

Sponsored by  
Hemmings Coaches

Coach Holidays  
Day Excursions  
Private Hire

Tel. 01237 451282

# Putford Post

www.putford.co.uk  
February-March 2016



Manufacturers of quality cattle,  
sheep, horse and game feeds  
Tel: 01409 254300

## CONTACT LIST - West and East Putford PARISH COUNCILLORS

Lorraine Drake: (Chair): Common Moor, East Putford, EX22 7XP. Tel: 01409 241005  
Allin Bewes: (Vice Chair): Suddon, East Putford, EX22 7UG. Tel: 01409 241214

Phillip Bond: Braunds Farm, Kismeldon, West Putford, EX22 7XH. Tel: 01409 241592  
phil.stanbond@googlemail.com

Ruth G. Clark, Narracott Farm, East Putford, EX22 7XL. Tel: 01409 241095  
ruthanddavid1@yahoo.co.uk

Mike Cornish, Sessacott Farm, West Putford, EX22 7XQ. Tel: 01409 241359  
mtandlacornish@gmail.com

Pauline Geen: Lovelake, North Worden, West Putford, EX22 7UZ. Tel: 01409 261537  
paulinegeen@yahoo.co.uk

Jeremy Jessell: Venn Farm, East Putford, EX22 7XT. Tel: 01409 241409

Mavis Lewis, Bridge Farm, West Putford, EX22 7UF. Tel: 01409 241049

Nigel Moulder, Cudjamoor Farm, East Putford, EX22 7XR. Tel: 01237 451361  
nigel.moulder@hotmail.co.uk

David Pomeroy, Putford Barton, East Putford, EX22 7UG. Tel: 01409 241550  
helenpomeroy1@googlemail.com

Myles Thomas: Raleigh, East Putford, EX22 7UG. Tel: 01409 241251  
mylesthomas15@gmail.com

Jim Wooldridge, Mandor, Milton Damerel, EX22 7NP. Tel: 01409 261102  
william.wooldridge152@btinternet.com

Sue Squire, (Parish Clerk) Haxlea, 2 Threeways, Bratton Fleming, Barnstaple, EX31 4TG  
Tel: 01598 710526  
sue@suesquire.com

County Councillor Robin Julian, Higher Wembworthy Farm, Hartland, EX39 6EN.  
Tel: 01237 441052 or 07801 956 227  
robin.julian@devon.gov.uk

District Councillor: Robert Hicks, West Hele, Buckland Brewer, EX39 5LZ.  
Tel: 01237 451044  
councilor.hicks@torridge.gov.uk

### Putford Parish Council

Mrs L. Drake (Chair), Mrs M. Lewis, Mr A. Bewes (Vice), Mr M. Cornish, Mr P. Bond, Mrs G. Clark, Mr D. Pomeroy, Mr N. Moulder, Mr J. Wooldridge, Mr M. Thomas, Mrs P. Green, Mr J. Jessell.  
Parish Clerk Sue Squire 01598 710526 or sue@suesquire.com

### Local Heritage Mini-Festival

We are an independent group hoping to hold a Mini-Festival in the parishes of Abbots Bickington, Bulkworthy, West and East Putford from Sunday 15th May 2016 to Sunday 22nd May inclusive. More information will follow on noticeboards and in the April-May issue of this magazine.

With the loss of Putford School and properties spread out, we feel there is a need to bring parishioners together socially with what we hope will become an annual event.

As the last remaining meeting place for each parish, we plan to hold an Art Exhibition in Abbots Bickington church, a Flower Festival in Bulkworthy church and a display of Local History in Putford church. In addition there would be musical events, refreshments, plant stalls, a photography competition (for all ages) and more.

We welcome your suggestions and/or help in the planning and running of this event.

For more information or to register an interest, please call Mavis on 01409 241049 or email Malcolm - malcolm.woodcock@me.com

Hayley and Jeremy Jollow would like to thank everybody who donated to their Christmas light appeal.  
This year they collected £134.41 which was given to Childrens Hospice South West.

### Church Services

February		Church Services	
7th	10 am	Abbots Bickington	Morning Prayer
14th	11.30am	Putford	Sung Eucharist
21st	11.30am	Putford	Sung Eucharist
28th	4.30pm	Putford	Evensong
28th	11.30am	Bulkworthy	Sung Eucharist
March		Church Services	
6th	11.30am	Abbots Bickington	Sung Eucharist
13th	11.30am	Putford	Sung Eucharist
20th	11.30am	Putford	Sung Eucharist
27th	4.30pm	Putford	Evensong
27th	10am	Bulkworthy	Morning Prayer

**Bradworthy History Society** held a lively AGM over tea and biscuits on Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> January, 2016. End of year reports included the number of acquisitions, visitors and accounts in detail. Plans were made for future funding, Open Morning themes set and it was agreed 2015 had been both an enjoyable and productive year for the Society.

