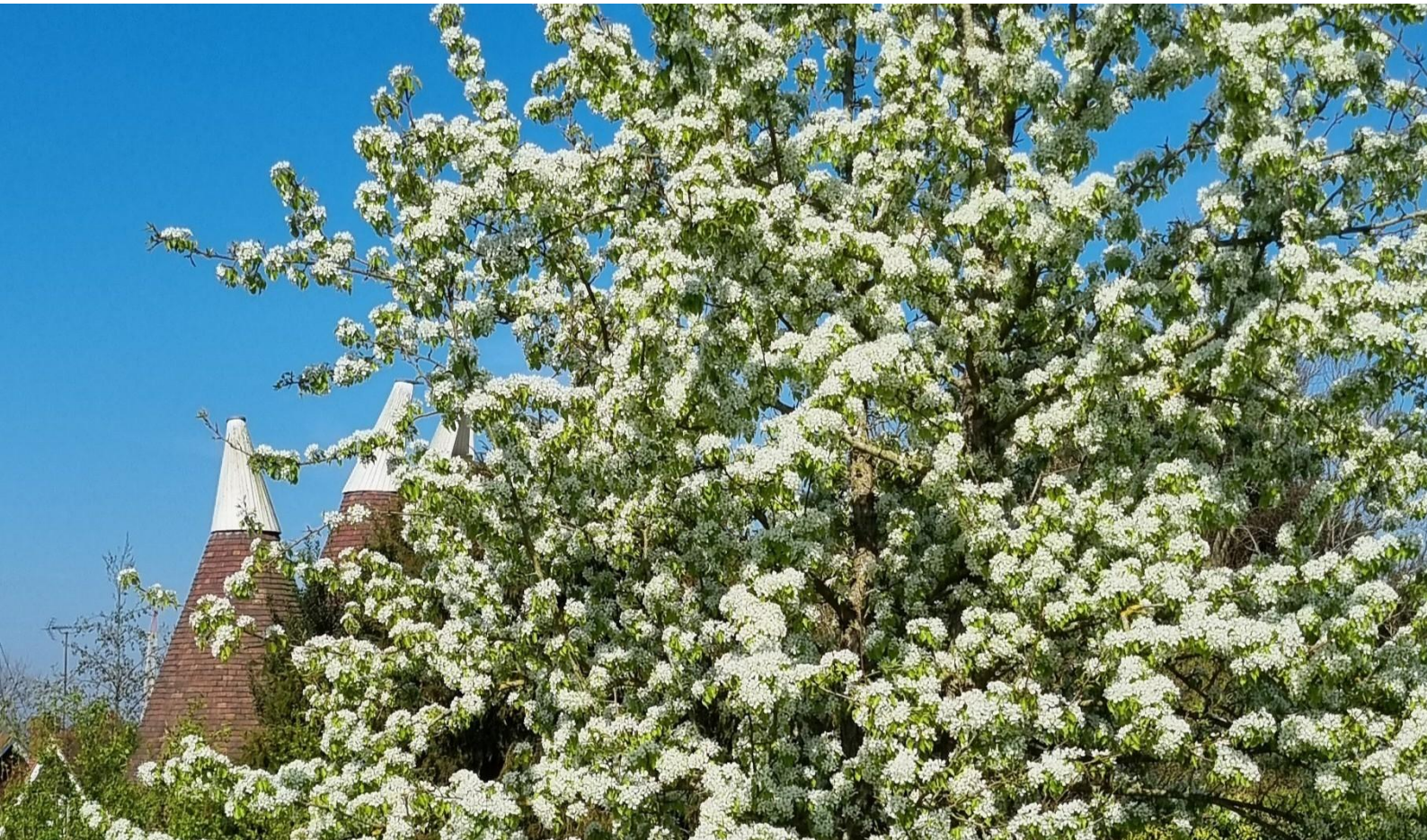


“Some sort of periodical is an essential life-line in a village such as ours”

Welcome to West Farleigh's own

LIFELINE



WEST FARLEIGH EVENTS DIARY

Sat 10 th May	Dandelion May Fair 11-3
Sat 17 th May	Village Plant sale 10 – 1
Sat 17 th May	Spring Concert by Innominata
Sat 14 th June	Village in Bloom Quiz Night
Sun 22 nd June	Garden Open day at Smiths Hall
Sun 6 th July	Village Cricket and BBQ
Fri 18 th July	Twelfth Night at Elmscroft

