Award Winning
Parish Post
Miserden, Whiteway,The Camp
Sudgrove & Wishanger
Spring 2025



Memories of Michael Roberts Artist Blacksmith (1942 - 2024)

Sue Andrews writes: Doesn't time fly; looking back I realise I knew Mike for over fifty years. Our first meeting was after my interview for a groom's job with my childhood idol Pat Smythe, whose books I had avidly read. The whole day was a little surreal, having travelled by train from Sussex to Kemble, where Paddy, Pat's secretary, collected two other girls and me.

After a morning meeting and riding Pat's horses, I became aware of Mike's passion for his pipe at the first of many lunches in the dining room at Sudgrove House. After the meal Mike, whose conversation had covered almost every topic imaginable, searched for his pipe while others at the table teased him. He was quite convinced it had been beside him earlier. When eventually found, he carefully cleaned and prepared it, refilled with tobacco and lit it, surrounding his own little world with a grey aura. Little did I know at that point I would soon be one of the girls, like others who worked at Sudgrove, who constantly hid his pipe, much to his frustration.

Later that day, once the other two girls had caught earlier trains home, Pat called me to her office and offered me the job. In a haze of disbelief, having felt the least experienced applicant, I was then taken aback when Mike offered to take me back to Kemble to catch my train. Was this unusual young man safe to accept a lift from? Paddy and the other staff laughed and assured me that however strange Mike was, he was totally trustworthy, and of course he delivered me courteously to the station.

Photo above: Miserden School gates made by Michael Roberts

Mike and I were more thrown together than close friends. Living under the same roof I found him most amusing at times, although he often lived in a world of his own. When I left Sudgrove and married, Aubrey's assistance was often called on when Mike needed help installing the wonderful fire canopies he constructed, or simply loading heavy metal artwork for delivery both in this country and abroad. This was when I became more aware of his artistic talent with metal, seeing some of the wonderful structures he produced.

Mike was always generous with rewards for this assistance, and one June day, probably in the late seventies, offered us a day at Three Counties Show. It was the final day when all the artwork being displayed needing bringing home, so Aubrey's assistance at the end of the day would be most welcome. On arrival Mike showed us the incredible display of artistic metal work from himself and other local blacksmiths, fed us bacon rolls and arranged a time for us to meet back at the marquee.

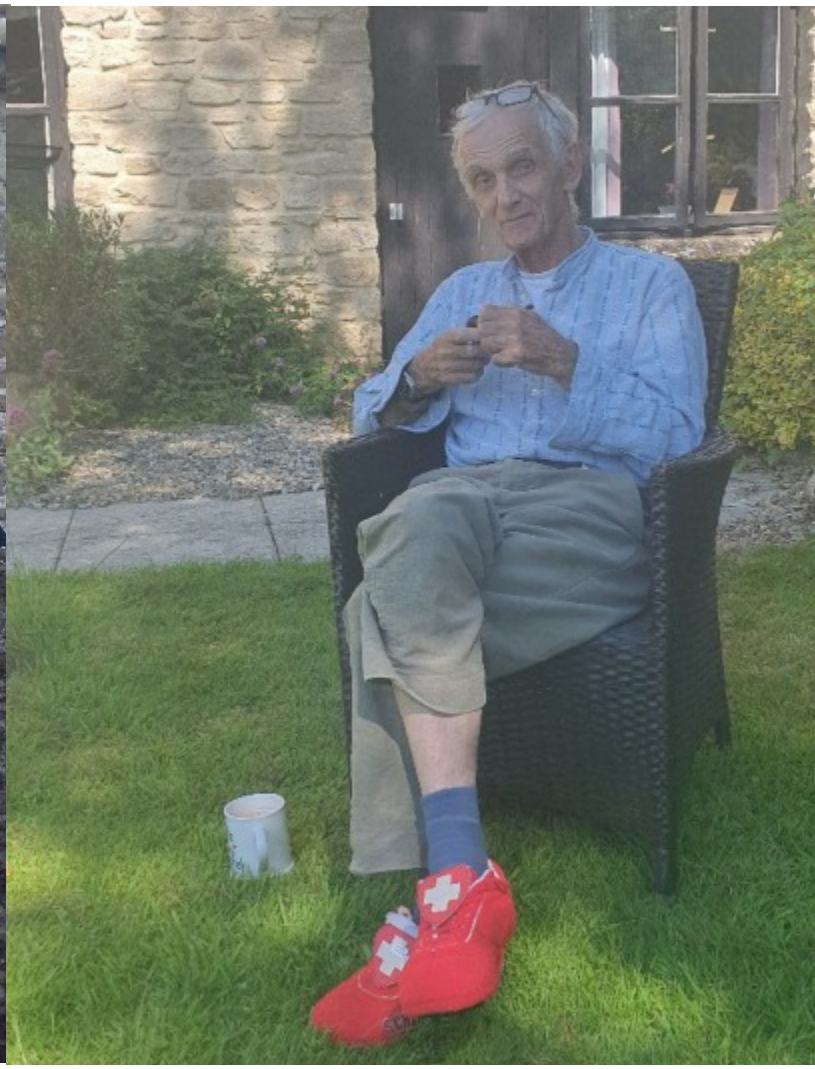
After a lovely day looking at livestock we met back at the agreed time to find Mike and his friends had already backed their vehicles into the marquee and loaded most of the exhibits. At this point Aub noticed Mike's trailer, groaning under the weight of heavy metal, had a flat tyre. The thought of unloading then reloading was more than anyone could cope with, but a car jack was not going to lift the weight of the loaded trailer to change the wheel.

