

The Redlake



"Keeping Watch high above the Redlake"
(photo: Wayne Davies - see his farming column overleaf)

Welcome to the spring 2026 edition of the Redlake newsletter

Welcome to the spring 2026 Redlake! With so much taking place at present, we've again extended to an eight-page issue. We hope you enjoy it but suggestions for improvements are always welcome by contacting us at Redlakenewsletter@icloud.com We'd also like to use this opportunity to thank the people who deliver the newsletter by hand: Jemima Jameson, Jane Kent, Mark and Karen Limbrick, George Roberts and Janet Tudor. In addition to the hand-delivered copies, we're now increasing circulation to people further afield by building up our email distribution list.

So if you know anyone who would like to receive the Redlake that way, ask them to let us know their email address. Friends, relatives and former residents often like to keep in touch with events in the valley and it's always good to see new faces when there's something on in the village hall.

The Redlake Editorial Team
(Patrick Cosgrove, Bob James & Sarah Jameson)

Farmer Column: Wayne Davies

By the time you are reading this in May, lambing for most farmers will be all but finished, except perhaps for a few stragglers still waiting to lamb running around otherwise empty sheds. I think it's fair to say that lambing 2026 hasn't broken any records. We had less lambs to start with, due to a lower scanning than usual after the dry summer and have still had a fair share of the usual problems which has resulted in less lambs overall.

However the ones that have made it to the field seem to be mostly growing well so you have to remind yourself that it's not all bad. You probably spend 80% of your time fiddling around with 20% of the problem lambs, so in turn it can be quite easy to convince yourself that there are more problems than there actually are (that's what I tell myself anyway!).

Lambing

Without trying to sound too dramatic, lambing on any scale can be quite a test of emotional resilience...! There is life, and death (hopefully more of the former than the latter), there are bad days when everything seems to be a problem, and good days when things seem to be going to plan, and these can change from one to the other very quickly, often for reasons completely beyond your control. There are ewes that hate their own lambs, and there are ewes that steal everyone else's lambs. There are ewes with no milk, and there are lambs that refuse to suck. There are lambs being born in every position imaginable, head first no legs, legs first no head, tail first, back legs first (amongst others!) which all require assistance, and those which are born in a waterbag and if you're not there that second to break it can suffocate very quickly. Anyway, here I am doing it again focusing on the negatives... there are of course also those ewes that lamb themselves, are good mothers, have plenty of milk and are out on the field in a day or two!! (and to be fair, unless you're very unlucky that is hopefully the vast majority, even if it doesn't seem like it at the time!).

Spring calving

Many farmers will also have been calving during the spring, sometimes alongside lambing (...well if you have to get up to check the sheep, you might as well also check the cows!). Unlike lambing, calving can happen all year round, with most beef suckler cows tending to group calvings in either the autumn or spring. Spring calving means cows and their calves can hopefully be turned out on to fresh spring pastures, the cheapest way to feed them.

Fertiliser and food security

There are lots of other jobs that need doing on the farm as the spring gets going, with fertilising crops and grassland, weed control (they always seem to grow quicker than the grass!) and spring sowing of various crops. This year, along with diesel, fertiliser prices are much higher than they should be which is causing concern for farmers and focusing minds on what, where and how much to put down. Food security is not just about growing food in this country but also having control of the inputs needed to grow it.

Nitrogen (N) fertiliser is the most important in the spring to boost yields of all crops and it is made from natural gas so is heavily linked to energy prices. Since most is now imported (60% according to the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board or AHDB) makes us even more vulnerable to price shocks and supply issues. There are ways farming can reduce reliance on artificial N fertiliser, such as using legumes like clovers in rotations and on grassland which fix nitrogen from the air. Manures also contain varying levels of N and good soil health allows plants to take up and use N (and all nutrients) more efficiently.

Many farmers are doing all of this, and it's definitely part of the equation, but the fact remains that most high yielding modern crop varieties are bred to require a boost of nitrogen in the spring and without it they would not be economically viable to grow, so until something changes with this, a secure supply of fertiliser is very important for food production.

Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI): The new offer for 2026

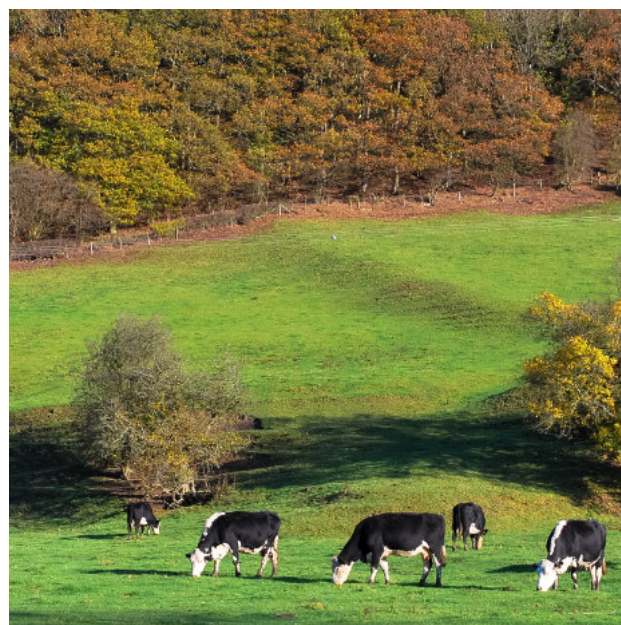
Local farmer information meetings

James Turner will talk about the new SFI deal and how to build a good agreement for your farm.

Doors open 6.30, talks start at 7pm at following locations:

- Thursday 30 April, Clun Memorial Hall (unfortunately probably before this newsletter is distributed)
- Wednesday 6 May: Norbury Village Hall
- Thursday 14 May: Cleobury North Village Hall
- Thursday 21 May: Leebotwood Village Hall

Just turn up. Enquiries to Jenny Wakeman at jenny.wakeman@shropshire.gov.uk or 01743 253 117



Cattle grazing beneath Brineddin Wood (c) Sarah Jameson

Clun Town Council News



Monika Jones (above) has taken over from Ryan Davies at Clun Town Council with Chapel Lawn, with Rowena Bowles appointed as her deputy. To the best of anyone's knowledge, Monika is the first female Mayor of Clun (though not the first female chair; that was Joyce Morris, of the Hurst, Clun).

Monika says "I am incredibly proud to serve my local community and to take on this role. It feels like a real privilege to represent Clun and Chapel Lawn, and to build on the work of those who have come before me. My focus as mayor will be on supporting our community, celebrating what makes Clun special, and working collaboratively with councillors, residents, and local organisations". So, many congratulations from the Redlake Newsletter to Monika and, of course, thanks to Ryan for his work on behalf of the community in recent years.

Chapel Lawn is, of course, part of Clun Parish and again has no representative on the Town Council. Does this matter? Some might say not a bit as nothing much happens here other than one of the three streetlights in the village occasionally needing repair. Others might say it does because without representation, how will our voices be heard when there's an issue on which the Town Council has a voice, such as a planning matter? There's also the argument that we pay an annual precept of a few thousand pounds to the Town Council, but we have no voice to argue for the money to benefit our community. A fourth opinion is that there could even be the case for the Chapel Lawn Ward (i.e the Redlake Valley from the boundary with Bucknell to Treverward) to strike it out alone and, like nearby Stowe, apply to become a 'Parish Meeting', the lowest tier of local government for places with fewer than 200 residents. However, in the unlikely event of that happening, it represents a lot of work for not much money and maybe not much to do with it. In the meantime, Town Council matters are now regularly updated on its new website (Cluntowncouncil.gov.uk) and the notice board at the end of St. Mary's Church wall, and any public-spirited individual interested in becoming a councillor should **email the clerk at clerk@cluntowncouncil.gov.uk**

Town Council to meet in Chapel Lawn in July

Clun Town Council with Chapel Lawn will hold the July meeting in the Redlake Valley Village Hall, Chapel Lawn at 7.30pm on Tuesday 7 July.

Before then, there is the Community Meeting for Clun on Sunday 10 May at 2.00 pm in the Memorial Hall. This is when Clun and Chapel Lawn residents hear a summary of the Council's work in the last year, and for local organisations to bring along a display or other information of their recent activities to share with residents.

