

Village Views

May 2019

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



SATURDAY BUS SERVICE AT RISK

Shropshire Council has launched a six-week consultation into proposed cut to its public transport budget, which would see a reduction in the number and frequency of bus services subsidised by the Council.

Among the services being considered for closure is the Saturday service which runs from Cardington to Shrewsbury, via Frodesley, Acton Burnell, Pitchford and Cantlop. The closing date for public comment on these proposals is Monday, 6th May, so it important to act quickly if you wish to try and influence this decision!

The Saturday service offers local residents the chance to get into Shrewsbury for a couple of hours for a morning's shopping, or to meet up with friends and family. It provides an invaluable service for those without access to a car, particularly for older members of our community, who can easily become isolated, with

consequences for their emotional and physical well-being.

It is also important to note that the weekday bus service only runs during Shrewsbury College term time, which would mean that at Christmas, Easter, Whitsun and throughout the summer our villages would have no bus service at all. This would present serious problems to anyone who is dependent on public transport.

The removal of the Saturday service would be a severe blow to our villages. At a time of accelerating climate change, when we should all be reducing our car use as much as possible, this would seem to a backwards and short-sighted step.

And for those of us who may still choose to use our cars to travel to Shrewsbury, please be aware that Shropshire Council is also considering removing the concessionary Park and

Ride fare (which currently offers a 50% discount) and the group ticket (allowing up to 5 passengers to travel for only £2.50) and increasing the return ticket from £1.60 to £2.00, making using the Park and Ride a much more expensive option.

To contribute to the consultation, please email your comments to passtrans@shopshire.gov.uk, or write to: Public Transport Consultation Passenger Transport Services Shropshire Council Shirehall, Abbey Foregate Shrewsbury SY2 6ND

A petition to save the Saturday bus service is also available for you to sign at Acton Burnell Shop.

Please take the time to drop by to add your signature to the petition, or to contact the Council, even if you do not use the bus yourself. You may not need it now, but one day it may be essential!

ACTON BURNELL FÊTE AND THE BURNELL BASH!

The annual Acton Burnell Fete takes place on 8th June and starts 2.30pm by the church. Lots of stalls and sideshows to enjoy for all the family, including teas, ice creams, bric-a-brac, skittles, coconut shy plus many more!

The Fête is followed by the Burnell Bash, starting at 6.30pm. For those who have not been before this is a chance to chill out after the Fête. There will be a bar and food (hot pork rolls, salads and puddings). Tickets will be available from the Acton Burnell shop or from Jill Faulkner.

We will have music if we can get someone to play for us! If you know of someone who can come along and sing or play, please ask them to contact

Jill Faulkner on the telephone number below. A small fee can be paid. There must be some young buskers out there who would like to play to an appreciative local audience.

There will also be a scarecrow competition for residents of Acton Burnell – watch out for a flyer through your door with more information!

Not many villages hold a fête so it is a lovely opportunity to come along, get involved and enjoy yourselves, and meet everyone else who lives in and around Acton Burnell.

Offers of help are never rejected so if you would like to get involved, please contact Jill Faulkner on **01694 731363** or by emailing jillfaulkner@btconnect.com

Pitchford Estate to help rebuild Notre Dame

We are pleased to report that The Pitchford Estate has joined with many other estates across the country to offer to donate British oak to help rebuild the roof of Notre Dame cathedral in Paris, which was destroyed in the recent devastating fire.

This initiative is being organised by Historic Houses, the association for independently owned historic homes and gardens, who report that over 100 historic estates have pledged trees.

The closing date for contributions to the next edition will be Friday 9th July 2019.

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

ACTON BURNELL, FRODESLEY, PITCHFORD, RUCKLEY & LANGLEY PARISH COUNCIL

The Parish Council last met in March at Concord College. The draft minutes of the meeting are available on the Parish Website www.actonburnellparishcouncil.org.uk

Some of the points raised at the meeting include:

- A grant from the Lightsource Community Benefit Fund was agreed, to support the production of the 2019 edition of the Village Directory.
- The PC has submitted a 'CIL Local' funding request to Shropshire Council, to help with the costs of providing a pavement extension from Acton Burnell Village to the entrance of the Stoneleigh Park development. CIL, is the Community Infrastructure Levy that is placed on new building developments specifically to help fund additional infrastructure needs resulting from such development.
- A number of planning issues were discussed including applications relating to Frodesley Lodge and the exit from Stoneleigh Park.
- The Community Led Parish Plan Review was approved for submission to Shropshire Council and inclusion in the 'Church Stretton & surrounding areas Place Plan'. Representatives of the Parish Council will be attending a meeting at the end of April, which aims to review the content of the Place Plan and to prioritise the projects identified within it.