Written, managed, and distributed freely by West Farleigh residents. Edition 576

Editors: Stephen Norman, Helen Swan, Sue Birchall, Katie O'Connor

Website: www.thefarleighs.co.uk

Email: editor@thefarleighs.co.uk

Deadline for the next issue is 20th May

RS RACHEL
SPRECKLEY
ART



South East Open Studios

Sunday 8 June 10-3pm
Thursday 12 June 10-3pm
Sunday 15 June 10-3pm
Friday 20 June 10-3pm
Saturday 21 June 10-3pm

Smiths Hill Oast, Smiths Hill
West Farleigh ME15 0PG

Watercolour WORKSHOP

Smiths Hill Oast Studio

Saturday 5 April 10-1pm £75
Friday 13 June 10-1pm £75

Please see website for further info
& booking rachelspreckleyart.com



LEARN & EXPERIENCE POTTERY



SHAZPOTS HOLIDAY RETREAT

1 MAYS PADDOCK - LOWER ROAD - EAST FARLEIGH - KENT - ME15 0JT
(Please contact to ask about entrance and parking)

POTTERY WHEEL HAND-BUILDING & GLAZING EXPERIENCES

ADULTS £15pp, Per Hour
CHILD 4-16 YRS £12.50pp, Per Hour

Age 4-6 hand building & painting only.
Small additional £2.50 firing cost per lb of clay for the items you want to keep.
Min 2 hours for wheel experience.

POTTERY COURSES

4 x 3 hour lessons £150
4 x 2 hour lessons £100

Book a 4 week course in a time period that works for you.
You choose the day and time to start.

RAKU KILN FIRING DAY

5hr hands on experience
Learn some of the art of the traditional Japanese firing technique, Raku.
Design and glaze 2 of your own pots, fire to 1000 degrees
then complete the process ready to take home the same day.

Adults £70 for the day
Children £60 (14-16 yrs only)
(old clothes advised as smoky)

SHAZPOTS HOLIDAY RETREAT

Why not have a pottery holiday?
Stay in our dog friendly 1 bed fully equipped cabin, sleeps up to 4
free use of our on site private secure off lead dog exercise field.
Plan and book your own bespoke break, pick how many days & how
many lessons you'd like.

NOT JUST FOR POTTERS

Stay in our cabin and enjoy the beautiful Medway Valley area of East Farleigh Kent.
Dog friendly and free use of dog exercise field.

ITEMS FOR SALE IN OUR POP-UP STUDIO SHOP
GIFT VOUCHERS AVAILABLE

GARDENING NOTES BY TINA WOODHAMS

MAY GARDENING NOTES

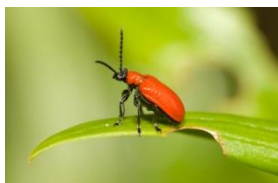
“Ne’er cast a clout till May is out” – clout being an old English word for clothing, the saying suggests that we should not rid of our winter clothes until the end of May! Another meaning relates to the flowering of the hawthorn tree, using this as a guide to when we can discard our jumpers and head into warmer temperatures. This good, simple advice is for us to remain vigilant of our fickle British weather which can bathe us in warmth one day and bring chilly winds the next.



The recent warm temperatures have promoted fast new growth already and clematis and climbing roses should be tied into their supports as the stems become woodier. Use a soft tie or string, spacing the shoots well to maintain air circulation.

Have a tidy up! Strong winds have left leaves, twigs and moss lying all over lawns and flower borders so grab a rake or broom and clear the debris – it’s amazing how this will instantly transform your garden and also reduce hiding places for pests such as slugs and snails.

If you haven’t done so already, in dry periods the lawn can be scarified to remove moss and dead matter by using a spring-tined rake. Sprinkle grass seed on any bare patches and water in well. If you notice holes in the lawn it is most likely to be animals searching for grubs such as leatherjackets, which can be controlled using a biological nematode.



If your lilies are starting to shoot, beware of the lily beetle! This bright red insect will consume and destroy the foliage. They are easy to spot however have a black underside which tends to make them disappear if they land on their backs! Hold a bowl underneath the leaf when removing by hand, then when they drop down you will be able to catch them.

Start to plant up summer bedding in pots, keeping them in a sheltered area until they have established (plants will be available at the Village Plant Sale on 17th May!).

Prune early flowering shrubs remembering the May rule – “if the shrub blooms BEFORE May then prune immediately after flowering”. This includes forsythia, japonica and choisya to name but a few.

