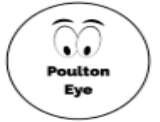


# THE POULTON EYE



COMMUNITY - NEWS - INFORMATION



## Welcome to the March 2026 edition of the Poulton Eye

As we step into March, there's a real sense that spring is just around the corner. The snowdrops are fading just as daffodils are beginning to brighten verges, while the fields are slowly turning from muddy brown to fresh green. After a long, damp winter, it's a welcome change.

The lighter evenings are an additional joy. Whether you're walking the dog, out in the garden, doing the school run or popping to the shop, it's lovely to do so in daylight once again.

With spring approaching, the gardening club is restarting, full of plans for seed swaps and planning summer planting schemes. Robin Spiller is organising the annual Village Tidy Up (Saturday 14th March), while Books and Biccies and The Pantry at the village hall continue to be a warm and welcome gathering point for neighbours old and new. If you've been thinking about getting more involved, now is a perfect time. Volunteering a little time - whether helping at events, supporting the church, or joining the litter-pick team - makes a real difference and keeps our village thriving.

We hope that you will find something to enjoy in these pages. If you have news to share - celebrations, achievements, or community notices - please send them in for next month's edition. Our monthly deadline is 15th of each month.

Rosie and Lizzy - [poultoneye@gmail.com](mailto:poultoneye@gmail.com)

### In this month's Edition:

**Mothering Sunday or  
Mother's Day?**

**Down on the Farm**

**"And The Doubts Began To  
Grow" - a short story by  
Pam Varey**

**Fancy learning more about  
Pigeons?**

**Spring has sprung in the  
Garden**

**Protecting Against Cyber  
Crime and Fraud**

# CHURCH NEWS

## Lent: What Happens When We Stop?

Last month we were at the beginning of Lent. Pancake Day, ashes and forty days of some sort of restraint. So what does giving up something teach us?

Lent was never meant to be a self-improvement programme. It was meant to expose attachment. When we remove something, even something trivial, we discover how quickly it has embedded itself into our rhythms. The mid-afternoon sugar hit. The reflex scroll. The glass poured without thinking.

St Augustine wrote candidly about this in the fourth century: he did not merely struggle with big moral failures, but with ordinary appetites that quietly ruled him. His eventual conversion was less a lightning strike and more a gradual recognition that desire was driving him rather than the other way round.

In literature, we see the same pattern. In A Christmas Carol, Ebenezer Scrooge is not transformed by comfort or indulgence, but by confrontation - by having his illusions stripped away. Deprivation clarifies.

The desert fathers of the early Church went further still. They withdrew into the wilderness not because they despised the world, but because they knew that silence and lack would sharpen perception. When distractions are removed, the mind grows louder before it grows quieter. Modern life is built on availability; we can eat what we like, watch what we like, buy what we like, whenever we like. The economy depends upon it. But there is an old human suspicion that unlimited access does not necessarily make us freer.

Philosophers from Aristotle onwards observed that self-restraint builds capacity. Musicians practise scales. Athletes train. Writers impose deadlines. Limits create form.

Religious traditions across the world have long embodied that instinct; during Ramadan, Muslims fast from dawn until sunset for a lunar month - not as a dietary experiment, but as a discipline of awareness, solidarity with the poor, and attentiveness to God. The fast is communal, embodied, and deeply rooted in spiritual formation. In Judaism, Yom Kippur centres around fasting and reflection. In Hinduism and Buddhism, various fasts and periods of renunciation mark the calendar. Even secular culture has rediscovered "digital detoxes" and "dry January." It seems we are wired to understand that occasional abstinence recalibrates us.

There is a modern myth that fulfilment lies in having every desire met. Yet history suggests the opposite. The psychologist Viktor Frankl, writing after surviving concentration camps, observed that meaning often emerges not from comfort but from endurance - from choosing a response under pressure.

Lent is a mild and voluntary version of that principle. No one is starved against their will. No one is compelled. But we choose, briefly, to live with less - and discover that we are not diminished by it.

Perhaps the most important part of Lent is not Ash Wednesday or Easter Sunday, but the long middle stretch in between. It is there that we learn whether restraint was merely symbolic or quietly formative. Some will abandon their resolutions. Some will adapt them. Some will quietly continue. None of it is graded.

But the invitation remains: to notice what drives us, what comforts us, what we reach for without thinking. In a world of constant consumption, forty days of interruption may not be a hardship. It may be a gift.

**Rosie Arkwright**



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## GROUP CHURCH SERVICES FOR MARCH 2026

<b>Sunday 1st March</b> 2nd Sunday of Lent	10am 10am 16.00	Word & Worship Parish Communion Sunday Gathering	Harnhill Down Ampney Poulton
<b>Sunday 8th March</b> 3rd Sunday of Lent	10am 10am	Word & Worship Parish Communion	Harnhill Driffield
<b>Sunday 15th March</b> 4th Sunday of Lent	10am 10am	Word & Worship Parish Communion	Harnhill Ampney Crucis
<b>Sunday 22nd March</b> 5th Sunday of Lent	10am 10am	Word & Worship Parish Communion	Harnhill Poulton
<b>Wednesday 25th March</b> The Annunciation of the Lord	12 noon	Holy Communion followed by Soup, Rolls & Pudding Lunch	Poulton
<b>Sunday 22nd March</b> Palm Sunday	10am 10am	Word & Worship Parish Communion	Harnhill Ampney St Peter

**Community Café at Poulton Church**  
**4pm - Sunday 1st March**

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## Down on the Farm

As we all know, it's been a winter of rain - relentless, soaking, field-flooding rain. When I started our usual monthly conversation I expected Charles to describe it as a disaster of biblical proportions. Instead, he surprised me. "Actually," he said, "it's much better than last year." Last summer's exceptional dryness opened up deep fissures in the clay. Those cracks have acted like natural drains this winter, giving the water somewhere to go. Timing, too, has been everything. The autumn crops went in earlier than they did the previous year. So when the heaviest downpours arrived, the plants were already rooted and growing strongly enough to withstand it. Twelve months ago, the rain came before crops had properly established and reseeding became inevitable. Same weather pattern perhaps - but different outcome.

