

EXCELLENCE IN OAK

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Mill Lane, Lopen TA13 5JS

Edit this...

Welcome back and trust everyone had a good Christmas and New Year, although our weather certainly didn't seem to know what season it was in!

Warning - this issue contains a lot on the subject of water.

On that subject, Jeremy Rook our village meteorologist presents a summary of 2022 and will keep us informed of the diverging seasonal rainfalls, and we have some words of advice regarding flooding from the Council.

Talking about 2022, the team was delighted to report that Mistletoe Fayre generated £2692, which is a terrific effort and reflects the hard work of all those involved. All the funds go to support the Sunday School Room repairs and the Church.

The start of a year also makes one think of resolutions, winter blues and how to get through to the prospect of Spring in a couple of months time. To reflect this we have some features on such topics as the Lopen Lads, details about some basic life support training being arranged for free to Villagers, another dimension to our local wildlife, and some thoughts on the more typical fads people think about for a resolution and Lent - from alcohol-free weeks to crash diets, followed by an Easter full of chocolate! And then f course there is the water - advice and more.

Hope you enjoy the issue and thanks for your support. In the next issue we will cover some details on the Lopen Village Fund and the prospects of some community space, with a healthy dose of Spring, Easter and anything else you all care to impart!

Chris Marsh - Fditor

STOP PRESS - News of Lopen's colourful past, coming soon to a place near you. More information to follow in the next issue.

Contact Details:

Email: chrismarshlpc@gmail.com

(f) /Lopen-Events-277018432630673/

Visit our village website: www.lopenvillage.org

PUBLICATION FOOTNOTE:

- COPY Deadline for articles and photographs 4 weeks prior to next issue.
- Adverts need to be submitted in PDF format details on sizes and rates are available from the Editor
- All comments and views expressed are the responsibility of the writer and are not those necessarily held by Lopen Parish Council and its members.

Lopen Parish Council.

MONTHLY MEETING ROUND-UP

Headlines from County Council via Adam Dance and Jo Roundell Greene:

- Reports that they are proposing that lower income households may be set to pay no council tax from April.
- Older residents are strongly advised to keep their winter vaccinations up to date, both Covid19 and Flu.
- £300,000 has been granted to plant more trees as part of the Somerset Climate Emergency Strategy.
- Somerset has joined the MEAM network, Making Every Adult Matter - to align health, social care and housing for vulnerable residents.
- They are asking for people to join the Unity Councils 'Customer Panel' to shape Council Services going forward. Those interested can get involved in a number of different ways. Please find out more via the website (https://playbook.somerset.gov.uk /our-customer-panel/), or you can register by calling 0300 123 2224.

TWO PARISH COUNCILLORS NEEDED:

Okay we are small - but beautifully proportioned as they say - however we do need more people on the Parish Council to keep us ticking along and continue to make our Village the place we want it all to be. Don't be afraid, come and be part of the community, we are looking for two new heads. Contact the Parish Clerk for details.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS?

Due to the Christmas and New Year period, much of the regular council business has been quiet, in terms of planning, local transport issues and general welfare. No doubt the usual issues will arise as we all defrost and gear ourselves up for the year ahead.

Please make sure your voice and issues are heard by attending a Council Meeting if you can, they are typically the last Monday in the month. Details below.

NEXT MEETINGS

Monday February 27th & Monday March 27th at 7.00 PM in the Sunday School Room. Everyone welcome, please come and be heard.

PARISH COUNCILLORS:

Chairman - Stephen Crane - Scrane1@hotmail.co.uk - 01460 241412

Nick Jones - nick.jones.lopenpc@outlook.com - 01460 241643

Jenny Feeney – jfeeneylopenpc@gmail.com – 1460 419569

Chris Marsh - chrismarshlpc@gmail.com - 07951 239110

Caroline McKendrick - caroline.mckendrick.lopenpc@outlook.com - 01460 359201

Parish Clerk - Jane Collins - lopenpc.clerk@gmail.com - 07967 218478

All Saints Church

SERVICE DATES FEBRUARY AND MARCH:

Every Monday at 9:00am

Morning Prayers lasting about 30
minutes is said for the people of Lopen.

