

A tall, leafless tree covered in ivy against a blue sky with clouds. The tree's trunk and branches are completely covered in a dense layer of green ivy, while the branches themselves are bare and dark. The sky is a vibrant blue with scattered white clouds. The overall scene is a striking contrast of green and blue.

Ermington

Parish Magazine

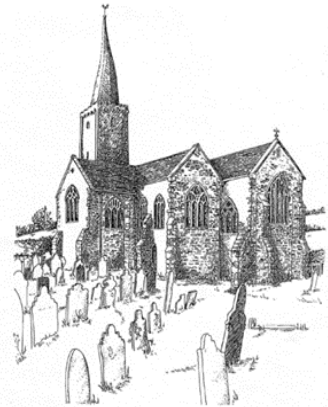
December 2024

Parish Diary

Event	Time	Place
Store & More open	Mon-Sat 10 – 4, Sun 10 – 1	
The Hub	See page 5	
Ivybridge Mobile Library	9.40 – 10.10 a.m. Tuesdays 17 Dec, 21 Jan	Fawns Close
Pub quizzes	Sundays 1 Dec, 5 Jan	Crooked Spire

The date of the next Parish Council meeting is on the Parish Council website - <https://www.ermingtonparish.com/> or contact the Clerk - 01752 893691

Christmas Services at Ermington Church 2024



You are all warmly invited to our forthcoming festivities:-

- Twilight Fair* Sat 7 December at 5 pm
- Carol Service* Sun 15 December at 6.30 pm
- Christingle Service* Sun 22 December at 11 am
- Christmas Day* Wed 25 December at 11am

The Church Building is open every day for visitors and those seeking a quiet reflective space for private prayer.

Thanks to Mr & Mrs P Daniels

For more information, please go to the website:
www.threeriversmissioncommunity.org.uk

From the Editor

Hello Everyone,

The big news this time is the election of a parish councillor; see pages 6 and 7 for details. Please make sure you vote.

We recently had a weekend full of grandchildren, aged 18, 16, 9, and 6. They are lovely, but hard work. Mind you, the teenagers did lots of useful things, like chopping wood and kneading my bread, but we still emerged exhausted. We are getting old.

Cycling has not been fun in this dark and gloomy weather, and nor has gardening, but to cheer you up there is a lovely song on page 35; *Wish I was sixty-four*.

For more personal news, now that we are well over sixty-four, Sue and I are planning to move house in the New Year.

Thornham Bridge is far too big for us, and keeping it running is too much like hard work, not to mention expensive. We don't know where we will be going, nor when, but there will be two consequences: first, there will be a big old barn conversion for sale, and second, if we move out of the area, I will have to give up being editor of this magazine. Is there anyone out there who would be interested in taking over?

Anyway, Christmas is coming, the goose is getting fat, and the desperate search for presents begins. We have evolved strict rules. Within the family (apart from the little ones) all presents must be home-made, recycled, or at worst from charity shops, and costing £5 or less. We really do not need more gadgets, ties, or even socks.

Happy Christmas and Merry New Year to you all.

All the best,

Adam

Village Fund—Dates for your Diary

Switching on the lights 5.00 pm Saturday 8 Dec, followed by lantern procession to the church for the Christmas Craft Fair, from 5.00 until 7.30



ERMINGTON VILLAGE FUND.

WISHES EVERYONE A VERY HAPPY CHRISTMAS

It seems that we ordinary folk don't have much say about world peace, but we can wish everyone around us PEACE, HAPPINESS, and GOODWILL, not only for Christmas but all through 2025.

Come and celebrate with us on Christmas Eve in the Square, to have a glass of Mulled wine, a Mince pie, and sing Carols with Richard's band. We will be collecting for Richard's nominated charities.

The Village Fund tries to raise funds for events throughout the year, like the Easter egg hunt, giving free eggs to all children taking part, and the Fireworks night, how amazing that was this year. To make these things happen volunteers are needed, we need some new faces for 2025, so why not come to our next meeting, they are always very informal, and see who we are, and help to keep our good work going.

A VERY HAPPY and HEALTHY 2025. from us all.

Di Webley Secretary.

Activities in The Hub

Activities in The Hub are listed under What's On, week by week, on the website www.ermington-shop.com

They do not vary greatly from week to week; here are the activities for the week 30 September – 5 August:

Monday

09.30 a.m. – 10.30 a.m. Beginner's Yoga with Cait

6.45 p.m. – 7.45 p.m. Yoga

8.00 p.m. – 9.30 p.m. Ukulele Group

Tuesday

2.30 p.m. – 4.30 p.m. Men's Yoga Group

6.30 p.m. – 7.30 p.m. Ermington Local History Group

Wednesday 10.00 a.m. – 12.00 p.m. Chris Pascoe Art Class

Friday 09.30 a.m. – 10.30 a.m. Pilates core strength workshop

Saturday 10.00 a.m. – 1.00 p.m. Kerry Fused Glass



Important Election in Ermington, 28 November

STATEMENT OF PERSONS NOMINATED

South Hams District Council

Election of a Parish Councillor

The following is a statement of the persons nominated for election as a Parish Councillor for Ermington Parish Council

Name of Candidate	Home Address	Description (if any)	Name of Proposer (*) and Seconder (**)	Reason why no longer nominated*
GRAFTON Margaret	(address in South Hams)		Murch Gay * Hill Ellen E **	
SUMNER Cliff	Mill Hill, Church Street, Ermington, PL21 9NJ		Kerslake John * Savery Andrew R D **	

The persons above, where no entry is made in the last column, have been and stand validly nominated.

All parishioners can vote, at The Hub, between 7 a.m. and 10 p.m. on Thursday 28 November. Take photographic identity, such as a driving licence, blue badge, or passport.

Both candidates have made personal statements; opposite page. Whoever you wish to support please use your vote.

Margaret Grafton writes

I am a former primary school teacher, and I moved into Ermington in 2016 after deciding to work specifically with disadvantaged children and young people. I am passionate about inclusion and the strength of community, and I love Ermington!

They say it takes a village to raise a child, and I have been blessed to witness how our village community has been so supportive of the less fortunate children and young people I work with.

So now it's time for me say thank you to the village by choosing to offer my time as a Parish councillor. If elected, I will work for the benefit of the whole village, doing so with objectivity, transparency, and selflessness.

Cliff Sumner writes

Ermington has been my home for 40 years and as a former Parish Councillor I have led a team that produced the Ermington Millennium book, organized the Millennium celebrations, been Treasurer of the Church Council, Chairman of the Ermington Players, run regular film shows in the Reading Rooms, was one of the original members of the Cricket Club, and wound the Church clock until heart surgery stopped me climbing the Church spire amongst other things over the years.

I believe a community's strengths is in its residents, and this Council lacks the vision of nurturing them, exemplified by refusing to Co-opt three capable applicants who applied in 2023. I will endeavour to put people at the heart of Ermington Parish Council.