That, says Charles, is farming in a nutshell. "It's all about timing."

## A £120,000 decision – or not

Despite the wet ground, there is planting to be done. The seed drill - the machine that places seed precisely into the soil - would normally be in use at this time of year. But instead of spending £120,000 on a new one, Charles and the team have taken their ten-year-old drill apart piece by piece, replacing worn components and rebuilding it from the ground up. The cost? Around £30,000. "With a bit of luck, it'll give us another ten years," he says. Though he did admit it has been extremely time-consuming dismantling and reassembling the whole thing. If urgent drilling is needed before it is finished, there is a neighbouring drill they can borrow. Farming, as ever, runs on a mixture of ingenuity, pragmatism and good neighbours.

## Why Triticale?

One of the spring crops going in this year is triticale - a crop unfamiliar to many outside agriculture.

Triticale is a hybrid of wheat (*Triticum*) and rye (*Secale*) - hence the name. It was developed in the late 19th century to combine the yield and grain quality of wheat with the hardiness and disease resistance of rye. It thrives in poorer soils, tolerates drought better than many cereals and produces reliable yields. Traditionally it has been used as animal feed because of its high protein content and good digestibility. More recently, it has also found its way into bioenergy production and specialist flour blends.

At Poulton Fields, triticale is being grown for a seed company. Much of it will go into environmental stewardship mixes, carefully balanced seed blends which are planted to encourage farmland birds and wildlife. It is robust, produces good ground cover and offers feed value for birds over winter.



The move into triticale reflects a bigger shift. Charles is cutting back significantly on spring barley, particularly malting barley (the variety used in beer and whisky). Malting barley attracts a premium over feed barley, but only if there is demand. And demand is changing. Brewers and distillers have continued producing, but consumption patterns, especially among younger generations, have altered. Twenty-somethings are drinking less alcohol than previous generations. Stock levels have risen. The market is oversupplied. And when supply outstrips demand, premiums disappear.

Seed merchants, sensing the direction of travel, have asked for more triticale. So sowing tricale and peas (once the ground allows) is the Poulton Fields plan.

## Livestock and the shadow of TB

Most of the cattle are still indoors for winter, though a hardy few remain outside all year round and appear perfectly content despite the adverse weather. Next week brings the annual cycle of TB tests, blood tests and health checks - always a tense time. I wondered if Charles was sanguine after so many years of testing or whether he got very nervous in advance? "There's nothing you can do about it," he says. "It's completely in the lap of the gods."

Wildlife control in the area has now finished, but he believes it has made a tangible difference. Local TB incidents have fallen significantly, by around 60% in some estimates, because of the reduction in badger population, and there has also been a noticeable increase in hedgehog numbers as a result which many of you will have noticed.



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# DOWN ON THE FARM

## The End of Dairying

Perhaps the most significant local change is that local dairy farmer Joe Bennett has decided to give up dairying this autumn. We have interviewed him a number of times for The Poulton Eye and are sad to hear that yet another dairy unit is closing because it's not viable. Both sides of his family have farmed cows for generations. He will continue farming in a different capacity and we will catch up with him at some point in the next few months.

Milk prices, Charles says, have "fallen out of bed". It is the classic supply-and-demand cycle. Prices rose sharply, farmers produced more milk, and now there is oversupply. So as you may have seen in the national press over the last few weeks, supermarkets are paying less for milk than it costs to produce for many dairy farmers. It's only the really big herds which can produce at a cheap enough price to remain viable.

It was not always so volatile. Under the Milk Marketing Board, established in 1933 and abolished in 1994 following reforms under Margaret Thatcher, dairy farmers sold their milk collectively. The Board pooled production and ensured a single national price. There were milk quotas too - strict limits on how much each farm could produce. Charles gave up milking quite soon before the Board was dissolved. He remembers warning fellow farmers they would regret losing it. "Five years later," he says, "I met some of them on picket lines trying to force prices back up."

Today, milk is sold through contracts, which are often tied to specific end markets. When Covid struck, one farmer supplying largely to hospitality chains saw demand vanish overnight and was pictured tipping thousands of litres of milk down the drain. Meanwhile, supermarket shelves elsewhere stood empty. The rigidity of contracts exposed a fragility in the system. Could the Milk Marketing Board ever return? Charles thinks not. British farmers, he suggests wryly, are not always natural co-operators, unlike their French counterparts.

Finding workers is another challenge. Cows must be milked twice a day, 365 days a year. The hours are unsociable. After Brexit, the supply of experienced overseas workers diminished sharply. Larger farms increasingly invest in robotic milking systems, which reduce labour demands and offer more regular hours. But the capital cost is high. Charles himself would not return to dairying. "You can make money if you're big enough," he says. "But it's relentless."