A MESSAGE FROM DAN MORRIS, SHROPSHIRE COUNCILLOR FOR THE WARD OF BURNELL

In April 2019 Shropshire Council turned 10 years old!! It's been a tough old 10 years in local government in terms of funding - but in that time the council has saved around £200 million, and also delivered some big projects such as Shrewsbury Museum and Art Gallery, the Battlefield Energy Recovery Facility, growth in housing, the successful Theatre Severn, University Centre Shrewsbury, the purchase of the Shrewsbury Shopping Centres and the Flaxmill regeneration.

There are ambitious plans for the future with our exciting new housing company and completing Shrewsbury North West Relief Road, whose funding was confirmed a few weeks ago, and the implementation of the Shrewsbury big town plan. So whilst funding remains tight, Shropshire is settling down to be a forward-looking more commercially-orientated council.

I'd also like to tell you about the new way Shropshire Council have recently set up to contact them about highways defects, potholes and damaged road signs. It is an on line process called MyShropshire and you register by following the instructions from: <https://my.shropshire.gov.uk/>

When you register, you will need to give an email address and password. At that stage the council will send an email back to you with a verification code, you put in that code and then you are good to go.

The process allows you to drop a virtual pin on a map where a defect occurs, and gives you the opportunity to add some text describing where it is and the nature of the problem. You then send the complaint off, and you get a complaint number, and also then a list of the complaints you have made and their current status.

Now it may be beginners luck but I tried this and registered 9 defects. Within 72 hours many of these defects had been repaired! The major difference this system allows is that it allows you to track the status of the complaint on line, which wasn't available before.

This is the first real public facing view of the Councils Digital Transformation Programme, which aims to create a better experience when dealing with Council issues, and this programme will roll out to other areas. I would be interested to hear peoples experiences of using this system! Of course, if there is an emergency then there is always a phone call!!

Thank you for reading this! If you have any questions or matters you think I can help on, please do get in touch 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](tel:07902408400)).

FLICKS IN THE STICKS

Over the summer months, Flicks in the Sticks will be bringing a number of films to local venues, including The Wife (15), Bohemian Rhapsody (12A), and Widows (15). Live screenings from The Royal Ballet will include Matthew Bourne's Swan Lake and Romeo and Juliet. Summer holiday screenings of films for younger members of the family will be announced soon, and details will be posted at www.artsalive.co.uk.

Our local 'Flicks' venues include Cardington Village Hall (all enquiries to **01694 771295**), All Stretton Village Hall (**07812 583113**), Church Stretton School (**01694 724330**), Ryton Village Hall (**01743 718237**) and The Edge Arts Centre at Much Wenlock (**01952 728911**).

CHURCH PREEN PRE-SCHOOL AND TEENIE PREENIES

Church Preen Pre-School currently has vacancies for children aged 2 to 5 years old. Described as providing a 'warm and caring environment promoting fun and learning through play', they are based at Church Preen Village Hall and offer the following sessions (in term time only):

Monday 9.00am to 3.00pm
Tuesday 8.00am to 3.00pm
Wednesday 8.00am to 12.30pm
Thursday closed
Friday 9.00am to 3.00pm

More sessions may be available if the number of children attending increases.

Please note that the pre-school accepts '24u' funding.

Places are also available at the Teenie Preenie parent and toddler group for all children from 0 to 5. The group meets every Wednesday morning (term time) from 10.00am to 11.30am to take part in the pre-school structured sessions with qualified professionals. The fee is £3.00 per child (£1.00 additional siblings).

The pre-school has strong links with Church Preen Primary School.

For more information, please go to www.churchpreenpreschool.org.uk, call **01694 771 797** or contact maria@churchpreenpreschool.org.uk.

What's on

Attingham Park

There are a large number of exciting events planned at Attingham Park over the summer months, including wildlife encounters (from finding out how to encourage mason bees to make a home in your garden to meeting the deer); gardening hints and tips (planting sunflowers and guided tours of the Walled Garden); introductions to archaeology; running groups (including the chance to try out the growing sport of canicross); 'behind the scenes' tours of the Mansion and theatrical experiences. Some are listed below, but for full details of all events, please go to www.nationaltrust.org.uk/attingham-park/whats-on.

10th May

Swervy World perform their own arrangements of jazz and blues classics live at Carding Mill Valley. This is an adults-only evening. Ale, cider, wine, soft and hot drinks and snacks on sale throughout the evening. Music starts at 7.00pm, tickets £7.00 available by calling **03442 491 895**.