See cluntowncouncil.gov.uk

News in Brief

Clun Museum

The museum now has a Facebook page which is updated every Thursday.

Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LRNS) Maps

In the winter Redlake there was concern expressed over the accuracy of some of the maps produced. The LRNS team promised us an update of ongoing discussions with landowners, and we are currently awaiting this.

Community Benefit Society news

Scheduled work parties at the quillies were badly disrupted by the constant wet weather, but a slightly kinder March enabled volunteers to make up for lost time. The main job was to cut up and clear away debris from trees that had fallen across the public footpath, some of which was used to create dead hedges, and the remainder efficiently turned into logs and wood chipping by tree surgeon Nicky Tranter of Five Turnings, that will now be sold in aid of Society funds.



Community Well-being Outreach

Shropshire Council's Community Wellbeing Outreach Team (CWOT), Public Health, has launched the WOW (Winter Outreach Wellbeing) Project, a mobile hub initiative designed to bring health, wellbeing and practical support directly to Shropshire's most rural and isolated communities. CWOT will deploy their mobile hub van across various remote villages and hamlets to provide residents with onsite access to practical advice, health promotion and wellbeing services as part of the WOW project. Residents will be able to access support and signposting for cost-of-living and energy guidance, food security, mini health checks, vaccination and screening information, lifestyle and smoking cessation advice, mental health support and more. A key part of the project is to listen to local people; gather insight on the challenges they face and feed that intelligence back into place-based planning so that services better reflect community need for now and in the future. WOW's vision is to enhance the health and wellbeing of Shropshire's most underserved and isolated communities by facilitating connection and support through comprehensive mobile outreach. Its main aims are to build relationships and trust with rural residents, reduce barriers to information and services, strengthen community connections and integration and address rural health inequalities and disparities. The project will be delivered through partnership working between Shropshire Council, health services, charities, parish councils and many others to ensure a coordinated local response and to maximise the range of support available at each hub visit.



After the first visit to Chapel Lawn, WOW Project Officer for South Shropshire, Diane Breeze said, "It was such a pleasure to visit and meet three members of the community and great to have been able to offer some health checks and signposting. I look forward to my next visit in the early summer. Let me know if you will be holding any events that health and wellbeing can piggy-back on to."

Diane can be contacted by email at communityoutreach@shropshire.gov.uk

Pop Quiz

On 28 March in the village hall, the twenty-five strong Presteigne Pop Choir livened up a rainy afternoon for over fifty people with renditions of past hits. The fourteen songs performed were: Time after Time (Cyndi Lauper), Walk on By (Dionne Warwick), Goodbye Yellow Brick Road (Elton John), Hotel California (Eagles), How Deep is Your Love? (Bee Gees), You Got It (Roy Orbison), Uptown Girl (Billy Joel), The Promise (Tracy Chapman), The Greatest Day (Take That), Can't Help Falling in Love (Elvis Presley), Let it Go (Lo Soothie), Like a Prayer (Madonna), The Night (Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons), Mister Blue Sky (ELO/Jeff Lynne). The home-made cakes afterwards were pretty good as well. No prizes, but try your hand at putting a date to each of the songs: answers on back page.



Crumbs Review

On 18 April, Chapel Lawn Village Hall, was treated to a hilarious performance of Badapple Theatre Company's "Crumbs", a one-woman show starring Harrogate actress Ellen Carnezza. It featured baking on stage for the audience to taste as the story of former TV baking show host Petronella Parfait unfolded. Excellent reviews of her acting and comic talent plus unlimited enthusiastic energy had already raised the audience's expectations, and they were not disappointed. Touring nationally, Crumbs combined comedy, song and original music, placing theatre at the heart of our rural community life.

Alex Turner
Village Hall Arts Alive Coordinator

Food & drink carton recycling

From Monday 13 April you can recycle food and liquid cartons (called TetraPak) in your purple-lidded bin (or boxes). Keep everything loose (no bags please). Cartons can include: Milk (longlife/oat/almond/soy), juice & smoothy cartons, protein shake cartons, soup, stock & broth cartons and sauce cartons.

You can still recycle in your purple-lidded boxes: plastic bottles, tubs and trays/tins & cans/glass bottles and jars and tin foil crunched into a ball.