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Ermington Church achieves Net-Zero Carbon.

The Church of St Peter and St Paul in Ermington now offers the parish a warm, net-zero welcome. Many parishioners contributed to the appeal for under-pew electric heaters. Again, thank you. These are now installed and working very effectively.

There is a master switch (controlled by the churchwardens so that we keep a handle on the electricity bill), and an individual switch in each pew that is fitted with heaters. So just come in, sit down, switch on and get warm.

We have also changed our electricity supplier to provide zero-carbon electricity. This does include nuclear, but no fossil fuel burning generation. So, with our old oil-fired boiler shut down forever, we can honestly say that Ermington Church is a net-zero-carbon building.

Does anybody want an old oil-fired boiler?

James Burnell-Nugent, Churchwarden

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Introducing the Ermington Local History Group

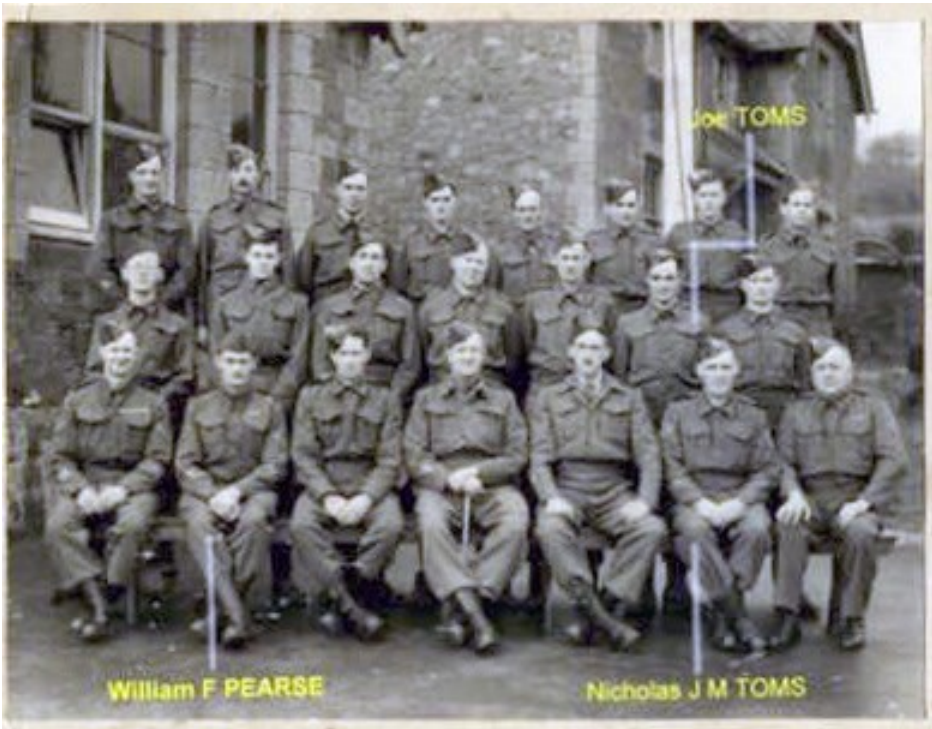
A chance Facebook message has led to the formation of the brand-new Ermington Local History Group. This new community initiative brings together residents and history enthusiasts who want to explore, preserve, and celebrate our parish's rich heritage.

The group is the brainchild of a relatively new resident to the village, Jeremy Saunders. Jeremy has a wealth of experience of running a similar group in his previous residence and was surprised to find Ermington didn't already have something similar. When he asked about it in the Residents of Ermington Group on Facebook, he was quickly inundated with comments from people who had often thought they would like to do something about that, but had never quite got around to it...



Our first meeting, on 24 October, was well attended by people from all over the Parish, and beyond. We chatted about what we could do to expand our knowledge and organize research projects to explore the rich heritage of our ancient parish, and share the results with everyone who might be interested.

We already have two projects in the pipeline. The first will be a special project to record oral histories from our community members. By capturing the memories and experiences of long-time residents, we hope to preserve a personal perspective of Ermington's history that might otherwise be lost. If you, or someone you know, has a story to share—whether it's about local events, family traditions, or memorable changes in the village—please get in touch. We'd love to hear from you.



This photograph, taken in 1940, shows members of the Ermington Home Guard, outside the school. William F Pearse farmed at Woodlands Manor. His son-in-law was Nicholas J M Toms, who in turn became the father of Nicholas J M Toms, now head of the household at Lusson. Joe Toms, nephew of Nicholas J Toms, was born at Lusson, and later had a farm at Aveton Gifford. Does anyone know any of the others in the photograph?

We're also planning an exhibition at Ermington Store and More. This display will feature old photographs, documents, and as much information about life in Ermington through the years as we can fit on the display boards. If you have any old photographs or memorabilia that you'd like to contribute, please reach out – we'd be thrilled to include your items and stories.



We plan to host occasional talks and presentations by local experts. These events will be open to everyone, giving the community a chance to learn from those who've done extensive research on topics like local history, architecture, and more. We already have two experts lined up for the new year – Tony Rea will be talking about Ermington and Ivybridge during WWI and Robert King will share his research about Drake's Island. If you've done any research into Ermington's history or have a topic you'd love to share with others, please get in touch – we'd be delighted to hear you speak.

We'd love for you to join us. We plan to meet at least once a month, and everyone is welcome. No prior knowledge is needed – just an interest in the past and a willingness to learn together. Our contact details are below, or find our Facebook group and join us there. Keep an eye out for our new website coming soon, and regular updates in the Parish Magazine.

Ermington.localhistory@gmail.com

PRICKLES IN A PICKLE

Talk by Judy Oliphant – Founder



www.pricklesinapickle.co.uk

Ermington Environmental were treated to an extremely educational talk by Judy in the Hub on Saturday 14 September. We learnt that Hedgehogs are in serious decline and are now officially vulnerable to extinction.

Prickles in a Pickle is a home-based Wildlife Sanctuary which has become busier and busier over the years, particularly with sick hedgehogs. As a result of the generous donations received from the many attendees, EE were able to give £100 to the charity. We have also applied for a grant from CAG (Community Action Group) Devon to provide two hedgehog houses for the top of the Churchyard. These will provide necessary shelter, not only for hibernation but also for rearing litters.

For information on how to make one yourself please visit the very informative website. In addition, EE have been given grant money to provide some traffic-awareness signs to place at the entrances to the village.

What to do if you find an injured or sick hedgehog

Wear gardening gloves if possible. Pick up and put in a box or cat carrier lined with a towel, and provide another towel to cover the casualty. Please **DO NOT** use leaves, grass, hay or straw.