11th May

Cound Fête at St Peter's Church. Begins at 2.00pm and features music by the Stiperstones Brass Band, a display by the Chelmarsh Owls, and a teddy parachute jump from the Church Tower (please bring your own teddy!). Refreshments, a bouncy castle, and numerous stalls also planned.

11th & 12th May

Shropshire Kids Festival in the Quarry Park, Shrewsbury. Family fun days with a giant waterslide, inflatables, music, drama and sport. Family tickets £40, adults £4 and children £17.50. More information at www.shropshirekidsfest.co.uk.

17th May

Pub Night at Pitchford Village Hall. Doors open at 7.30pm. Beer, wine and soft drinks on sale, and conversation and laughter provided free of charge! Children and well-behaved dogs always welcome.

18th May

The 12th annual duck race at Carding Mill Valley. Sponsor your duck for 50p to help support Stretton Climate Care. Prizes for every race! From 11.00am to 4.00pm at the Chalet Pavilion.

18th May

A model railway show steams into the United Reformed Church, Coleham Head, Shrewsbury. There will be a variety of layouts in various gauges and a number of trade and hobby exhibitors. Refreshments available throughout the day. Doors open at 10.00am and the event finishes at 4.00pm. Admission is £5 for adults, £2 for children and under 5's free.

25th May

Head to Attingham Park for an overnight family camp, offering the chance to take part in bushcraft activities, star watching and marshmallow toasting around the campfire. Dinner and breakfast provided, but bring your own tent and sleeping bags. Tickets are £30 per adult, £5.00 for children aged two and under, and £15 for children aged two to 16 years old. Book by 23rd May by calling **03442 491 895**.

8th June

Acton Burnell Fete opens at 2.30pm by the church, and the fun continues into the evening with the Burnell Bash. Please see separate article for more details!

16th June

Harley garden trail gives you the opportunity to enjoy a visit to 8 small and medium sized gardens in this village near Wenlock Edge. Gardens are open from 12 noon to 6.00pm. Parking and information in field adjacent to St Mary's Church. Please note that dogs will not be admitted. Tickets £6, proceeds to support St Mary's Church.

21st June

Come along to Pitchford Village Hall for pub night, and meet up with friends and neighbours for a chat and a drink. Doors open at 7.30pm.

20th & 21st June

Celebrate the Solstice with an unforgettable night of wild camping on the Long Mynd. A team from Carding Mill Valley will supply a warming fire and a long-drop loo! Please provide your own small tent, sleeping bag, torch, food and drink. Tickets and more details from **03442 491 895**. Adults only on this occasion.

23rd June

Open garden day at The Leasowes, Cound. Enjoy the garden's wonderful roses, arboretum, ponds and stream. Admission £3 in aid of St Peter's Church, Cressage.

29th & 30th June

Shrewsbury Food Festival at The Quarry Park, Shrewsbury. Food, crafts, music and activities for all the family. Family tickets £35, adults £12.50 and children £5. More information at www.shrewsburyfoodfestival.co.uk.

30th June

Half acre farmhouse garden open to the public at Harnage Farm, Cound in support of St Peter's Church, Cound. Enjoy lovely views over the Severn valley, and a pleasant walk through fields to a small peaceful lake. Tickets £5. No dogs, please.

3rd July

Cup O' Joe offers an evening of folk and bluegrass at the Chalet Pavilion, Carding Mill Valley. Music begins at 7.00pm and ale, cider, wine, soft and hot drinks and snacks on sale throughout the evening. Tickets are £10 and can be purchased by calling **03442 491 895**.

4th July

A fast-paced and funny adaptation of Sense and Sensibility takes place against the backdrop of the Mansion at Attingham Park, performed by The Pantaloons. Tickets £15 for adults and £10 for children. Performance starts at 7.00pm. Book by calling **03442 491 895**.

7th July

Much Wenlock garden trail offers the chance to visit more than 10 gardens of varying size, from 11.00am to 5.00pm. Light refreshments available in Willow House garden. Tickets (£5) available from 'The Penny Farthing' shop in The Square, Much Wenlock. In support of Holy Trinity Church, Much Wenlock.

19th July

Pub Night at Pitchford Village Hall from 7.30pm onwards. All welcome for a pint and a natter, or a cheeky glass of wine and a laugh.

20th July to 26th July

Carding Mill Valley celebrates the 50th anniversary of the first moon landing with an exhibition, open from 10.00am to 5.00pm each day at the tea rooms. Entrance is free.

25th July

Evening guided tour at Pitchford Hall. Tickets are £25 per person, to include sparkling wine and canapes. Book by going to: www.historichouses.org/houses/house-listing/pitchford-hall.html

3rd August

Gangsta Granny comes to Attingham Park. Entertaining fun for all ages from 7 years upwards. This outdoor performance begins at 7.00pm. Tickets are £15 for adults and £10 for children, available by calling **03442 491 895**.

