

# LOPEN/*life*



December & January  
2025 2026

ISSUE 20

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# Edit this...

As the end of another year appears in the headlights, our little village continues to develop as a community - witness the Pop Up Pub the L'Open Arms Oktoberfest and the funds raised for the Sunday School Room, and then looking ahead to our 'next big thing' - the Village public space plan for the orchard on Kitchen Lane. We continue to need and create 'excuses' to come together and build substance to Lopen.

So lets pat ourselves on the back for this years achievements however small, and look at what our personal and community resolutions need to be for 2026, that will make a difference to others and thereby ourselves. Seasons Greetings to everyone and a healthy and prosperous new year.

*Chris*

**Chris Marsh - Editor - Email:** [chrismarshlpc@gmail.com](mailto:chrismarshlpc@gmail.com)

 [/Lopen-Events-277018432630673/](https://www.facebook.com/Lopen-Events-277018432630673/)

**Visit our village website:** [www.lopenvillage.org](http://www.lopenvillage.org)

**Join The Village WhatsApp Group for all the latest - Contact the Editor**



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**- 01460 419012**

# Lopen Parish Council

Look out for the next meeting via the Whats App groups and the Lopen Life Diary - usually the last Monday of the month, everyone welcome.

## PARISH COUNCILLORS:

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

**Stephen Crane** - scrane1@hotmail.co.uk - 01460 241412

**Jenny Feeney** - jfeeneylopenpc@gmail.com - 01460 419569

**Michael Armstrong** - md.armstrong@btinternet.com - 01460 354023

**Dan King** - d.king1@hotmail.co.uk - 07504 250172

**Parish Clerk** - lopenpc.clerk@gmail.com - **Kim Larsson** - 07871 935101

## OTHER CONTACTS:

**Unitary Council:** Jo Roundell Greene - 07341 560016-

jo.roundellgreene@somerset.gov.uk

**MP** - Adam Dance - 07767 224213 - adam.dance.mp@parliament.uk

**Just Women** - Pauline Rook - 240644 - prook12@gmail.com

**Lopen Lads** - Trevor Power - 07878 185537 - trevorpowermbe1967@gmail.com

**Neighbourhood Watch** - Carron Richards - 07706647112

Caroline Gibson - 07767621804

**Police CSO** - Mike Bell - Dial 101 and ask for PCSO 7954

mike.bell@avonsomerset.police.UK

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# What you may have missed...

## Lopen Music Weekend

Back in September a recital by French Horn player Benjamin Hartnell-Booth accompanied by Jonathan Delbridge on piano launched the 2025 Lopen Music Weekend. Here are some details and a reminder of the special occasion in our annual calendar...



The well attended event provided an attentive audience with a rare insight into the French Horn repertoire, demonstrating the wide variety of sounds and textures the instrument produces. Benjamin is an experienced orchestral player but this recital illustrated his subtlety and finesse performing chamber works by Beethoven, Dukas, Schumann and Poulenc. A horn sonata by York Bowen made considerable demands on both the horn player and pianist alike to navigate the florid, late romantic idiom of this interesting work. An entertaining encore of variations based on The Beatles 'Hey Jude' wrapped up a highly enjoyable evening of music.

The weekend concluded with Jonathan performing three Mozart piano sonatas on his 19th Century square piano to a capacity crowd on Sunday afternoon. Our grateful thanks to Jonathan for organising the Lopen Music Weekend and for raising £478 towards the upkeep of the church. KEITH HILL

# What you may have missed...

## L'Open Arms does a night of pure Gemütlichkeit...

Our September Pop-up Pub brought a little piece of Oktoberfest magic to Lopen, and we're still smiling thinking about it.

From the moment guests arrived at our beautifully refurbished School Room, it was clear this wasn't going to be an ordinary Friday evening. We streamed live from the actual Oktoberfest in Munich including a festive video, learned the joyful toast song "Ein Prosit der Gemütlichkeit" and discovered that wonderful German word that has no English translation: Gemütlichkeit – a feeling of social cosiness, warmth, good cheer, belonging and peaceful contentment all rolled into one. That word perfectly captures what our Lopen community is all about, and what our Pop-up Pub evenings deliver every single time.

