

Village Views

February 2021

SERVING THE COMMUNITIES OF ACTON BURNELL, PITCHFORD, FRODESLEY, RUCKLEY AND LANGLEY

WELCOME

As the country once again faces a national lockdown, many people will be finding it difficult to face the prospect of being at home, possibly alone, and missing contact with family and friends. Please take the time to check on any older or isolated neighbours. A smile, a friendly word or a phone call can make all the difference to someone's day.

We hope that Village Views will help to make people feel more connected and better informed at this difficult time, and we would like to thank the volunteers who tramp around our streets and lanes in rain and

wind, sunshine and snow to make sure that every member of our community receives their copy.

While the situation in the country is changing quickly, and restrictions and advice are being constantly updated, we have made every effort to ensure that information contained in Village Views is correct on the date of printing. However, please do make your own checks before relying on any information.

Looking forward to happier times to come!

Chris Harrison, Karen Fisher and John Glover

Looking for Help and Support

As we face another period of restrictions, many people will be struggling with money worries, difficulties around home schooling and problems with working from home. Everyone is having to deal with the heartache and loneliness of being unable to spend time with family, friends and colleagues.

If you (or someone you know) are finding these problems increasingly difficult to cope with, then please reach out to one of the many services, charities and organisations providing help during these uncertain and challenging times.

Here are a few contacts to help. Please pass these on to anyone you think may be in need. Please note: this is not an exhaustive list; there are many other organisations offering help, advice and support.

Need someone to talk to?

- **Samaritans** are available 24/7 by calling 116 123. This number is free to call from both landlines and mobiles, including pay-as-you-go mobiles. You do not need to have any credit or call allowance on your phone to call.
- **Supportline** on 01708 765200 provides a listening ear to anyone in distress, and can also help to signpost callers to other organisations and services which may be able to offer longer term support for specific problems.
- **Age UK** offers a telephone buddy service which can offer regular friendly calls to older people feeling isolated or anxious. Call 01743 233788 for more information.
- **Shropshire MIND** provides telephone support on 01743 368647.

Worried about money?

- The **Government** is offering a range of support for people whose finances have been affected by Covid. Find information at <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus/worker-support>.
- **Citizens Advice Shropshire** offer an advice line on 03444 991100, and can help with information on claiming benefits and managing debt.

- If you have been told to self-isolate by the **Test and Trace** service and this has impacted on your finances you may be eligible for a support payment. Call 0345 6789002, or go online at www.shropshire.gov.uk/benefits/what-help-can-i-claim-from-the-council/covid-test-and-trace-support-payments/.
- **The Farming Community Network** offers support and advice for members of the farming community in relation to finance, health, emotional and family issues. Call 03000 111999 or go to www.fcn.org.uk.

Struggling to put food on the table?

- **Cressage Food Share** is open every Wednesday at Cressage Village Hall from 1pm to 2pm. A range of bread, fruit, vegetables and fridge and freezer goods is provided for families in need at a cost of £2 per person (but no-one will be turned away if they cannot afford to pay). No referral needed.

Business facing problems?

- **Local Restrictions Support Grants** of up to £9,000 are available to help businesses stay afloat until they are allowed to trade normally again. Take a look at www.shropshire.gov.uk/coronavirus/information-for-businesses-and-the-self-employed/local-restrictions-support-grants/ for more information and links to application forms.



NEWS FROM THE PARISH COUNCIL

We are pleased to welcome our new Parish Council Clerk, Anna Morris from Frodesley. Anna replaces Elizabeth Wicks who is stepping down after 4 years' sterling service.

At the meeting on January 19th it was agreed to maintain the Parish Council precept (part of our council rates) at the same level as last year. There have now been six years with no increases.

Potholes

This winter has again heralded the appearance of a number of severe potholes and sunken manhole covers across the four villages. These are generally reported by Parish Councillors and/or the clerk as they are spotted and our local councillor, Dan Morris, is regularly pressed to pursue these issues with the local authority. However, there is a facility on the council website for individuals to report these (after signing in). More and repeated reports would help to draw attention to our area so please add your comments using the portal at: <http://my.shropshire.gov.uk/>

It is a bit of a fiddle to set up but once done it is easy to send additional reports and a map is provided making it easy to show where problems are.

Paul Harrison



The closing date for contributions to the next edition will be 21st April 2021

Would you like to advertise your business in Village Views? Contact us on villageviews@hotmail.com for more information.

