping build practices.

Areas of expertise - Hard and soft Landscaping



JOIN or RENEW MEMBERSHIP

MEMBERSHIP:

Adults: £10 per annum

Juniors (under 16): FREE

With membership of LHC, you also become an Affiliated Member of the RHS (Royal Horticultural Society)

All enquiries to: lurgashallhortclub@gmail.com

THE NOAH'S ARK COUNTRY PUB



We look forward to welcoming you to the Noah's Ark. Join us for a drink at the bar, or for lunch or supper in our restaurant, bar and spacious Ark room.

To book your table, see our current menu, or for opening hours, what's on, and more information, please visit our website.

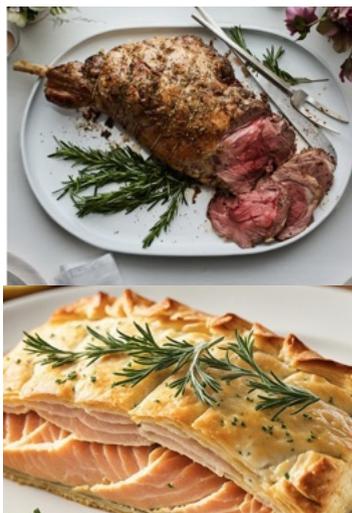
reservations@noahsarkinn.co.uk | 01428 707346 | noahsarkinn.co.uk

Please support your community shop



This month as the days lengthen and spring approaches, Mother's Day and Easter are on the horizon. Take a look at our range of lovely cards and gifts for Mothering Sunday on 15th March.

You can support the shop by placing your food order for Easter weekend; quality fish from Johnsons for a Good Friday supper or a leg of lamb for Easter Sunday lunch from Young's Butcher. Ask at the counter for more information or email (see below). Final orders by Monday 23rd March please.



The LVS subscription scheme continues to gather momentum and we thank all those people who have shown their support with a monthly contribution. We are now able to make plans to renew the lease and recruit another member of staff to serve at the post office and shop counter. This month, we are extending the range and selection of food and drinks, so please drop in we would love to see you.

MARCH	VILLAGE SHOP		POST OFFICE	
	OPEN	CLOSE	OPEN	CLOSE
MONDAY	9.00 AM	5.00 PM	9.30 AM	12.30 PM
TUESDAY	9.00 AM	5.00 PM	9.30 AM	12.30 PM
WEDNESDAY	9.00 AM	5.00 PM	9.30 AM	12.30 PM
THURSDAY	9.00 AM	5.00 PM	9.30 AM	12.30 PM
FRIDAY	9.00 AM	5.00 PM	CLOSED	
SATURDAY	9.00 AM	5.00 PM	CLOSED	
SUNDAY	10.00 AM	1.00 PM	CLOSED	

TEL 01428 707277
 EMAIL lurgashallvillageshop@gmail.com
 WEBSITE www.lurgashallvillageshop.uk



LURGASHALL PARISH COUNCIL

Lurgashall Parish Council's next meeting is on **Thursday 12th March 2026 at 7.30pm** at the Village Hall.

DRAFT minutes from the last meeting are available to view on the Village Green noticeboard and the website.

CHAT WITH YOUR PCSO

(NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICING TEAM)

MONDAY 27TH APRIL 2026

11AM – MIDDAY

LURGASHALL VILLAGE HALL

If you wish to raise concerns or get crime prevention advice, please come along.

DATE REMINDERS

MOBILE SKIP

Saturday 7th March 2026

10am - midday

Lurgashall Village Hall car park.

COMMUNITY TIDY UP

Saturday 28th March 2026 at 10am

Meet at the Village Hall Car Park for equipment.

Please join in and help keep the village tidy.

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 2026

Thursday 16th April 2026 at 7.30pm at the Village Hall

REPORTING ISSUES

Please contact OPERATION CRACKDOWN for anti-social driving (i.e., speeding, careless and aggressive driving and driving whilst on a mobile phone). Either via the website www.operationcrackdown.org or 01243 642222. Abandoned vehicles should now be reported to Chichester District Council.

To report all non-emergency POLICE matters, call 101 or visit www.sussex.police.uk/contact/af/contact-us/

Want to report a pothole or road issue? www.westsussex.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/make-an-enquiry-or-report-a-problem-with-a-road-or-pavement/

To report a problem with a right of way directly then either report online <https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/land-waste-and-housing/public-paths-and-the-countryside/public-rights-of-way/report-a-problem-with-a-right-of-way/> or email prow@westsussex.gov.uk or phone 01243 777620 or inform the Parish Council

Keep up to date with local road closures: www.one.network/uk/westsussex

Mrs Helen Cruikshank
Clerk to Lurgashall Parish Council

Email: clerk@lurgashall-pc.gov.uk
Tel: 01798 860788
<https://lurgashall-pc.gov.uk/>

On Tuesday March 3rd Dr Helena Rufus-Ward
will give a talk on

The Mosaics of Ravenna: For the Glory of Kings, Emperors and Empresses



Ravenna became the capital of the western Roman Empire in 402AD and prospered under Ostrogoth and the Byzantine rule. This left Ravenna with a legacy of richly decorated early Christian buildings earning it UNESCO World Heritage status.