Tom kicked off the evening with a fascinating Oktoberfest quiz (congratulations to Michael's team!), we sampled beers from the only six breweries permitted at Munich's actual Oktoberfest, and Andrew and John took home prizes as our best-dressed guests.

Our brilliant musicians Ross (keyboard) and Simon (bass guitar) had everyone singing along to rousing renditions of "Sweet Caroline" – not once, but twice! The second performance closed the evening perfectly followed by a heartwarming chorus of "Show Me the Way to Go Home". Sophie led a wonderful gingerbread heart decorating station with hearts imported from Germany, including our very own Lopen-branded ones. The unanimous favourite? Liney's heart commemorating their "early wifi installation experience" – nothing says welcome to Lopen quite like a decent broadband connection!

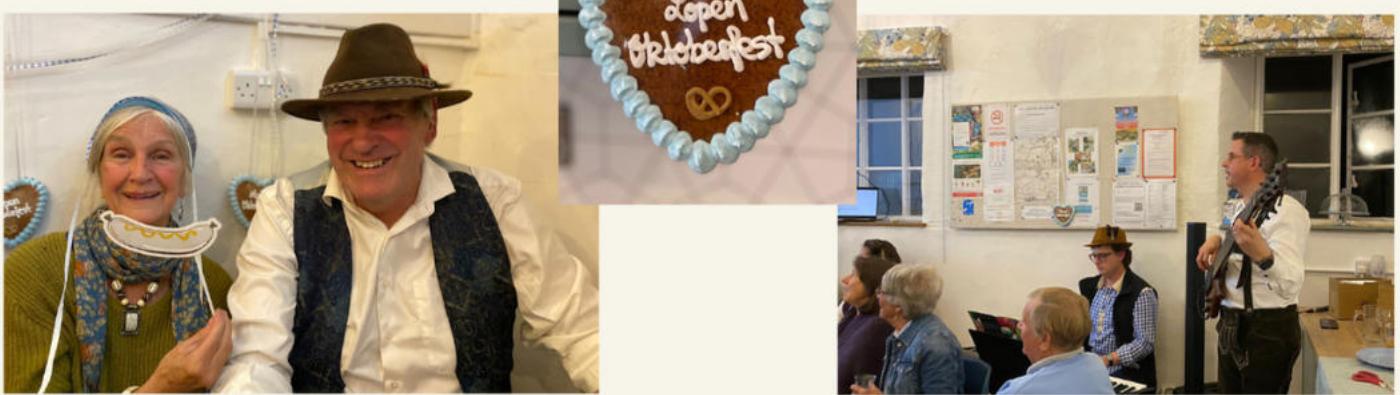
But the real star of the show? The people from our village. Watching neighbours become friends, hearing laughter echo off the School Room walls, feeling that wonderful sense of Gemütlichkeit come alive – that's what these evenings are all about. By unanimous vote, we raised funds to split between the School Room and Dorset and Somerset Air Ambulance.

A huge thank you to our fantastic co-hosting team – Simon, Louise, Sophie, Jonathan and Ross – and to everyone who came along and made it such a memorable night. You brought the warmth, the laughter, and that unmistakable Lopen magic.

Ein Prosit der Gemütlichkeit!

Tom and Sarah Volkert

**For more information about Pop-up Pub evenings or to get involved in planning future events, please contact Mary Chapman – [mechapman2016@gmail.com](mailto:mechapman2016@gmail.com)**



# December 2025 - Diary Dates

DATE	EVENT	NOTES
Monday's	Tai Chi @ ARK at Egwood 9.30-10.30 am	£5 Just turn up!
2nd & 4 <sup>th</sup> Thursdays	Health Walks Meet 10.30 at ARK	Stretch those legs...
Last Friday of the month	ARK Supper Club 3 Courses and Live Music	£27.50 per head Contact 01460 391974
Tuesday 9th	Just Women Angie, from 'Cottage Flowers' demonstrates making Christmas decorations	7.30pm Sunday School Room
Wednesday 10th	Coffee Stop 10.30-12.00 Sunday School Room	Tea, coffee, cake and chat, all for a good cause and a £1

## PLEASE NOTE

It is with regret that due to a lack of volunteers coming forward - Coffee Stop - will no longer be held twice a month. In view of this it has been decided that it will be held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of each month until further notice.