Butty Van on BBC

Andy Martindale of BBC Hereford and Worcester recently reported on the Butty Van. saying, 'The Butty Van provides lunches to farmers across Herefordshire, Shropshire and Warwickshire, rocking up at a barn and allowing agricultural workers to meet up and chat over a sarnie or several. Volunteers say that the van, which travels through each county approximately once a month, allows farmers to speak to others in a similar walk of life, when they might not otherwise get the chance to in an industry where lone working can be the norm.

To listen to the two-minute report from Meadow End Farm at Acton near Bishops Castle, type '**BBC Sounds Butty Van**' into a search engine.



May's Butty Van Wednesday 13 May, Clunton

May's Butty Van is being hosted by Carol and Jonathan Griffiths on Weds 13 May at Cwm Bydd Farm, Clunton, SY7 0QH from 10.30 until 12.00. Sausage/bacon butties, tea/coffee and cake will be available.

We are looking forward to seeing you again after a busy lambing season.

**Janet Tudor: jetstream4000@gmail.com
or 01547 520293**

Art workshop in Village Hall Wednesday 13 May, 10am to 3pm

Finding inspiration from natural forms in the hedgerows and local landscape, artist Andrew Howe will demonstrate how to make folded artist books using simple drawings and collage. The day includes a walk to Brineddin Wood to see the work the RVCBS has been doing there. Materials provided. No previous skills or art experience required. Bring your own lunch. We will provide tea/coffee/biscuits. The free workshop is run by CPRE Shropshire as part of their Hedgerow Heroes project. **Book your place by Monday 4 May latest, via Sarah on 01547 528546 or admin@cpreshropshire.org.uk**



Highland Challenge comes to the Redlake

In June 2025, organised by volunteers from Ludlow Cycling Club, and registered with Cycling UK, 350 riders entered the 34th Danny Mason Highland Challenge and enjoyed a great day out. This year, on Sunday 14 June, the route of approximately 68 hilly miles will take in the Redlake Valley with a refreshment break at the village hall.

It isn't a race – no timings or numbers – how riders approach it is up to them. It normally attracts both young, fast club riders and older, once-a-year tourers – plus all comers in between! With around 1,650m (5,400ft) of climbing and some challenging rural lanes, to complete it needs strength and stamina. There are toilets and refreshments at the start and at three refreshment stops en-route. After costs, all proceeds from the event go to Shropshire Wildlife Trust for whom the Challenge has raised over £20,000 over the last five years. **More details at www.shropshirehighlandchallenge.co.uk**

Bob's Word Corner

Bob's word in the Winter issue was *gallus* which Bob understands to mean mischievous or naughty and can apply to animals or people. Susan Birdseye emailed in to say that her husband's grandfather in Cheshire used the word to describe a person who was always cocksure to the point of arrogance. Well, that's not entirely different to Bob's version, and interesting given that *Gallus* is the scientific name for a chicken. The Shropshire Word Book of 1879 has *gallows*, pronounced *galus*, also meaning naughty, and suggests its derivation is from Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost* in which Cupid is described as *gallows*, meaning a rascally wretched rogue fit for the gallows, i.e. a 'gallows bird'. Bob's word (or phrase) for this issue for you is: **'Top and Butter'**. **Let us know what you think it means by emailing Redlakenewsletter@icloud.com**

60th Wedding Anniversary



Andrew Gibbs and Christine Wade met at a Christmas party organised by parents of mutual friends. Chris spotted an open topped sports car when she arrived (a Triumph TR3) and wondered who it belonged to - Andrew of course! They were engaged four months later. Their wedding was on 12 March 1966. They honeymooned in Winchester and St Maws, Cornwall. North Cheam, Surrey was their first home.

Chris worked in Electrophysiology at Belmont Hospital, Sutton. In those days there were a lot of soldiers who had suffered in the war and were being treated there for shell shock.

Andrew and his family lived with his grandfather, who was a crafting blacksmith. His family had been farriers. Andrew worked on a farm after leaving school. He then became an architectural sales rep for an asbestos cement company in London. He soon began to climb the ladder into management, working for a security guarding company most of his career.