## The Red Tractor maze

This month brought a Red Tractor inspection - with Poulton Fields passing with no non-conformities (that means with flying colours).

Red Tractor was established in 2000 in response to consumer concerns about food safety and traceability following crises such as BSE. It is a farm assurance scheme covering food safety, animal welfare and environmental protection. Virtually all grain sold into supermarket supply chains must be Red Tractor assured. If livestock is sold as Red Tractor, the feed they have consumed must be assured too. The inspection process is formidable - hundreds of compliance points, meticulous paperwork, licences and records. Charles estimates "about 700 boxes to tick".

The system, he says, can disadvantage farmers who struggle with paperwork. It is bureaucratic and driven largely by retailers rather than producers. He questions the 90-day rule for cattle, which states that animals must spend 90 days on an assured farm before slaughter to qualify as Red Tractor. In his view, assurance should be lifetime-based, from birth to slaughter, especially since many animals move several times in their lives. 90 days doesn't seem like much of an assurance. In the past, grain merchants would visit farms and judge quality with their own eyes. Today, paperwork has largely replaced personal inspection. "That's the world we're in now," he shrugs.

## Farming stories in the news

There is intense debate around new animal welfare proposals, including restrictions on tail docking and castration methods in lambs.

Farmers argue that early docking reduces the risk of fly strike - a distressing maggot infestation - and that alternatives may increase chemical use. It is, Charles believes, a debate requiring practical realism.

Meanwhile, an analysis reported in Farmers Weekly made stark reading: if food prices had risen in line with house prices since 2013, a loaf of bread would cost over £15, four pints of milk more than £5, and a weekly shop for a family of four would be £675 compared with £166. Food has not kept pace. Supermarket profits, on the other hand, are in line with the rise in house prices. Surely some mistake as our colleagues on Private Eye would say!

See you next month to find out what happened in the TB tests, and how Poulton Fields got on juggling weather windows for fertiliser and spraying, and putting the seed drill back together again.

**Rosie Arkwright in conversation with Charles Horton**



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family*

# MOTHERING SUNDAY - FROM SIMNEL CAKES TO SCENTED CANDLES

**Mother's Day.** That annual moment when florists triple their turnover, restaurants brace themselves, and children across the land present slightly lopsided cards bearing heartfelt declarations such as "You're the best Mum in the world (please ignore last Tuesday)."

**But where did it all begin? And how did we move from religious observance to emergency petrol-station bouquets?**

First surprise: It wasn't originally about your mum at all...

The tradition of **Mothering Sunday** in Britain predates modern **Mother's Day** by centuries. It falls on the fourth Sunday of Lent, three weeks before Easter, and originally had nothing to do with breakfast in bed. That's because the "mother" in question was the mother church!

In medieval England, people were encouraged to return to their "mother church" - either the cathedral or the main church of the area where they had been baptised - for a special service. It was sometimes called "Going a-Mothering." Servants and apprentices, who often lived away from home, were given the day off to visit their families. For many young people working in big houses, this was one of the rare occasions they could return home.

So yes, it was originally less about Prosecco and more about parish allegiance.



## Simnel cake and small mercies

Because Mothering Sunday fell during Lent, traditionally a time of fasting, it provided a small break from austerity. Families would bake a simnel cake, a light fruit cake topped with marzipan, sometimes decorated with eleven marzipan balls representing the apostles (Judas rarely gets a look-in). It became associated with both Mothering Sunday and Easter.

Children would often pick wildflowers on their walk home to present to their mothers. No cellophane, no ribbon, no £6.99 price tag. It was modest, domestic, and rooted in church life.

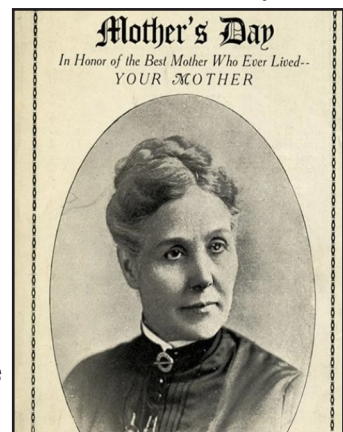
## The transformation into the modern Mother's Day owes much to the United States

In 1908, an American woman called Anna Jarvis campaigned for a national day to honour mothers, inspired by her own mother's community work, and her dream was realised in 1914, when US President Woodrow Wilson officially declared the second Sunday in May as Mother's Day.

Ironically, Anna Jarvis later became disillusioned by how commercial the day became. She spent much of her later life campaigning against florists and greeting card companies, furious that what she intended as a sincere tribute had become, in her view, a retail frenzy.

It's one of history's great plot twists: the founder of Mother's Day trying to cancel Mother's Day!

Britain gradually absorbed the American tone and trappings during the 20th century, merging it with our own Mothering Sunday tradition. By the 1950s, cards, chocolates and carnations were firmly established. And here we are. Post-war prosperity, mass marketing and the explosion of card companies did the rest.



Mothering Sunday has become the busiest day of the year for restaurants and the second biggest flower-selling weekends after Valentine's Day. It can also become a guaranteed annual test of sibling co-ordination!

While today millions of pounds are spent each year in the UK on gifts and meals for Mother's Day, the irony is that the original observance required nothing more extravagant than attending church and perhaps bringing a small cake. But strip away the commercial gloss and something steady remains. Mothering Sunday has always involved a journey home, a gesture of gratitude and a recognition - however understated - of the work that goes into holding families together.

