

“Who is in your bubble?” And “What tier are you in?” Last Christmas, if someone had asked you these now familiar questions, you might have thought they had a screw loose. Perhaps bubble is a quaint term for a home you might have thought? A tier? “I left college years ago,” you might have replied.

At the time of writing, Christmas 2020 has been given the go-ahead by the Prime Minister with five days of official celebrations between December 23 and 27: permission to travel and for three households to meet under the same roof. In the manner of all pandemic restrictions, the news has been greeted as being not lenient enough by some and as being far too free and easy by others – inevitable maybe given the fickle nature of the virus and the breadth of experience of those being restrained.

Here in Wye there seems to be a characteristic determination to make the holiday period as festive as possible with ideas of lighting up the village, and of decorating front windows and gardens. We are lucky that we live in such a supportive community. Lucky too that we have retailers and a Farmers’ Market, and pubs and restaurants offering takeaways. Now, surely more than ever, is the time to support these essential pillars of our community. Breadth of experience means that people will want to do this Christmas in different ways, depending very much on the individual. There will be some who will want to push the boundaries of bubbles and tiers, who are perhaps more confident that, through age and health, they would survive the virus. And then there will be others who will spend the time on their own, determined to repel this unwanted invader through rigorous care and hygiene.

This is an occasion where there is no right or wrong answer. All we can hope is that people are respectful of each other’s ways of coping and are careful not to intrude on each other’s space. Above all, it is important not to be complacent. The virus has already killed nearly 60,000 people. We have a vaccine on the way. Let’s not throw away any advantage that we have already secured.



Community Warden Richard Sinden with Our Place Wye director Penny Haynes photographed last year when Richard was in the best of elf... Currently off work with a back problem, we all wish him a speedy recovery.



Our Place Wye is here to support those who may need help over the Christmas period. We can be reached by email: admin@ourplacewye.org.uk or by phone: 07561600889. If we can’t help out, we’ll be happy to point you in the right direction.

Quite aside from all this, we have recently launched two working groups – a social group and an environment group and will write more about them in the New Year. If you’d like to help out, please do get in touch. In the meantime, in whichever way you wish to celebrate, have a peaceful and restorative Christmas.

A reminder that Our Place Wye delivers the **Welcome Pack** to all newcomers to the village.

It contains the latest edition of the Parish Magazine, a letter of welcome and a very useful Wye village Information leaflet. Please get in touch if someone has recently moved in near to where you live: **Sue Powell 01233 812533 or suepowell80@gmail.com**

WYE'S ROVING REPORTER

RETURNING BACK TO SCHOOL AFTER LOCKDOWN

BY MICHAEL MCBRIDE, YEAR 9 STUDENT AT WYE SCHOOL

First of all, I would like to think that these last few months were something we would all like to put behind us. Although it was great to spend quality time with my family, it was also difficult for many both mentally and financially. However, now we are out of the first lockdown I feel that everyone has adapted and complied well with all the rules and guidelines set out by the school and the government and are dealing extremely well with them.

Coming back to school was quite calm and well thought out by the school and greatly organised. The students and staff have been told to wear masks around the buildings to keep the virus from spreading and have also have been told to regularly wash or sanitise their hands. The return was full of pressure from the lessons, as we went from completing 2-3 lessons a day whilst at home to doing a full 6-hour day with five lessons and six on Tuesdays. However, I feel all the pupils will get through the rest of the pandemic with ease.

The break for lunch in the middle of the fourth lesson is very well set out as this separates the year groups, because we have one year eating in the hall and the other having their allocated time on the plaza. It is enjoyable and it gives us time to relax and collect ourselves and I think it boosts productivity in the second half of the lesson we have. However, I do miss having the longer mid-morning break and an hour for lunch which was more enjoyable as we were able to go on the MUGA and field to play football and socialise with our friends. I miss all the co-curricular activities like rugby, hockey and chess clubs that we had last year as they helped keep our brains much more stimulated in school. However, I do understand that we still need to avoid any unnecessary contact to help prevent the spread of the virus.

All the lessons and teachers I have are doing really well helping us to catch up with what we missed over the past six months. I have also been enjoying all my lessons and all the teachers have been very nice and understanding whilst helping us to readjust back into the school environment.



WANDER WYE WINTER WONDER WINDOWS



LIVING ADVENT CALENDAR ~ 1-24 DECEMBER

Look out for Wye's **Living Advent Calendar** this month in the lead up to Christmas, where 24 homes are decorating their windows for each day of advent – to find out more and get involved check out the announcement on the Our Place Wye Facebook page.

KNITIVITY CHALLENGE ~ 5-19 DECEMBER

Can you help find our missing knitted Kings, Shepherds & Sheep? They will be hiding in windows in the centre of the village this December. Knitivity Challenge sheets can be downloaded from the Wye Benefice website: www.wyebenefice.org.uk and there will be a small prize for the winning entry.



TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS ~ 25 DECEMBER - 5 JANUARY

Our Place Wye and St Gregory and St Martin Church invite you to decorate your front window / garden / gate / hedge / fence, on the theme of The Twelve Days of Christmas. Spread some cheer in the village this festive season and post your pictures on the Our Place Wye Facebook page.