Having enjoyed holidays in the Welsh borders, Andrew and Chris looked to retire there. They discovered Llanfair Waterdine in 1998 and moved with Pop, Chris' father who was 103 and their rescued Alsations, Joey and Poppy. Andrew was still working in the south, returning home at weekends, until retirement in 2000. They joined Llanfair Church, Llanfair Singers and Chris the WI. Chris first saw their future home in Chapel Lawn (Rock Cottage, Pentre) when picking up from Chapel Lawn on a coach trip to Llandudno! The couple moved into the cottage in 2002. Although Andrew and Chris left the valley for Knighton in 2015, they remain regular contributing members of the church, Andrew being our Deanery representative on the Parochial Parish Council.

Andrew and Chris joined St Mary's church straight away. Andrew became church warden alongside James Middleton. Between them they masterminded the church restoration project in the 2010s. Chris met Pat Hancock at Knighton hospital, when Pop had a fall, becoming firm friends.

Secrets of a happy marriage: Take it in turns to be boss. Have integrity. Never let anyone down. Have a sense of humour and joke a lot.



Illustration: Margaret Grubb

A local christening

Further to the mention in Church News below, Tom and Leila Whitton have emailed to ask if we could pass on how grateful they are to everyone who came and especially to everyone who helped out. There were so many people helping; it felt like a real community effort.

Pictured below are the Godparents. For Kestrel, Sarah Hyatt, Karen Limbrick and Adam Howard-Dobson. For Beatrix, Denise Gregory, Di Cosgrove and Badgr El Shaboury.



Dark Skies Movement

Bright light, just like excess sound, smoke, or sewage, is a pollutant that can harm our health, our wildlife and our pockets. Yet there are ways of turning the lights down without jeopardising safety or security which save money by reducing costs. This was the message that a speaker from Presteigne Dark Skies brought to Clun Memorial Hall on Tuesday 14 April to initiate a process of consultation by the Town Council on the merits of switching to more environmentally friendly lighting in Clun and Chapel Lawn.

Those in attendance learned that Wales is leading the UK on this approach, with Presteigne very much in the vanguard in 2024 as the first International Dark Skies Community in England and Wales, and with many other places in Wales hard on its heels. In Presteigne, the sky is now measurably four times darker and the stars more visible and, admittedly anecdotally, so far people walking the streets actually feel safer in less harsh lighting that creates fewer dark recesses. Clun Town Council will place more information on the consultation process on its new website and Chapel Lawn will be included in that.

Inevitably, the issue of rural crime was raised by members of the audience, but it seems that targeted, smart lighting can even improve security without causing light pollution. The Redlake will follow and report on this initiative.

Patrick Cosgrove

Flood event report

Increased flood risk from climate change is troubling many of us who live in river valleys in remote parts of the country. So it was no surprise that the Chapel Lawn Village Hall car park was more than full on 10 April with people keen to attend the workshop on Local Flood Resilience fronted by Namrata Bhattacharya Mis of Chester University. As part of the River Severn Partnership, Chester University is managing community alert systems in smaller catchment areas. After hearing how Bucknell residents cope with flood problems, the audience began to explore the problems of trying to find out what is happening before, during and after a flood event. There was a lot of anxiety: things seemed to depend on individual initiative and informal routes in an unsatisfactory way.

A report from an experienced flood group in South Herefordshire reinforced these concerns but also demonstrated how continuous monitoring of river flow and rainfall could create a local warning system. Namrata Bhattacharya Mis then gave an update on the river monitoring devices recently installed in the River Redlake. Two are working well but the third has some teething problems and the question of linking them together and providing public access has yet to be solved. Hopefully, it will not be long before there is a publicly available 'dashboard' providing continuous information about the likelihood of local flooding.

The meeting was hosted by the village hall and the WI who, together, laid on a bar and refreshments.

Anthony Morgan

NFU Award for James!