Bring the animal inside your house; **DO NOT** leave outside, in a shed or garage, it must be warm. A hot-water bottle or a drinks bottle filled with hand-hot water and covered can be put in with the hedgehog, but allow enough space for the hedgehog to get near to the heat source or move away if it needs to. Like all creatures who feel poorly, they need warmth, comfort, and quiet.

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Riverbank Clean, 26 October



water
Wild About The Erme River

**A Riverbank Clean was organized by EE on 26 October 2024
in conjunction with WATER (Wild About the River Erme)**



It was a beautiful autumnal morning, and we had seven volunteers, who walked along the meadow opposite Plantation House, up over Sequer's Bridge and back along the other side, ending at Ermington

Nursing Home. We had gained the landowners' permission, and no one entered the water.

It turned out to be a really worthwhile endeavour, as we managed to pick up quite a lot of plastic bottles and balls that had been carried along on the flood-water, particularly near the bridge, which we were able to retrieve.



The biggest and most valuable find was a massive ten-foot black net-type mesh, which was very fine and took a lot of dislodging, as it was hooked up in the branches of low-lying trees. This would have caused



devastation and potential harm to our much-loved water mammals, as well as eventual deterioration and harmful plastics to our oceans. Well done everyone and thank you for your time and efforts.

N.B. WATER has now gained Charity status – which is fantastic news.

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Growing Tips Ro Hughes

As the leaves fall, and this year's growth dies back, by December we can really see and appreciate the bare bones of the gardens and landscapes we create.

So far this autumn has been mild, grey but not so wet, and the leaves, without gales and frost, have hung on and given us the most wonderful display of colour – golds, reds, and russet browns. It really is a lovely time of year to look through and appreciate structure. So too, a good time to plan and prepare for improvements and new planting.

Bulbs can still be planted, shrubs and trees replaced or added. Pruning goes on to create the desired structure and form for next year's growth.

Watch out for the frosts, though they might come later; tender plants will need protection, or moving indoors to a frost-free place. Last winter a lot of plants succumbed to the prolonged wet weather; so it may be worthwhile lifting those that can't cope with waterlogging. Herbs like thyme and rosemary, and more Mediterranean plants, could be saved by moving them to the greenhouse or a light shed.

In the vegetable garden, the beds can be weeded, compost added, and covered in readiness for spring. The long winter evenings are perfect for looking through seed and plant catalogues to plan for next year.

With the winter Solstice and Yuletide approaching, make the most of the evergreens in your garden to cut and bring indoors, to brighten and protect your home through the darkest days.

Please remember the wildlife. Keep plenty of refuges, put out food and water for the birds, and keep an eye out for young hedgehogs that may need extra help getting through the winter.

Rest and enjoy the festivities as we look forward to the coming year.



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Barbara Jones writes

I am in my seventeenth year of being a volunteer at the school, and it is one of the joys of my life. I was recently listening to children read in Reception and Year 1, so these children are four and five years old. We were on the three-letter word book which they were to read.

One little boy, aged 4, sounded out the letters and then 'read' the word. We had P A T; he got the letters and I said 'I can pat you on the back' (patting him on the back as I said it) 'P A T - pat' he replied. 'Brilliant' I said. Now D I G. he said the letters and I said, 'I was in the garden this morning with my spade (then I mimed digging) and I had a D I G'. He then said 'D I G - dig.' Lots of whooping and clapping from me.

Then it was P A N. He said the letters and I whispered, 'It's what we fry our sausages in.' His eyes lit up as he confidently said, 'P A N - air fryer' You can see why I love being there.



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Ermington Community Speedwatch Group

You may have seen us out and about around the village in our high-vis jackets, pointing a speed gun, and wondered what we are doing and why, so we thought it was time to provide an update.

We formed two years ago because we shared

concerns about the perceived speed of traffic coming through the village. With no pavements on most of our narrow lanes, pedestrians in particular are very vulnerable and there have



been some near misses.

During our sessions we record data of speeding vehicles and subsequently report these to the police, who then send a letter to the registered keeper of the vehicle to advise them to reduce their speed. It is hoped that motorists who have inadvertently exceeded the speed limit will become more aware of the dangers of speeding. Repeat 'offenders' may then receive a hand-delivered letter from the traffic police.

Despite our presence generally slowing traffic down, we have found that an average of ten per cent of all vehicles travelling up Town Hill are travelling at 24mph or more. We have attended various other locations around the



village but have found fewer incidences of speeding. Each location must be approved by the police to ensure that we can monitor speeds safely. We have to be able to have a clear sight of approaching traffic for the speed gun to record. This limits suitable sites in the village. Also, it can sometimes feel as though vehicles are speeding past when passing very close, but in fact they are within the speed limit.

Town Hill is where we consistently find speeding vehicles, which is why we have focused our efforts there. We believe that one of the key factors resulting in speeding on Town Hill is that people find it hard to adjust from the 40mph limit on the Totnes Road. They appear not to notice the 20mph signs, both on



posts and painted on the road. We would very much welcome a reduction in the speed limit on the approach to the village to 30mph. We feel the transition from 30mph to 20mph would be easier for drivers to achieve.



In the meantime we welcome any ideas to try to slow the traffic in the village. Traffic calming measures which have been implemented, including the speed reduction through the village centre from

30mph to 20mph, the speed bumps at the shop end of the village, the width restriction by the school entrance, speed cameras, and pedestrian-in-the-road signs have all undoubtedly helped. However, with an increase in the volume of traffic over the years we feel there is a need for additional measures.

Wider roads appear to encourage drivers to drive faster (the Square and the entrance to Erme Park are examples). Virtual pavements or 'etching' to show where there could be

pedestrians may reduce this effect. Villages which very obviously appear 'lived in' may encourage more cautious driving. The 'policemen' that stood on Town Hill and opposite the shop for several months a few years ago definitely caused a few drivers to hit the brakes.

Finally, we would welcome new members! With more volunteers we could have more monitoring sessions and cover more locations. It does not have to be a commitment. Every hour helps!! Increased awareness can help us all become more careful drivers in the village and beyond.

If you have any ideas or are willing to help please contact Margaret Grafton. Email margaretgrafton@gmail.com



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Also found in...

The Michelin Guide, The Good Hotel Guide, Alastair Sawday's 'Special Places,' Signpost Hotel Guide, and The Trenchermans Guide

Parish Council Report Denis Onley

Parish Council Election

I hope that you are reading this before 28 November, and are planning to vote in the Parish Council election, the result will be posted on our website as soon as possible afterwards.

Parish Council elections are run by the District Council, and SHDC are responding to the request of ten Ermington parishioners to replace the councillor who resigned, by having an election, rather than allowing the Parish Council to co-opt to the vacancy. Some parishioners have asked if we can just co-opt the two candidates, as we have six vacancies, or hold one election for all the vacant positions. Local Government election legislation does not allow us to do this, and Parish Councils have no say in how elections are managed. The cost (estimated to be at least £2500) however, must be paid by the Parish.