You must **STAY AT HOME** and book a test if you have any of the following symptoms:



High temperature



Persistent Cough



Loss of taste or smell

You can book your test by **calling 119** or by visiting www.nhs/coronavirus

If you have any of these symptoms:



Headache



Aches and pains



Feeling tired for no reason



Sore throat



Runny nose



Sneezing



Child has stomach ache

You can also get tested – you will only need to self-isolate if the test comes back positive.

STAY HOME ▶ PROTECT THE NHS ▶ SAVE LIVES



www.shropshire.gov.uk

NEWS FROM PITCHFORD HALL

In theory we should have an interesting year at Pitchford as we're trying to launch the Pitchford History Festival (August) and we've joined up with the National Garden Scheme to do a charity garden open day in the Summer. As both of these events are largely outdoor, hopefully we'll be fine. We will obviously continue to run Historic Houses 'restoration' guided tours throughout the year from Spring onwards. Half the guided tour is outside as we show our guests the Orangery, Walled Garden, Pitch Well, Stableyard, Smithy and Treehouse.

Other news is that the Orangery is now finally restored and we are now able to book events there for 2021 and 2022. These could be pop up dinners, cultural events, business networking events or obviously weddings. If there is interest in the local community in events from Spring 2021 onwards we would obviously

be delighted to hear from people.

We are always looking for garden volunteers if anyone in the local community is interested. Any assistance in the run up to the National Garden Scheme would be extremely welcome as you can imagine.

There are also still a few units/lock ups in the stableyard if the community is interested.

Please take a look on Twitter and Instagram @pitchfordestate to keep updated on events throughout the year.

James Nason



ACTON BURNELL POST OFFICE

The shop and post office at Acton Burnell is open throughout the week from 9am to 1pm, and 2pm to 5pm, except for Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday, when it is closed all day. Thank you to Rose Jackson for keeping this essential service going during very difficult times.

Please note that this information was correct as of 29th January. Due to the evolving situation, the opening hours and days may be subject to alteration. Changes to opening times will be posted on the Acton Burnell Community Facebook page.

TO ALL DOG OWNERS....

The issue of dog mess was under discussion once again at the January meeting of the Parish Council. Dog mess has been left on the pavements and footpaths in Acton Burnell, and in Frodesley there is a particular problem with dog poo bags being hung and abandoned in trees and hedges.

Dog owners are required by law to clean up after their dog, and failure to do so can result in a fine or prosecution. Dog waste should be either placed in a litter bin or taken home and disposed of in the household bin.

The vast majority of dog owners are responsible and make sure to pick up anything their dog deposits, but it is unfortunate that a few people walking their dogs in our villages are not abiding by the rules. As the weather improves, more people will be out and about (with and without dogs). Let's make sure that our pavements and footpaths are mess free, so that we can all enjoy them!

#RUN1000

Ana Natalio, who is the co-author of our regular 'What's That Bug' articles, has been taking part in the #RUN1000 challenge to raise funds and awareness for rural mental health charities. A series of challenges were set up throughout January, and were supported by runners and walkers throughout the UK and the rest of the world, with each runner or walker choosing a team to support. Fundraising will continue through February and if you would like to contribute, please take a look at the following 'Just Giving' pages:

- Team England, Farming Community Network, www.justgiving.com/fundraising/run1000-teamengland
- Team Ireland, Embrace Farm, www.justgiving.com/fundraising/run1000ireland
- Team Wales, DPJ Foundation, www.justgiving.com/fundraising/run1000teamwales
- Team Rest of the World, The Do More Agriculture Foundation, www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/run1000-restoftheworld
- Team Scotland, Royal Scottish Agricultural Benevolent Institution, www.justgiving.com/fundraising/run1000-teamsotland

Ana signed up with Team Scotland and explains, "I have ties with both England and Scotland as I lived in England for 25 years and it is my kids' country of birth, but my partner is a Scot. It came down to numbers and Scotland had less participants and so I went with it. I will continue to share my enjoyment for running/walking the gorgeous local trails whilst highlighting the cause on social media. All teams could do with additional supporters and/or extra funds and links to each can be found above."



What's on



For keen gardeners, **Homegrown Gardening Group** hold a monthly meet-up (usually in person at different venues around Shropshire, but currently on-line only), for anyone interested in growing fruit and vegetables. No charge for attending, but registration is required. Take a look at their Facebook page (search for Homegrown Gardening Group) for more information on future events. Next virtual meet-up is on 20th February.