All are welcome to join in.

Sunday February 5th 9:00am Holy Communion

Sunday February 19th 10:30am
Parish Communion

Sunday 5th March 9:00am Holy Communion

Sunday 19th March 10.30Mothering Sunday Communion

Looking for a local hidden gem?

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Preparing for Winter Flooding

While drought conditions may have dominated headlines last year the focus is back on flooding preparedness during the winter months.

Somerset councils have combined to offer the following advice and guidance to help residents and businesses reduce the impacts of flooding. We hope this will assist you when you are dealing with people's concerns and queries over the coming months.

Please feel free to share the information widely.

What can I do?

Thinking ahead and preparing for what the weather may bring especially at this time of year can make a real difference in your home, business and community.

One of the first things is to check whether your property is at risk of flooding (https://check-for-flooding.service.gov.uk/)

We also recommend taking precautionary measures and purchasing your own sandbags in case of flooding emergencies. If sandbags are not available, you can use:

- rolled-up mats or carpets
- · bags of garden compost
- pillow cases filled with soil (don't overfill them)
- timber boards (possibly screwed to door frames and sealed with mastic)

What to do during a flood

There is information to help you on what to do during a flood on the Somerset Prepared website: https://www.somersetprepared.org.uk/hazard-advice/flooding/.

The key point is to always stay safe, in an immediate flood emergency or where there is a risk to life, follow the advice of the emergency services.

Protect yourself from future flooding

It is advisable to plan how you'll respond to a flood. Information and plans are available to help you plan ahead (https://check-for-flooding.service.gov.uk/plan-ahead-for-flooding).

We also encourage you to download the 'Prepare. Act. Survive.' flood plan to help reduce the impact of flooding.

You can find up to date information on flood warnings by visiting the flood warnings page on the website (https://check-for-flooding.service.gov.uk/)

Flooding and roads – key information

It's important to ensure drains and gullies are clear during the autumn and winter months – If you spot a problem with a drain or gully, or any issue on the highway you can report it easily and quickly here - https://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/report-a-problem-on-the-road/

Heavy rain and flooding present a clear and present danger to drivers – road users are urged NOT to attempt to drive across flooded roads as it is not possible to estimate the depth of the water reliably.

It's vital to prepare for wet conditions if you have to travel and to proceed with extreme caution if you get caught in flood conditions – you can find information and advice here - https://somersetroadsafety.org/drivers/weather/



I am one of the network of amateur rainfall recorders who cover the country. We submit our records to the Environment Agency each month on a card showing our daily records. We are used these days to back-up and validate the automatic rain gages run by the EA and river authorities, and also for rainfall research.

A proper national scientific record of rainfall has only been going for about 120 years in the UK- this means that we do not have a great deal of data really and combined with the variable nature of rain, records are always being broken somewhere in the country!

To illustrate how variable rain can be when I lived on the Eastern side of Haselbury parish I recorded 76 mm in 3 hours during a thunderstorm, whilst a farming friend at Merriott was haymaking and had no rain at all.

The total rainfall I recorded for the year 2022 was 811 mm – not far from my Long Term Average (LTA) of 891 mm. However the year's figures disguise the considerable variation within the year.

The months of July and August this year added together at 26 mm was my lowest 2 monthly total in 30 years of recording– this low rainfall combined with very high temperatures gave us this summer's drought.

My lowest total for a single month was July 2106 when I recorded only 2.8 mm

To set against that this October to December felt wet as we have had few days where some rain did not fall. October is our wettest month on average and the quarter October to December is the wettest period of the year on average. This is because the sea to the South West of us is still relatively warm and together with the frequent gales, put a large amount of water into the atmosphere which then falls upon us as rain.