An end of year balance sheet will be displayed on Bradworthy Parish Notice Board until the end of March and our first Open Morning this year is in the Collacott Room, Bradworthy Memorial Hall on Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> March from 11.00am to 12.30pm.

In honour of his support for National Archive Week in 2015, we have selected photographs of Augustus Jeremiah Honeybun for display and welcome your memories of a TV puppet who "achieved longevity second only to Sooty"!

Refreshments will be available and we look forward to seeing you.

*Daphne, Sarah, Margaret, Jackie and Lin.*

### Skittles

Div 1 Rebels after 19 games have 21 points  
Div 2 Roys Boys after 18 have 26 pints  
Div 2 A Team after 18 have 24 pints

**Our warmest thanks as always to all contributors, sponsors and advertisers.**

**Last copy date for the next issue of the Putford Post is Mar 23rd.**

**Contacts Advertising:- Lorraine:- 01409 241005 Treasurer:- Rosemary 241409**

**Distribution:- Jackie 240321 or email Chris at putfordpost@btinternet.com**

Printed by North Devon Print, Bideford.



### Just a Thought ...

### After Christmas

*The shepherds said one to another, let us now go even unto Bethlehem and see this thing, which has come to pass. (Luke 2:15)*

I'd like to know what happened to the shepherds after Christmas. We can be fairly certain about what happened to the others. There weren't many there, just enough to represent humanity; and we know what happened to some of them. Mary and Joseph, for instance: they were what we'd call naturally good, naturally religious people. There are some in every generation: devout, unwavering in their faith. We know what happened to Mary and Joseph after Christmas: they stayed with Jesus, right up to the end. There are many who will come to Bethlehem who won't go on to Calvary, but Mary did and we can be certain that Joseph stayed beside her as long as he lived. Mary ministered to Jesus at the joy of his nativity, and she was still there, serving him at the sorrow of his crucifixion. So we know what happened to Mary and Joseph. There are always some people whose behaviour we can predict: their goodness is so fixed and settled, we know how they'll react in a given situation. We can usually tell what the truly devoted will do. Bethlehem and Calvary are all one to them. Yes, we know what happened to Mary and Joseph after Christmas.

And we can be fairly certain about what happened to the three wise men. The wise men were, like me, professional religious teachers. There are always some in every generation: they are just naturally interested in religious questions. Generally speaking, they are no worse and no better than those who are not interested in religion. They give their lives to the study of religion, fascinating as it is. Sometimes they try to live it, but mainly they talk about it, make their living at it. It's their profession, after all. So we can be fairly certain about what happened to the wise men. They probably went back home and wrote up the experience and got it published. They'd lecture about it, give illustrated talks to the Women's Institute in Baghdad. After all that's what professional wise men usually do. So we can be fairly certain about what happened to the wise men after Christmas.

But what happened to the shepherds? That's what I'd like to know. After all, they were the biggest group there, as they are the biggest group anywhere. They were the common people, neither particularly devout nor particularly interested in religion; working men with little time to think about such things. Shepherds are usually very busy earning a living or enjoying what spare time they have. And we can be fairly certain how they behaved in Bethlehem. They'd stand around at the back, the way they do at weddings and baptisms, feeling slightly awkward and out of place, nipping out occasionally for a smoke. Perhaps they were impressed in spite of themselves, made uneasy by the sense that maybe there was something here they ought to be paying attention to, because it was mysteriously important. I like to think that at least one of the shepherds was permanently affected by that night and that he stood, strong and grieving, with the group at Calvary a lifetime later, and that he himself died on some alien hillside for the sake of the babe he saw born the night he watched in the fields above Bethlehem. I like to think that, and maybe it's true of one of them. But I suspect it wasn't true for many of them. I think I know what happened to the shepherds after Christmas, because it happens year after year to most of us. After the temporary excitement and charm of it all we go back to our average ways. We remain unchanged. Bethlehem is nice once a year, but we are too booked up to go any further.

