



APRIL UPDATE FROM THE TRUSTEES OF THE LEIGH AND BRANSFORD MEMORIAL HALL LIONS, LAMBS, BUNNIES, HARES, SWIFTS, PONIES and HOGS

The snow and arctic air blowing in at the start of March thankfully didn't stop the steady progress of Spring and its very welcome return to our parish. The white carpets of snowdrops, that appeared at the end of January in our hedgerows and verges, kept their heads up until they were superseded by shoals of daffodils moving like a sea in the March winds. And now April is upon us with the imminent promise of oceans of fragrant bluebells appearing throughout our local woods, copses and common spaces.

While snowdrops, daffodils and bluebells are perhaps the most common *flowers* we associate with the end of winter and the beginning of Spring, folklore also uses the characteristics of *animals* to describe the changeable weather patterns of March, by comparing those cold windy days to a **roaring lion** and the milder calm days to the **docility of a lamb**. As the saying goes, "if March comes in like a lion, it will go out like a lamb" – or vice versa.

And so to **April**, which again this year is the month in which we celebrate Easter – when animals once more feature heavily in our customs. While Easter is a major festival in the Christian calendar, (with Easter Sunday this year falling on April 9th), many of our more recent Easter traditions and symbols (like the traditional **Easter Bunny** and the Easter Egg hunt) have their beginnings in folklore rather than Christian belief.

It's thought that our association with the *Easter Bunny* first originated in 16th century German folklore as the *Osterhase*, or Easter **hare**. In German tradition the fabled *Osterhase* is said to hatch and then hide multi-coloured eggs for children to discover around their homes and gardens on Easter Sunday. So, if you're having an Easter Egg Hunt this year, make sure you keep an eye out for the Osterhase or Easter Bunny. I must warn you, however, that actual sightings are extremely rare!!

We also associate late April with the return of that most elegant of birds, **the swift** – returning to our shores after a long flight back from Africa where they over-winter. Swifts are known to return to the same territory year after year – and so if you're lucky enough to hear and see some in your neck of the woods, then the likelihood is that these are the exact same birds you saw last year and probably the year before that. It's as though these iconic birds feel safe and secure by returning to their familiar 'home' territory and community – a place where they truly 'belong' and can raise their young. And what better place than right here in the heart of Worcestershire?

And talking about the resurgence of life as Spring reassuringly emerges, I can see a similar resurgence in the increasing

number of family bookings made and events that have taken place at the Hall in recent weeks.

By the time you read this no fewer than 12 children's birthday parties and a couple of family gatherings will now have either taken place or are booked for April and May. The resurgence in popularity of celebrating a child's birthday at the Hall is a most welcome trend and judging by the positive feedback we've been getting lately, this is due not only to the recent improvements we've made to the building and its amenities, but also to the fact that our recent investment in solar energy has helped us to keep Hall hire charges to an affordable level in these days of high inflation.

But what about the **ponies** mentioned in the headline, I hear you ask? Well, on Sunday 5 March the local Malvern branch of The Pony Club hired the Hall for their Area 9 Qualifier for The Pony Club National Quiz.



120 competitors from across Area 9 (which roughly stretches down to Swindon and across to Banbury) took part. Malvern fielded 3 Mini Teams and 2 Senior Teams – but sadly no high places for them this time, as both the Mini and Senior Competitions were won by Berkeley Hunt Branch from south Gloucestershire – who now go forward to take part in the final of the National Quiz. For the Area 9 Qualifier, prizes of a grooming kit and pony treats were awarded to the first 4 teams in each class – thanks to the generous sponsorship of Oldfields of Ombersley; Newland Poultry; Nuyard Garden Centre; Broomfields of Holt and Pioneer Feeds. The photo below shows one of the winning Berkeley Hunt teams.



You can find out more about The Pony Club at pcuk.org, and if you're interested in joining the Malvern Branch you can email Amanda Allsop at malvern+amanda@pcuk.org

And finally . . . **hogs**. On **Saturday April 22**, between 5 – 11pm, the Malvern Pony Club are holding a Barn Dance with **Hog Roast** and Promise Auction at the Hall. Tickets cost just £15 (£12.50 for under 16) and are available by contacting Sophie Goodwin at sophiejanegoodwin@hotmail.com

Jon Gamble, Chair of Trustees