The Shropshire Library Service is running free 'Virtual Rhymetime' and 'Virtual Storytime' sessions throughout February and March on Zoom. Rhymetime is aimed at babies and toddlers – get ready with something to shake, rattle, hit or blow and join in with favourite rhymes and songs. Storytime gives older children the chance to listen to a story with a follow-up craft activity to enjoy afterwards. Go to www.shropshire.gov.uk/libraries/library-events/?month=02-2021&audience=&category= and follow the links to book your places.

Age UK has a range of on-line activities for older members of the community, including reading and singing groups. Reading groups meet on Tuesday morning at 10.00am and on Thursday

afternoon at 1.30pm to listen to a short story or poem and then discuss what has been read. Two on-line choirs are also on offer, the Orchard Choir and the Acorn Choir, who get together to sing via Zoom. To register for any of these events, please call 01743 233 123, or email enquiries@ageukstw.org.uk.

If you want to know more about local birds, flora and fauna, **Shropshire Wildlife Trust** are offering talks by staff and guests on YouTube. Take a look at their website on www.shropshirewildlifetrust.org.uk events to see what is planned for the coming weeks, or go to their YouTube channel (www.youtube.com/channel/UCFNZuW3Fd8mNa-sUGsWJQdW?view_as=subscriber) to watch previous talks.

Want to get fit or keep fit during lockdown? The **NHS Fitness Studio** offers a range of free on-line classes, ranging from aerobics and yoga to pilates and even belly dancing! Go to www.nhs.uk/conditions/nhs-fitness-studio/ for more information.

Get creative with the **Isolation Art School**. Free lessons and tips by artists to help anyone of any age get started

with painting, drawing, printing and crafts. Go to www.instagram.com/isolationartschool/channel/ to view the range of videos available. You'll need to sign on to Instagram to take part.

Feeling the need for a change of scenery? Many **National Trust** grounds and parklands are open, but please note that Government advice is to 'stay local', so for those of us living in the Acton Burnell area, that really means restricting our trips to Attingham Park and possibly Carding Mill Valley. You'll need to book in advance for Attingham Park, by going on-line at www.nationaltrust.org.uk/attingham-park or calling 03442 491895. Entry is free for National Trust members, but charges apply for non-members.

Alternatively, put on your walking boots and try one of the **Local Strolls** featured in Village Views. In this edition, John Glover guides us on a walk around Acton Burnell Hill. If you'd like to try a previous 'Stroll' then please take a look at earlier editions of Village Views on the Parish Council website (www.actonburnellparishcouncil.org.uk/village-views). There are plenty to choose from!



News from Pitchford Village Hall

Clearly, given the continuing situation, the Village Hall remains closed and we do not have, as you would expect, a clear timeline for re-opening. That is in the lap of the virus, the vaccine and people's behaviour!

We did hold the AGM by Zoom a few days ago and some discussion was had on the increasingly worrying state of the Hall and how we go about repairs. This is especially the case given the lack of money and the less-likely chance of getting any given the fact that the landowners have refused to extend the lease meaning any potential funding is restricted due to the lack of longevity in return for their potential donations. There will be more discussion on the best way to proceed at the next standard Committee meeting later this month.

The 'day-to-day' positions on the Committee were confirmed as follows making you aware of who to chat to regarding any aspect of the Hall should you bump into them on your lockdown walkies in the area!

Chairman:	Mike Price
Vice Chair:	Andrew Roberts
Secretary:	Chris Jones
Treasurer:	Bridget Thurgood
Tote Manager:	Jeanette Reaney
WI Representative:	Beth Davies
Pub Night Manager:	John Glover
Parish Representatives:	Rev. Geoff Garrett
	Daphne Lewis
	Nikki Williams

Collections for Tote Membership have gone well despite the difficulty in getting around to everyone personally by knocking

on doors. There are however, a couple of tickets left and should you wish to take part, have a chance to win big money and support the Hall, then contact Jeanette Reaney.

As usual, if you have any other queries, feel free to contact the following:

Mike Price

Chairman PVH Management Committee
email: price622@btinternet.com
mobile: 07740 067955

Chris Jones

Secretary PVH Management Committee
email: csjay@btinternet.com
mobile: 07538 744807

Jeanette Reaney

Tote Organiser
email: jeanettereaney@hotmail.com
mobile: 07971 780963

Many thanks to Alan Hotchkiss for cheering up Pitchford residents with his New Year's Eve fireworks.