But why? Why is it so easy to remain unchanged, uninvolved? After all, we are not talking about some harmless and irrelevant interest that has its strange enthusiasts. We are talking about the action and presence of Almighty God. We are talking about God whom one day, maybe one day soon, we shall confront with unavoidable finality. Of all things, then, why is it so easy to avoid him, to avoid the very reality that gives us the power of avoidance? Why is it so easy to be like the shepherds who went back to the price of wool and the cup final at Nazareth? The answer is simple. Is there, do you think, anything more helpless than a new-born baby? One thing, perhaps: a man nailed to a cross. Yet this is how God comes to us: in helplessness. He does not crush us with fantastic power: he presents himself in weakness and in silence. But why? Why does he make it so difficult: a baby in a manger, a man on a cross? Why like that? It's because he will not force us. He wants us to recognise him by our free choice: and because he is so quiet, it is easy to overlook him. Day after day he lays before us quiet and undemanding signs of his presence, wanting us to stay long enough to read them and recognise him and go to him at last. And most of the time we don't notice, we rush past.

In Church, or wherever we are reading this article, we're given another opportunity to meet him. Like the shepherds, maybe we were interested in Christmas for the excitement, the novelty. Perhaps some unbidden prompting caused us, almost in spite of ourselves, to think about these events. Whatever the reason, here we are: reading this article or sitting in Church, caught for a moment slightly off guard.

I wonder what happened to us after Christmas? Has tomorrow engulfed us too soon and obliterated the memory of that unguarded moment just inside the shadow by the stable door? Or will this moment be our awakening, our moment of final recognition? Will we go with him beyond this moment, or is this to be another of those one-night-stand moments that so characterise the lives of those who are too afraid or too confused to commit themselves? Time is getting on for all of us. I wonder what has happened to us after Christmas?

**God bless - Richard Freeman**

### Thank you

to everyone who came and helped out at the Big Breakfast on Saturday 23rd January in Sutcombe village hall. This event was raising money for the Friends of Sutcombe School, the village hall and St Andrew's Church bell fund. A total of £982.50 was raised, this was divided between the three organisations so each organisation got £327.50

A very successful event which was enjoyed by all.

*Amy Bellew*

### Recent Planning Applications and Determinations

#### During June 2015 – January 2016

**Ref. No: 1/0179/2015/FUL** Construction of agricultural workers dwelling along with access and drainage works at Mambury Farm, East Putford, Holsworthy EX22 7UH. Validated: 3 March 2015. Status: Permitted.

**Ref. No: 1/0324/2015/FUL** Conversion of existing barn into workshop/studio at Cory Barton, West Putford, Holsworthy. Validated: 24 June 2015. Status: Permitted.

**Ref. No: 1/0870/2015/AGMB** Change of use of agricultural building to one dwelling under Class Q (a) at Nichols Farm, West Putford, Holsworthy. Validated: 20 August 2015. Status: Permitted.

**Ref. No: 1/1177/2015/FULM** Construction of 5 megawatt solar park and ancillary development on 14.6 hectares at Bulkworthy, Holsworthy. Validated: 21 December 2015. Status: Being considered.

**Ref. No: 1/1314/2015/FUL** Construction of two bay oak framed garage at Mambury Manor, East Putford, Holsworthy. Validated 13 January 2016. Status: Being considered.

*John Light*

### NHS Patient Advice and Complaints team

The Clinical Commissioning Group advice team provides a service to patients, carers, family members, the public and staff. They offer advice and support with concerns relating to NHS services, including free and confidential help to investigate problems as they happen.

Hearing from patients helps them to make improvements and gives early warning of system problems so the CCG is keen to hear when things go wrong.

The CCG can be reached on 01392 267665 or 0300 123 1672

Email: [pals.devon@nhs.net](mailto:pals.devon@nhs.net)

**Chilworthy village hall** Valentine's Dance with The Texans on Saturday, 13 February, 8.00 p.m. to midnight. Bring and Share supper. Tea and coffee. Raffle. £5.00 per person.

## NOTES OF WEST AND EAST PUTFORD PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 1 DECEMBER 2015.

The Meeting was chaired by Councillor A Bewes

Apologies received from Councillor P Bond, Mrs L Drake, Mrs M Lewis and J Wooldridge.

The Chairman welcomed newly co-opted Councillors Mrs P Geen and M Thomas who had both attended New Councillor Training at Bridestowe. A letter of application to be co-opted had been received from Mr J Jessell who was unanimously co-opted on to the Parish Council, bringing the numbers up to full strength at 12 with no further vacancies. Councillor Mrs P Geen declared a Declaration of Interest as a non executive director of Northern Devon Health Care Trust.