Aub disappeared off around the show ground to locate a lorry with a heavy duty jack he could borrow. Being the last day of the show when everyone was loading up and leaving, it took him some considerable time to find one and then a further trip with another member's pickup to transport the item to the marquee. Eventually the trailer was lifted, the wheel changed, the jack

Shop sign for Miserden Stores



Michael Roberts (photo courtesy of Sue Andrews)





The handrails at Miserden Village Hall made by Michael Roberts

returned to its owner leaving just the problem of extricating the land rover and trailer from the marquee, as by now Mike couldn't work out how they'd got it in!

Almost nine o'clock when we eventually left the showground, Mike announced we'd go through Tewkesbury where he'd treat us to a steak supper. This was back in the good old days when restaurants stayed open 'til late at night! Luckily we found room to park the landrover and trailer in a public car park close to the steak house, where we encountered another problem. The maître de assured us he had a table free and was happy to serve Aub and me, but couldn't accept Mike looking like he did.

It wasn't until that point we realised Mike was, to put it mildly, black around the edges. Still in a grubby shirt and trousers, most of him was covered with dirt and black dust from the industries of his day. 'Don't worry,' he assured us, saying he had a suit in the landrover that he'd worn earlier in the week at a show reception, and could quickly change.

Having given us his order, Aub and I started to enjoy our evening, sipping wine and cold beer. The restaurant was busy, but once our order was taken we began to wonder where Mike had got to. The car park was close by, but he seemed to be taking a long time to change.

Aub decided to go and see what was holding him up, only to find Mike being accosted by a local police constable questioning him about undressing in a public place! Aubrey managed to stop a heated argument, confirming Mike was simply trying to change into his suit and he was let off with a severe warning. After a quick wash in the gents Mike arrived dressed in fawn summer suit with shirt and tie and we all enjoyed a delicious steak and a day to remember.

I'm sure Mike's life was full of little adventures like this. Looking back at Pat's 'Three Jays' children's books, all of which I read, I feel Mike may have been the inspiration for her character 'Dash it all Darcy', the slightly eccentric ex-RAF pilot who added considerable excitement to the children's exploits.

Above: Weather Vane on Dentist's Barn; Below right: Crucifix to possibly be mounted in the Church

Martin Ractliffe writes: Here are some fine local examples of the work of the late Michael Roberts who sadly died in December. Michael was a gold medal winning Artist Blacksmith who established his workshop and forge at Anvil Barn.

Michael designed and created his beautiful sculptures, but was not happy until he had expertly fitted them in to place. This must have been particularly scary when fitting the outstanding Weather vane complete with cockerel on the top of Minchinhampton Church steeple. (Take a look next time you are in that village, or on the common).

Recognised for his talent by his peers from around the country and internationally, Michael loved Miserden and Sudgrove. Everyone who knew him will, I am sure, remember him as a real character who also had a heart of gold. Isn't it great that his work is there for all to see, and will also be there for future generations?

The photos of Michael Roberts' work were taken by Martin Ractliffe





Talking Horses with Sorrel Warwick

"I've been riding since the age of three" said Sorrel, who has lived in Wishanger for the best part of twenty years. Sorrel's mother (the actress Veda Warwick) would take her riding in Liverpool Park, and when she was 5, her granny bought her a Welsh Mountain Pony ("Silver") – kept in a field near home.

One day after Sorrel had been riding, mother said "you untack Silver and I'll sort out her hay" – Sorrel removed the pony's bridle and Silver ran off round the field still wearing her saddle! After some chasing, the pony was brought in and all was well but Sorrel learnt a lesson – "I have never done that again" she said.

Sorrel soon moved on to her second pony "Joy" and joined the pony club. Later the family moved to Kent since Sorrel's father (also an actor) was working at the Old Vic. Their house had several acres of land so plenty of room for ponies and horses. Sorrel's pony was a very good jumper and they went in for all the shows around the country winning several medals while Sorrel was in her teens.

From the age of 16, Sorrel graduated to horses rather than ponies – her horse at the time was a thoroughbred – able to go fast but could jump as well. This was ideal for the sport of eventing – a "horse triathlon" including Dressage, Show Jumping and cross country riding. They won lots of prizes including at Badminton show and were short listed for the European team but unfortunately the horse went lame just before-hand. At one time, Sorrel and her horse were rated 3rd in the country.

It was still quite new for women to compete at a high level in the sport – women were not able to compete in eventing at the Olympics until 1964. Sorrel and her horse "Boy" were on the reserve list for the British team at the Mexico (1968) Olympics but didn't go in the end. Bad luck struck again when Sorrel and her horse were short listed for the Munich Olympics, but sadly the horse broke its back in an accident.

It was at this point in here life that Sorrel started to move away from competitive riding and towards training. Looking back, Sorrel can see that

Photo: "Devina" ridden by Sonnar Murray Brown



Above: Sorrel with "Tuppence", her Shetland pony who was originally a nanny to her stable of sports horses. Tuppence arrived by pure fluke when she was 4, and lived to the grand age of 39. Below: Sorrel with"Devina"



the coincidence of having a horse so suited to eventing took her in that direction and it became her specialist subject.

Surprisingly, Sorrel took up the offer of a job as a cook, working for Lord and Lady Russell in Wiltshire: "mother had taught me to cook things like fish cakes and baked beans, so I thought it would be easy" she said. It was terrifying when Sorrel saw that all the menus of the house were in French and she was expected to create haute cuisine for dinner parties! Luckily the Russells' went away for a few days holiday which gave Sorrel time to invent and test ten menus.

Lord and Lady Russell were also closely involved in the horse scene (Rosemary, Lady Russell had pioneered the sport of cross country riding) and Sorrel was soon spending her days riding and her evenings cooking: "catering for a dinner party of 30 is just a matter of being organised" she says "those were great days". For a while, Sorrel ran the stables business in Sudgrove for Pat Smythe, however this job also involved a lot of administration which Sorrel found tedious. After a "gap year" spent in London – visiting concerts and the theatre – Sorrel moved back to Wiltshire.