MESSAGE FROM COUNCILLOR DAN MORRIS SHROPSHIRE COUNCILLOR FOR BURNELL

At the time of writing (January 11th) we are a week into our 3rd National lockdown. To me this feels both the most serious phase of this crisis and at the same time the one where we can be the most optimistic, courtesy of the vaccine rollout. Whatever one thinks of the national response by the Government to this crisis, and it would be wrong of me to comment on national matters in a capacity as a Local Councillor, I am proud of the fact that the UK has been at the forefront of the vaccination process, and the Oxford Vaccine appears to me as a layman to be the easiest to distribute and rollout. What is especially heartening is that Oxford University wouldn't partner with Astra Zeneca unless the vaccine was provided in the most part at cost. The best minds from Britain have come up with this game changing vaccine that will give world-wide benefits.

Just as before the Government is asking Shropshire Council to administer the schemes of financial assistance for those businesses impacted adversely by on-going Covid restrictions. I would urge everyone to watch the daily announcements from the Council via the Newsroom Releases that come out on the council website. You can sign up to receive these updates automatically at

<https://newsroom.shropshire.gov.uk/>.

Alternatively please do contact me and I will do my best to help anyone navigate through the Council system. Recently I have successfully assisted businesses through the sometimes difficult and daunting process of applying for grants. It can go against the grain sometimes doing this, but I would say if you don't apply you won't get the grant. In the majority of cases it is your money, so please do apply, and please do ask for help if you need it!

It is difficult to comment too much on the Covid situation, because the situation is moving so fast, but we do know now that 7 mass testing sites have been set up in England. With a bit of luck by the time you read this article there will also be a site set up in the Telford International Centre, and GPs will also be involved. You will be contacted directly to go for your test, I'm told by medical friends that it is useful to have your NHS number close to hand when you are contacted.

Covid has fundamentally changed the way the council operates, council colleagues and staff have been re-allocated to different roles to help the county-wide effort to combat the pandemic. Covid has doubtless also speeded up the decision making on how Shirehall will be used in the near future. It will no longer be the

hub of our council, instead this will likely be in the Charles Darwin Shopping centre in the coming few years. The Charles Darwin Shopping Centre will take on new roles and purposes as part of the larger Shrewsbury big town plan. More information can be found at www.shrewsburybigtownplan.org, where the strapline is for Shrewsbury to 'Build Back Better'. There are "a range of ambitious and bold opportunities for Shrewsbury...being set out in a "Masterplan Vision" for how the town could evolve over the next two decades". This really is once in a lifetime transformational stuff for Shrewsbury and Shropshire and it is supported across the political parties. There will be a 6 week long public engagement process on the ideas and projects involved- I would urge everyone to look at this phase of the exciting next chapter in the life of our county town.

As ever if there are any issues you feel I can help on, please do not hesitate to contact me by email (dan.morris@shropshire.gov.uk), on twitter ([@dan4burnell](https://twitter.com/dan4burnell)), on Facebook ([dan4burnell](https://www.facebook.com/dan4burnell)) or by phone (**07902408400**). For now please stay safe, stay at home and save lives.

Dan Morris

A MESSAGE FROM REV. GEOFF GARRETT

What a difference a year makes! This time last year the first reports of COVID 19 were coming through with Wuhan closing down and cruise ships being quarantined, but positive messages about it being 'a mild case of flu and we will be rid of it in months!' Roll on 12 months and here we are in the midst of the worst pandemic for 100 years, but with the optimism that the various vaccines are giving.

The current situation means that we are unable to host any Sunday Services in our church building. Although the regulations allow us to hold Sunday worship in our churches we, like most churches around, have decided that it is too risky to do so. I am continuing to send out weekly services to my email contacts and we have just started a Zoom service on Sunday mornings at 10am. The Zoom link is sent out on a weekly basis with the service to the email contacts.

Despite the severity of where we are currently with the virus, the optimism of the roll out of the vaccines means that we hope that the 'banishment' from our church buildings will be relatively short lived, but we must not be complacent, and we will not get back to meeting together until it is safe to do so. There is a hope that we may be able to celebrate Easter in our churches, but it is unlikely that we will be in church much before that. We hope that some of our social events will be able to take place later in the year, but that will depend on the advice of the time.

If you are not on my email list and would like to be, please email me on regeoff@live.co.uk or call me on 01743 872251.

I hope everyone is keeping safe and well and continues to do so and if you or anyone you know needs a helping hand, please get in touch.

Best wishes to all.
Geoff Garrett



RING OUT THOSE BELLS....

Thank you to Jeremy Lowe for lifting our spirits by ringing the church bells at Acton Burnell every Sunday morning.

CRESSAGE FOOD SHARE PROJECT

The Food Share Project began just over a year ago as an effort to prevent food waste. Supermarket and producers' excess food that had passed its 'Best Before' but not its 'Use By' date was donated to the project.