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 27 October were approved and signed.

No members of the public present to raise any items.

The Police were not present and no report received.

County Councillor Julian advised there had been complications in organising training for Road Warden Schemes and Chapter 8 training; grass cutting disposal taken to the local tip is free for the next six months if it has been done on a voluntary basis. A date had not yet been set for the work to be done at Venn Bridge. It has to be done by the end of the financial year. He would be accompanying Councillor Bewes on a site visit to a field entrance which had been tarmaced, to highlight a waste of material and money.

District Councillor Hicks was not present, apologies not given or a Report received.

Notes of a Meeting of the Holsworthy Area Advisory Group on 5 October had been circulated from the Editor of the Putford Post and noted, with grateful thanks for attending on behalf of the Parish Council.

Holsworthy Rural Community Transport had been advised that the Parish Council had allocated £100 from its TAP (Town and Parish) Fund allocation towards the running costs.

There were no Planning Applications to consider. A TDC Decision Notice to approve prior notification for the change of use of agricultural building to 1 no. dwelling under Class Q (a) Farm Building, Nicholls Farm, West Putford was noted. There was a discussion about the conversion of barns to dwellings where County Councillor Julian advised the District Councillor could call an Application in to the Plans Committee at TDC. It was explained that the Parish Council did not have contact with the District Councillor and Councillor offered to help if necessary.

Balances were given and payments agreed. The 2016/17 Budget was set. The 2016/17 Precept was agreed at £2,100, unchanged from last year. The Clerk's salary was increased by £24 per annum. Councillors agreed to sign a form to allow Lloyds Bank to send text alerts to the Clerk on a weekly basis to show the balance of the current account.

The dates for Meetings in 2016 were set: 23 February; 26 April; 31 May; 30 August; 25 October and 6 December, all on Tuesdays in Bradworthy Primary Academy at 7.30pm.

*Sue Squire*

**Gardening (cont)** There is still time to plant bare root rose and fruit bushes before the plants start growing again and if you have any currants red, white and black, gooseberries etc. and then it is still time to prune them. The idea to pruning all of them except for blackcurrants is to form a vase shape. This allows the air and light into the bushes and this helps stop/reduce mildew and helps in the ripening of the fruit even if we have a year like 2012.

February is also the time to plant Alliums and Lilies in the garden. If you grow hellebores this is the time to remove all of last year's leaves. This helps to show off the wonderful flowers that will soon be showing themselves off. Once the snowdrops and aconites have finished flowering it is good to divide the clumps up. By dividing the clumps up it helps stops large clumps producing and the increased risk of the bulbs going blind and not flowering, but mainly it give you a chance to increase these lovely harbingers of spring in your garden.

### **Plants for damp soils**

**Hydrangea paniculata Vanille Fraise;** A welcome addition from French breeders, this plant is already an award winner. Loose pyramid-shaped clusters of flowers form at the tips of red-stemmed branches in summer. They emerge creamy-white and turn shades of pink as they age, before finally taking on rich red and russet tones. Perfect for adding late summer colour to the shrub border, or for creating an informal, flowering hedge. **Garden care:** To enhance flowering prune hard in early spring, cutting back the previous season's shoots to within a few buds of the permanent, woody framework of the plant.

**Amelanchier lamarckii -June Berry;** Delicate, star-shaped, white flowers in March to April and bronze leaves maturing to dark green and then orange and red in autumn. Noted for its beautiful autumn leaf colour, this upright-stemmed shrub or tree is an ideal specimen plant for a shrub or mixed border in full sun or part-shade. **Garden care:** To train as a multi-stemmed tree remove stems that are growing too close together back to ground level.

**Cornus alba 'Elegantissima' – Dogwood;** This deciduous shrub has pretty, grey-green leaves with white margins and produces small, creamy-white flowers in May and June. But it's really grown for the vivid red stems that are revealed when the leaves fall. This lovely dogwood looks stunning planted in groups in damp areas of the garden, beside water, or in a winter border. Best in full sun, it works particularly well with orange or purple-stemmed varieties of dogwood. **Garden care:** In March cut the stems back hard to within 5-7cm (2-3in) from the ground and apply a generous 5-7cm (2-3in) mulch of well-rotted garden compost or horse manure around the base of the plant.

**Filipendula rubra 'Venusta';** in reliably moist soils, this is a fast growing perennial that will soon form a good-sized clump of handsome foliage. In early summer branching sprays appear, topped with deep pink feathery flowers, which fade to a softer pink as they age. It is an ideal choice for naturalising in an open woodland or meadow where there is a reliable source of water. **Garden care:** Apply a generous layer of mulch in spring.