30th August

Whispering Woods is an exciting storytelling experience designed to give the audience a glimpse of the magic of woods and trees of Attingham Park. Includes aerial performances high in the treetops! Tickets are £15 for adults and £10 for children, available by calling **03442 491 895**. Performances at 2.30pm and 7.00pm.

NEWS FROM ACTON BURNELL WI

At the present moment, we are a quarter of the way through our 2019 programme. So far, we have had Sally Joyner to show us how to sign language for the deaf and inform us of workshops within Shrewsbury. This was running on from our contribution to the Signal Deaf Charity from some proceeds of our Christmas Fayre. The charity, although small, serves the needs of many deaf people in the area through projects both social and educational.

Cookery and food is very close to all WI ladies' hearts so it was quite fitting to have a demonstration of how to cook a meal for Valentine's Day. Caroline Morgan, a well known member of our community who has a catering business in Acton Burnell, gave us a salmon sausage with confetti vegetables and rosti potato followed by champagne and raspberry posset and - here comes the good thing - we all had a taste of it at supper time. Caroline is the daughter in law of one of our much loved members Sylvia who was taken from us much too early and who was a dear friend and staunch member to many in our WI.

March brought something entirely different: Travels with my Penguin, a talk given by Penny Turner, a lady in her late sixties, who rented out her house and

took a year's sabbatical to travel round the world with her travelling companion - a toy penguin - fulfilling her bucket list. Her journeys and adventures were exciting and inspiring in equal measure. I wonder how many of us secretly wish we were brave enough to do that.

The year carries on with lots more interesting things to look forward to. We have an antiques valuation night in July and possibly a repetition of a canal barge trip we did last year to much acclaim, and also a visit to a plant nursery followed by an pub supper somewhere along the way.

As mentioned previously, it is our centenary in Shropshire this year so lots of extra events have been put on via the County. Two notable ones are a camping sleep-over in September and a special afternoon complimentary tea for two out of each institute in July.

We, as a group, continue to enjoy our meetings and our opportunities to learn, socialise and in our own small way, try and put the world to rights. If you feel you would like to join us, to do something different, or if you are stuck in a rut or are new to the area, just give me a call. I'm sure we would be able to help.

Beth Davies (Secretary)

01694 731657 | beth.davies1@hotmail.com

A TALE OF TWO BROTHERS

There is no war memorial in Frodesley but two brothers from the area found their way on to the Much Wenlock church memorial because that is where they signed up. Over the last four years volunteers have researched the lives of those on the memorial and this information is now available in the church.

Samuel and John Bright were the sons of Samuel Bright, a shepherd born in Plaish, and Mary (nee Harvey) who was born in Shrewsbury. They met while both working at Rowe Farm in Frodesley, and were married in Church Stretton in 1893. They had three sons. Henry was the oldest. Next came Samuel, who was born in 1896 at Gretton and baptised in Longnor church on 10th May. At the time their parents were living at 36, Golding Cottages, Pitchford. In 1898 John (known as Jack) was born but unfortunately it was a difficult birth and Mary died. Samuel must have struggled to both work and bring up three young boys. In 1900 Samuel married Mary (nee Davies) and they went on to have three children: Mary, Edith and Edward.

When their second son Samuel was 15 he was working as a cowman for Headley James Brown at Acton Pigott farm. Samuel enlisted in the 1st Battalion Kings Shropshire Infantry, which was mobilized for war in August in 1914. He served entirely on the Western Front and was wounded on 24th September 1915, but returned to fight and was entitled to wear a wound strip. In January 1918 he was serving with 5th Army which bore the brunt of the German Spring offensive. Samuel was reported missing presumed killed on the Somme on 22nd March. He is remembered on the Arras Memorial bay 7.

Their youngest son, John, lived in Much Wenlock and joined the Montgomery Yeomanry, and later the Yorkshire Regiment, the Green Howards. They landed in France on 6th June 1916 and went onto the front line near Loos, and later were in action in the Battle of Ancre on the Somme. In 1917 he saw action during the German retreat to the Hindenburg line. In March 1918 he fought in the Battle of St Quentin. He died of wounds on 12th April 1918 at the age of 19, less than a month after Samuel. He is buried at La Kreule Military Cemetery.