In the vegetable garden, prepare supports for climbing beans and peas. The ground should now be warm enough to direct sow carrot, parsnip and beetroot seeds. Start to harden off any plants from the greenhouse ready to be transplanted into the garden at a later date.

Potatoes that were planted last month may be showing growth above the surface and should be carefully earthed up to prevent frost damage, protect the tubers from sunlight and encourage the formation of more potatoes.

The longer, warmer days mean more time to enjoy the great outdoors – Happy Gardening!

West Farleigh in Bloom

Plant, Refreshment, & Cake Sale



SATURDAY 17TH MAY

THE FOOTBALL CLUB HOUSE

Charlton Lane

West Farleigh

10.00AM - 1.00PM





Come and join us at All Saints Church West Farleigh for a fun packed evening full of trivia and nonsense!

Saturday the 14th June 2025 at 7.30pm.

All proceeds go to West Farleigh In Bloom

Contact Peter on 07964 330856 to reserve your table

£5.00 per head, bring your own drinks & nibbles

INNOMINATA in concert

All Saints Church

Sat 17th May, 7.30pm

Tickets £10 from the Good Intent or on-line

Innominata are a local singing group who sing a wide variety of different music across the ages.....from early church music, negro spirituals, 1930s, modern classics and pop songs.

"We like to have fun," says Lynn Seeley, a founder member, "there be something for everyone !!"

There will be a mixture of singing and instrumental items, with refreshments.



will



QR for tickets

Or visit: <https://buytickets.at/westfarleighvillageevents/1631902>

An Easter message from our MP, Katie Lam

Few things are more beautiful than our countryside in spring. The snowdrops and daffodils are in bloom, and the cold winter is finally coming to an end. Easter is a time of change, renewal and hope.

It's also a time when people come to their local parish churches, not only to worship but also to catch up with friends and neighbours. In villages throughout the Weald of Kent, parishes are at the heart of both spiritual and civic life. They offer support and sanctuary all year round – even if it's often at Christmas and Easter that we come to appreciate them the most.

Most of the work churches do is down to a few selfless volunteers, who do everything from ring the bells to run Sunday schools and play groups. Church wardens are also at the forefront of fundraising to protect our historic buildings. But they can't do it all on their own – a church roof can easily cost £20,000 to repair.

That's why, earlier this year, I joined other Conservative MPs in fighting to renew the Government's Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme. It's not (confusingly) actually a grant scheme, but a tax rebate, refunding VAT paid on maintenance and repairs to listed churches. Thankfully, the Government listened, and will be extending the scheme for another year. But there's more to be done. I'm working to protect the long-term future of the scheme, since I know how vital it is for parish churches like All Saints.

In Parliament, I've also questioned the Church Commissioners on why they are spending millions of pounds on divisive political projects, and less and less on parish churches. Parishes are the Church of England: the Church Commissioners' funds should go to protect these centres of faith, history and community, and the clergy who devote their lives to them. Along with our local councillors, farmers, teachers, doctors and business owners, they are crucial to the flourishing of the Weald of Kent – we can't take them for granted.

It's not just our churches that need investing in. The state of our roads and public transport is something I'm really worried about, especially after reading the results of the Transport Survey I sent last month. I'd like to thank everyone who took part; your feedback will help me work with Kent County Council to fix our potholes, put an end to disruptive street works, and get our villages better connected by public transport. I'll also be holding the Government to account on their promises to improve transport services across the country, making sure rural areas like the Weald of Kent don't get left behind.

As ever, if there's anything you'd like to speak with me about, don't hesitate to get in touch. You can email me at katie.lam.mp@parliament.uk, or speak to me on 01580 388344.

I wish you all a happy and joyful Easter!

[Editor's note: yes, we know Easter has passed but her message is still relevant]





The Coxheath Chiropractic
& Natural Therapy Centre

43, Stockett Lane, Coxheath, ME17 4PT
established 1993

Telephone number 01622 745178

Promoting Natural Healing & Health

McTimoney Chiropractic: A safe, gentle manipulative technique to help to ease your aches and pains and soothe away the stress and strain of life:

Neck, shoulder or back pain. Headaches & Migraines. Carpal Tunnel.

Sciatica. Arthritis. Pins & Needles. PMS or Pregnancy. Sport's Injuries

For full details please visit: www.coxheathchiropractic.co.uk



KIRK-BROWN LTD
Chartered Surveyors



Planning and Building Regulation Applications
Homebuyer Survey Reports
Building Surveys
Party Wall and Neighbourly Matters
Defect Analysis
Professional Member of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors
Contact Cliff on 01622 817769 or 07908 641668
Email Cliff@Kirk-Brown-Ltd.co.uk

How intelligent is your dog? Asks Rebecca Hawkins.