Whether that's a marzipan-topped cake in medieval Gloucestershire or a hastily ordered bunch of tulips from Cirencester, the impulse is similar.

**Rosie Arkwright**

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# AND THE DOUBTS BEGAN TO GROW WHEN...

**A short story by Pam Varey**

## **And the doubts began to grow when..**

We met at the office party. I fancied him as possible boyfriend material.

The doubts began to grow when he went off to get the drinks and came back with two mugs of tea.

He offered to see me home.

The doubts began when he put on his overcoat and I saw his woolly mittens hanging on a string from his sleeves.

We went to the car park and the doubts began to grow when he collected his tandem and indicated that I should hop onto the rear seat.

He invited me out the following weekend but it was to watch him morris dancing.

Other dates included turning the pages of his music while he practised the bassoon and a visit to a rat sanctuary.

“Eating out” was a packet of crisps from a burger van.

Then came an invitation to meet his mother. I bought flowers and chocolates for her and wondered what kind of house they lived in. So after dismounting from the tandem as elegantly as I could, I saw we were outside some Victorian-type building.

The doubts began to grow when I saw the words Spiritualist Church above the entrance.

‘Will your mother be there?’, I asked. ‘Only if her spirit manifests itself’, he replied.

The doubts began to grow when he asked if I would sew new bells on his morris dancing outfit, polish his bassoon and darn a hole in one of his mittens.

The doubts began to grow when he whispered sweet words of love, then realised that he was talking to his teddy bear.

The doubts began to grow when we got soaking wet pedalling back from a meeting of the Dr Crippen Appreciation society.

I invited him in and suggested that he get out of those wet clothes and stay the night. I went to the kitchen to make coffee and came back to find that he had disappeared.

About half an hour later the doorbell rang and he was standing there even wetter than before. He explained, ‘I went home for my pyjamas’.





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# ON THIS DAY IN HISTORY - MARCH

March in the UK has seen its fair share of drama - rebellions, royal milestones, political shake-ups... the lot. Here are some standout historic moments:



**3 March 1284**

The Statute of Rhuddlan, signed at Rhuddlan Castle, came into effect under Edward I, bringing Wales under English law after his conquest.



**1 March 1700**

The old (Julian calendar) date of the death of Charles II of Spain, which triggered the War of the Spanish Succession - a conflict Britain became heavily involved in. (Under the modern calendar, this fell in November 1700.)



**5 March 1770**

News of the Boston Massacre (or The Incident on King Street) reached Britain, intensifying tensions between Britain and its American colonies. In the confrontation, nine British soldiers shot several people in a crowd. The event was subsequently described as "a massacre" by Samuel Adams, Paul Revere, and other leading Patriots who later became central proponents of independence during the American Revolution.



**25 March 1807**

The Abolition of the Slave Trade Act received Royal Assent. The Act made it illegal to buy and sell enslaved people throughout the British colonies and prompted Britain to use its naval power and diplomatic relations to encourage other nations to stop their involvement in the slave trade. However, while the act abolished the trade in enslaved people, it did not end the use of slaves across the British Empire; this continued until 1833's Slavery Abolition Act.



**10 March 1862**

The HMS Warrior, Britain's first iron-hulled, armoured battleship, was commissioned, heralding the end of wooden ships forever. HMS Warrior became the biggest and most powerful ship in the world (at the time!)



**15 March 1988**

The funeral of the "Gibraltar Three" took place in Belfast. British SAS soldiers suspected the three of planning a car bomb attack on the island and shot them dead. The three were subsequently found to be unarmed and no bomb was found. At the funeral, two British soldiers were shot dead. The episode became one of the great controversies of the Troubles.



**18 March 2003**

The House of Commons voted in favour of military action in Iraq under Prime Minister Tony Blair. The motion was proposed on the basis that "Iraq's (possession of) weapons of mass destruction ... and its continuing non-compliance with Security Council Resolutions, pose a threat to international peace and security".



**22 March 2017**

A terrorist attack occurred at Westminster Bridge and outside Palace of Westminster in London, resulting in multiple fatalities and injuries.

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### Finding Balance as the Light Returns

March always feels like a new beginning.

For me, this year began with a day shadowing a crew at Cirencester Ambulance Station, seeing up close the calm, careful work our frontline teams do every day. It wasn't dramatic - just steady professionalism, moving from call to call, helping people when they needed it most. It struck me how much good outcomes depend not on rushing, but on clarity and composure.

And outside, the light is returning.

After the long months of winter, mornings brighten and evenings stretch out. When we "spring forward" and set our clocks an hour ahead, the days suddenly feel fuller. It's a small shift, but one many of us feel keenly - as if life is nudging us to move faster, to catch up, to begin again.

That change in light can bring a sense of urgency. It's the season of fresh plans and renewed energy. Gardens are tended, cupboards cleared, diaries filled. There's a feeling that things must now move forward.

But March also brings something quieter, and perhaps more important.

The spring equinox marks the moment when day and night are almost equal. Light and dark in balance, even if only briefly. I find that symbolism especially meaningful this year.

Across the South Cotswolds, people tell me the same thing: the world feels fast-moving and uncertain. Families are juggling higher bills. Farmers face changing rules and tight margins. Our NHS and councils are under real pressure. Everyone wants progress, and quickly.

I share that desire. Standing still isn't an option. Whether it's cleaning up our rivers, strengthening local health services or helping communities prepare for floods and extreme weather, we need practical solutions and the courage to act.