At first, the project was open to anyone keen to prevent food waste, but when Covid-19 affected us all in March, the direction of the project changed to help those in crisis.

Now, with weekly pop-up events across the area, the Food Share Project aims to help more people by sharing good food with a wider community. For a donation of £2 per person in your household, we will fill your bags with bread, fruit, vegetables and fridge and freezer goods. What is on offer changes week by week but those staples are always present.

We will never ask for proof of your circumstances in order to take part in the Food Share.

We can be found every Wednesday at Cressage Village Hall between 1 and 2pm. Come and see us- and tell your friends!

Lucy Blair

ARCHDEACON JOSEPH (PLYMLEY) CORBETT 1759-1838

Joseph Plymley was born in Longnor at the Bank House, now the Dower House, built by the Corbetts for his parents. His father, an apothecary, had married into the Corbett family. Apart from his time at school and then Pembroke College, Oxford, Joseph spent his whole life in Longnor. However he had a profound influence on affairs in Shropshire and also further afield.

Joseph was destined for the church from an early age and in 1792 he became Archdeacon of Salop (in the Hereford diocese). His abilities and enthusiasm led to much restoration and repair of church buildings as well as the invigoration of local clergy. He was keen to use existing laws and charities to improve the conditions of the rural poor, and would take others to task if they failed to do what he considered to be their Christian duty. He took this attitude into his work as a magistrate, also using the powers conferred upon him to help improve the county's infrastructure of roads and bridges. He became actively involved in elections for the county and Shrewsbury and, in later years, promoting the work of the local Bible Society.

As an Archdeacon, Joseph took his role very seriously, making a visitation to every church in his six deaneries. He wrote a report about each church and its parish which included details of the agriculture, industry and state of the poor. The six volumes of hand written notes (now in the possession of Shropshire Archives) are partnered by six volumes of illustrations held by the Corbett family. These include watercolours of each church, and sometimes also the parsonage houses, and coats of arms of patrons and incumbents where appropriate. His sister Katherine wrote that the illustrations were all her brother's work.

Plymney came to national prominence as a key supporter of the anti-slave trade movement in the late 1700s, becoming a friend of William Wilberforce and a close associate of Thomas Clarkson. Partly as a result of his proven administrative expertise in this capacity, but also because of his deep commitment to Shropshire and its inhabitants, he was asked by the Board of Agriculture to produce a report on the state of agriculture in the county. His report, which included contributions from those with specialist knowledge,

led to Plymney becoming the principal link between a number of scientists and intellectuals in what has been termed 'The Shropshire Enlightenment'. It was in this atmosphere of scientific inquiry that the young Charles Darwin grew up.

Joseph was married twice, his first wife dying young, and had a large family with whom he had a close relationship. In 1804 he changed his name as a condition of receiving the Corbett inheritance and subsequently moved into Longnor Hall.

We know a lot about Joseph's life both from his own writings and from the diaries his older sister Katherine kept between 1791 and 1827, which run to almost 150 notebooks. Such a rich source of information has yielded an excellent biography written by Douglas Grounds titled 'Son and Servant of Shropshire' and published in 2009 by the Logaston Press.

Ron Repath

Ron's next 'Great Life' will feature an 18th century woman who lived locally and was a diarist, traveller, painter and naturalist specialising in entomology who met with, was treated on equal terms by and wrote about many of the great reformers of her day.

THINGS TO BE DOING IN YOUR GARDEN RIGHT NOW (EVEN IF YOU'RE NOT A GARDENER)

Things may look a little bleak in your garden at the moment, but the days are slowly lengthening, and now is a good time to plan ahead for the spring and summer. If you have a greenhouse or cold frame, or even if you only have an empty windowsill or two, you might want to think about sowing some seeds. Alongside the usual tomato, root vegetable, salad and hardy annual seeds, why not have a go at some more unusual plants. Small and specialist seed merchants often have some rare and interesting seeds to try, at very little cost.

A few of the less well known fruits and vegetables you might like to try include:

- Melothrie or cucamelon – small fruits that taste like cucumber and are apparently delicious sliced in a G&T!
- Tomatillos – from South America, these vegetables are used to make salsa, sauces and chutneys.
- Loofa – fry or boil when young and tender, or use as a pot scourer when old and fibrous.
- Achocha – originally grown by the Incas, this prolific plant has fruits that taste like green peppers.
- Cinammon vine – fruits can be eaten, but grow this mainly for its strong cinnamon scent.

- Purple carrots – this was the original colour of carrots when they were first domesticated. Taste like ordinary carrots, but look quite different on the plate!