We are therefore also still seeking to co-opt new Councillors; all are welcome to apply. We are particularly keen to encourage parishioners with a diverse range of backgrounds and skills. If you wish to apply, please see the Co-option Policy and procedure on our website.

Reading Rooms

The Reading Rooms are used not only for Parish Council Meetings, but also to support Church services and community events held in the Church (as the Church has no toilet), as well as Village Fund events held in Honey's Field, such as the summer fair and fireworks, and by a couple of community groups for occasional meetings. However, they have rarely been booked for paid activities and private events since the COVID pandemic. They have been recently redecorated and are now looking splendid; so if you would like to book, or have ideas for the use of either room, please see the details on our website.

Website

Our website has been viewed over 55,000 times. Parishioners who regularly access the site tell us they find it informative and interesting. See : <http://www.ermingtonparish>, and let us have any comments.

Highways

Devon County Council (DCC) are now considering the changes required to reduce the speed limit on the A3121, and verifying the estimated costs. When we know the outcome we will consult parishioners. We have also asked DCC for an update on the promised works to the Town Hill, Bunkers Hill and Penquit road junctions to the A3121.

Vehicle speeding seems to be reducing through the village. The vehicle-activated speed signs and findings of our Community Speed Watch Team are revealing occasional excessive speeds, but most are now driving within the limit. We are however aware of speeding along Woodlands Road and Beech Road, together with Hunsdon Road, and welcome suggested sites to relocate a speed camera to gather data. Please also report any motoring incidents to the police and Devon County Council. This will ensure they are recorded, and give higher profile to the concerns raised by the Parish Council.

Flooding, blocked drains, and new potholes can be reported direct to DCC at :<https://www.devon.gov.uk/roadsandtransport/report-a-problem/> We also wish to encourage parishioners to report any household flooding: <https://www.devon.gov.uk/floodriskmanagement/who-to-contact-if-you-experience-flooding/>

Please do speak to any councillor with any parish issues, or join our Open Forums at each meeting, or contact us via our website, email, or post.

Best wishes for a happy, healthy festive season and new year, Denis Onley, Ian Creese, John Dunlop, and Robert Owens

Cold Days, Warm Libraries

Warm welcoming spaces and a host of services in libraries across Devon and Torbay this winter

Free warm clothes, hygiene banks, community fridges stocked with free food, and hundreds of welcoming groups and events are amongst a wealth of offerings to be found in libraries across Devon and Torbay this winter.

Libraries Unlimited, the charity that runs 54 libraries in the county, is rolling out its Cold Days, Warm Libraries campaign for the third year running. The initiative is aimed at encouraging people into warm, friendly library spaces this winter, not only to help with their fuel bills and the cost of living, but to combat isolation.

1.2 million visits were made to the libraries between 1 October 2023 and 31 March 2024 during the campaign.

Libraries Unlimited's Health-and-Wellbeing Manager Beth Harris said: 'Everyone deserves to feel warm and connected during the colder times of the year, but sadly we know this isn't always the case. Our libraries across Devon and Torbay will always be a welcome space for people to come in for free, with no obligations and no questions asked. We have comfy chairs, cosy nooks, hot drinks, engaging activities and events, and of course, a whole host of reading materials to enjoy.

Some libraries are welcoming donations of clean, warm coats, clothing, and accessories for their Coat Rails. Anyone can also take an item of clothing for free, no questions asked.

Community fridges and hygiene banks in a number of libraries are also appealing for tins and non-perishable, in-date food, as well as unopened hygiene products. Libraries will also be working with local food waste groups to stock up, supporting recycling and preventing food going to landfill.

Activities and services across multiple libraries include:

Coat rails of donated clothing in Churston, Torquay, Paignton, Newton Abbot, Chudleigh, Tavistock, Totnes, Ivybridge, Barnstaple, Ilfracombe, Bideford, Tiverton, Seaton, Teignmouth, Exmouth, Exeter, Lynton, and Clyst Vale libraries

Community Fridges/Larders in Tiverton, Seaton, Honiton, Crediton and Tavistock libraries

Free warm drinks in many libraries

Hygiene banks offering stocks of donated shampoo, toothpaste, tampons and body wash

School uniform swaps to help families save money and resources

Gentle exercise classes aimed at keeping visitors warm and healthy

Weekly clubs from Lego to knitting - there's something for everyone

A huge thanks to our supporters, sponsors and partners of whom have helped make this happen, included in those are Ikea, Willmott Dixon, Julian House, Torrington Town and Lands, Honiton Town Council, Devon County Council and our library Friends Groups.

Ivybridge - coat rail, plus

Monday - Lego club for grown ups,

Tuesday - Scrabble club,

Thursday - Knit and natter,

Friday - Book groups / colouring for adults.

For further information and full contact details please visit our web page librariesunlimited.org.uk

A Spiral Staircase

Ross Barrett

During the loft conversion at our cottage, I was constantly thinking about how we'd reach the new space. We wanted something more special than a ladder but didn't have the room for a conventional staircase. That's when I had the idea: what if we could create a staircase that looked as if a tree was growing up through the house, with wooden steps emerging like branches on a spiral?



The journey began, right near our home, in the River Erme. My father-in-law Roger, wise and resourceful, knew of an old tree he thought might be just right – not too thick, not too thin, a bit twisted, but with character. When I finally saw it, it was exactly what I'd envisioned. The only problem was, it was *in* the river, and had been for some time. It had sunk. We knew it was going to be hard to pull down the river as it was dragging on the river bed. This didn't deter us. Roger, myself, and Sarah, three months pregnant with Riley, pulled the sunken limb out from under the river bank. Using ropes, determination and brute strength we hauled the monster down the river.



We pulled the massive log from the riverbed with ropes, determination, and sheer grit, hauling it downstream about 100 meters to a spot where our 4x4 could reach the bank. There, with the help of a tree and a makeshift pulley system, we lifted the log onto the bank. It was twice as long as we needed, so we cut it down to size.



The chainsaw was finding it really difficult, and that's when Roger realized we'd found oak—a true treasure. We left the two massive oak logs in our front room to dry out for three months, much to the dismay of our midwife when she came to inspect the space for Riley's home birth.



With the timber finally dried, Sarah got to work sanding and cleaning it, uncovering the natural grooves and knots that would bring it to life in our home. We measured the beastly branch, and Roger cut it to size with his chainsaw. I then chiseled out a notch to account for the door frame which was part of the design to give the illusion that the tree had grown up through the cottage. We hoisted the timber up into place with a mechanical winch set up in the loft, securing it in what would be its forever home and a second life.



Creating the steps was a technical puzzle. Because the center post wasn't perfectly uniform, I couldn't use a standard spiral staircase formula. The trick was to make sure each step was positioned just right, with a constant walking path about two-thirds from the center. I made cardboard templates to visualize the layout and adjusted the placement until it was perfect.