According to Stanley Coren, author of "Intelligence in dogs", there are three types of dog intelligence.

- Adaptive intelligence (Learning and problem solving ability) measured by IQ tests.
- Instinctive intelligence (specific to individual) measured by IQ tests.
- Working/Obedience intelligence. This is breed dependant.

You can research your specific breed, but as a guide the dogs ranked in the top spots are Collies, Poodles and German Shepherds, and the last places are Bulldogs, Basenji and Afghan Hounds.

Here is an intelligence test devised by Coren just for fun. Keep a tally of the points and the results are at the end.



Test 1 - Food under a can. This will test your dog's problem solving ability.

Items needed - An empty can or plastic cup, high value treats and a timer.

How to do the test.

1. First get your dog into a sit.
2. Show your dog the treat and let them sniff it.
3. With the dogs full attention, slowly place the treat on the ground and place the can over the top of it.
4. Start timing and encourage the dog to find the treat.

If the dog knocks over the can in 5 seconds or less, score **5 points**; 5-15 seconds, **4 points**; 15-30 seconds, **3 points**; 30-60 seconds, **2 points**; and if your dog doesn't even try it then score **1 point**.

Test 2 Food under a towel. A more difficult problem solving test.

Items needed - Hand towel or tea towel, high value treats, timer

Do the test the same way as before with the treat but instead cover the treat with a towel and score the dog as before.

If the dog gets the treat in 5 seconds or less score **5 points**; 5-15 seconds, **4 points**; 15-30 seconds, **3 points**; 30-60 seconds, **2 points**; and if your dog doesn't even try it, **1 point**.



Test 3 Dog under towel. To test problem solving ability.

Items needed - Large bath towel or blanket, a timer.

How to do the test.

1. Make sure your dog is fully awake.
2. Let the dog sniff the towel
3. With a quick smooth motion throw the towel over the dogs head, so it's head and shoulders are completely covered.

If the dog frees itself in 5 seconds score **5 points**; 5-10 seconds, **4 points**; 15-30 seconds, **3 points**; 30-60 seconds, **2 points**; if the dog hasn't freed itself after 60 seconds, **1 point**.

Test 4. Can your dog recognise a smile? Another problem solving ability.

Items needed - Your dog and a smile.

How to do the test.

1. Have your dog sitting about 2 metres away from you.
2. The dog must **not** have been told to stay or sit.

3. Stare intently at your dog's face - when your dog looks at you, count silently 3 seconds and then smile broadly.

If your dog comes with tail wagging **5 points**

If your dog comes slowly only part of the way, with no tail wag **4 points**

If your dog stands or rises from a sitting position, but does not move forward **3 points**

If your dog moves away from you **2 points**

If your dog pays no attention **1 point**.

Test 5. Does your dog know its name?

Items needed - a voice and your dog.

How to do the test.

1. Your dog should be settled comfortably around two metres in front of you.
2. In the voice tone you use to call your dog call "Refrigerator!"

If the dog shows some response to move forward **3 points**

If the dog does not come, call "Movies!" In the same tone. If the dog comes **2 points**.

If the dog has still not responded call its name. If the dog comes or shows a tendency to move to you **5points**.

If the dog has not moved, call its name a second time. If the dog comes **4 points**.

If the dog still doesn't come **1 point**.

RESULTS -

Add up all the scores on each test and find out if you have a genius or a bit of a plonker.

Over **20 points** - your dog is a genius

10-20 points - your dog is smart but won't pass for Cambridge.

5-10 points - your dog uses his cuteness to get by

Below **5 points** - your dog must be an Afghan.



COXHEATH VETERINARY PRACTICE
6 Westerhill Road, Coxheath

Professional Pet Healthcare in a bright, caring friendly atmosphere
Modern Diagnostic & Operating Facilities
Opening hours: Mon-Fri: 8.30 am – 7pm; Sat: 9am – 12 noon

PATRICK TIBBITS BVSc (Massey) MRCVS
For Appointments or 24 emergency cover, phone 01622 734888



IPAF Trained
LOLER Cert.