But the equinox is a reminder that moving forward doesn't mean moving recklessly. Growth isn't a sudden leap. It works best when energy is matched with care, and ambition with reflection.

That's what I saw with the ambulance crew. Even when time mattered, they stayed methodical and focused, making careful judgements based on training and teamwork. Speed alone isn't enough; steadiness saves lives.

I see the same grounded wisdom in our charities, volunteers and community groups - people quietly supporting neighbours, running local projects and solving problems together. Progress built on cooperation, not haste.

That is how I try to work as your MP: carrying those local voices into national conversations, pushing for change while making sure it is thoughtful, realistic and rooted in what communities actually need.

As the days lengthen and the season shifts, I hope we can all take something from this moment of balance. Spring invites us forward, yes - but also to pause, listen and move with intention.

Light is returning. With it comes both energy and calm. And in that balance, there is real hope.

Warm wishes,

Roz

[roz.savage.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:roz.savage.mp@parliament.uk)

01285 300555



## 🇬🇧 The Truth About City / Tourist Taxes 🇬🇧

City taxes are becoming the new “extra” no one asked for, they’re popping up in more destinations every year. You’ll hear them called tourist taxes, bed taxes, or the very fashionable climate resilience tax.

They’re almost always paid locally at your hotel or apartment, which is why they are not included in your holiday cost.

### Why are more places charging them?

A few reasons destinations are leaning into the “visitor contribution” trend:

- **Overtourism is real.** Cities like Amsterdam use the funds to manage crowds and protect historic centres.
- **Infrastructure.** These taxes help pay for public transport, street cleaning, and the upgrades visitors rely on.
- **Climate resilience.** Greece’s new tax supports rebuilding & strengthening infrastructure after extreme weather.
- **Fairness.** If you visit, you contribute.

### Where are they highest?

Amsterdam currently holds the title for the highest tourist tax in Europe, with several Greek cities and Berlin following behind. Most places charge between £1–£4 per person per night.

### Don’t let it put you off

Factor it into your budget so nothing catches you off guard. Many destinations reduce or waive the tax for children, and the places themselves are still absolutely worth it.

**Think of it as a small contribution to keeping our favourite cities & resorts looking their best**



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## The Miracles of Everyday Life

I am looking out of my window at a pigeon eating ivy berries. Not much more everyday than that to most Poulton residents! However, dig a bit deeper and there are some amazing facts behind the veneer of familiarity.

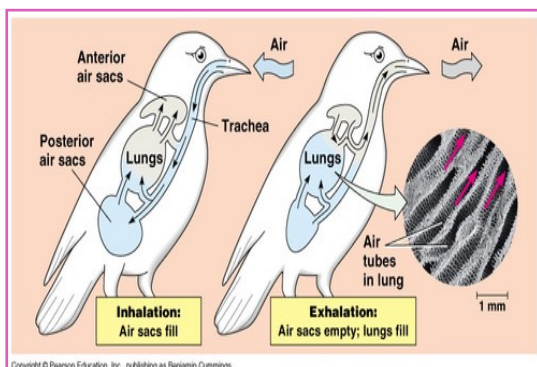
Against a backdrop of declining bird populations everywhere, the pigeon stands out as the exception. Pigeons are flourishing and their numbers increasing because they fit in well with the human-driven environmental changes. Our warmer winters mean that farmers are planting more fields with winter wheat and oilseed rape. So instead of the bare ploughed fields which would have dominated the countryside 50 years ago, there are now acres of green foliage which pigeons can feast on. Pigeons can also feed on seeds and berries in the autumn and on insects and grubs in the summer so there is no season when they are not well-fed! Mostly they eat green leaves especially the cabbage family, as any gardener can tell you. The ivy berries I saw them eating today are toxic to humans and most mammals by virtue of their saponins (soap-like substances) which the ivy makes to deter insects and herbivores but surprisingly the pigeon can tolerate these remarkably well which gives them a survival advantage.



Another adaptation makes them efficient foragers: look closely and you will see that pigeons walk in a rather unique way as they forage for food. As they walk forward the visual image would be blurred by movement, so to avoid this they move their heads in a peculiar way called "head-bobbing". The head is thrust forward by extending their neck, the head is then fixed in space and the body "catches up" by contracting the neck. This allows them to see the minute detail they need to detect tiny seeds and insects without blurring. Carefully scanning the ground makes them rather vulnerable to predation but their eyes are sited laterally so they can see around 340 degrees without moving their heads. The field of vision of each eye overlaps the other in the front so they can accurately judge distance of nearby objects. Their eyes are rather extraordinary since they can not only see into the ultraviolet range but are also effectively bifocals! They have two areas in their retina where the photoreceptors are very numerous (fovea), one positioned to see distant objects to the side and the other to see nearby objects on the ground. The part of the lens looking forward is short sighted, focusing on an area within pecking distance, while the part looking laterally is long sighted, ideal for scanning the sky to detect hawks and other dangers. This does not always work, as once or twice a year I see a collection of feathers in my backyard that indicates a fox has made a meal of a less than careful or perhaps less agile, older pigeon.

Another amazing fact about pigeons is that unlike most birds, pigeons, penguins and flamingos produce milk to feed their young. Pigeon milk, like human milk is made up of cells full of fat and protein which are extruded from glandular structures found both in the human breast and in the pigeon crop. This is an expanded bit of their gullet lining just before it enters their stomach. They can regurgitate this extremely rich milk on demand for their hungry fledglings. Unlike other birds who have to time their brood rearing so that there are good supplies of caterpillars or grubs the pigeon can produce milk at anytime of the year so can and do breed at any time of the year.