She decided to start her own business, taking a lease at "Druids Lodge" close to Amesbury – this had formerly been a racing stables and home to the "Druids Lodge Confederacy" betting syndicate in the early years of the 20th century. Sorrel ran a Sports Horse Livery in these surroundings that had an "amazing vibe". She trained members of the Spanish team for both the Seoul (88) and Barcelona (92) Olympics where they came 5th – no medal but a great achievement starting from no experience at this level.

After ten years the lease at Druids ended so Sorrel had to move, first to premises at Cholderton and later at Stockbridge – all along the Wiltshire A303 corridor so she could retain her loyal customers. Alongside training horses and riders for competition, Sorrel became more interested in "mending" horses that weren't doing so well and improving their performance. Sorrel had a "light bulb moment" after taking part in Pilates and realising that the fitness of the rider really does affect the horse.

If riders are practising Pilates so improve their performance then something equivalent can be done for the horses – exercises to build their core strength and agility. For example practising the pirouettes that are part of Dressage builds a skill that the horse can use during cross-country where tight turns are needed. Sorrel worked alongside other specialists: a Pilates instructor for the riders, massage and chiropractic for the horses to deliver these services to customers in the increasingly competitive horse world.

By this time, Veda had moved to Wishanger and in 1996 a "woodshed" in the grounds of Veda's house was converted into a small cottage. After Veda died in 2009, Sorrel decided it was time for a change and moved to Gloucestershire to live in the cottage. Of course Sorrel could not bear to be without horses in her life and when her pony "Tuppence" got a bad eye ulcer in 2017 Sorrel feared that was the end. Happily the condition was cured by a new treatment from the vet. Sorrel was reminded that Tuppence would not live for ever so started to think about getting another horse.

A friendship with Sonnar Murray-Brown, a dressage rider based in Gloucestershire lead to Sorrel hearing about a 3-year-old horse in Germany for sale. Sorrel realised she had enough funds to buy the horse and so they went to Germany to make arrangements – rather complex since this was just after the COVID lockdown but the deal was successful and the new horse was brought to Sonnar's stables in the UK.

Back home, Sorrel was visiting Tuppence every day and told her that there was a new horse (now named "Devina") – two weeks later Tuppence stopped eating and when Tuppence even refused her favourite Trebor mints Sorrel realised that the pony didn't want to live any longer. Tuppence had sensed that she had to hang on (at the age of 39) just until Sorrel had a new horse.

Sorrel describes Devina as "supersonic" and believes she is Grand Prix material – and when she is older will compete in Dressage ridden by Sonnar or one of his team. From young rider, to competitor, to trainer and now owner, Sorrel remains at the heart of the world of horses.

David Harris



"Tuppence"



Save the date: Whiteway Fete & Dog Show, Sunday 7th September

Put the date in your diary, for a relaxing, traditional, family friendly Fete at Whiteway Colony. Enter your dog in the dog show, have a go at skittles, wander around the stalls for a little shopping, try your luck at the Tombola, or simply soak up the atmosphere with a cup of tea and some cake (or a beer and a burger, whichever works for you!) Lots to see and do, learn about Whiteway's fascinating history and listen to a little live music.

Whiteway Colonists - we need you! We will have the Made in Whiteway stall again this year. Could you make some chutneys, sweets and treats, or homemade soaps, cushions and candles, jewellery or jam, cards or cardigans, socks or scarves, or maybe bring something from the garden? All creations and crafts will be welcomed . Thank you very much!

We are always short of volunteers. If you'd like to help, please do get in touch with me, Claire at cmorgan47@hotmail.com



Miserden Gardens and Events by Archie Egar

Spring is now firmly on the horizon and the beautiful Garden at Miserden is starting to awaken from its winter slumber. The snowdrops are still in bloom and the daffodils are starting to bud. Because we are at a slightly higher altitude than other local gardens, the Garden at Miserden tends to bloom slightly later and our spring bulbs are often still flowering in May. Head Gardener Alexander McCallum is busy pruning and tying up our glorious roses and getting ready to treat the lawns with their expansive views over the valley and the rest of the Estate.

As many of the readers will know, the Garden was designed in the 17th century and has been open to the public since the 1930s. There are a number of standout features in the Garden including a topiary yew walk and grass steps designed by the architect Sir Edwin Lutyens, who also redesigned a wing of Miserden Park.

The Garden is well known for its splendid borders that contain a wide range of roses, clematis, shrubs and herbaceous plants that provide colour from spring through to the autumn. Even if you have visited the Garden in previous years there is always something new to see and this year will be no different. Not least because the Creating Spaces sculpture exhibition returns to the Garden for the summer. The exhibition, run by the Cotswold Sculptors Association, showcases a range of artworks by artists who predominantly live and work in the Cotswolds. Over 150 artworks will be



nestled amongst the trees, topiary and flower beds. Visitors can follow the map and enjoy discovering the sculptures along the trail. Seeing the artworks against the backdrop of our beautiful Garden brings a magical quality to the works that is a must see. The good news is that all of the works are for sale so if you are inspired and see something that would be perfect for your garden or home, there is the opportunity to purchase the sculptures on the day of your visit.

Aside from the Garden, the improved weather is likely to tempt more people to enjoy the many quality walks around Miserden. The avid local walkers will know already that there is plenty of parking in the village with both the school car park (outside of school hours) and the Garden car park providing suitable space. With over twenty miles of public footpaths and permissive routes across the Estate, there are plenty of opportunities for locals and visitors to explore.

We would be grateful if everyone can respect the non-public areas by sticking to the official

footpaths and the designated routes. If in doubt, it is best to consult OS Maps for the public rights of way, and the permissive paths are described on the Miserden Lake Walk which can be found on the Miserden website (www.miserden.org/walks). Walkers will also notice that the route around the lake is marked with informative QR codes. We will soon be putting up some more way markers and signs which should help to further distinguish the local walking routes.