Sunhyll
Charlton Lane
West Farleigh
ME15 0PB
01622 720810

AngloGlobal
07730 43 55 65
www.AngloGlobal.com



Barrett Roofing

Brandenburg Oast, Collier Street
Tonbridge, Kent TN12 9RH

All types of roofing work undertaken, including:

Flat Roofing	Tiling
Lead Work	Slating
Gutters	Fascias

Tel: 01892 730581 • **Mob:** 07850 785381
Email: office@barrettroofing.co.uk

NFRF THE NATIONAL FEDERATION OF ROOFING CONTRACTORS LIMITED



TANTONS TREE SURGEONS
Your Local Tree Experts

Fully insured, qualified & experienced in all aspects of:
Tree Surgery, Site Clearance, Stump Grinding, Whole Tree Chipping
Land Clearance Machine for hire. Commercial and Domestic.

Clean, tidy and friendly service guaranteed
For a quote please telephone Ben Tanton (NCH Arb.) on:

01622 630312
07788973053

City & Guilds NPTC tantontreesurgeons@yahoo.co.uk facebook www.tantontreesurgeons.co.uk YouTube

PASTORAL LETTER FROM LORNA FAULKNER

I have found this month's letter almost impossible to write. I sat down a couple of weeks ago to make a start and stared at a blank page for an hour. And I have done the same today, a day before the printer's deadline arrives.

Today, I feel like I have done nothing. I am frustrated and a little disappointed.



But as I sit here writing this evening, I look back over my day and see that's not true. I answered my emails, caught up on my phone messages and updated my schedule on the whiteboard in my office. I spoke to a lovely lady about laying her mother to rest. I tidied a couple of rooms then did some filing. I did a little outstanding paperwork. I decorated my son's 18th birthday cake, wrapped some presents, and hosted a small family gathering. I emptied and re-loaded the dishwasher. I printed out some orders of service. I walked the dog and did a couple of loads of washing.

I feel like I did nothing because I was struggling to write the pastoral letter. But, in reality, I had quite a busy day!

As I sit and reflect on my day, I realise that, so often, we judge ourselves harshly. We see only what we did not do, rather than acknowledge the entirety of the life we have lived that day.

I felt I was a failure today because I didn't do one of the things on my list. But, when I look at all the things I did do, is it fair to call my day a waste?

There is a practice in contemplative prayer called the 'Examen'. The general idea is that, before the day ends, you take a gentle walk in your mind back through the day just passed; noticing where God felt present, the moments you are grateful for; where you feel things went awry, the moments of regret perhaps; ask God to be in the day to come...

Life is not always as we plan or expect it to be. But we continue to live it. Jonathan Swift's words are an encouragement to us: 'May you live every day of your life'. No part of our life is a waste. It is all there to be lived.

May we be a little more willing to allow ourselves to be glad for that which we have done as well as mindful of that which, as yet, has gone undone.

May we notice all the moments of our day and not just the ones we count as successful.

May we all be a little kinder to ourselves.

May God bless you in whatever you do, or don't do, today.

Lorna

SERVICES AT ALL SAINTS

Sunday 11 th May	9.30am	Communion	David Jones
Sunday 25 th May	9.30am	Morning Worship	Sue Elliot



LITTLE ANGELS

A mother and toddler group in West Farleigh Church 1pm every Friday in term time. From babies to pre-schoolers. Mums, Dads, Grandmothers, Grandfathers and carers all welcome. Coffee for adults, lots of toys and fun for the youngster



‘Twelfth Night’ at Elmscroft House on Friday 18th July

Following the success of "The importance of being Ernest" last year, the Changeling Theatre is coming to Elmscroft House to perform Shakespeare's eternal play.

Tickets available <https://buytickets.at/westfarleighvillageevents/1538044> or in person from Alex at Elmscroft House. £25 per adult, £15 per youngster 12-18 yrs.



Dandelion Time

Dandelion Time is opening its 22-acre site in West Farleigh on Saturday 10th May for its annual May Fayre fundraiser. The event is a once-a-year opportunity to visit Dandelion Time and see a small glimpse of the work the charity does in supporting children with

emotional challenges.

Visitors will have chance to meet the charity's donkeys, alpacas, sheep and guinea pigs, as well as explore its woodlands and vibrant gardens, and try out craft activities. All of which play a key part in Dandelion Time's therapeutic approach.

There will also be traditional stalls such as the tombola and beat the buzzer, and guests will be entertained by Maidstone Rock Choir, Old School Samba, Stardust Puppets, and Cuban band, Los Carrateros.

Tunbridge Wells based Charlie's Angels Kitchens, will be cooking up delicious vegetarian dishes. The not-for-profit caterer's mission is to reduce food waste by repurposing surplus. A purpose aligned to Dandelion Time's sustainability goals.