I used to live next to a pigeon fancier who raced his pigeons in the annual Pau Masters Pigeon Race. The pigeons were sent in a basket by train to Pau, France, 610miles away and around 16 hours afterwards he would be out in his garden shaking a pail of grain, trying to persuade the pigeons to come down and to allow him to take off their clocks and record their times. Last year's winner flew 621 miles in 14 hours, an average of 44 miles per hour. This makes them amongst the fastest fliers in the bird kingdom so they can easily outfly most birds of prey when flying horizontally. How do pigeons or indeed any bird achieve such speeds? Flying is an incredibly energetic activity. A starling flying requires a power output of 150 Watts per kilogram of body weight which should be compared with the power output of a top athlete running a marathon, who averages 5.6-6 Watts/kilogram body weight. Thus birds generate energy at a rate which is 20 times more than humans which is why we cannot fly but they can!



This final miracle, the ability to generate so much energy relies on a completely different and much more efficient system of oxygenating their blood than our own. While we breathe in and out, they blow air through their lungs in the same direction continuously. This is possible because they have two air sacs in their respiratory system, as shown in the image (courtesy of Quizlet website). The inspired air (shown in blue) goes mostly into the posterior air sac which then contracts to force air through the lung, Then as it exits the lung it enters the anterior air sac those subsequent contraction forces air out via the trachea. Thus there is no in and out, air flows in the same direction through the lung which as a result does not need to constantly alter its shape as ours does. The gas exchange from air to blood is, as a result, much more constant and efficient which is why they are turbo-charged compared to us humans.

So next time you see a pigeon give a thought for the many miracles it conceals.

**Robin Spiller**

# Poulton Garden Club 2026



**Join us on  
Monday 16 March  
7.30pm Poulton  
Village Hall**

(2026 subscriptions due\*)

[Poulton.garden.club@outlook.com](mailto:Poulton.garden.club@outlook.com)

**Monthly meetings  
Garden Visits Guest  
speakers Practical  
education Fun and  
sociable**

**New and Existing Members Welcome**

**\* Subscriptions for 2026 are £25/person or £40/couple for the year**

**f you cannot make the meeting but want to join the garden club for 2026,  
just email [poulton.garden.club@outlook.com](mailto:poulton.garden.club@outlook.com) and let us know.**

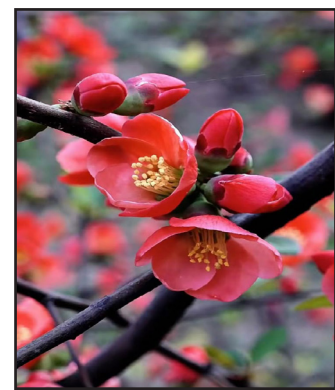
# MARCH IN THE GARDEN

**Imagine a sunny day in March - swathes of daffodils nod in the breeze, vibrant chaenomeles dazzle, sweet violets and primroses peep from the hedgerows, birdsong fills the air. Spring is here!**

Now, after a moment or two of tranquil contemplation, the gardener's next thought is to pull on boots and fetch the spade because after winter's slow plod, March is the month when nature picks up the pace to a rapid trot.

Each day lengthens by about four and a half minutes, giving us almost 13 hours of light by the time the clocks spring forward on the 29th. Along with rising temperatures, it is the cue for seedlings to emerge while buds fatten and flowers bloom.

With things moving so fast, it's quite a challenge to notice every fleeting moment. And so I invite you to mix a little *kisetsukan* into your life. This Japanese word translates as a 'sense of the seasons' and is about finding beauty in the smallest things and bringing everyday enlightenment - surely a balm for the interesting times in which we now live.



According to Japan's ancient agricultural calendar, the year is divided into 72 *kō*, or micro-seasons, each one with a descriptively beautiful name and lasting just five or six days. From March 1-5 it is 'Grass sprouts, trees bud' followed by 'Hibernating insects surface'. 'First peach blossoms' (March 11-15), 'Caterpillars become butterflies' (March 16-20), 'Sparrows start to nest' (March 21-25) and 'First cherry blossoms' from March 26-30. I particularly like 'White dew shimmers on the grass' (Sept 8-12) and 'Silkworms feast on mulberry leaves' (May 21-25).

As far as I'm aware, we're short of silkworms in Poulton and our climate here is a little different to Japan's, but we can benefit from the philosophy behind *kisetsukan* by connecting with nature, attuning to the seasons and being grounded in the moment.

On another note, spring last year was one of the warmest and driest on record in England. Persistent rainfall in early 2026 means the outdoor sowing season might well be delayed this spring. The advice on the back of seed packets is broad - much better to take a hands-on approach. Scoop up a fistful of soil and give it a squeeze. If it feels cold, wet and claggy you will be consigning any seeds sown in it to an early grave. Once it has warmed a little and is easy to crumble, the time is right.

This year I'm trying to beat the 'hungry gap' in the veg garden between March and May and have sown a few early pots indoors of fast-growing salad crops - spinach, winter lettuce, mizuna, beetroot and peas, these last two for their tender young leaves. Soon they will be moved from the cold frame to a pre-warmed veg bed which has been protected with old compost bags for a few weeks. Hopefully we'll taste the first salad pickings by the end of the month.