Ron Repath, Frodesley

THE STAR SPANGLED SPITFIRES WHICH FLEW FROM ATCHAM

The legendary spitfire fighter is an iconic symbol of the Battle of Britain and the nation's defiance in the darkest hours of the war. In the days after the unexpected Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour, signalling the American call-to-arms to the war in Europe, they eagerly took up the loan of spitfires from Britain, rebadging them with the American star markings and sent into action. Specified airfields, one of which was Atcham, were in the vanguard of this operation and American airmen came there to train on how to fly them, some having only twenty hours' flying experience before being sent into battle. They, in turn, became members of the American fighter force alongside their own fighter, the thunderbolt T47, affectionately known by pilots as 'the Jug' because of its rotund shape.

On the 2nd February 1944, a thunderbolt from USAAF (Squadron 495) returning from an aerobatics training mission in poor weather, was approaching Atcham airfield and crashed in the Wibbley's field of Top Farm in Pitchford. The crash was due to a detonation in the cockpit due to the build-up of gases. The pilot, one Sergeant Charles Griffin, aged 24 from Seattle in America, died instantly. Older villagers who were lads at the time remember going down the field to view the crash site.

It was only when the internet came into regular use that the details were investigated further and our interest continued to be stimulated. Coincidentally, at the same time, on a visit to Yorkshire we made the acquaintance of a group of metal detectorists who travelled the country to visit sites of historical interest and we invited them to stay at the farm. Their findings were of great significance. Not only did they find musket shot, presumably from the Battle of Shrewsbury and a huge quantity of clay pipes, but also the altimeter of the doomed spitfire.

Charles Griffin's body is buried in the American Air Cemetery at Madingley near Cambridge. He is in good company; Glen Miller's body also lies here, as does John Kennedy senior, the uncle of the late John Kennedy, President of the USA.

The search for more information goes on ...

Beth Davies,
Local History Group

Footnote: If you have a story you would like to share which has been passed down from friends or family about life in Pitchford in days gone by, please get in touch with either Beth (01694 731657) or Daphne (01694 731357).



News From Pitchford Village Hall

Future of the Village Hall

A massive thank you goes out from the Village Hall Committee to our local residents who stepped up in great numbers to our request for opinions regarding the future of the Hall. 25% of all households in the larger parish responded to the questionnaire sent out with the last edition of the newsletter which was very encouraging.

We mentioned that the reason for the request for opinions about how you regard the facility is that the Hall is suffering significant problems over and above normal maintenance requirements and the Committee needed to know whether to concentrate on a 'sticking plaster' approach to keeping it going as best we can, or whether to direct our energy and funds towards a replacement Hall. If it was not to be replaced and it then had to close due to its various weaknesses, over 75% of you said you would miss the Hall which we take to mean we need to ensure as far as we can, that a facility of this type continues to exist for the people of the parish.

84% of respondents said they used the Hall in some form or another at least twice a year and many people attended much more than that. However, its unwelcoming state and in particular, its poor heating in the colder months, were putting you off using it more. This was especially the case for people who would want to book an event but were put off from doing so.

If we were to be in the fortunate position to build a new hall, then the overwhelming majority said that a more modern building of about the same size but with greater internal flexibility in terms of splitting the main room into smaller ones was the best way forward. Over 75% stated that they would want any new hall to be sited on its current location in Pitchford including 74% of people living in Acton Burnell, along with 27% of Frodesley residents and 75% of Ruckley and Langley respondents. 97% of Pitchford replies understandably wanted any new facility in Pitchford.

Based on this evidence, we think it can be assumed that we have a good mandate to look into the possibility of a replacement facility but clearly, much depends on the availability of the current site well into the future and of course,

the funds to build one. We are, obviously, at the very start of the process and at this stage no outcome is guaranteed. 13 individuals mentioned that they would be happy to help within a 'Steering Group' when we are in a position to move forward but, while some of you have given me your contact details via email as requested, some of you have not done so yet. If you are still interested in helping and have a particular skill which you think would be useful to us, then please do contact me at jbglover@outlook.com. Thank you also to the 41% of you who said you would be open to helping run any extra facilities in a new Hall if it were to become a reality. We will keep you informed but thank you again for taking the time and the effort to respond to the four pages of interrogation you were happy to complete. We do feel supported and in turn, we will do our best to continue to support the only all-inclusive community facility in our area!

Events

Pub nights continue every third Friday in the month and are well attended. The last one saw the purchase of the onions ready for the Grand Onion Weigh-in which will probably be at September's pub night. If you keep horses and notice a decrease in the amount of manure produced, don't call the vet – it's just overly enthusiastic competition entries trying their hardest to knock Alan Hotchkiss off his winner's podium from last year!

Defibrillator

The third defibrillator from the four promised has now been installed to the left of the main entrance at the Village Hall in Pitchford. We hope it won't be needed, but good to know it's there just in case.