Somerset is like a large bowl with low land in the middle, almost completely surrounded by hills – Exmoor and the Blackdowns to the West, the Mendips to the North East and the Dorset Downs to the South. Dunkery Beacon on Exmoor has the highest rainfall in the county and last time I visited it had 4 rain gages – 2 automatic and 2 manual! In contrast the area from Somerton to Bridgwater has the lowest rainfall in the county.

JEREMY ROOK

February - Diary Dates_____

- ODI GRALI			
DATE	EVENT	NOTES	
8th Wednesday	Coffee Stop Sunday School Room - 10.30am	Tea, coffee, cake and a catch up - all for a good cause	
14th Tuesday	VALENTINES DAY	There must be someone special!	
14th Tuesday	Just Women Meeting - Sunday School Room 7:30pm Daryl & Judy Ford - Royal Photographic Society presentation on rural Romania	Recording everyday life using natural light - contact Pauline Rook on 01460 240644	
19th Sunday	Lopen Lads - Sunday School Room 9.30 Drive to South Petherton then walk to Old Dairy Cafe - Bower Hinton	Contact Trevor Power 07878 185537	
April & May Diary & Events Deadline for Next Issue – 10th March			
22nd Wednesday	Coffee Stop Sunday School Room - 10.30am	Tea, coffee, cake and a catch up, all for a good cuase	
24th Friday	L'Open Arms Pop-Up Pub 8.00pm - Sunday School Room	Contact Trevor Power 07878 185537	
27th Monday	Lopen Parish Council Meeting – 7.00pm Sunday School Room All welcome	Local Lopen Issues	

March - Diary Dates

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DATE	EVENT	NOTES	
8th Wednesday	Coffee Stop Sunday School Room - 10.30 am	Tea, coffee, cake and a catch up, all for a good cause	
8th Wednesday	Basic Life Support Training Sunday School Room 7.00pm - 9.00 pm	Free Course Booking Required Trevor - 07878 185537	
14th Tuesday	Just Women Meeting - Sunday School Room - 7:30pm AGM - followed by 'in conversation' with Susan Ogilvy Botanical Artist and Angela Naunton Davies	Includes unravelling the lost story of birds nests New members welcome Annual Subscription £5 Contact Pauline Rook 01460 240664	
18th Saturday	Lopen Lads Sunday School Room -9.30 am Objective - Lopen Raj Breakfast	Contact Trevor Power 07878 185537	
Save the dateMONDAY 10th APRIL - Bank Holiday Monday - 12.00 - 2.00 pm LOPEN EASTER EGG HUNT Look out for details in the next issue of Lopen Life			
22nd Wednesday	Coffee Stop Sunday School Room - 10.30am	Tea, coffee, cake and a catch up, all for a good cause	
27th Monday	Parish Council Meeting Sunday School Room 7.00pm	Local Lopen Issues All Welcome	
31st Friday	L'Open Arms Pop-Up Pub 8.00pm - Sunday School Room	Easter Bingo Event	



Lopen community Life Support Training

Lopen village is fortunate enough to have a defibrillator located in the porch of the Sunday School Room (SSR) on Church Street.

It is reassuring to have potentially life saving equipment in the village, however we all hope we will never need to use it. But if you did...would you be confident using a defibrillator? Have you ever seen one being used? (not counting episodes of Casualty or Holby City!) For many people the answer is sadly no.

The same question 'would you know what to do?' could apply to basic CPR and medical emergencies such as choking, diabetes, stroke, heart attack and many other situations. Sustaining someone's life until medical experts arrive is a major part of saving life. When every minute is vital and every second crucial, knowing what to do and also what not to do means you could be the difference.