Guests will also be able to feast on cakes and hot food prepared on the BBQ.

"Every corner of our space is designed to nurture connections, build confidence and provide healing, reflecting the heart of our mission at Dandelion Time. We're excited to give you a sneak peek of our work at the May Fayre and look forward to welcoming both familiar faces and new families for what's sure to be a fun-filled day!"



Graham Carpenter, CEO

LOCAL TRADES

Firefly Payroll Services fireflypayroll.com Jason Hart 01622 934110 enquiries@fireflypayroll.com	No Muck'in About Professional and affordable cleaning services Sarah Dunn 07885 634559 nomuckinabout@outlook.com	Heathside Electrical heathsideelectrical.co.uk Sam Sephon 07976 895001 heathsideelectrical@gmail.com
D. Ward Plumbing & Heating Darren Ward 07973 314266 darren@dward.biz	Pest Purge pestpurge.co.uk Richard Lee 07758 615101 richard@pestpurge.co.uk	Top Dog Fencing and Gates Sam Morton 07709 530166 Topdogmaintenance@icloud.com
Castle Portable Loo Hire castleportableloohire.co.uk Steve Millsom 07990 606067 castleplh@gmail.com	Hair Traditional Facebook/Instagram 01622 817800 @hairtraditional.maidstone	



THE EVERGREENS

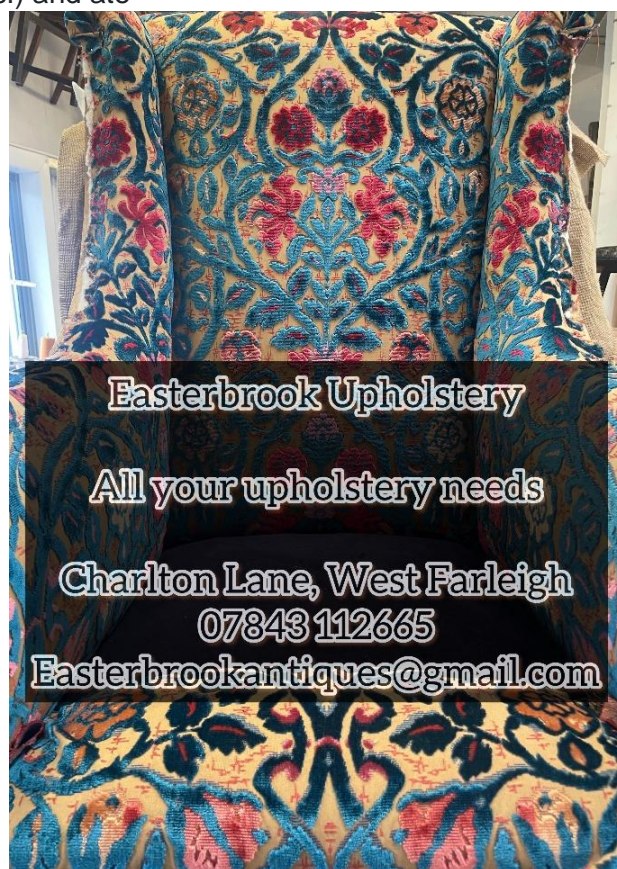
As usual the Evergreens had two meetings in April. Our first was an afternoon tea where we played bingo (some members being far more familiar with this game than others!) and ate lots of sandwiches and delicious homemade cakes.

Our lunchtime meeting on the fourth Tuesday of the month was a hybrid celebration of St George's Day (we enjoyed a full roast beef, roasters and Yorkshire pud lunch) and Easter (beautiful mini egg cupcakes and tea to follow). We pitted our wits against a general knowledge quiz and all learned a few things – proving every day is a school day!

For our next get together on May 13th we are visiting Brookside Nursery for shopping and refreshments.

If you are retired (our members range in age from their 60s to their early 90s) and would like to come along and enjoy our hospitality and company twice a month, ring Helen on 01622 814445 or email Katie at katieeth66@gmail.com.

If you live in East or West Farleigh we can offer transport to and from the WI Hall where we meet in East Farleigh.



SPORTS REPORT BY TEL BAINES



FOOTBALL Our 2nd XI rounded off their season unfortunately with three disappointing results. We began by losing to Tonbridge Invicta 5-1, only to meet Tonbridge Invicta again and amazingly losing by the same scoreline 5-1! Lastly Weald Wolves, where we went down 4-2. (We were 4-0 down with ten minutes to go, so some crumbs of comfort that we kept going to the final whistle!)