In the meantime, please do continue to support the Hall and if anyone is thinking of hiring the venue for a private (or even public!) function, please contact:

Mike Price: price622@btinternet.com | 07740 067955
or Christine Jones: csjay@btinternet.com | 07538 744807.
Costs are very cheap!!

John Glover

THE 'PITCHFORD LAKE'

PERMANENT PUDDLE BLOCKING THE BRIDLEWAY FROM PITCHFORD TO STOCKBATCH

The depression in the bridleway leading from Pitchford westwards to Stockbatch and beyond is, as many Pitchford residents will know, virtually permanently flooded to the degree that it effectively blocks its use for many months in the year except after a long drought or when it is frozen. This forces a significant number of people back onto the road, or others coming from the west (possibly from the holiday cottages at Stockbatch, The Granary or Windy Mundy) to turn around. Others who try to brave the mire occasionally fall in (yes, really!), lose their shoes or at the very least get soaking muddy feet as the water floods over their ankles into their shoes. This makes the only public footpath from Pitchford virtually unusable.

Action will only be considered if there are enough complaints sent to the Outdoor Recreation Department at SCC. Should you wish to use this path but are prevented from doing so by the blockage, then please email outdoor.recreation@shropshire.gov.uk directly quoting the number of the bridleway which is 'BW0430/33/3 Pitchford towards Stockbatch'.





Looking towards Caer Caradoc from the Bowdler Hills

Local Strolls: *Caer Caradoc and the Bowdler Hills*

Right. It's spring. Days are longer and things are looking up with the summer ahead. Time for a proper stroll! Having said that, it is only about 5 miles long but it does involve a couple of peaks and about 1500 feet of accumulated ascent, so a bit of a workout.

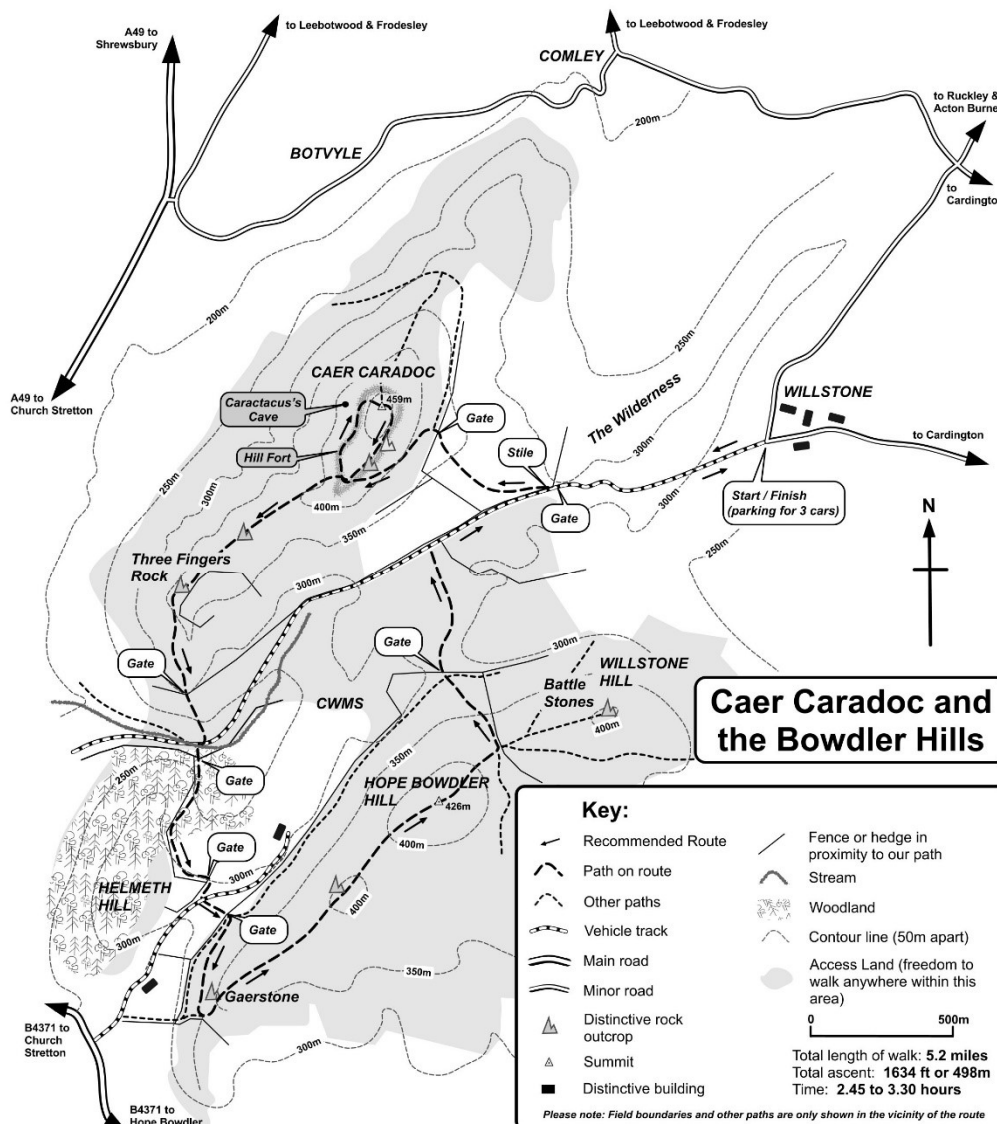
Caer Caradoc is an iconic hill to the south of our 'patch', just outside Church Stretton. Formed from lava and ash from volcanoes during the late Pre-Cambrian when the slab of crust our part of Shropshire sits on was somewhere near where the coast of Antarctica is now, it