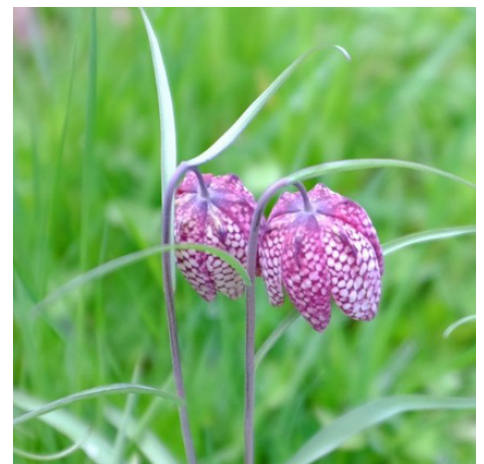
Now is also the time to think about adding some bird nest boxes to the garden, or to check existing boxes to make sure they are securely attached to the wall of tree. If you are sure the nest isn't already occupied, then take a few minutes to clear out any old, used nest material. The bird nesting 'season' officially runs from February to August, so do this as early as possible to encourage birds to set up home in your nest box.

If you don't have a nest box in your garden, you might want to try making your own. The RSPB has plans and instructions on their website at www.rspb.org.uk/fun-and-learning/for-families/family-wild-challenge/activities/build-a-birdbox/. Alternatively, try providing some nesting material to encourage birds to make their nests in your hedges or trees. Scraps of natural wool, sisal or jute twine and moss make good lining for nest, and some birds are particularly keen on hair (dog, cat or human!).

Hedgehogs should begin to emerge from

hibernation during March. Take care while doing any spring garden tidying, as you may disturb a sleeping hedgehog sheltering under piles of leaves or dead branches, particularly at the bottom of hedges and in undisturbed corners of your garden. If you are lucky enough to spot a hedgehog early in the year, and want to give it a helping hand, then a meal of dog or cat food and some fresh water are the best things to offer. Make sure they are able to roam freely by providing pop-holes in fences or at the base of walls, so that they don't become trapped in your garden!

Chris Harrison





On the path just after Evenwood looking SW

Local Strolls: The Grand Houses around Acton Burnell Hill

Lockdown v3 means yet again that we need to take exercise for our bodies and our brains locally. Definitions of "local" vary but I think this little number will be acceptable to anyone within the scope of this newsletter. A large part is on road, but given the reduction in traffic this is a fairly safe bet and a tour which under more normal conditions may be a little more dodgy. Every cloud and all that !

We are blessed in our area with some stunning buildings set within our fantastic countryside, and this 5¹/₂ mile route which circles Acton Burnell Hill in a clockwise direction, passes some nine interesting and standout buildings for you to lust over and mull the history behind.

Parking outside Acton Burnell Castle if you are coming from outside the village, the first of these is obvious! The Castle is set in beautiful grounds of cropped cedar. The original property was fortified into what you see today in 1284 by Robert Burnell who was at the time the Chancellor of England as well as the Bishop of Bath and Wells. The first Parliament outside London was held in the tithe Barn in 1283, the ends of which can be seen just over the fence in the grounds of Concord College. Leaving the grounds the way you came in, you almost instantly pass St. Mary's Church. This was built a little before the Castle was fortified and contains some fascinating tombs and effigies.



Acton Burnell Castle

Moving back along the track you drove in on, you end up at the crossroads in the middle of the village where you turn right (or north) and hike down the main road to the T junction at the end of the village where you turn right and out into open countryside.

Concord College is on your right and it will take you a while to pass by all of the grounds which make up this, one of the country's premier private schools for mainly foreign but some local students. The exterior of the main house was known as Acton Burnell Hall and was built sometime after 1811 and took on its present form after being gutted by fire in 1914. It was turned into a school in 1973.

Trundling down the road you soon see a creamy brown house to your right and some distance from the road. This is Sham Castle and was built as a gothic folly around 1780 it was restored to its current form in the 1980s. The lakes in front of it evolved from

fishponds created in the C13th at the same time as the real castle in the village was constructed. However, you will not see these from the road as sadly for us (but not for the owners!) it is all on private land.

The hill which is the backdrop to the 'castle' was a deer park many moons ago (and still has upward of 100 of these animals today) and the gardens were decorated with ornamental trees. It houses the "Shell House", a grotto-like summer house and igloo in shape. Sadly, yet again, these grounds are no longer accessible to the public so all you can do is stare and wonder!