## To do in March

- Snap the spent heads off daffodils but let the leaves die back naturally to nourish the bulbs for next year. Lift & divide snowdrops.
- Get a head-start on weeds - hand pull any growing through shrubs and perennials and tackle open areas with a hoe.
- Prune early flowering shrubs, such as winter jasmine, once the blooms fade.
- Sow hardy annuals - anchusa, calendula, clarkia, larkspur and nigella direct in their flowering positions. Plant plugs of sweet peas.
- Cover soil on veg beds to create warm dry conditions which will give a head start later in spring.
- Chit seed potatoes. Plant earlies from the middle of March and second earlies towards the end of the month.
- Plant onion and shallot sets, covering them with fleece or netting to stop birds pulling them up.
- Veg seeds to sow outdoors under cloches or in pre-warmed soil - artichoke, beetroot, broad bean, Brussels sprout, cabbage, carrot, cauliflower, parsley, parsnips, radish, rocket, spinach and winter lettuce.
- Under cover - sow tomatoes (last chance), plus other tender vegetable like cucumber and aubergine. Also half-hardy annuals such as impatiens (busy lizzie), cosmos, gazania, lobelia, marigold and petunia. Pot up dahlias.
- Plant summer-flowering bulbs - lilies, freesia, gladioli etc.
- Plant or move roses, shrubs, climbers and perennials before they come into growth.
- A dry day in March is the perfect time for the first light trim to tidy and encourage root growth before regular mowing resumes next month. Reseed any bare patches around the end of this month.

**Trina Wood**

**POULTON  
VILLAGE  
HALL**  
❧

**Books, Biccies &  
Beverages  
“BBB”**

**Village Coffee  
Morning**

**1<sup>st</sup> Saturday of each month**

**Saturday 7<sup>th</sup>**

**March**

**10.30 to 12.30**

**Everyone Welcome**

**Come & enjoy a pot of coffee or tea  
and homemade biscuit over a chat  
with friends & neighbours**

**Browse/buy from the bookshelves  
of good quality proved books**

All proceeds towards the running costs of the village hall

**Are you planning an event.....?**

If you'd like to book the Village Hall, then go to the online booking system at

<https://hallbookingonline.com/poulton/>

where you can check availability, costs and other relevant information.



DO YOU ENJOY WATCHING FILMS? If yes, why not come to a Cinema Night at the Village Hall? They are held twice a month on the first and third Tuesday evenings. Membership isn't necessary so all welcome to come along at any time.

We have a mailing list through which information about the forthcoming film is shared. If you're interested, then please send a mail to [poultononeandnines@gmail.com](mailto:poultononeandnines@gmail.com) and we will happily add you to the group.

## Cinema Nights at Poulton Village Hall

On first & third Tuesdays of every month

**Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> & 17<sup>th</sup> March**

**Entrance £4**

Contact [poultononeandnines@gmail.com](mailto:poultononeandnines@gmail.com) to join the mailing list for information about each film.



<sup>®</sup> The Outreach Post Office is run at the Village Hall on Tuesday afternoons from 1.30 to 3.30pm by Matthew who is the Sub-Postmaster at Shrivenham Post Office.

As well as postal and banking services, Matthew has a selection of cards, stationery, small gifts, gift cards etc on sale each week.

While you're there, you can also enjoy a pot of tea or coffee and a homemade treat at The Pantry! Pop in if you're about on a Tuesday afternoon.



**Poulton Hill**  
ESTATE

Whites  
Trio Offer  
£44.99



Think Local, Drink Local

Buy online or visit us at the cellar door

— [www.poultonhillestate.co.uk](http://www.poultonhillestate.co.uk) —

Poulton Hill Estate, Poulton, Cirencester, Gloucestershire GL7 5JA

01285 850 257 info@poultonhillestate.co.uk WHAT3Words: kilowatt.dozen.press

# FROM THE CELLAR DOOR

## Spring 2026: new life, new wines and a great new offer!

### Poulton Hill Estate's Natalie Barker celebrates the end of winter and looks forward to exciting times ahead

Winter pruning is now over. This year has been particularly arduous due to the almost constant rain. We would like to say a huge thank you to Diogo, who went out in the vineyard every day until he had pruned every single one of the 9,750 vines by hand, no matter the weather (even through Storm Ingrid). His dedication is truly appreciated by the entire Poulton Hill Estate team. When you sit down in a couple of years' time to enjoy a glass of Poulton Hill 2026 wine, you will have Diogo to thank for his care and attention in preparing the vines for a successful growing season.

We are now looking forward to seeing the first signs of new life in the vineyard, as the buds start to show on our beautifully pruned vines.

### New vintage released

Poulton Hill Estate has just released its 2024 vintage of Phoenix white wine. This ever-popular wine made from 100% Phoenix grapes, a variety that was created in Germany in 1964 when Bacchus was crossed with Villard Blanc. The grape variety is perfect for the UK climate, as it is a cool-climate hybrid developed to withstand and ripen in cooler, damp conditions. It is also highly resistant to mildew, which can be an issue for UK wine growers

Poulton Hill Estate's Phoenix 2024 has a pale straw appearance with a delicious nose of guava and peach. The palate is off dry, refreshing and wonderfully balanced, bursting with sweet melon, pear and creamy apple, which leads to a long, clean and satisfying finish. This wine is perfect to drink on its own or with pasta dishes, Thai cuisine, seafood and cheese. 11% abv

The wine costs £18.50 a bottle and is available from our website <https://www.poultonhillestate.co.uk/> or from the Cellar Door in Poulton.