forms a very distinctive feature to the east of the Stretton Fault. Lesser known are the Bowdler Hills further south and east. Further away from main roads and with a more rounded and less distinctive shape, you will find fewer folk treading their tops despite it being a wonderfully airy place to be.

While there are several starting points for Caer Caradoc itself, the advantage of starting at Willstone is that you start higher up; you are more likely to park your car; you can get there without queueing to get onto the A49; it makes the Bowdler hills more accessible and the 'very free range eggs' from Willstone Farm are lovely!

Walking up the wide track from the corner at Willstone, you eventually go through a gate and just beyond is an angled gate on your right leading from the track and into a field which we need to enter. The path here is indistinct, but if you parallel the hedge on your left

passing around a small steep rise on your right, you get into the main part of the field from where you head directly up the gentle slope towards the hill. A kissing gate at the top leads you onto the hill proper and assuming you don't want to take the 'directissimo' route up the east face in front of you, the gently sloping path to the left will angle you up the hillside. This path is in fact an engineered causeway which was used to give access to the hillfort on the summit. It brings you up to the southern end of these fortifications through an obvious 'gateway' into the fort. This hillfort on the top is superb. Dating from the mid Iron age some 600 years before the Romans came, it actually makes it to No. 10 on the Countryfile best British Hillforts list and considering some of them, this is a fantastic accolade but also richly deserved! At least two parallel ramparts and associated ditches circle the summit of the hill and contains, amongst other



things, hut circles, granaries and even a temple! There are several ways to the top from here but the nicest cuts across to a distinct gap in the rampart on the far side of the plateau from where a path takes you to the right along the top of the inner rampart, with a stunning view of the Stretton Valley and the Long Mynd. Just beyond a small pond, there is a small track to the right which takes you right onto the summit itself. Having said that, if you fancy a bit of an explore, there are a few crags lower down to your left and under one of the less rocky and distinctive bulges is a small cave.

Caractacus was Welsh Celtic chieftain who, when the Romans reinvaded Britain in AD43, saw it as part of his job title to give them some 'stick'. Eight years later, he made a final stand somewhere on our hill and had his HQ in the cave. He was captured while hiding in the cave, taken to Rome, tortured and generally given a hard time. However, he took his 'lot' with bravery and in the end, the Romans were so impressed, they forgave him allowing him to live out his life in sunny Rome. The trouble is, the other Caer Caradoc near Clun has a similar claim. It then transpires that several other locations between Hereford and Llangollen also reckon this all happened near them! However, the name Caradoc does come from 'Caradog' which was an alternative name for Caractacus which narrows it down to two sites, so who knows! Assuming you find the cave, you won't need your headtorch, electron ladders or your speleological fashion wear as it's only about four metres long!



The summit is superb. Fantastic views of the Lawley and our patch to the north, and then clockwise, the Wrekin, the Clees, the Black Mountains, the Brecon Beacons, central Wales, the Stretton Hills and Shrewsbury make this special. Heading to the east for a few yards, there is a small pond which was the water source for the good folk of the Iron Age who lived in this necessarily defensive site making it a bit more attractive than many of the other hillforts in the area.

Walk away from the summit back along the eastern rampart, towards the sun. This will let you see some of the interesting crags on the east side of the hill. You will soon end up where you first reached the plateau and

you need to head back to the cut in the rampart on the west but this time head down the rough track towards the southern ridge of the hill. In a little while you will come across a small rocky outcrop which you can by pass or play at Edmund Hillary and scramble over it, after which you reach a more substantial outcrop called "Three Fingers Rock", so called as that is exactly what it looks like when down in Church Stretton. This hard rock is called tuff and was laid down horizontally from ash thrown out in a series of explosive eruptions, hardened when crushed and then bent upwards through 90° becoming vertical where it breaks the surface.