For those walkers with dogs, lambing season is nearly upon us and there will soon be young lambs in the fields which could easily be scared or killed by an over enthusiastic dog. We have had a few lambs and sheep killed over the last year by unaware or carefree dog owners and we would be grateful if all dog owners could keep dogs on the lead in the fields and under control elsewhere throughout the year. The Countryside Code is worth reading and includes guidance on access to the countryside more information on using footpaths, keeping dogs under control and closing gates behind you.

After your walk, you will probably be ready for a well-earned cup of tea and a biscuit or two! This year we are delighted to welcome back Little Ginger Café to Miserden to provide an award winning selection of snacks, homemade cake and hot and cold drinks from their characterful food



trailer. There will be plenty of seating in the grounds of the glasshouses giving walkers, Garden ticket holders and anyone visiting Miserden the opportunity to sit in the sun with their refreshments.

The Garden at Miserden reopens to the public on Wednesday 9th April until the end of September 2025. Opening times are Wednesday – Sunday and Bank Holidays 10am – 5pm. A Friends of Miserden Pass offers unlimited visits to the Garden for a year from the date of purchase. Tickets for the Garden and the Friends of Miserden Pass are available to purchase on our website, www.miserden.org/garden

Visitors to the Garden can see the Creating Spaces sculpture exhibition from Wednesday 4th June until Sunday 3rd August 2025.

Whether exploring the Garden, enjoying the sculpture exhibition or just taking a walk, we look forward to welcoming you to Miserden soon.



Monthly Garden Checklist

In the Autumn edition, I wrote about gardening jobs that are ideally tackled from October to March, for this edition I will be concentrating on the remaining months of the year. Hopefully you will find it equally helpful. For more in-depth information on any of the tasks, visit the RHS website at https://www.rhs.org.uk/advice/in-month/

April

• Early in the month prune lavender back to the lowest visible new grey buds. Take care not to go further back as lavender does not readily sprout from old wood.
• Prune back penstemon and shrubby salvias to a healthy growing point.
• Prune spring flowering shrubs such as forsythia, ribes and Lonicera fragrantissima as soon as they have finished flowering, cutting back to the newest growth. Remove the oldest branches right back to ground level to open up the centre of the plant.
• Transplant evergreens that are growing in the wrong place, water them in well and ensure they don't dry out in the summer ahead.
• Divide and replant ornamental grasses such as stipa, hakonechloa and panicum.
• Put stakes or twiggy hazel supports in place for summer flowering perennials and climbing plants.
• Direct sow hardy annuals, such as calendula, nigella and poppies.
• Sow chard, leeks, courgettes, squash, sweetcorn, cucumber, basil under cover.
• Under cover sow climbing beans (eg French, runner, borlotti) as well as bush varieties towards the end of the month
• Parsnips and carrots don't transplant well so must be sown direct where they are to grow.
• Plant maincrop potatoes.

May

• To encourage them to be less rangy, 'Chelsea Chop' late flowering perennials such as persicaria, phlox, asters, sedum, helenium and Helianthus 'Lemon Queen'. Cut back by up to a half.
• Clear away forget-me-nots before too many have had time to reseed.
• After the last frosts (usually the last week of May here) plant out hardened off half-hardy annuals, tender perennials and dahlias.
• Deadhead spring bulbs as they fade but leave the foliage to die down naturally.
• Discard spring bedding in pots, refresh compost and plant up with summer bedding.
• Take dahlia cuttings from new shoots.
• If necessary, prune stone fruit such as plum, cherry, peach and nectarine.
• Mulch all soft fruits such as raspberries, strawberries, currants and gooseberries with well-rotted organic matter.
• Early in the month plant greenhouse tomatoes. At the end of the month plant outdoor tomatoes.
• Continue successional sowing of lettuce, radishes, beetroot, carrots and peas to ensure a continued harvest throughout summer.
• Keep earthing up potatoes to protect shoots from late frosts.
• Towards the end of the month plant out courgettes, squash, runner and French beans, sweetcorn and outdoor tomatoes. Be prepared to protect them if frost is forecast.
• Keep a watch for slug and snail attack and treat accordingly.
• Remove blanketweed from ponds.
• Support 'No Mow May' by not cutting your lawn, or at least parts of it, and leaving it to flower for pollinating insects.

June

• Carry on tying in tall perennials as they grow.
• Dig up and divide bearded irises after they have finished flowering.
• Tie in the growth of climbing plants.
• Cut back old foliage and flower spikes of earlier flowering perennials such as pulmonaria, brunnera and oriental poppies when they have gone over.
• Prune philadelphus, deutzia and weigela, removing one third of the oldest wood back to ground level to open out the centre of the shrub.
• When the foliage starts to look tired, prune back to ground level culinary herbs such as chives, marjoram and lovage.
• Even if we get rain showers, remember to water pots, containers and hanging baskets.
• Net soft fruit while the crop is ripening.
• Regularly tie in the leader, as well as remove side-shoots from cordon tomatoes. Apply a potassium-rich liquid feed once a week. Home-made comfrey juice is very good for this.

• Sow winter brassicas e.g. cavalo nero and kales.
• After the summer solstice sow Florence fennel, radicchio and chicory for autumn and winter use.

July

• Regularly dead-head annuals, perennials and roses to prolong the display, unless they are being grown for their attractive hips or seed-heads.
• Cut back to the ground any earlier flowering perennials such as geraniums, astrantia, lupins and delphiniums. They will soon green up again and may produce the odd flower in autumn.
• Where gaps have arisen in the borders, plant fast-growing annuals such as cosmos, nicotiana and zinnias.
• Prune the soft whippy shoots of wisteria back to about six leaves.
• Cut out the fruited canes on summer-fruiting raspberries.
• Thin apples and pears if the 'June drop' hasn't done this naturally for you. Aim for an outstretched hand's width between fruit.
• Prune back grapevines to within two leaves of the last bunch to allow air and sunlight to ripen the fruit.
• Make the most of your vegetable garden by sowing autumn and winter crops once space becomes available. For example, once the early potatoes and broad beans have been harvested, sow French beans, parsley, beetroot, Swiss chard and spinach beet.
• Sowing maincrop carrots now will also be far less susceptible to carrot root fly.