On your left and to the left of the Wrekin, you will also get a glimpse of Golding Hall, another splendid and distinctive building.

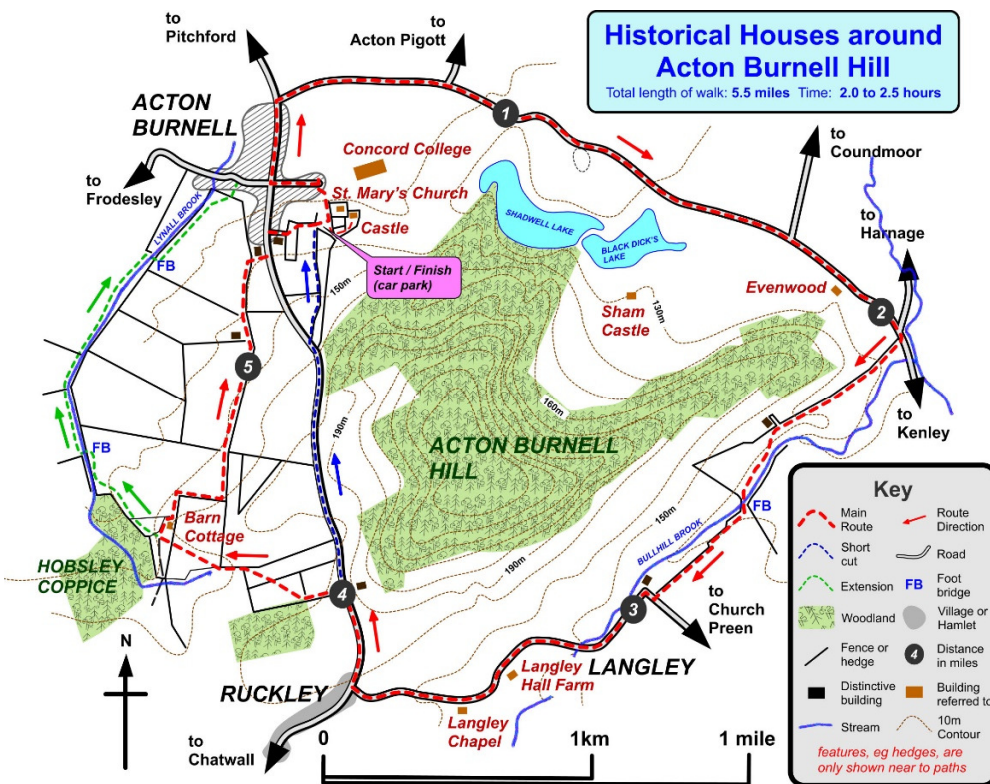


Evenwood

As you march down the slope on the road, you approach a 'T' junction (which you ignore). From here you can see Evenwood House ahead and to the right. This is a spectacular abode which at the time of writing is undergoing major work on the house itself along with the conversion of some of the outbuildings into holiday lets. Just past this old farmhouse is a brideway sign pointing you through a gate to the right and away from the road for a much-needed break from the tarmac of the last two miles!

The good track keeps to the left of a hedge and heads south west with a good view of Caer Caradoc and Lodge Hill in the distance ahead of you. You now travel parallel to the southern flanks of Acton Burnell Hill to your right and Bullhill Brook to your left. About half a mile along you come across an old barn and at this point you leave the hedge and wander across the field hanging left and towards a couple of marker posts nearer to the brook. The stream and its valley are classic Upper Course river features although there are signs of lateral erosion as the meandering stream seeks to cut sideways and eak out a fledgling floodplain. Rivers do not simply jump from one stage to the next, e.g. 'upper course' to 'middle course', but travel through a transitory zone with characteristics classic of each stage, with features of the former gradually giving way to features of the latter.

After a short distance, you drop down to the valley floor and cross a small footbridge before slopping up through a muddy bit and onto the other side of the valley where you turn right and parallel the stream along the field's edge. After about 500 metres and a short zigzag, you reach the road from Langley to Parkgate and turn right.



surrounding it, meaning it ceased to be used regularly about 1700. The pews are old and rough, separated into those for the commoners and those of the higher ranks and the layouts are atmospheric and fascinating and adorned with medieval tiles and carvings in wood and alabaster. Nothing too fancy – just genuinely authentic and that’s the magic. Well worth popping your head in, it is owned by English Heritage and you are free to look inside. The entrance door is on the left of the building and served by a large key (which, if it not there, can be obtained from Jill Faulkner back at Langley Hall Farm by the Gatehouse).