Pictured is James Middleton receiving the G.E. Meddins Cup from Stuart Anderson MP at the Clun Forest NFU Annual Dinner held at the Lion, Leintwardine in January this year. This was for winning the Branch Annual Grassland Competition with a new grass seeds ley of Ryegrass, Timothy and White Clover at Bryncalled. Rankin Lewis of Little Penywern said that in his time in the NFU he had tried to win it but was always beaten by earlier and more fertile farms in the Clun and Craven arms areas. The cup was presented in 1965, and the closest it has come to Chapel Lawn was when it was won by Lady Ripley, Heath Farm, Bedstone in 1971. With the changing weather patterns now sometimes favouring our lighter, free-draining soils, Richard Thomas, Llanhowell two years ago won one of the cereal cups for an excellent crop of spring barley.

Farming in the Shropshire Hills - meet the farmer

Saturday 6 June, 10.30-12.30, Chapel Lawn

Join farmer, James Middleton and Helen Oliver and Cath Landles from the Shropshire Hills National Landscape team on a farm walk to find out about farming in the Shropshire Hills. Free event aimed at non farmers. Small donation appreciated for tea/cake. Sorry no dogs.

Book your place via Cath Landles:

cath.landles@shropshire.gov.uk or 01743 254 742





Photo: Janet Tudor

Church News

Our traditional Good Friday children's activities took place again on Friday 3 April from 2pm in the village hall and church. Many parents, grandparents and carers turned up with their children eagerly expecting a range of hands-on activities.

Easter Gardens

We put together two large Easter gardens out of compost, moss, gravel, and small rooted primroses and forget-me-nots, inside old dustbin lids. These were to decorate the church. Christine offered 'do it yourself' hot cross buns, though she had also been busy the day before making trays of buns to ensure there were enough to go round! We hosted over 30 children and 20 adults. Children also made Easter baskets with card and stickers and filled with eggs, with help from members of the Davies family.

Egg Hunt

Outdoors, there was the ever popular egg hunt in the church yard where over 50 eggs had been hidden. The weather was kind with no rain hampering proceedings. Inside the church we had an Easter storytelling session before hot cross buns were eaten outside on the grass. Exhausted happy children left for home replete.

Easter Sunday Service

Our Easter Sunday service was led by Revd. John Daniels. It was also a joy to hold a Christening for the Whitton family. The sun shone as Tom and Leila's two daughters willingly accepted the sign of the cross on their foreheads, witnessed by godparents, family and friends together with members of the church. All were invited to a sumptuous lunch in the village hall afterwards.

Illustration: Margaret Grubb



Chapel Lawn WI

theWI
INSPIRING WOMEN

We meet in the Village Hall on the second Tuesday of the month. We are a small, very friendly group and would love to welcome you.

If you are interested in joining, your first three meeting will be free of charge. **Contact Christine Rogers 01547 530258 / 07780 728812 christine@techsyst.co.uk**

Tuesday 12 May, 7pm

A talk by a representative from Shropshire Domestic Abuse Service.

Tuesday 9 June

Summer Outing

Tuesday 14 July, 7pm

Folk duo Steve and Julie Wigley sing and tell the stories behind the songs



Chapel Lawn Mailing List

To get regular, up-to-date information about events coming up in Chapel Lawn, please **contact Christine to go on the mailing list: christine@techsyst.co.uk**

Chapel Lawn Village Hall Annual Meeting, Wednesday 26 May, 8.00pm

A warm invitation to residents of Chapel Lawn and Obbley. Come and hear what was achieved in the past year such as live entertainment, pub nights, popular films such as *The Ballad of Wallis Island* and *The Choral*, and many private bookings. Have your say about plans for the future. Enjoy a drink and nibbles on the house!

Contact Di Cosgrove 01547 530347 or deedee151@hotmail.com

Contributions for the Summer newsletter should be sent to the Editors at redlakenewsletter@icloud.com by Friday 10 July.

A digital archive of past issues of the Redlake newsletter going back to 2007 is now available to read/download on the Village Hall website where there is also a useful what's on page:

Go to: chapel-lawn.co.uk/the-redlakes

Answers to Pop Quiz

1984, 1964, 1973, 1976, 1977, 1989*, 1983, 1995, 2008, 1961, 2025, 1989, 1972, 1977

* Released posthumously a year after Roy Orbison's death

The Redlake is funded by Redlake Valley Hall Funds and neither the Hall committee nor the editors can accept responsibility for any opinions expressed by contributors in these pages. The editorial team reserves the right to edit contributions as it believes appropriate.