August

• Cut beech, yew, laurel and box hedges. To avoid box blight, for which there is no cure, choose a dry day and collect up all the clippings.
• If you don't want plants to seed around, cut back flowering stems before seed has time to develop. If you do want to increase your stock, collect seed as soon as it is ripe. Store in a paper envelope (which you have labelled and dated) in a cool dry place until it is time to sow them.
• Take semi-hardwood cuttings of half-hardy pelargoniums, fuchsias, verbena, argyranthemums and plectranthus and also of mediterranean plants such as penstemon, diascia, rosemary, sage and lavender. They will make strong plants better able to withstand cold conditions if rooted and potted up by October or November and grown on under glass.
• Take photographs and make a note of any changes you want to make to your borders while the plants are still there to remind you.
• Summer-prune espalier apple and pear trees.
• If space becomes available in the veg patch, sow green manure such as Phacelia or mustard. This will cover the soil surface for the winter months and can be chopped up and incorporated as necessary in the spring.
• Make use of the greenhouse or cold frames this winter by sowing hardy lettuces and wild rocket, as well as oriental leaves such as mizuna and mustards. Carrots are also well worth doing this way for delicious roots in winter and early spring.

September

•Cut down long meadow grass and remove the clippings to avoid enriching the soil. For the best floral content, mow the grass regularly while it continues to grow using a collection box, expose areas of bare soil and sow fresh yellow rattle seed onto them. This will curtail the grasses' vigour and allow more desirable wild flowers to take a hold.
• Sow perennial wildflower meadows from scratch, as well as new lawns. Now is a good time to lay turf.
• As long as the ground is workable and not too dry, start digging up and splitting overcrowded clumps of perennials, and plant any new perennials.
• Move self-sown seedlings, such as honesty, foxgloves, sweet rocket and alchemilla, if they are growing in the wrong place.
• For earlier flowering next year sow hardy annuals such as calendula, Orlaya grandiflora, nigella, cornflowers, opium and Californian poppies.
• Plant narcissus and other spring flowering bulbs toward the end of the month.
• Tidy up lavender plants for the winter by shearing off the old flower stems. Leave the main pruning until spring.
• Now is a good time to tidy or renovate garden ponds to minimise disturbance to wildlife living within. Carefully remove dead and dying leaves as well as over vigorous aquatic plants, and scoop out some silt from the bottom where it has built up. Pile up the debris beside the water for a day or two to allow any wildlife to return back into the pond

Pull out and keep this checklist, and Happy Gardening! Sue Spielberg



Lambing Again!
by Sue Andrews

Here we go again! A bit later this year, but the awful weather in March and April last year made us realise the earlier lambs had rapidly been caught up by the later lambs as we were able to house them for a bit longer, while the earlies suffered from the cold wet weather on our Cotswold hills.

Planned to start around Sunday the 23rd of February, with lambing staff standing by from the 22nd, there were still a number of ewes who didn't read the memo and decided to lamb a little early. By Friday we had eight in pens, two of which had no milk and one who hated her lambs so was already in an adopter so her lambs could feed and not be maltreated by their mother.

A first time lamber, she had been my show gimmer for Three Counties last year, and obviously motherhood hadn't been part of her game plan. Luckily after a couple of days she decided she could love them, Another not sure about the lambing process produced early Saturday morning. Expecting twins she had cleverly given birth while I was filling the feed buckets before serving breakfast, but when I discovered the new arrival it's mother was head butting it. Obviously one that hadn't been to the ante-natal classes and was totally amazed when she gave birth. Luckily after a few mouthfuls of breakfast and seeing the admiring glances of others in the pen she decided the child was actually rather nice, then proceeded to have the second one and loved both.

Friday night wasn't one of my best times. Having helped Aubrey with several awkward births throughout the day, and bottled lambs whose mothers had no milk, at about eleven in the



Clemmie with the ewes

evening a further imminent birth looked like taking us into the early hours of Saturday. Ready to drop, we came to the arrangement that I'd go home to bed, but would check the cameras at 6am the following day. You cannot imagine the sheer bliss of collapsing into bed, even if I ached all over. It was wonderful.

The cameras showed all quiet at 6 am, but after a mug of tea I knew I'd have to bottle at least four lambs so gathered up our incredibly enthusiastic dogs and drove to the farm, where the dogs danced around waist deep in the usual mud, then decided I needed a cuddle. All was quiet in the sheep shed, but for the four lambs who were most vocal, so bottles of warm milk were rapidly distributed. These lambs will be installed in a pen with an automatic milk feeder and heat lamp later today so they will be happy and contented.

Having checked all was relatively quiet I walked round to the feed shed to fill the endless buckets of ewe nuts needed to feed the masses, although in honesty we are only lambing 150 ewes this year as opposed to 250 other years. What may have looked quiet earlier suddenly changed as I arrived back at the sheep shed with brimming buckets of nuts. The one ewe couldn't hang on until after breakfast and had given birth and three others were pointing out they were imminent. From then on it was all action. Luckily by now we had help, but as usual what seemed like plenty of lambing pens turns out to be far too few, and small families are waiting for more to be built!

Barns now have machinery thrown out and are housing ewes and lambs as although today's weather is good, it isn't forecast to last and the fields are still waterlogged. Not ideal for young lambs to sit around in when we have the facilities to keep them in a little longer.