Just the two games to report for our 1st XI. We had a much needed victory over Tatsfield 3-1. Next was our semi-final clash versus Horsmonden. Great news! After a hard fought and close game, we scored 10 minutes from time to secure a fantastic 1-0 victory which takes us to the final, the date of which is not known at the moment. I will publicise it when I find out...



NETBALL Our summer league begins on May 6th. We have 2 or 3 new players so confidence is high and we are hopeful for a successful and enjoyable season.



CRICKET Our season kicks off this weekend (26th April) with a friendly away to East Sutton while on Sunday 27th, we have been drawn against Grenfell (Bromley) in the National knockout cup. Then after a week off, we start our league campaign on May 10th. Supporters are always welcome. Net practice has now started at the ground. If you would like to come along please get in contact (07761 355518)

CLUB NEWS

We now start our new ton-up year so this is a good time to join if you would like to support your Club. You can buy a number with monthly draws and an Xmas jackpot!

This month's lucky winners were:

45	Elizabeth Major	£30
105	Amelia Pollard	£20
44	Simon Day	£10

Yours in sport, Tel (07761 355518)

Taking your phone to the match? Why not send your pictures of our sportsmen in action to editor@thefarleighs.co.uk. We will credit you.

More sports news on www.westfarleighsportsclub.com/



The Farleighs WI

At their April meeting, members of The Farleighs WI had an interesting and informative talk from local speaker Janey Ramsay, who gave a presentation on The Queens Regnant, the five Queens who have ruled in their own right.

As well as our monthly meetings, we continue to offer a wide variety of activities and social events for local women. We have an active arts and crafts group, where our members can learn new skills or continue to work on their personal projects. The most recent project has been to decorate the hall with yarn bunnies for Easter, and we have also learnt to make greetings card using the prick and stitch method. We love new ideas for any craft we haven't yet tried, and the group is also open to any member who just wants to call in for a coffee and a chat.



WI team at TT Quiz Night

Our darts group continues to meet at the Good Intent every Monday and our quiz team takes part in the Tickled Trout charity quiz each month.

Our book group is proving popular with members, and this month we are reading *The Family Upstairs* by Lisa Jewell. We also have an active lunch group, which does the rounds of local hostelrys and eateries, and a walking group, as well as other regular opportunities for socialising with friends. No skill is needed for any of our activities; our aim is to make new friends and catch up with old ones.

Our monthly meetings continue to be the second Wednesday of each month, 6.45pm for a 7.00pm start at the WI Hall in East Farleigh. Our next meeting is on Wednesday 14th May when we will be having our AGM and also marking the 80th anniversary of VE day with a cream tea. We are open to women of all ages and new members are always welcome. Check out our Facebook page, email us at TheFarleighs@wkfwi.org.uk, or just pop into our next meeting where we can guarantee tea, cake and a warm welcome.

Lynn Stout

President, The Farleighs WI

FLYING AROUND THE FARLEIGHS



STOP PRESS: BULLFINCHES THREATEN UK FOOD SECURITY.

Such could have been a press release, fifty years ago, for the first West Farleigh Lifeline dated April 1975, had the concept of food security been in use then.

According to the entry accredited to H. Payne Farms, Ltd: *'We should soon start spraying the Bramleys for scab, but with the ground so waterlogged we can't move. In any case, the bullfinches have eaten seventy-five percent of the bud. Never seen bullfinch destruction on such a scale before.'*



Losing three-quarters of our apples to a single species of bird was clearly a significant problem for agriculture. By 2022, according to Fresh Produce Journal, *'Almost 50% of apple packs on UK supermarket shelves in October and early November were imported, according to surprising new research'*. Since then, we've had the collapse of the Kent apple market and the grubbing out of orchards changing our countryside landscape.

So how much blame can be laid at the feet of this colourful species? A local farmer tells me that as a lad fifty years ago, he and his friends would sit under a particular ash tree (whose seeds are also a favourite of bullfinches) and easily shoot fifty of them in a short space of time, so plentiful were they. There is no doubt the birds can do serious damage and although they are now protected by law, it is still theoretically possible for a farmer to get a licence to shoot them. Ironically, studies already being carried out at that time at the East Malling Research station were identifying two simple steps that would reduce their population and the impact of their predations – but as numbers of all farmland birds had already started a steep decline it proved unnecessary. Since the time of that first Lifeline, we have lost considerably more than half the population of bullfinches.