For the steps themselves, we found an unexpected gem in Roger's workshop: reclaimed teak from an old pontoon. Each step was crafted by joining two pieces side-by-side with a biscuit joiner for the necessary width. To create a seamless look, we slotted the treads into the walls, making it appear as if they simply disappear.

For the bottom two steps, which lacked wall support, we crafted supporting



pillars from the same timber off-cuts, blending strength with style.



Seeing the finished staircase now, it feels like a dream come true. It has a raw, natural beauty, with twisted lines, textures, and imperfections that give it an authentic charm. It's a piece of functional art that suits our cottage perfectly, a rustic, fairy-tale staircase that would look out of place anywhere else.



I'm so grateful to Roger and Sarah for their help in turning this vision into reality, and to Marilyn for believing in me every step of the way.

Restoring our cottage has been a labour of love, honouring the history of a home first purchased by Roger's grandmother from the church, and where our son Riley was born.

Should anyone need half an ancient oak log for their own project, we just might have one waiting.



The Gabriela Mistral Mausoleum Grant Elliott



Lucila Godoy Alcayaga was born in 1889 in the town of Vicuna, in the Elqui valley, in Chile. She became a schoolteacher and began to write poetry after a passionate romance with a railway employee, who committed suicide. She took the pseudonym Gabriela Mistral from her favourite poets Gabriele D'Annunzio and Frederic Mistral.

Her first great collection of poems, *Despair*, was published in 1922. Further poems came in 1924 with the publication of *Tenderness*. Her success enabled her to move on from her teaching position. She went on to become Chilean consul in Naples, Madrid, and Lisbon and was active in cultural committees of the League of Nations. She was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1945 and so became South America's first ever Nobel Laureate in Literature. Gabriela Mistral died in 1957, and her complete poetry was published a year later.

Vicuna is situated at the start of the Elqui Valley in the Chilean Andes, 400km north of the capital, Santiago. Further into the valley is the small



village of Montegrande where Gabriela Mistral grew up, and where she became the village schoolteacher. She clearly loved the Elqui Valley and described it as '*a heroic slash in the mass of mountains, but so brief, that it is nothing but a rush of water with two green banks. And this little place can be loved as perfection*'. It is here, in the small village of her childhood, where Gabriela Mistral's remains were laid to rest .

Today the village of Montegrande devotes itself to preserving her memory. The school where she grew up and taught has been turned into a museum displaying her furniture and belongings. Just south of the village, opposite the turn off for Cochiguaz, is her mausoleum, which is also open to visitors. From the roadside entrance, a ramped and stepped path takes you up the hillside. The path is set within a garden, and the shading from the trees is a most welcome respite from the heat of the day. At the top of the path there is a wall with many commemorative plaques and a bronze bust of her torso set on a stone plinth (see opposite).



pose, with her arms folded and gazing down to the ground.

Eventually the path arrives at a welcome, small courtyard garden where you can rest from the climb. The headstone to her grave is set into one of the borders and is a simple minimal rock with the inscription '*Lo que al alma hace por su cuerpo es lo que el artista hace su pueblo*' which translates as, '*What the soul does for its body is what the artist does for its people*'.

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Organ Recital

In the u3a choir we sing a song that may remind you of a Beatles number. Most of the words were written by soprano Barbara Yea, who gave me permission to print them, though she thinks she heard something similar on YouTube. I found many such parodies on YouTube, but nothing like this one.

Now that I'm older, losing my hair, life is not much fun.
I wake up each morning full of aches and pains; my lumbago's
hurting again.
Been in the garden, digging the weeds; now my back is sore.
Piles, constipation, poor circulation; wish I was sixty-four.

Wrinkles everywhere; I've got a turkey neck; lots of skin to spare.

Varicose veins are giving me hell, and arthritis too.
Must replace the battery on my hearing aid; eyesight's macular,
about to degrade.
Can't get the slippers on to my feet; they don't fit no more.
I need medication and defibrillation; wish I was sixty-four.

What a bummer, got to buy a joint through the private route, if
it's not too dear;
Have to scrimp and save. Oo, NHS in a mess; support is what we
crave.

Shuffling along with my Zimmer frame, and orthopaedic shoes
Now my yellow dentures have begun to slip; have to use more
Polygrip.
Getting confused, and I can't recall where I live, and more;
Poor respiration; I'll soon need cremation. Wish I was sixty-four.

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An Estate of the Heart Ella Thurston

Over on the wrong side of the Tamar, Cornwall has inspired a number of writers. With unique and dramatic coastlines, quaint villages and a rich history, is it not hard to see why the likes of John Betjeman, D. H. Lawrence, and Virginia Woolf had strong connections with the county. However, it is in the works of Daphne du Maurier where the influence of Cornwall is most striking, given the significance of setting and place in her novels.

Growing up in Hampstead, London, the du Maurier family would spend summers at their holiday home, Ferryside at Bodinnick. This became Daphne du Maurier's favourite haunt, and the solitude enabled her to begin working on her writing career. She wrote that in Cornwall '*was the freedom I desired, long sought-for, not yet known. Freedom to write, to walk, to wander, freedom to climb hills and be alone.*'

Born into a creative family - artist and writer grand-parents, and actor parents - it is perhaps no surprise that she would



pursue a literary vocation. On the other hand, without the particular inspiration of a number of Cornish locations, perhaps her greatest works would never have come to fruition.



Menabilly, a great estate near Gribbin Head, the seat of the Rashleigh family, is a few miles west of Fowey. With buildings dating from 1589, the estate is steeped in

history, featuring beautiful grounds and gardens. In the late 1920s, it was discovered by du Maurier in a dilapidated state. In her book 'Enchanted Cornwall', she describes finally seeing the house for the first time, after being thwarted on previous attempts by tangled overgrown gardens:

'I paused, stung by the beauty of that first pink glow of sunrise on water, but the path led on and I would not be deterred. Then I saw them for the first time – the scarlet rhododendrons. Massive and high they reared above my head, shielding the entrance to a long smooth lawn. I was hard upon it now, the place I sought . . . My house of secrets. My elusive Menabilly.'

After many years of no doubt yearning, and dreaming of living there, in 1943 du Maurier persuaded the Rashleigh family to agree to lease it to her, a transient arrangement. *'Perhaps it is wrong to love a block of stone like this, as one loves a person. It cannot last. It cannot endure. Perhaps it is the very insecurity of the love that makes the passion strong. Because she is not mine by right. The house one day will belong to another.'* She set about restoring it and made it the family home before returning it to the Rashleighs in 1969. When the lease came to end, her feelings were thus: *'There is a plant, the mandrake, which bleeds and shrieks when it is pulled up, and that is how I felt on leaving Menabilly.'*

Famously, her 'house of secrets' became inspiration for Manderley in 'Rebecca.' Published in 1938, years before du Maurier actually lived at Menabilly, the setting was based entirely on stolen glimpses and attempted visits to the derelict house. While never explicitly located, the fictional nearby place-names of 'Kerrith' and 'Lanyon' are unmistakably Cornish.