The lambing process can sometimes be stressful. While most ewes lamb happily by themselves when presentation is correct, there are those lambs that haven't read the instruction leaflet suggesting they are born front legs then head. These can cause problems by leaving a leg behind, coming backwards or even upside down.

At one point even I became useful as my hands are smaller than the men's, succeeding in finding a lost front leg that was still a long way back and

St Andrew's Church Miserden



Services 11am every First, Third and Fourth Sundays of the Month

Second and Fifth Sundays: Please see *Parish Connections* Magazine and Benefice website
www.erminwestbenefice.org.uk

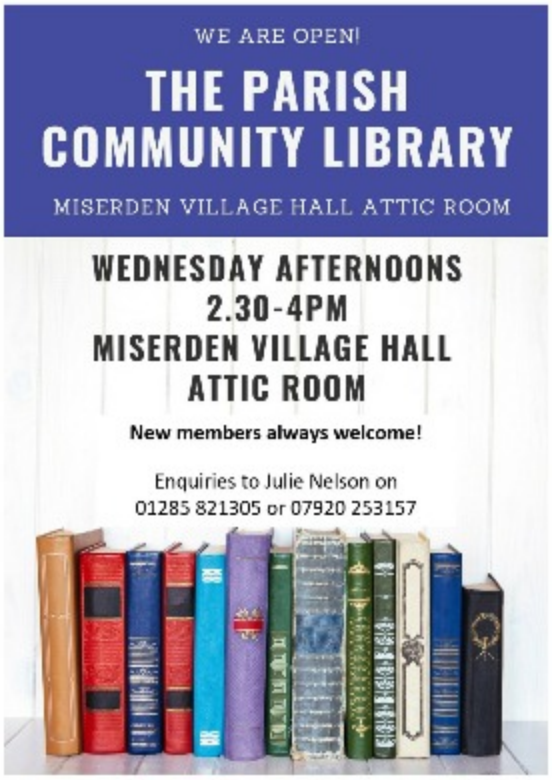
For further information call 07714 707310 or email enquirieserminwest@gmail.com



manoeuvring it safely to the correct birthing position.

Once ewes and lambs are ready to leave their individual pens we need to identify which lambs belong to which ewes as these are mainly pedigree sheep so their breeding needs recording. Each lamb is given an ear tag then the mother has the matching number sprayed on her side, in red if a single and blue if twins. This is a combined operation with Aub tagging, Mark T holding the lambs then artistically adding the numbers while I try to ensure the paperwork is correct. Some years the ewes look as though they would eventually grow into their numbers, but this year the art work has more of a Banksy flair.

We have some lovely lambs, and some very interesting matings. We had found a white ram lamb in with the white texel ewes and one of our stock rams, and removed him back to his field rapidly. Sadly not quite quick enough as I now have four Blue Texel ewes with white lambs, proving he visited there as well. Luckily the Badgerface texels were at North Farm in Edgeworth or I really might have lost my sense of humour, but all lambs are alive and fit and healthy so what more can you ask for, other than some prolonged dry weather and sunshine.











Pets Corner with Claire Coles-Jones

I recently met with a friend for a coffee (at a rather lovely but Jolly Pricey place...!) when, as it often does, the conversation turned to animals. This friend comes from a family of animal lovers, and she has inherited the love and kindness and passion for all four legged furry friends from them. As she was telling me about the things that she and her partner do to keep their elderly cat happy, she had me laughing at the extraordinary lengths we go to, to keep our pets happy…

My friend had me chuckling as she told me how during that during the night, or first thing in the morning, their cat Gemma (*above left*) lays on top of them, and waits, eyeballing them, to see if they are awake. They know, that the second that they open their eyes, she will start to paw at them, at their faces, the bedcovers - and then if that gets no response, she starts to stand on them, screaming and wailing! This is just for her breakfast. So the owners now talk in the morning with their eyes closed, as Gemma is waiting for eye contact!

Gemma also has to have her own mini plate of food - with whatever the owners are having to eat. If they don't she tries to steal their food from their plates. This got me thinking… as I work in the vets, we regularly witness the lengths people go to, to get the very best of care for their pet. Why don't I ask a few people what they do, on a regular basis, to keep their furry pals happy & content?

Well. Lets just say, what a variety of stories! I hope you enjoy these as much as I did. I absolutely **love** the fact that people are willing to go to these lengths. I do understand that for some of you, particularly those who don't own pets, will find this all rather bizarre, and you may even think it's ridiculous, but there is a large majority of owners out there (including myself) that make sacrifices or go out of their way to make their pets life as great and as comfortable as it could possibly be. I have kept the owners names out of this - but not the pets.

K has a much loved chocolate lab, a very friendly, big and bouncy chap called Toby. She says her children like to play him Bob Marley's 3 Little Birds and they also like to play the Harmonica, because "it makes Toby sing"

H said: Winnie (*photo above right*) gets scared when I get the hiccups, so I have to sing her *The Brave Song* when I have them. (*Claire -When I asked her for the lyrics to said song, she sang*: "She's so brave, she's well behaved, she is not afraid" *and this is repeated*) Winnie also has a wardrobe of clothes - pyjamas, outdoor coats. She also prefers to drink running water, so H pours her a continuous stream of water from a bottle whilst they are out and about. "If it's cold in the car,