The clear path moves on beyond the rocks and veers slightly to the left and heads down the hill via a small kissing gate to a good farm track in the valley bottom. The tracks here become a network, but follow the main one (which is a little loose) and you will hit the vehicle track via a bit of boggy ground. Turn right, cross the ford and immediately turn left off the track and up a small path. The woods of Helmeth Hill are in front of you. You pass through another gate and onto a gently rising track into the woods taking care not to go through a side gate to a track coming from the right, which would take you up Helmeth Hill itself.

You pop out onto a small col with Helmeth to your right and the Bowdler Hills to your left. Cross the farm track and head up towards the hillside keeping the field fence to your right. Go through the gate and onto the rough 'fell' leaving the improved field behind. A number of paths meet here, but if you go straight up the hill for a few feet, you will hit the upper path where you turn right. This gently climbs the hill, gradually taking you away from the trees on your right until you reach the Gaerstone – a very distinctive outcrop at the southern end of the line of hills. Circle round this keeping it to your left (or over it if you still want to scramble) and then head up the good track up the ridge of the hill towards a rounded (false) summit.

This is a really pleasant amble. The path is clean and green and sucks you up the hill. It's made all the more pleasant by the good views all around. Eventually, you reach the summit of Bowdler Hill. From here you can see the full length of Wenlock Edge clear to the east.

Wander down from this keeping north until you reach a deep col with Willstone Hill (and Battle Stone – another rocky outcrop) in front of you. Don't go through the gate but do turn left and track down the hill. Just beyond a slightly soggy bit, you pass through a gate into improved land and follow the path walking towards Caer Caradoc until you reach a small clump of trees and that same good farm track by you first started up. Turn right and head down to your car at Willstone.

Right. Choices. Eggs for a booty later or down to Cardington and the pub where a beer would be well earned!!

John Glover

What's that bug: Solitary Bees

Solitary bees belong to the order Hymenoptera and undergo complete metamorphosis, their life cycle goes from egg, larva, pupa to imago just like wasps, ants and other type of bees.

There are over two hundred species of solitary bees in the UK, outdoing the number of bumblebees or honeybees. As the name suggests, solitary bees don't live in colonies containing a queen but can live in close proximity to each other.

Both males and females emerge around March and can be found up to about October, exact timings are species specific and influenced by weather conditions. Mating starts after they emerge, the males die soon after and females start a brood. Usually, the females look for a nesting place, lay the eggs and provide pollen for the larvae without having a queen or workers to help. They live between four to eight weeks so you're likely to encounter different females throughout the year.

What are solitary bees?

Solitary bees can be divided into three groups: the mining bees, the leaf cutter bees and the mason bees. Mining bees usually make holes in the ground or walls, enjoying mostly areas of bare ground or with short grass. The leaf-cutter and mason bees use tube holes,

hollow plant stems or existing holes in wood or masonry cavities for their nests. These bees will protect their eggs and larvae by building brood cell walls containing pollen and sealing their nests with leaves or mud respectively.

Are solitary bees important?

Pollinator insects play an essential role in food production. As such, solitary bees being part of this group offer valuable pollinating services to crops and also mediate seed production in garden plants.

Solitary bees are very efficient pollinators, by carrying dry pollen using their hind legs and/or abdomen they can easily spread it from flower to flower whilst foraging.

How can they be spotted?

Look for small volcano shaped holes (less than a penny in diameter) on your lawn or flower beds as you could have *Andrena haemorrhoa* (mining bee) living in it.

Osmia bicornis (red mason bee) is a common inhabitant of bee hotels. Other *Osmia* species might be found too, such as *Osmia caerulea* (blue mason bee) and *Osmia leaiana* (orange-vented mason bee). Although, leaf-cutter bees and solitary wasps might also take up residency.

What can be done to help?

Provide a continuous supply of nectar and pollen from the period of March into October by sowing a variety of pollinator friendly plants. Nectar is a sugar rich drink providing a source of energy essential for flight. The protein packed pollen supports ovary formation and egg development, and it's the food source for developing larvae. The females of solitary bees collect dry pollen with their hind legs and/or abdomen and pack their egg filled nest chambers with it.

Building bee hotels can be great fun and a way of providing a home to the wonderful solitary bees. Aim to provide tunnels of varying diameters to attract different species. More information on how to build yours can be found here: www.foxleas.com/make-a-bee-hotel.asp

Ana Natalio and Nick Antill