The dates will be shown in Lopen Life, on the SSR Notice Board and the village WhatsApp notifications.



# January 2026 - Diary Dates

DATE	EVENT	NOTES
Monday's	Tai Chi @ ARK at Egwood 9.30-10.30 am	£5 Just turn up!
2nd & 4 <sup>th</sup> Thursdays	Health Walks Meet 10.30 am at ARK	Stretch those legs...
Tuesday 13th	Just Women Middle Eastern theme Dinner from Sue Foreman 2 Courses @ £20.00	7.30 pm in the SSR Contact Pauline Rook 240644
Wednesday 21st	Coffee Stop 10.30-12.00 Sunday School Room	Tea, cake and a chat, all for a good cause @ £1
Monday 26th	Lopen Parish Council Meeting 7.00 pm Sunday School Room	All Welcome
2026 Resolution? Last Friday of the Month?	HOSTS & THEMES NEEDED L'Open Arms POP-UP-PUB	Please Contact Mary Chapman 07942 689164

## WINTER CLOTHING PLEA

Many thanks to all who donated summer clothing for RAFT (Refugee Aid From Taunton) recently. I am now appealing to those who can pass on unwanted clean washable winter clothing for men, women, children and babies, all sizes, and any suitable winter footwear for all. We always need blankets, sleeping bags, tents, large suitcases with wheels, new toiletries, baby and hygiene products. All such donations are gratefully received because every little helps enormously.

With grateful thanks,

Geraldine Downey, Merriott tel. 01460 271358

# St. Margaret's Hospice Care Charity

We are all probably well aware of this amazing Charity and the wonderful work they do, often identified through their daffodil logo, and a strong high street presence. They are lining up a series of fund raising events that may be of interest to you our villagers. These are a few of those through December and January that may have some appeal...

## DECEMBER: Light up a Life

For many of us, the festive season is a time to gather with loved ones, while remembering those we miss so much. This winter, St Margaret's Hospice is once again inviting their local community to remember their loved ones by dedicating a star in their memory in support of their Light up a Life appeal.

The hospice is also inviting the community to attend their Light up a Life gatherings. These moving events provide an opportunity to remember and celebrate the lives of loved ones through readings, music, and the lighting of candles.

Thursday 4 December – Monkton Elm Garden Centre, Taunton – 6pm to 7.30pm

Sunday 7 December – St John's Church, Yeovil – 2.30pm to 4pm

More information: <https://www.st-margarets-hospice.org.uk/ways-to-give/light-up-a-life/>

## JANUARY: Walk 100 Miles With Your Dog

St Margaret's Hospice Care is calling on dog lovers to lace up their walking boots and take part in the Walk 100 Miles With Your Dog Challenge this January. The virtual event invites participants and their four-legged friends to cover 100 miles over the month while raising funds to support patients and families across the county.

Participants can sign up for FREE and receive a special doggy bandana, as well as a mileage tracker and a sponsorship form. Simply tick off the miles you have walked throughout the month, and collect as much sponsorship as you can for the hospice. , and to see the impact her fundraising has made is very special."

More information: Walk 100 Miles With Your Dog - St Margaret's Hospice Care



St Margaret's Hospice Care

# Light up a Life 2025

Will you remember a loved one with a star this winter?

By dedicating a star in memory of a loved one, you will help St Margaret's continue caring for families in Somerset when it matters most.

SCAN ME

Dedicate a star today

Please visit our website: [st-margarets-hospice.org.uk/light-up-a-life/](https://st-margarets-hospice.org.uk/light-up-a-life/)

Registered charity number: 279473 FUNDRAISING REGULATOR



## Walk 100 miles with your Dog!

We're challenging you and your dog to walk 100 miles in January 2026 and help us raise vital funds.