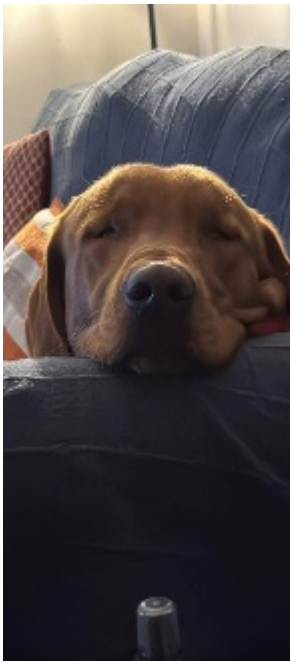


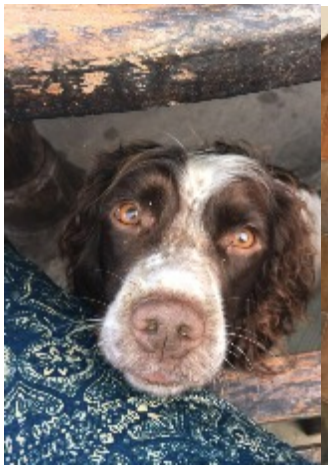
Winnie gets the heated seat put on, with a blanket around her shoulders"

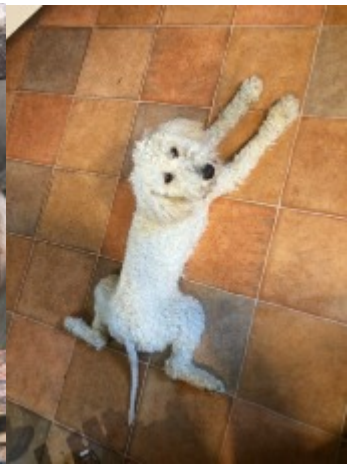
R said: My cats get their paws gently massaged with Vaseline. I give them two types of cat litter so they can choose their favourite... They also have extended 'official' names (*Claire - I **love** this part, we see it at work a lot*) 'Reginald Winston Winter Bottom' and 'Luna Boona Ninja Lightening Lovegood' We also call them random names - 'Floof Not Fat, Beast, Boons, Roo, Boo, Dagger Paws'. And I 'put on' a Reggie or Luna voice, and have conversations with my daughter - pretty sure this is all normal pet parenting, right?

A said: All the dogs are completely spoiled, they love their jobs! The Labs spend their time working the shooting season from Sept-Feb, and are couch potatoes the rest of the year. The Terrorists are on







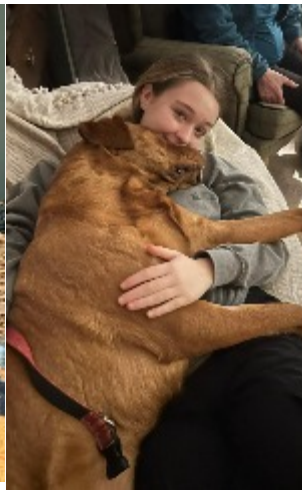


Farm Duties all year around, and come home to comfy beds every day - as the labs have all the space on the sofa! They occasionally get there first.

F said: My husband and I work fulltime from home in the office, and the dogs have the whole of the upstairs of the house whilst we work. They get the usual amount of love and attention, and they love to run around the fields whilst I feed the horses. But on Wednesdays things are different. We call it 'Woofer Wednesday' - this day is entirely devoted to our dogs - no work! The day starts with us giving them breakfast with us. I pay someone to go and check, feed and turnout my horses on Wednesdays, morning and evening, so that I don't have to leave the dogs at all. We then either go for long walks, or go to the beach, or a dog friendly day trip out. Everywhere we visit HAS to be dog friendly (cafes, pubs, shops) or we won't go. The dogs have the entire day with our full attention. We love it, and the dogs do too. No plans on ever changing this!

L said: Rio (aka Scooby) wakes us up with a bark as soon as the boiler starts up - no weekend lie-ins for us! Mr Bear, every morning, has the first lick of the cereal left overs. Scooby gets second lick. At





weekends they go to the Farm to run free - if it's cold Mr Bear wears his Barbour Jacket. In the evenings we have a dog and a human on each sofa for cuddles. We sometimes light the wood burner for Mr Bear as he likes the heat. At bed time, both boys go to their beds, they have a biscuit each and Bear has his blanket. Mr Bear also has medication daily, wrapped in a piece of chicken. Scooby gets a piece of chicken, just for being his brother!

N said: When the log burner is on, we set up a blanket in front of the fire for the bunnies to sit next to it and warm their bums!'

J: We took the time to research hamsters and as a result we enrich their lives with more natural, spacious enclosures, including sand for bathing, and plants planted in the enclosure to encourage natural foraging for food. They have plenty of fresh natural produce including nuts, seeds, fruits, veg, egg and mealworms. They also get lots of opportunities to come out and explore, which they love. They are curious, sensitive little creatures and it takes time to create a bond, but they do bond to us! We go at their pace when it comes to handling, to build trust. They require a lot of care and attention, and aren't actually all that suited to very young children as they are complex little souls.

I'll leave you with these two. One, from a very good friend of mine, who has been working with dogs (and other animals) for over 40 years as a very well respected behaviourist, who lectured all over the world at universities, rescue centres, veterinary practices to name a few. And Two - from another good friend who was a first time parent to a dog and a child.

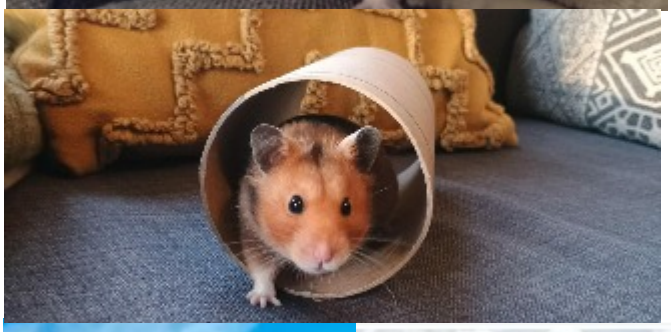
J: I spent £70,000 on a van just so that my dogs could come on holiday with me I replaced all my furniture, mattress, bedding, changed carpet to vinyl - just to reduce allergens for Jack I have never accepted a job, unless the dogs could come too

S: Oh now I have bad dog parent guilt as I don't think I do anything special for Dixie! *(Photo right)* I'm just grateful that I am managing to keep both her and my child alive on a weekly basis"

Thanks for reading - keep spoiling your four legged friends! ***Claire x***













Movie time at the Village Shop!
by Jon Cobb

If you came to the shop for a Sunday paper on the 16th February, you may have seen a variety of equipment set up around the shop, cameras, gimbles, lighting and microphones along with a couple of faces behind the cameras.