Typical of a grand country estate, Manderley is filled with family heirlooms, shuttered windows and labyrinthine corridors, creating the sinister Gothic atmosphere of the novel. The house becomes a key character, haunting the protagonist as much as the late Rebecca herself. *'Last night I dreamt I went to Manderley again. It seemed to me I stood by the iron gate leading to the drive, and for a while I could not enter, for the way was barred to me.'* Like Menabilly, the fictional Manderley was hidden in woods and could not be seen from the shore.



This shrouding in secrecy mimics the dark themes of *Rebecca*, yet contrastingly, du Maurier's daughter writes in her biography many years later, that the house was always bright and cheerful for the children.

The estate appears again as inspiration in her later novel, *The King's General*, which was based loosely upon her discovery that during restorations of the house in 1824, a skeleton of a man had been found in a small hidden room. Letters reveal du Maurier went to great lengths to research this; Daphne consulted with the Rashleigh family and a couple of local historians, to ensure the accuracy of *The King's General* plot – of course, the body in a secret room was key.

Today, Menabilly and most of the grounds remain private, although three cottages are rented as holiday lets.

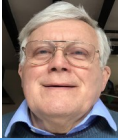




The estate is immortalized not only as the fictional Manderley, but also as the location where du Maurier wrote sixteen of her books, including the novels *My Cousin Rachel* and *The House on the Strand*, as well as a number of non-fiction publications.

Three days before her death in April 1989, she paid her last visit to the house. In *Vanishing Cornwall*, du Maurier beautifully describes her tribute to the estate:

'I walked this land with a dreamer's freedom and with a waking man's perception – places, houses whispered to me their secrets and shared with me their sorrows and their joys. And in return I gave them something of myself, a few words passing into the folk-lore of this ancient place.'

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Parish council meetings normally take place on the first Tuesday of each month (except August) at 7.30 pm in the Reading Rooms. You may think that you are too busy to spare the time, but even the busiest people can usually attend a monthly meeting and its fine if you have to miss the occasional one.

There are only a few rules to stand for election. You must:

be at least 18 years of age

be a British citizen, a Commonwealth citizen, or a citizen of the European Union

be a registered elector of Ermington Parish; **or** during the whole of the last 12 months occupied land or other premises in Ermington Parish (as owner or tenant); **or** during the last 12 months your principal or only place of work has been in Ermington Parish; or you have lived in Ermington Parish for the whole of the last 12 months or within 3 miles of it.

If you have any questions the Parish Clerk can be contacted by email - ermingtonparishclerk@gmail.com or telephone 01752 893691, or Chair of Ermington Parish Council, Denis Onley denis.onley.epc@gmail.com.

You can also visit the parish council website at <http://www.ermingtonparish.com/parish-council/archives/> to find out more about the work of the council.

Applicants to give a brief account of their reasons for wanting to become a Councillor and any experiences or interests they may have which they feel would benefit the community.

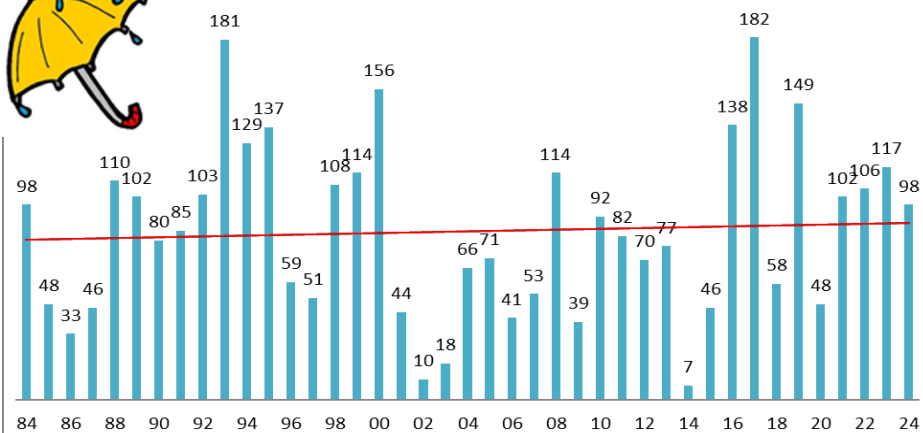
The Council will consider all applications, and will co-opt the successful candidate onto the Parish Council at a later date.

Rainfall Records by Frances Bromfield

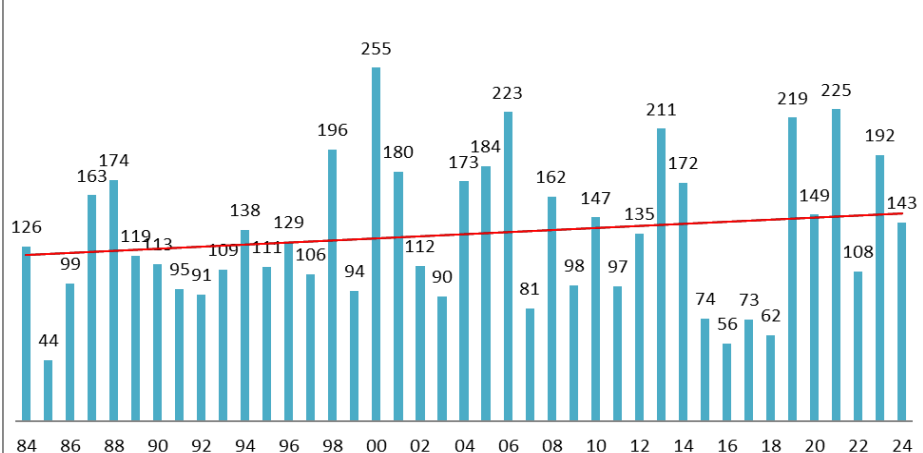
Both September and October 2024 have been fairly close to average months with 98mm and 143mm of rain. However, the overall total for the ten months so far is 1205mm against an average of 959mm for the period, which is about 25 per cent over the average. The first week of November has been quite dry, but unfortunately lacking in sunshine so far.



Rainfall for September from 1984-2024



Rainfall for October from 1984-2024





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SuperWASP Adam Hart-Davis

As I write this, I am preparing to go on holiday to Lanzarote, to sun myself, and probably to eat too much.

I have been to the Canary Islands once before, but that time it was strictly business; we were filming for an astronomy series. We flew to La Palma, and then drove upwards, for what seemed like hours, till we reached the top of the island, which is the rim of an extinct volcano. Dramatically, you look one way into the caldera – the great hollow from which the eruption came – and the other way straight down 2400 metres into the Atlantic Ocean. Perched just below this ridge is SuperWASP.