Sign up for FREE and receive a handcrafted doggy bandana!

Sign up: [st-margarets-hospice.org.uk/walk-100-miles-with-your-dog/](https://st-margarets-hospice.org.uk/walk-100-miles-with-your-dog/)

Amicus Law SOLICITORS

St Margaret's Hospice Care

**St Margaret's Hospice's beloved Christmas Tree collection is back for its fifth year – and it's growing stronger than ever!** This January, they are once again teaming up with Children's Hospice South West to offer a simple, eco-friendly way to recycle your real Christmas tree – all while raising welcome funds.

The service is hassle-free: one of the hospice's teams will collect your tree from your roadside in exchange for a kind donation, and local tree surgeons will chip it down for use in farms, gardens, and paths.

The event has become a true symbol of Somerset's generosity and teamwork, bringing together volunteers, local businesses and residents to turn festive clean-up into meaningful fundraising. Every donation ensures St Margaret's Hospice can continue to provide specialist support, comfort and compassion to patients and families facing life-limiting illness.

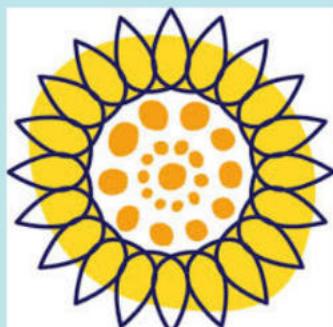
**Date: 9-11 January**

**Location: Dozens of postcodes across Somerset. Register your interest today to help the hospice customise their radius!**

**More information: <https://www.st-margarets-hospice.org.uk/event/christmas-tree-collection/>**



And finally for those feeling they need to sort out a new years resolution, how about these thought starters...!



**FIRE & ICE CHALLENGE 2026**

*Will you brave the cold and face the flames?*

Take part in just one or complete both to earn your exclusive Fire & Ice medal.

A photograph of a person's legs and feet walking barefoot across a glowing fire. The background is dark.

**FIREWALK**

Date: **Friday 27 February 2026**

Location: **St Margaret's Hospice, Yeovil, BA20 2HU**

A photograph of a person in a swimsuit and goggles swimming in the ocean. Other people are visible in the background.

**NEW YEAR'S DAY DIP**

Date: **Thursday 1 January 2026**

Location: **Minehead Esplanade, TA24 5BG**

Sign-up deadline: **30 December 2025**

For ticket prices and minimum fundraising amounts see website

Register now at [st-margarets-hospice.org.uk/fireandice](https://www.st-margarets-hospice.org.uk/fireandice)

Registered Charity No: 219473 Fundraising REGULATOR

**St Margaret Hospice Care**

# Always look on the bright side...

November Rainfall report - Jeremy Rook



Rainfall in September and October this year taken together were approximately average with September above average and October below. Groundwater levels are still low following the Summer drought – this can be checked by looking into ditches - you can see that except during heavy rain there is no water lying in the ditch bottoms yet.

Concerns have been raised about flooding during periods of heavy rain in the parish. Looking at the map we have a catchment area of several square miles stretching from Lopen Head to Eggwood (North to South) and Allowenshay to Lopen Mill (West to East).

Most of the rainfall running off in that several square miles is channelled into Lopen Brook which flows under the bridge on Merriott Road.

In the past land drainage and river management was in the hands of local Drainage Boards. These boards usually comprised local councillors, a few landowners and a professional engineer to oversee such works as they thought necessary. The drainage boards thus had a great incentive to ensure that floodwater was moved off their patch as quickly as possible, as affected locals would know who to blame if things went wrong.

Unfortunately responsibility was taken from the sensible locally based drainage boards and given to the Environment Agency which was stuffed with loads of bureaucrats who had never dug a ditch in their lives. The EA also thought that it was more important to protect newts and other wildlife than it was to keep people's homes free of flooding.

There has been a very great reduction in the amount of clearance downstream on the River Parrett and its tributaries like the Lopen Brook, and this is to my mind a major factor in the flooding problem in our area.