Lopen is lucky enough to have residents Sarah and Mark Lethbridge who are qualified in Advanced Life Support, and have offered to provide Basic Life Support training totally **FREE** for Lopen residents:

8th MARCH from 7.00pm to 9.00pm in the Sunday School Room

To book your place or if you have any questions contact Trevor on 07878 185537

Always look on the bright side...

In the last issue we heard from Philip Harper and the Churchyard Eco-Group, the origins of mowing songs and some of the birds spotted in and around the Church.

Continuing that theme and thinking on the general wellbeing benefits of our local fauna and flora, as an ex-urbanite I am always delighted by the sights and sounds that we experience daily in the area, from the deer that seem to like our neighbouring field, to the twilight flash of the bats.

On the subject of bats, and appreciate like some other mammals they are sometimes considered a problem or vermin, they are still extraordinary creatures, and a protected species. Local sightings have been of two specific varieties - Pipistrelle and Horseshoe. Supposedly in hibernation until the latter part of March or even early April, our strange performing weather has confused them, and many other animals who traditionally sleep for 3 months, into wakeful bouts of hungry exuberance.

A useful source at the Somers winter period, about develop our local wildle many, unusual development.

Not only would it also may hell what we do an Thoughts welcome.



A useful source of information can be found at the Somerset Bat Group. During this winter period, it may be a good time to think about developing a recording and tracking of our local wildlife - what is seen, where, how many, unusual sitings and habitat development.

Not only would this be a wellbeing initiative, it also may help us understand and consider what we do and how we do it.
Thoughts welcomed to the Editor.



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Resolution, Revolution or Evolution?

The irony of a 'Dry-January' in an issue that talks about flooding, rainfall and weather is not lost on you I am sure, but the whole subject of New Year's resolutions is a strange one, and unlike Christmas not a 'new' one. The origin of making New Year's resolutions rests with the Babylonians some 4000 years ago, who reportedly made promises to the gods in hopes they'd earn good favour in the coming year. They often resolved to get out of debtalways a good start!

Most common amongst such promises and pledges are to eat less/loose weight, dry-out from seasonal excess, or 'get-fit' (a relative term for most). Gym memberships rocket in January, same as slimming clubs and on-line dieting fads, often to become redundant by March. But in this time of increasing concern about well-being, putting oneself through the stress of often artificial goals, common sense and moderation are often the better way forward. So how did your New Year start? Full of resolutions to lose weight (again), start 'couch 25K' (again), drink 3 litres of water everyday (again).

To simply eat and drink what is good for you, healthy, low sugar/salt/ fat natural foods; do things that are good for you, start walking a bit more or a bit farther, and then just really make sure that you consciously enjoy the bits in between - when you are scoffing a scotch egg or chomping a bar of chocolate, so they become twice as rewarding.

Some of us can turn a resolution into a revolution and change habits of a lifetime, but most of us should think of them as an evolution to gradually change the less good habits into something that takes care of our whole. But always with the caveat that life is too short to not enjoy the bits in between! And that way please the gods. (Thanks to Kate from the Trading Post for the inspiration).

Refugee Support Group Update:

REFUGEE AID FROM TAUNTON 2023



Raft continues to request donations to send to those living in refugee camps and, if necessary, for those resettled in the Taunton area. They also help homeless people in need. Some refugees now volunteer with the charity, sorting and packing donated goods.

Raft requests blankets, sleeping bags, tents, but no other bedding is wanted at present. Suitable, clean, washable clothing for men (not large sizes please), women, children and babies, plus hygiene items for all are always needed. Refugee Support Group receives your donations and, if necessary, will collect, and transports them to Raft.

In addition, trustees at Raft have set up an e-bay page where they are now selling individual clothing and footwear not suitable for life in camps. They need to be in good condition and would include those designated 'vintage'. Many, I expect, would be unwanted purchases or presents, and are sometimes even from businesses closing down. Raft uses the money to buy baby and hygiene products. They are also now having to find £18,000 a year for smaller premises where previously they were fortunate to have, from the council for free, a large premises awaiting redevelopment.