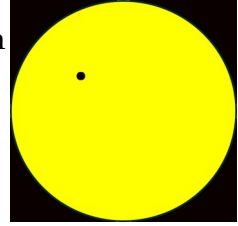


One of the most exciting challenges for astronomers today is the search for exoplanets, that is planets round distant stars. Our own sun has its family of planets – Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, and so on – but what about the other stars in the sky? Even our own galaxy, the Milky Way, has a hundred billion stars; how many have families of planets circling round them? Back in the sixteenth century, Giordano Bruno thought there were probably many, perhaps inhabited, and was burned at the stake for heresy.

In 1995 two Swiss scientists, Michel Mayor and Didier Queloz, found a planet orbiting a star in the constellation Pegasus, and gave it the exotic name 51 Pegasi b. That started a world-wide hunt for exoplanets, and in 1999 Don Pollacco (left) and colleagues at Queen's University Belfast, put forward a brilliant new idea.



If a planet orbiting a distant star passed between the star and Earth, then some of the light from the star would be blocked, and so the brightness of the star would be slightly dimmed.



They got some grant money and built a simple observatory, containing four Canon cameras mounted on a robot arm, which was able to sweep around the sky. The cameras pointed in slightly different directions, so as to cover a wide angle, and they called the system Wide-Angle Search for Planets, or WASP. Then a kind donor gave them some more money, and asked what they would call it now. Pollacco, stuck for an answer, said 'Oh...er... SuperWASP.'

They bolted the four extra cameras on to the robot arm, and wrote to Canon for four 200mm lenses, but Canon wrote back to say they had stopped making them; so Pollacco and colleagues bought the lenses on eBay. Most observatories cost millions of pounds, but SuperWASP cost only tens of thousands, and some of it came from eBay.

The observatory is in practice a garage with a sliding roof (though Don was quite cross when I said so). When the night becomes dark, they slide the roof open and take eight pictures. Then the robot arm moves slightly, to aim at a different part of the sky, and they take eight more pictures. This goes on for perhaps ten stops, until they get back to where they started, and take exactly the same pictures as the first batch.

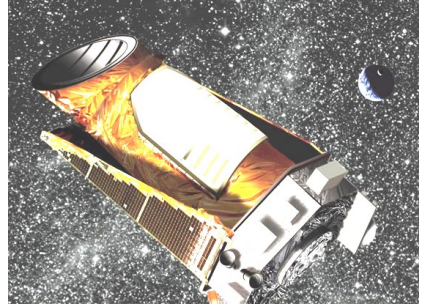


At the end of the night they send all the pictures back over the internet to the uk, and computers go through all the many hundreds of pictures, checking the millions of stars, to see whether any of them shows any sign of slight dimming.

SuperWASP began searching in 2004, and in that same year discovered two exoplanets. Later it acquired a sister observatory, SuperWASP 2, based in South Africa, in order to scan the southern sky. So far, the SuperWASPs between them have found nearly 300 exoplanets, which makes them the most successful earth-based exoplanet hunters.

Since 2009 NASA's Kepler telescope, floating in space and looking continuously at one area of sky, has found some 5000 exoplanets; the James Webb telescope will find many more.

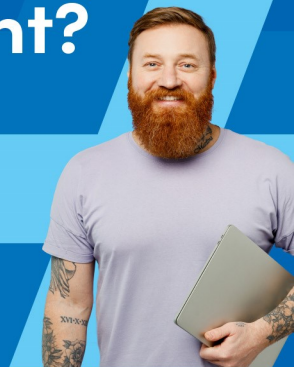
Astronomers are studying them to find out whether any of them might possibly carry some form of life, from microbes to dinosaurs; if so, we are not alone in the universe.



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Cross Words in Ivybridge

A cruciverbalists' guide by Ian McClure (anagram: MANIC CLUER)

This is a short treatise on Cryptic Crosswords. A Cryptic Crossword contains clues that are *hidden* (i.e. cryptic) and usually contain two elements – The DEFINITION part (leading to the answer) and the WORDPLAY. The challenge for the solver is to identify which is which, not always an easy task. Let me explain: in the clue **Go off to collect a small piece of meat (5)** the answer is **ROAST**. To go off is to **rot** and it is 'collected' by (i.e. contains) **a s** (a small). Confused already? Here is another: **Caught traffic light about to change, arriving at curve in road (6)**. The answer is **CAMBER** – **C** for caught plus **AMBER**.

These two clues contain typical crossword conventions, in this case **c** for caught and **s** for small. Compilers employ many more, such as Roman numerals (D, V, L, C, M) which occur in the 'Wordplay' part of the clue.

They also love double (or even treble) meanings; for instance, the word **FLOWER** can be either a bloom or a river (something that flows) or **BREAD**, which often refers to currency (**RUSSIAN BREAD** could be **ROUBLE**). More of this later.

There is also the **HIDDEN CLUE**, sometimes called a **RUN**, where the answer is contained within the text of the clue: e.g. **It may be concealed by vanishing edge (5)**. The answer is **HINGE**, made up of the last four letters of 'vanishing' and the first letter of 'edge'.

There are many more types of Cryptic Clue, but do remember that *every* clue consists of two parts, the Definition and the Wordplay. Perhaps the most popular (or infuriating) clue is the **ANAGRAM**, where jumbled letters lead to the answer.

Nearly every Cryptic Crossword contains one or more anagrams, often craftily disguised, with 'indicator' words such as 'nuts' or 'needs treatment' to show it is an anagram. Two of my favourite Anagrams are **carthorse**, which can transform an **ORCHESTRA**, and **instrument that could stun Lady Baker - answer: LAUNDRY BASKET**. **Schoolmaster** is an anagram of **THE CLASSROOM**. The naturalist Peter Scott coined the pseudo-scientific name of the Loch Ness Monster, *Nessiteras Rhombopteryx*, which some crossword buff anagrammed to **MONSTER HOAX BY SIR PETER S**.

To return to clues with several meanings: The English language is rich in such words, which are a boon to crossword compilers. A recent 'Times' clue was **Hide pepper (4)** to which the answer was **PELT**, illustrating two meanings of both words - Conceal/skin for HIDE and hit/spice for PEPPER.

Do I have a favourite clue? It is probably the clue to **BOOKING OFFICE**, which can be broken down into **BOO KING OFF ICE**, leading to the following gem: **Loudly disapprove royal skating performance, but with some reservations here (7,6)**

Other classics are **Two girls, one on each knee (7) - [PATELLA]**
Gges (9,4) - [SCRAMBLED EGGS]

The connection between the cat and the fiddle (3) - [GUT]

The first swallow? (5,7,3) - EARLY MORNING TEA

Enables one to obtain a high standard (8) - FLAGPOLE

I run a Cryptic Crossword Group for Ivybridge U3A, and over the years we have progressed from relatively simple to really quite difficult puzzles. We now tackle the 'Telegraph' and 'The Times' with increasing confidence. We are a friendly group and help each other, not taking our sessions too seriously. We are always looking for new members; so please contact Ivybridge U3A if you would like to join us.