Talks held at 2pm in Fittleworth Village Hall, RH20 1JB

Doors open 1.15. Coffee & tea afterwards

Visitors most welcome - £10

For further details contact Gilly Myers on 07805731663

or email westsussex@theartssociety.org

www.theartssocietywestsussex.org

THE AULD FOOL – ON THE MATTER OF BEING SEARCHED AND RESCUED.....

Until a couple of years ago thoughts of Search and Rescue – young, old or vulnerable people missing on cold wet nights - were just brief newsflashes on the television – I’d not given much thought to the people and dogs out on those searches and assumed that they were probably affiliated to some government outfit.....

Then son Jonathan (born and bred at Whites Green) arrived at my home with Olive – a bright lively Cocker Spaniel girl (bitch doesn’t seem at all right !) – amazingly intelligent, active and full of life – it soon became apparent that she could cope with any challenge put to her – and Jonathan signed up with **Surrey Search and Rescue** to train intensively and in his words “*Do something useful....*” This, in plain English, means that when the phone rings in the small hours and someone vulnerable is missing, Surrey Search and Rescue team members will be deployed on a live search to help find them.



This month Olive has successfully passed her **Level 2 air scenting assessment** and is officially an **operational search dog** – one of just four in the county.

But this did not happen overnight – nearly two years of hard training has gone into reaching this point and this included 93 logged training sessions over 286 hours. Rain, cold, darkness, mud, brambles and a great deal of patience — all to meet the nationally recognised Lowland Rescue standard. No shortcuts. No favours. Just quiet persistence and teamwork.



Jonathan was moved to write to me:

"I am beyond proud of Olive and how far she's come. Her focus, drive and endless enthusiasm constantly blow me away. Watching her grow into a capable, reliable search dog has been the most rewarding journey. None of this would have been possible without the incredible @surreysar team. The support, encouragement and guidance — and the many hours spent hiding in bushes and brambles so Olive could learn — have been extraordinary. This really is a team effort, and I'm lucky to be part of it."

.....And that, I think, is the key point. Olive may wear the badge, but behind her stands a small army of volunteers — trainers, assessors, coordinators and willing "hiders" — all giving their time freely so that when someone is lost, help can be found.



Surrey Search and Rescue website is: - <https://surreysar.org.uk/>

All run by volunteers – they also have a 'just giving' link for help with vehicle and equipment running costs -

<https://www.justgiving.com/charity/surreysearchandrescue>

And Olive's Instagram page – where you can follow her progress is:

https://www.instagram.com/search_dog_olive/

Followers of The Auld Fool could always drop them a few bob.....(If you prefer to contribute to Sussex Search and Rescue:

<https://www.sussar.org.uk/> will take you to their website)



Big Garden Birdwatch



Our front cover this month features a Greater Spotted Woodpecker, a Blue Tit and a Robin, photographed by David Shapcott who joined me at Pear Tree Cottage for the Big Garden Bird Watch on Sunday, 25th January. The day before had been bright – but Sunday was wet and windy, and quite a few of my usual garden visitors chose to stay away – including the redoubtable Blackbird with the broken leg - so our final tally was rather disappointing. However, a pair of Woodpeckers kept us amused by seeing everyone else off the peanut feeder most of the time, and the Robin perched himself on a branch right in front of us, and gave us a song recital!

Each year, The **RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch** takes place during the last week-end in January, inviting the public to count birds for one hour in gardens, balconies, or local parks. Participants record the maximum number of each species seen at one time to help track UK bird population trends.

The 2025 count saw over **590,000 people** participate, recording approximately **9.1 million birds**. The 2026 count is still going on, and is updated regularly. You can keep up with all the latest at:

<https://www.rspb.org.uk/what's-happening/big-garden-birdwatch>.

WHY IT MATTERS

The survey provides a vital "snapshot" of how UK garden birds are faring. Since the first count in 1979, records show significant declines in some species, especially **Song Thrushes** (down 83%) and **Greenfinches** (down 68%). Even the **House Sparrow** has seen a 60% decline since 1979.

Climate change, weather patterns and food availability all have effects on our bird populations, so it is important that we monitor them.

It is also a fun occasion recording your local bird population to get an accurate picture of what is present in your own habitat.

R.S.P.B TOP SPECIES

No 1: HOUSE SPARROW

the most commonly spotted bird for
the 22nd consecutive year



No 2: BLUE TIT



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No 4: WOOD PIGEON

No 5: BLACKBIRD

No 6: GREAT TIT

The weather has been so wet and windy this year, some species you might expect to see in your garden at this time may still be absent.... they have been keeping to woodlands and thick hedgerows where conditions are drier and warmer. Also, acorns, beech mast and berries have been in abundance, which has meant bird populations have not had to rely on subsidiary feeding by us humans.

We thought it might be interesting to try to find out the number of birds counted in the survey for the **Parish of Lurgashall**.... This would give a local view of different species of birds seen - and an idea of how many avid birdwatchers we have!

So, **if you have done the Birdwatch this year** and you'd like to e-mail your results to me, jax@lurgashall.com, we'd love to hear from you, and will publish results in the April Newsletter.

*Jacquie Lawson
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Details of costs and sizes are on page 34.