Nowadays my farmer friend would be hard pressed to see just five in a day, let alone shoot fifty in a few hours, such has been their decline.

It's just as well for us that the male bullfinch's plumage is so bright – females, like many species, retain a dull brown colouring throughout the year.



Being very wary of humans too, the most likely view you might have of either sex is of them disappearing ahead of you along a hedgerow, when they are easily identified by their bright white rump.

Their behaviour and lifestyle differ in many ways from most other common Farleigh birds. To begin with, they are rarely promiscuous – males and females are both socially and sexually monogamous. It's normal in most other species for the young in any brood to have been fathered by more than one male. It's because of this monogamous pair bonding that male bullfinches have no need of a loud song to ward off other potential male suitors, or to demonstrate their virility by having a loud and varied song. The male's song, therefore, is an almost inaudible (to my elderly ears anyway) brief, piping 'peep' sound. It has been likened to a squeaky barrow. [You can hear its song here.](#) (*) The male's virility, in fact, is genuinely low as studies of their sperm have demonstrated.



But looks and behaviour can indeed deceive. In the past, bullfinches were highly prized by bird catchers – people who took birds from the wild and trained them to whistle human songs, then sold them as household pets or novelties. As young birds (always the males) learn their species' song from other males, they would be kept in a dark cage – or worse, deliberately blinded – while tunes were played to them on a flute or whistled by their trainer. A well-trained bird could fetch a handsome sum. The problem for bird catchers, though, was that they had to acquire the male bird before it left the nest to get it at its most impressionable. The sex of nestlings cannot be determined on sight - this can only be done when it has its first moult in the autumn, and by then the window of musical opportunity has passed.

Bullfinches, though, were certainly worth the effort as they possess an astonishing ability to learn two, sometimes three, folk tunes, even though in the wild they only memorize a brief whistle. By their trainer whistling the same tune, in the same key, day after day, they quickly acquire their repertoire making them a valuable novelty for the rich – Queen Victoria and Tsar Nicholas II each had their own. They are also capable of recognising individual humans, creating pair bonds with their favourites. The male's spectacular colour (bullfinch is a corruption of the German for blood finch) simply adds to their attraction as a desirable pet. And that's another reason, incidentally, for them to be fully protected by UK and European law, lest they become another victim of mankind's greed, exploited for the pet trade.

Ray Morris (lepiaf@hotmail.co.uk)

(*) Paper readers: Bullfinch song at <https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/bullfinch>

YALDING TAXIS

Competitive - Personal - Professional - Reliable

- **Friendly, local, experienced family-run business since 2006**
- **Excellent local knowledge & throughout Kent**
- **No journey too short or too far**
- **Whole of Kent covered for long distance runs (airports, seaports, stadiums, London etc.)**
- **24/7 service, 365 days a year** (when booked in advance)
- **Competitive rates**
- **No extra charge after midnight** (when booked in advance)
- **All major credit & debit cards accepted**
- **Vehicles with up to 8 passenger seats**
- **Modern, clean, comfortable fleet - fully licensed and insured**
- **All drivers DBS checked and fully licensed (badged) by local taxi licensing authority**

 **078 777 777 44** 

Diamondbrite®

PROTECT | CLEAN | CARE

**THE NEXT GENERATION
HAS ARRIVED**

The All New – GRAPHENE PRO DETAILER



**6 Months
Protection**

The Future of Car Detailing Has Arrived!

Introducing Diamondbrite Graphene Pro Detailer – a breakthrough in car care technology! Infused with graphene, one of the strongest materials known to man, this cutting-edge detailer delivers unmatched gloss, durability, and protection in every spray.

- ✓ Unrivalled Gloss – Achieve a mirror-like showroom shine.
 - ✓ Extreme Hydrophobicity – Repels water, dirt, and grime effortlessly.
 - ✓ Advanced Protection – Creates a super-strong, durable barrier against the elements.
 - ✓ Up to 6 Months of Defence – Long-lasting performance, whether used as a standalone product or to boost existing Paint Protection.
- 📦 Easy to apply. Quick to buff. Instant results.

Give your vehicle the ultimate finishing touch and experience next-level shine & protection like never before!

SHOP NOW HERE!



www.diamondbrite.co.uk

Jewelultra Ltd, Diamondbrite House, Ewell Lane, West Farleigh,
Maidstone, Kent, ME15 0NG

Email: enquiries@jewelultra.com

Phone: +44 (0)1622 815679

Diamondbrite®
PROTECT | CLEAN | CARE