Profile - Jamie Spain

Jamie Spain is a soft-spoken American, who has been in England for nine years, and now lives near Westlake. He spent his youth on the west coast of the United States, building boats near Seattle. That needed lots of steam bending, for both the frames and the hulls, and was enjoyable, but hard work.



He lived for a time in Montana, a gloriously unpopulated state. [I once drove 500 miles across it to

see a man digging up a T. Rex in the weird badlands, where he also showed me the skull and horns of a young triceratops, just lying on the ground, but Jamie points out that drones will mean that such surprising finds are getting scarce.]



After he gave up boat-building Jamie did not want to retire, but instead used his woodworking skills to build things, from boxes to musical instruments. He went to the guitar school in Totnes, run by Phil Messer, who supplies Jamie with his wood. Jamie describes him as incredible.



Jamie uses various jigs for making instruments, and has rows and rows of tools in his small but efficient workshop.. He makes templates to get the shapes right, and now bends the wood inch by inch, although

he has sometimes poured boiling water in a tray and immersed the wood.



The half-finished guitar on the left is made of mahogany. For other instruments he has used flamed maple (sometimes called tiger-stripe maple). Phil also supplies spruce, cedar, and ebony. Jamie sells some boxes and instruments at craft shows, but more often for particular. One lady had broken the head stock of her ukulele, and asked him to mend it. When she got it back she was very happy.



It's not just about new glasses . . .

For some readers, the notion of booking an appointment at their local Optician is simply a means of obtaining an up-to-date prescription, so they can order the latest trend in glasses. Conversely, for others there's a misguided assumption that such an appointment means they'll be obligated to buy new glasses, even if they don't want them or cannot afford to do so. Result? they avoid visiting an Optician altogether!

Once upon a time, all Opticians were viewed as medical professionals, providing an invaluable healthcare service to the local community.

Then came the retail giants where selling glasses and meeting targets seemed to matter more than healthcare. In recent years, this narrative has become supercharged with adverts and social media posts awash with offers and deals to entice you in for an appointment to get a new prescription, so you'll then purchase new glasses from them.

So, what happened to the healthcare side of visiting an Optician? In truth, it never really went away, it just got squeezed as appointment times got shorter. After all, shorter appointments mean more appointments and more appointments mean more opportunities to sell glasses, right?

And now we have glasses from the internet. No need to leave the comfort of your armchair, simply swipe through the pretty pictures and select a frame, just like you would if buying a new top. Enter all those confusing numbers from your prescription and don't worry too much if it's way out-of-date; no one at the other end really cares! Hey-presto! a few days later a new pair of glasses arrive in the post. Oh, and if you can't see through them or the frame doesn't fit, the online retailer will likely suggest you to go and visit your local Optician to

sort it out! Except they will probably decline to do so as they didn't supply them, which after all, seems quite reasonable.

At this point, the author suspects you're thinking this all sounds a little bitter! After all, many of the big retailers do a pretty good job when it comes to providing glasses, so is it a case of bitterness . . . or is it confusion?

Despite incredible advancements in diagnostic technology like Optical CT Scans, in the understanding of sight threatening eye diseases, in dry eye treatments and in new technologies like Myopia Control, Colorimetry and Orthokeratology, the author is genuinely confused as to why so many people still chose to side-step most of the healthcare aspects for a brief sight test, despite a general understanding of just how vital good vision is.

What price would you put on your eyesight?

If all of this or, even some of this rings true with the reader, then you'll be pleased to know - there is an alternative . . .

As the bigger Optical chains become more retail orientated, so a growing number of smaller independent Opticians are becoming more healthcare oriented; extending the length of their appointments so there's more time to investigate, diagnose and discuss your results, investing in new treatments and eyecare services and, generally slowing things down so that you can enjoy a more relaxed unrushed experience, rather than it feeling like a trip to the cattle market.

So, what should you expect when you choose to visit your local independent Optician? Firstly, expect to be centre of their attention, expect to be asked lots of questions and offered lots of advice. Expect a longer, far more thorough Eye Examination, regardless of whether you are private or NHS.

Expect to be shown your Optical CT scan results, your retinal photographs, field-of-vision results and dry eye assessments.

Expect to have these results fully explained and expect to receive tailored advice and guidance. Naturally you'll probably be asked to pay a little extra, but ask yourself this - what price would you put on your eyesight?

And despite being given a new prescription, it's highly likely that any recommendation to consider new glasses will only be made if your visual acuity results suggest you'll actually be able to see more clearly with them. Maybe it's finally time to give the cattle market a miss and discover a local independent Optician who really cares about your vision . . .

In a future article we hope to enlighten you about why a Qualified Dispensing Optician really is the best person on the planet to help you choose your new glasses . . .

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Plymouth Argyle Rodger Reid

Lots of Injuries and Poor Away Form

There have been ten matches since my last report. Four of those fixtures have resulted in wins, but these have all come at home. The first five away games ended up as defeats. The Greens had the unenviable record of having the worst away showing in all the leagues. It hasn't helped that there have been a number of injuries to key players, and, in three cases, the injuries are long-term.

The first of the recent home victories came against table-topping Sunderland. Probably against the run of play, Argyle won 3-2, and left for their next game away to West Bromwich Albion with high hopes of at least a draw. Sadly it was not to be, and the team travelled home having suffered a 0-1 loss. The next game was at home to Luton Town, recently relegated from the Premier League. An exciting encounter saw The Greens pull off an unlikely 3-1 victory. Back up the M6 again for their next game away to Burnley, another side relegated from the Premier League. The Greens lost only 0-1, but the performance was poor.

Back home again for their next match against Blackburn Rovers saw the side record a fine victory by 2-1. Home Park was becoming 'Fortress Home Park'. These results were desperately needed when looked at against the away form, and that was put sharply into focus by the next match away to Cardiff City which saw the team hammered 0-5. Back up the M4 to London and into The Lion's Den that is Millwall. Another poor performance and a loss 0-1.

This game was followed by the poorest showing so far away to Leeds United: 0-3. The Greens barely got out of their own half,

and didn't have a meaningful shot at goal in the whole game. The importance of the next match, at home to bottom of the table Portsmouth, could not be over-stressed. How Argyle were not two or three goals down by half time is a mystery, but nil all it was. A better second half followed and with less than ten minutes left on the clock Argyle scored and, amazingly, came away with a victory. Pompey supporters must still be stunned that they didn't get anything out of the game.



Argyle were now in the relegation area of the league. Slowly some injured players are recovering and they will be desperately needed if fortunes are to change, but their away match against Wayne Rooney's old club Derby showed a spirited comeback, and ended in a 1-1 draw.

It's going to be a long winter ahead, but John and I will be there still cheering the lads on.

Green Army!



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