A VIRTUAL LUNCH WITH ANDREW STREET NEW MANAGER AT THE CO-OP IN WYE

What brought you to Wye and what do you like about the area?

I was given the option of working in either Kennington or Wye. When I first joined the Co-op 2 years ago I spent a couple of days in store and loved the area. It felt like a really close community with a great spirit so it was a no brainer for me.

What's the most interesting work you've done in your life so far?

The most rewarding work I have done professionally so far would have to be something called Meals on the Hill. At my previous store we donated food to a local group who supplied meals for the less fortunate in the local area. After work I would lend a hand preparing/cooking the meals. At times like this it's important that communities stay tight and stick together.

And the most exciting thing that's happened to you?

Tough question, This one is probably self inflicted but would be asking my fiancée to marry me in the middle of a packed Covent Garden in London.

How does the Co-op Local Community fund work?

The local community fund supports causes that bring people together and make a difference to local communities near to our stores and funeral homes. It also supports the Co-op Foundation (our own charity). To become a member all you have to do is buy a membership card that costs £1 and that's it, then start swiping and let the money build up in your account and the card will do the rest for the local causes. When members buy products or services at the Co-op, a percentage of their spend goes to the local community fund. This money, together with money from our single use carrier bag sales, supports projects in local communities. Each community has a maximum of three causes to support in every round. This year the Co-op is doubling what it gives back to local communities which is something to really shout about.

What's your favourite food and what are you having for lunch today?

I love a takeaway but I also love a Sunday Roast. Lunch on the go today consists of a banana and a ham and cheese crusty roll.



The Co-op supports Our Place Wye

The Co-op in Wye is supporting Our Place Wye this year as one of its three local causes. The other two causes are the Lady J Friends Association and Pilgrims Hospice Ashford. You can choose to nominate one of these organisations to receive your charitable donation which is boosted every time you visit the Co-op. Obviously we'd very much like you to choose us! Visit

<https://membership.coop.co.uk/causes/52421>
for more details.

IT support

Would you like to try out a smartphone, tablet or laptop for free, and get help using it to contact friends and family, and search useful information? OPW is considering a scheme to provide digital devices to villagers who need them and try to get everyone connected. These can help you see and speak to your family and friends, find health information, make appointments, order shopping, access online learning courses, and find endless entertainment and information. We want you all to have these opportunities so please get in touch if you, or anyone you know would like to register to join this free scheme.

Call **07561 600889** leave your name and number and we will call you back as soon as we can. If you already have a smartphone, tablet or laptop and need help to use it more effectively, remember you can contact our resident IT expert for help: eileenburton73@gmail.com or **07717 318450**. In normal circumstances, she can provide 1 to 1 tuition for you but at the moment she is still providing remote help so do ask if you need advice.



Wye Benefice Christmas Church Services will be confirmed in early December as public health requirements become clearer. Visit <https://www.wyebenefice.org.uk/wye> or the Wye Benefice Virtual Church Facebook page for up to date information.

UNIVERSITY EXPERIENCE

BY HONOR BOUVERIE, SECOND YEAR MATHS STUDENT AT LOUGHBOROUGH UNIVERISTY

Being a student in 2020 requires a great transition of learning. With the complete abandonment of timetables, I start my week mapping out when I will cover all the weekly content. As a second year maths student, each week I need to find time to watch 20 hours of pre-recorded online lectures, attend six seminars on campus, complete six problem sheets and do any relevant readings – whilst also maintaining both my mental and physical health.

The on campus seminars involve about 30 students (or perhaps only 4 if it's at 9am) spaced out in a lecture hall designed to fit about 200. Everyone sits in their masks in silence, whilst the lecturer walks you through some maths problems – which they will then have to repeat to 4 other similar groups at other times during the week. The fact that this could easily be online, does beg the question of why the universities have placed them in person – although sometimes they are a good way of having a bit of variation in the routine of get up, log on to the university website, eat, go to sleep.

Since there are lots more people who have been affected by COVID in worse ways than me, and having experienced half of 'normal' university last year, I feel I can't complain too much. The first years who have joined university this year have definitely been given a very raw deal. Starting university in normal times can already feel very isolating, despite the hundreds of students around, so this feeling of isolation can only be exacerbated by, well, enforced isolation. Normally, those friends you make in random modules, those people you chat to and then never see again are part of what makes the start of university so exciting. The closure of gyms, pubs, clubs and cinemas, and lack of clubs and societies, leaves little to punctuate the now monotonous learning experience. Removing the whole social element, you're left with a bunch of students on zoom, mics and cameras off, knowing that if they get picked on they can always feign 'technical issues' and quickly leave the call.

THE NEW 3 RS – REDUCE, REUSE, RECYCLE – ENVIRONMENTAL TIP OF THE MONTH – GET £60 WITH A TINY MOVE OF THE DIAL!

Turning the heating thermostat down by only one degree can save you around £60 a year according to The Energy Saving Trust – just put on that lovely reindeer jumper you got last Christmas if you're feeling a bit cold...

MANY THANKS TO OUR SPONSORS WHO FUND THIS NEWSLETTER – DELIVERED TO 2000 LOCAL HOUSEHOLDS



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