**Hosta 'Devon Green'** almost exclusively shade-lovers, Hostas are principally grown for their valuable foliage detail over the spring and summer months. Their planting versatility enables use as ground cover in a border, or as an understory to shrubby plantings, or equally they make handsome specimens to grace a garden planter. Hosta 'Devon Green' is a chance sport of Hosta 'Halcyon', forming dense, medium sized hummocks of heart-shaped leaves. Being dark in colour, their highly glossy surface throws into relief the distinct mid rib veining. Lily-like flowers of pale lilac appear in high summer. **Garden care:** Surround plants with a ring of crushed eggshells to offer protection from slug damage.

**Rodgersia aesculifolia;** Towering spikes of star-shaped, white or pink flowers on large panicles up to 60cm long in midsummer. This striking, clump-forming perennial with its horse chestnut-like leaves looks great planted in the moist margins of a stream or pond. Best grown in a sheltered, shady spot where it contrasts well with the lacy texture of ferns. **Garden care:** Add lots of well-rotted leaf mould when planting. Protect the young foliage against slug damage using beer traps or environmentally friendly slug pellets. Lift and divide congested colonies in early spring.

*Richard Hart*

### **Hart of the Garden**

With over 30 years of professional horticultural experience. Offering practical horticultural advice. Planting Schemes, specialist in pruning, Garden Renovation. Landscape Construction and maintenance work undertaken.

Richard Hart  
Mobile 07900 355387  
Email richard.hart69@btinternet.com

A new card designed to help people with autism has been launched in Devon. Carried by people with the condition, the card identifies its carrier as a person living with autism, which affects how they communicate with or relate to other people and the world around them. It can potentially help any situation in which a person with autism finds it difficult to express themselves, or make themselves understood. And that's more likely to happen in stressful situations. Devon & Cornwall Police supports the launch of the new autism alert card, hoping that it will help their officers engage with people with autism in the community. Officers are to receive guidance and information on how to adapt their behaviour in those circumstances. Devon County Council and Plymouth City Council have funded development of the card, in partnership with other organisations.

The card can be requested from [www.dimensionsforliving.org](http://www.dimensionsforliving.org)



The following incidents have occurred:

Bradworthy: 2x CRIMINAL DAMAGE TO PROPERTIES AND BURGLARY

CRIMINAL DAMAGE TO TELEPHONE LINE BY MEANS OF FIRING SHOTGUN AT IT

Clawton: DOG OUT OF CONTROL CAUSING INJURY

THREE DEERS SHOT, CARCASS DRAGGED TO THE ROADSIDE AND LOADED ONTO VEHICLE.

Tetcott: AN ATTEMPTED THEFT – TRAILER LADEN WITH GOODS

Halwill: DEFIBRILATOR UNIT LOCATED IN TELEPHONE BOX HAS BEEN STOLEN

THEFT FROM AN INTERNATIONAL TRACTOR ACCESSORIES GRILL, DIPSTICK AND DEISEL CAP WAS TAKEN.

Thornbury: FOUR WHEEL NUTS TAKEN FROM A LANDROVER DEFENDER

BURGLARY

St Giles on the Heath: COMMUNITY SPEED WATCH SIGN STOLEN

Chilsworthy: CRIMINAL DAMAGE TO A STONE PERIMETER GARDEN WALL BY ARROW WITH

STAINLESS STEEL TIP

PCSO 30099 Raquel ROWE

Holsworthy Police Station

### Sutcombe School News

The children have all settled back into school after their Christmas holidays and have been working hard. The children in Class 1 have recently been reading the story Previously by Allan Ahlberg which consists of lots of fairy tale characters telling their story backwards using the sentence starter previously. The children have each built up to writing their own Previously story where they have been working on expanding their noun phrases by including adjectives. In maths the children have been working on multiplication and division. All the children are really enjoying their current London topic, where they have so far learnt about different London landmarks and worked on finding them on a map. They then moved onto learning about the Great Fire of London in 1666 where they have created a timeline of events during the fire and written a diary like Samuel Pepys did. They have also used their designing and making skills to each make a house like the houses that would have been burnt down in the Great Fire of London.

The children in Class 2 have looked at clips from Harry Potter to help them write scenes where tension is building and have also looked at Roald Dahl books. In maths they have looked at presenting data in graphs and how to interpret it. As part of our topic they have looked at lifecycles and how to classify animals.