This was Luca and Sophie, from Full Power Promotions, a local media and events company with family ties to Whiteway. We were approached by them to create a short promotional video for the shop a month or two before Christmas last year, and a date was arranged for after that busy period.

The Shop needs every bit of promotion it can right now. The pandemic was unprecedented for the shop, and a real boom which meant that we were able to reinvest over those two or three years to try to make the shop more sustainable for the future. Rebranding, new fridges and freezers, secure outside storage and new lines of stock. However, post pandemic, last year was the hardest trading in the almost ten we've been custodians.

A combination of events, such as a poor summer, supplier issues, rising services costs, food inflation, the cost of living & a change in shopping habits have put a strain onto the shop along with drop in footfall to the area to far below pre-pandemic levels. This downturn isn't just confined to Miserden, in just one year convenience stores at a national level have seen sales drop by an average of 10%, while supermarkets have increased in trade by 7%. With supermarkets now holding a 95% market share of all food sales in the UK. Unfortunately, many rural stores are taking the brunt of the social change. You may be aware that Bisley Shop & Post Office closed at the end of February this year.

Full Power Promotions are keen to work at a local level, working with small businesses that really could do with a boost, and Sophie and Luca, a small business themselves, really know how to produce a great bit of video marketing. We discussed which parts of the business we wanted to promote, the extra things that we do above a 'standard' shop such as dry-cleaning & laundry, free cash withdrawals and cash deposits, gas and wood, along with our delivery services. Luca emailed some general questions in advance of the filming, although we still had to do multiple takes on the day!

We tried to put across things that people might not know. The shop is known as Miserden Post Office, however without the shop trade the Post Office cannot function on its own, so buying a pint of milk when posting a letter is a huge help in making us sustainable and providing essential services like the Post Office. We welcome all feedback and requests for alternative stock options. We love our business and we especially love being embedded in our vibrant wide community.

Together, we look forward to many years of being your local Village Shop and Post Office! @fullpowerpromotions @the_shop_and_postoffice

Parish Council News by Vanessa Price

Miserden Parish Council has been actively addressing local issues and supporting community initiatives in recent months. Here are the key updates from the meetings:

Traffic and Road Safety

• Wishanger Lane: In response to concerns about traffic encroaching on a resident's retaining wall, reflective black posts will be installed, with temporary cones placed in the meantime.

• Wishanger Lane and B4070 Intersection: Following an increase in accidents, County Cllr Sue Williams is pressing for warning signs to be installed as a priority.

• Miserden Primary School Flood Lights: Reports of the school's flood lights causing glare for motorists were addressed. The lights will be re-angled to improve safety.

The Council is addressing ongoing **drainage issues in Whiteway** linked to water flow from an area known as 'The Clay Piece.' Cllr Shields is liaising with Stroud District Council, Gloucestershire Highways Department and County Cllr Sue Williams to seek a solution. The issue will be revisited.

The Parish Council has **increased the budget for road safety** measures in the 2025-2026 financial year. The Council is considering various options to improve road safety, such as enhanced signage and other traffic-calming measures. This reflects the Council's commitment to ensuring safer roads for all residents and visitors.

The **blocked footpath at Bunnage** was cleared by Cotswold Countryside Warden's team. Parishioners can report footpath or road issues using fixmystreet.com.

A **reminder was issued about the no-parking** rule on zigzag lines outside Miserden School. The lines will be repainted in spring, but the rule remains in force.

Parishioners are encouraged to provide precise locations (using WhatThreeWords) when **reporting fly-tipping** to ensure swift action.

The **2025-2026 budget was approved**, including a precept request of £12,696, reflecting a 2.75% increase from the previous year. Current account balances stand at £9,669.44, with £5,220.85 in reserves.

Due to insurance and certification requirements, the council has decided to **sell its petrol strimmer**. It will be listed for sale if no local buyer is found.

The **next Parish Council meeting** will be held on Tuesday, 27th March, at Whiteway Colony Hall at 6pm. Parishioners are encouraged to attend and engage in local matters. For more updates and information, please visit the Miserden Parish Council website.



PARISH POST CONTACT DETAILS
parishpost@miserdenparishcouncil.gov.uk

Please could anyone intending to submit an article, advert or announcement to the Parish Post that is not a regular item, let the editor know as far in advance of the deadline as possible . The editor will acknowledge receipt of all articles, so if you do not hear back chase it up. **The deadline for the next Parish Post will be May 30th**

It's your Parish Post!

The Parish Post is created from stories written by our readers. We have great regular contributors but we would love to hear from more writers.

Stories, photos and memories are all welcome. Your friendly editor is always willing to help get the article into shape if you are not used to writing.

The Editor



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Laura Cobb - Parish Councillor
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Vanessa Price - Parish Councillor
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Gwen Durland - Clerk
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PARISH COUNCIL MEETINGS
These are held on the last Tuesday of every month at 6.00 pm. All members of the Parish are welcome to attend. Participation is at the discretion of the Chairman.

PLANNING APPLICATIONS
Plans of any applications for property in this Parish may be viewed by appointment with the Parish Clerk.
clerk@miserdenparishcouncil.gov.uk

DISCLAIMER. The views expressed in this magazine are not necessarily the views of the Parish Council except where specifically indicated. The Editor reserves the right to edit or omit material. No liability is accepted for any loss or damage arising from any omission of copy or advertising.