When you are done, continue along the road a short distance into Ruckley and turn right at the ‘T’ junction and charge up the last upward part of the walk until you reach Keeper’s Cottage on your right. OK. Decision time!

After about half a mile, yet another striking residence appears on your left. This is the Gatehouse of what was Langley Hall which was originally an ‘L’ shaped house made of part stone and part



Langley Hall Gatehouse

timber frame and surrounded by a moat. Before you get to the Gatehouse, you may be able to make out the outlines of old fishponds on your left. The Hall was demolished in the C19th, but originally dated from the late C13th or early C14th. The Gatehouse was added in the mid to late C15th and again, is another impressive construction on our stroll.



Langley Chapel in moody light

The old Hall and its outlying building and houses, most of which have sadly evaporated into the mists of time, were served by a chapel which can be seen another few tens of yards along the road. The inside is a genuine step back in time. Built around 1564 (although its architecture suggests it is a reconstruction of an earlier church first recorded in 1249), it was a classic Puritan place of worship although it has no known dedication. It has been preserved as it was due to the disintegration of the village

If your legs are done, or it’s particularly wet and muddy, then carry on along the road for about 1 kilometre where the road bends sharply to the left with the end of a large stone wall on your right. A path leaves here to the right which takes you straight back to the car park at the castle where you started.

If you fancy a bit more, then take the footpath signed opposite Keeper’s Cottage and aim for the two large trees in the middle of the field. The path will take you through a gate and after another 100 yards or so, you go through another gate on your right. Annoyingly, future cutlets and lamb kormas have sought to get their own back in advance of their demise caused by us hungry humans and have turned the width of the gate into a swamp which is more than ankle deep in grey glutinous mud in an effective attempt at revenge. Well, it is the countryside!!

Through the mire and then yet another gate, you reach a field with the ruins of Barn Cottage on the rise to your right, another fascinating and atmospheric building. Again at this point, you have a choice of route. Firstly, you could walk up to the left of the cottage and follow the track back to the old barns in Acton Burnell. Turn left at the road and then almost immediately go right once you have passed Home Farm. Follow the footpath back to the castle. A word of warning – if you have a large dog covered in mud from the expedition you are about to finish, you may want to turn back and get to the castle by road. The alternative is a heavy and dirty lift over a dog unfriendly stile built with no lift-up plank which therefore has no access for our four-legged friends!

The alternative slightly longer route from Barn Cottage cuts straight across the field keeping underneath the cottage on the rise to the right and follow the signs which will take you on a good route following the course of Lynall Brook into Acton Burnell just to the west of the crossroads.

Well done. A lovely tour of some stonking houses and buildings in atmospheric and moody settings and all within our stunningly remote Shropshire countryside.

John Glover

What's that bug: Earthworms

Earthworms belong to the class Clitellata with 29 known species in Great Britain mostly in the family Lumbricidae. They produce eggs where the young earthworm develops until is ready to hatch. Before the egg is released, a harden casing is formed around it called a cocoon. Each cocoon may have 1 to 20 earthworms depending on which species it belongs to. Earthworms have both male and female sexual reproduction organs (hermaphrodite organisms), but reproduction mostly involves two worms.

Charles Darwin did extensive work on earthworms and called them nature's ploughs. He observed them burying different types of leaves and vegetables, and excretions left at the soil surface (aka casts- organic matter mixed with mineral particles).

If I cut an earthworm in two will it grow into two earthworms?

No, they do not. Earthworms might be able to survive and grow new segments if only the tail side is cut off. However, death is likely if injury occurs near the head where their vital organs are.

How do you tell the species of earthworms apart?

Earthworm species differ morphologically, they can be distinguished by looking at their head, male pore, and by counting the number of segments between their head and saddle (clitellum) and on the saddle itself.

Earthworms are often grouped into three main ecotypes (but not strictly), meaning that they are categorised by their morphology and position in/on soil. The three main groups used are: Epigeic, endogeic and anecic. The epigeic are all pigmented and live on the soil surface feeding on litter. The endogeic are non-pigmented and feed on soil as they move underground along branching horizontal burrows. The anecic are only pigmented on the head side and are also soil dwellers. They live in permanent vertical burrows, collect fresh surface litter dragging it underground and excrete nutrient rich casts.

Ana Natalio and Nick Antill





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Telephone Box Swap Shop

Thank you to everyone who has used the telephone box 'swap shop' in Acton Burnell. This has proved to be a great way of sharing books, dvds, toys, games, jigsaws and other items. If you haven't popped your head in yet, then take a look when you are next out for a stroll. You may well find something to entertain yourself or your children!



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