### Poulton White Trio Offer!

Spring is here and we have a special offer for you on a trio of our white wines to celebrate the start of the new season. You can save more than £10 by picking up the Poulton White Trio for only £44.99 (normally £55.50).

The Poulton White Trio:

- 1 x Bacchus 2023
- 1 x Arlington White 2023
- 1 x Awkward Hill White 2023

Why not get ahead with your Easter preparations and order your white wine now? Collection from the Cellar Door is free or a delivery charge of £10 applies to orders under £100 within mainland UK.

For more details and to order your Poulton White Trio, visit our website or pop into the Cellar Door.

### Spring Tasting sessions

There are still tickets left for our Spring Tasting sessions, which are a lovely way to celebrate the start of the growing season here at Poulton Hill Estate. They also make a wonderful Mother's Day gift. Tasting session dates:

- March 14
- March 28
- April 11
- April 18
- May 2

At the tasting, you will sample a selection of our wines and learn about our medal-winning spirits. The tasting will include one sparkling wine and three still wines. Snacks can be purchased on the side. All sessions start at 11.30am and last for about an hour.

For more details or to book, click here to visit our website: [www.poultonhillestate.co.uk](http://www.poultonhillestate.co.uk)



# Save the Date

## 1.30 pm Saturday 14th March Poulton Village Spring Clean

This is an annual event to help keep our village and the surrounding countryside looking beautiful.

Join a team of fellow villagers in collecting rubbish from the surrounding roads and lanes, especially plastic waste, which unfortunately will never degrade.

Meet at the Village Hall at 1.30 pm to collect litter picking gear and your allocated route map.

Come wearing your own high visibility, weather-proof clothes and gardening gloves. We will provide litter pickers and bags. The council will collect the rubbish left in the village hall car park on Monday.

Tea and cakes will be provided afterwards in the village hall.

Please email Robin Spiller ([robin.spiller123@gmail.com](mailto:robin.spiller123@gmail.com)) if you can join us so I can plan and ensure we cover all the routes

If you cannot make Saturday but would like to take part, let me know and I can arrange for you to collect litter pickers and bags from the bench outside my back door, Ashbrook House, Ashbrook Lane, off Bell Lane any time in the previous week.

Hope to see you on the day - Robin Spiller

Poulton Eye Newsletter	<a href="mailto:Poultoneye@gmail.com">Poultoneye@gmail.com</a> Editors: Rosie Arkwright, Lizzy Roughton
Poulton Village Website	<a href="http://www.poultonvillage.co.uk">www.poultonvillage.co.uk</a>
Poulton Facebook Page	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/groups/959278000806216/?multi_permaLinks=4503302606403720">https://www.facebook.com/groups/959278000806216/?multi_permaLinks=4503302606403720</a>
Poulton WhatsApp Group	Please contact Rachel Hutchinson to be added to group; 07557 006623
St Michaels and All Angels Church, Poulton	Church Wardens: Lizzy Roughton - <a href="mailto:pryorlizzy@gmail.com">pryorlizzy@gmail.com</a> ; <a href="mailto:rosie.arkwright@icloud.com">rosie.arkwright@icloud.com</a>
Village Hall	Available to hire for parties, wedding breakfasts, clubs or meetings - <a href="mailto:poultonvillagehall@gmail.com">poultonvillagehall@gmail.com</a>
Playing Field & Allotment Charity (PFAC)	<a href="mailto:pfacrustees@gmail.com">pfacrustees@gmail.com</a>
Post Office	In the Village Hall. Tuesday 1.30 – 3.30
Parish Council	Chairman: Simon Collyer-Bristow <a href="mailto:scb@crfc.co.uk">scb@crfc.co.uk</a> Clerk: Heather Harris <a href="mailto:poultonclerk@gmail.com">poultonclerk@gmail.com</a>
District Councillor	Lisa Spivey: <a href="mailto:lisaspivey4@gmail.com">lisaspivey4@gmail.com</a>
MP - South Cotswolds Constituency	Dr Roz Savage MP: <a href="mailto:roz.savage.mp@parliament.uk">roz.savage.mp@parliament.uk</a>
Poulton Action Group (solar farm)	<a href="mailto:poultonactiongroup@gmail.com">poultonactiongroup@gmail.com</a> .
Refuse Collections	Food bin weekly Thursday 7am. All other bins & bags on alternate Thursdays.
Poulton Football Club	<a href="http://www.poultonfootballclub.co.uk">www.poultonfootballclub.co.uk</a>
Poulton Cricket Club	<a href="http://www.poultoncricketclub.co.uk/">www.poultoncricketclub.co.uk/</a>
Poulton Gardening Club	<a href="mailto:helenharesign@outlook.com">helenharesign@outlook.com</a> or <a href="mailto:jackie.pigott1@btinternet.com">jackie.pigott1@btinternet.com</a>
Poulton One and Nines	Films in the village hall every 1 <sup>st</sup> and 3 <sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of the month. Contact <a href="mailto:poultononeandnines@gmail.com">poultononeandnines@gmail.com</a>
Books Bikkies & Beverages	Village get-together 1 <sup>st</sup> Saturday of each month, 10.30 – 12.30 Poulton Village Hall Judith – 01285 851230
The Falcon Inn	<a href="http://www.falconinnpoulton.co.uk">www.falconinnpoulton.co.uk</a> email: <a href="mailto:bookings@falconinnpoulton.co.uk">bookings@falconinnpoulton.co.uk</a> 01285 850878