**#Ed - hence the importance of the Lopen Brook Catchment Flood Group (see Issue 19) - stay in contact: [floodgroup.lopen@gmail.com](mailto:floodgroup.lopen@gmail.com)**

# All Saints Church

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## SERVICE DATES:

### December Services:

**Sunday 7th - Communion - 9.00am  
Thursday 18th - Lopen Carol Service - 6.00pm  
Thursday 25th - Christmas Service - 10.30am**

### January Services:

**Sunday 4th - Communion - 10.30am  
Sunday 18th - Communion - 10.30am**

**Rev Bob and Julia Hicks 01460 76406  
bobhicks66@gmail.com  
juliahicks1@gmail.com**

Please check the Church Porch  
notice board for latest  
information

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### **All Saints, Lopen Treasurer - Vacancy Time is running out, Lopen needs you!**

As you are aware, I am standing down as treasurer to All Saints and the Sunday School Room at the end of this year after 10 years in the role.

With the Sunday School Room project almost complete, the heavy lifting has been done. I estimate the role will now require no more than a day a month. Any wider involvement is very much up to the individual. It is a very rewarding role as you are helping to maintain the church and Sunday School Room for the community now and in the future.

You don't need to be an accountant just happy with basic accounts and you do not have to be a member of the Church Council; just available to advise the members allowing them to make sound financial decisions.

All of you who might be interested please give me a call -  
07710235249.  
Steve Chapman

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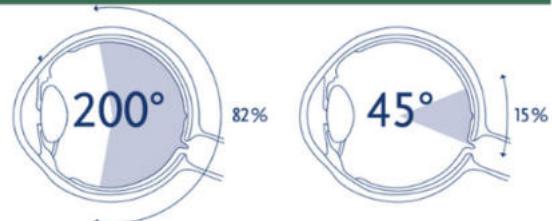


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# Lopen History Casebook

## CHAPTER 13 - FARMING IN LOPEN

There have always been farms in Lopen. The Domesday Book reveals that there were many sheep being kept in what was a small settlement.

The soil is said to be very good, and it was frequently made more fertile by the addition of marl, which was a clay like substance taken from a pit in the village, so it has always been a productive area. In the C18th, some arable land was typically managed by the three yearly cycle of 2 years of crops and in the third year the same land was left fallow to allow the soil to regenerate. This gave rise to growing more valuable crops, and in particular apples.

Between 1797 and 1803, orchard coverage nearly doubled in size. Many orchards grew cider apples as cider was often given to the labourers as part of their wages.

We have some knowledge of Court Farm, owned by the Goodlands (courtesy of the late V. Layzelle). There was the farm house, stables and a granary. The land continued up to the Fosse way (Broomhill/Snapant), and had many apple trees in it, having wonderful names like "Sheep's Nose, Morgan Sweets, Tom Putts and Beauty of Bath" as well as the more regular Cox and Russets. There were still sheep farms, and the wool may have been woven here, as cloth manufacture goes back to the late C17th.

By 1841 there were more than 12 farmers in the immediate area, employing many agricultural labourers. Wheat, barley and oats were grown, as well as hemp, beans, potatoes and peas. The hemp was used to make rope and twine, which was much needed on farms, and after harvesting, clover and other vetches were sown in order to put nitrogen back into the soil.

By 1888, there were 140 acres of meadow and pasture, which was needed for grazing sheep and cattle. In the late 18th century, there were also silk and flax weavers with cottages in Holloway housing some of the weavers. Flax fibre was grown to make 'dowlas', a type of rough sailcloth. As weaving and farming became more refined, dowlas became finer sail cloth, and finally linen, until superceded by cotton and man-made fibres. The weavers typically combined their work with small scale farming for food on our local fertile fields. The fields must have been a beautiful with the blue flowers in the spring and the orchard blossoms.

There are now only a few real farms left in the village, but agriculture has always played a large part in Lopen village life, and still does - reminded by our tractor traffic, sheep, cows and surrounding orchards. Flax, having been with us since the Bronze Age, is making a comeback as a soil regenerative plant and carbon absorber.



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