Many thanks to all our supporters, past, present and future, **Geraldine Downey - RSG - 01460 271358**

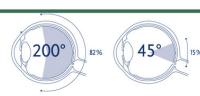


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LOPEN LADS - Walk-about & Talk-about

A nurse, a mechanic, a dentist and a shop assistant walked into a pub... and that is the story of how Lopen Lads started. So what is Lopen Lads? Simply blokes from all walks of life who live or work in the Parish of Lopen. Several have been in the village less than 5 years and a few much longer, most had not formally met before joining us for a walk. Now the group is growing we have a wider range of personal backgrounds, alternative destinations and the occasional Sunday to cater for the gents who are busy on Saturdays.

Now the festive period is over and for many the winter blues have set it in, there is no better time to dig out the walking boots and get a couple of miles exercise and an abundance of fresh air. As an engineer by trade I have no experience in mental health, but as a person I do know that a short walk, a little conversation and sharing knowledge with others is a wonderful boost to our mental wellbeing. Young or old, there is always something we can learn or something we can teach, no matter what the conversation, it gives the men in the village a focal point where they can get to know each other better and find common interests.

So if you are new to the village or arrived on the Fosse Way with the Roman Legions you are welcome to join us for any event (usually starting and ending with a short walk).

There is no membership, no subscription and no committee, only attend when the activity suits you or you fancy a couple of hours out with the Lads. Notifications are advertised in the Lopen Life diary dates pages.

If you would like more information or would like to receive a 'text message' reminder please call **Trevor on 07878 185537**



A.N.D another thing

What! More Misnomers?

I had a chance to look more closely at a smaller section of a Lopen map that was published following a survey conducted in 1886 and printed in 1887 by the ordnance Survey office Southampton. Surprise, surprise what did I first see but the piece of road now known as Kitchens Lane clearly named as Hitchens Lane. And where Old Mill is was very clearly marked as Hinton Flour Mill. Also other details of areas that I had not noticed before. We will arrange an opportunity to look at some of these maps where everybody can have a chance to see where they live. I will ask Joan Ferris if she can find the origin of the name Hitchen, it crops up not infrequently in other places. She is a good historical researcher.



What! More Rain?

The effect of rain has dominated many of our greetings and activities over the last few weeks, both in volume and intensity (and this issue!). Jeremy Rook has been measuring rainfall for many years. And he will tell you exactly how much we have had since he moved into this village. I know from him that in the past four weeks since 17th December we have had 225mm (nearly 9" for pre-metric measurers) . Almost without exception much of it flowing quickly into the Lopen brook. All of this will drain into the river Parrett, flow beyond Bridgewater and into the Bristol Channel. The faster this journey the faster the rivers reach their capacity and over flow. What happens when they are full and a tide the whole length of the north Somerset coast comes in? Have things changed? Urbanisation and the increase in the areas of impervious ground covering, roofs of houses, factories and industrial buildings, car parking areas and road changes add to the runoff.

But is this a problem? Perhaps not. Unless there is some form of obstruction in the flow. A few leaves on a drain grating might rot easily, pieces of plastic not so. Disposing of non-disposable objects, block drains not only from homes. Seeing the powerful pumps back again trying to reduce the problems so late in the day looks like trying empty a bath with a teaspoon. Flooding is common but for centuries added to the fertility and richness of this County unless contaminated by the runoff and waste from human noxious activities. Floodplains have been there for a reason, our gardens and surrounding fields play a similar part; they do their part soaking up water to fill the aquifers to keep us hydrated and the life of everything going when ground is baked, plants desiccated and use of water restrictions come into force, as during last summer.

Where does this water come from after it leaves the clouds? From where we live, work and play. Can we find ways of reducing the problem by slowing the process down where we have an influence? Of course we can.

Angela Naunton Davies





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