The whole school were recently visited by Lindsey Brading from Bideford Fire Station who came in to talk to each class about how to stay safe at home. The children learnt to identify fire hazards, how to get out of the house safely if there was a fire and the importance of having a smoke alarm at home. The children learnt different rhymes to help them remember what to do, like: Get out, stay out, call 999 and to stop, drop and roll if part of their clothes was on fire. The children all enjoyed the different activities and learnt important life skills relating to fire safety.

The children are now looking forward to their archery lesson later in the term as well as being able to perform their dance routine that they have been learning in PE to all their parents and carers.

Learning all about Fire Safety with Lindsey Brading.

Class 2



Class 1



### **Gardening**

This winter has been one of the wettest winters that I think anyone can remember, it seems that we have hardly had two days of dry weather since the beginning of November, and this makes any gardening very difficult and the plants that we are trying to grow struggle. One of the most important things to do is not to work any water logged soils, as this will damage the structure of your soil and will be very difficult to repair. If you do have to go on to your garden, it is recommended that you use boards if possible, this will reduce any damage to the soil.

If your soil has poor drainage but not a high water table (most of the soils that we have in this part of the country), then dig in plenty of organic matter. Organic matter is beneficial to clay soils as it helps chemically to break up the clay into smaller crumbs. Adding sand, grit and gravel is seldom effective as it is not often practical to add enough to reduce the overwhelming influence of the clay content. You will need one barrow load of organic matter per square metre of soil in order to make a significant difference to the soil structure and drainage.

It is still wise to select plants that are tolerant of wet soil conditions. Planting trees and shrubs on shallow raised mounds helps to protect them from waterlogging in wet soil.

If you want to grow some of the plants in your garden that need even more drainage then it would be thinking of building raised beds in your garden. These have the benefit of improving the drainage to the area, but you can also create a soil structure that is perfect for the plants that you would like to grow. If you want to grow Mediterranean plants that require improved drainage, raised beds makes it easier to grow with the climatic conditions that we experience in this part of the country.

Where there is a high water table, you can either decide to go with your soil type and plant a bog garden, or else consider installing [a drainage systems](#).

These is a lot of pruning that is needed at this time in year, fruit trees (apples and pears), soft fruit, wisteria and clematis all need to be pruned as well as a number of other species. Winter jasmine (*Jasminum nudiflorum*) can be pruned back to about 5cm from the old wood and to keep it in the space that you have for it to grow, as long as the plant has finished flowering.

Clematis have three different pruning groups and this dictates how the plants should be pruned.

Group 1 are the winter and early spring flowering species (*montana*, *alpina*, *macropetala*, *amandii* and *cirrhosa* species) with these it is just a matter of pruning out the dead and damaged wood and to keep it within bounds of the area that you have space for.

Group 2 are the large flowering hybrids, these plants are best pruned once the plants are in active growth and then it is a matter of cutting them back to strongly grown buds and removing all damaged and dead wood.

Lastly we have group 3, these are the late flowering species and the easiest to prune. Once they are in active growth and you can see strong buds growing at the base of the plant, it is pruned down to around 20cm from the ground.

After all this pruning it is advisable that you give the plants a good layer of mulch with well-rotted organic matter and a feed of a good balanced fertiliser.

As for wisteria, this is the time to give them a hard prune. This is done by keeping the main frame work and all of the side shoots that are growing should be cut back to two or three buds. This may look a bit hard but it does encourage the stimulation of flowering buds. If you have a new plant it is best to work out where you would like to cover with the plant before you carry out any pruning and train in the stems into the areas that need to be filled up and then prune out the rest of the plant. As in clematis always give them a good layer of mulch and feed after pruning.

In the vegetable garden this is the time when the work load starts to get more and you can get ahead to produce some early delicious tasting veg. If you have a glasshouse or even just a nice sunny windowsill you can sow some early onions, leeks, lettuce, tomatoes and peppers just to name a few. Early potatoes also need to be chitted so that they can get away quickly once they have been planted later in the year.

As for rhubarb it is the time when you can lift your large mature plants and divide them up and with the divisions you can either replant them to increase your stock or if you have somewhere that is warm and dark why not try forcing them for those lovely pink stems that are so nice in pies, crumbles and even savoury dishes with game or pork. Once you have forced your crowns do not just throw them away, replant them back in the garden and they will grow away just remember not to pick any more of those stems before 2014 and give each plant a good mulch and feed to give it all the encouragement you can.