

During half term Bromyard Halloweenfest took place on the Town Green with pumpkin carving, face painting, circus skills, balloon modelling, apple bobbing and Halloween crafts. The free event was funded by Herefordshire Council and despite the erratic weather it was well attended hopefully will return next year.

On the morning of November 11th. two short but meaningful services with readings, prayers, a bugler and the laying of wreaths were held at the memorial garden by the Halo Centre and the Korean Memorial on the Town Green. Although dry it was bitterly cold and so it was a great relief to move to the Public Hall for refreshments and the opportunity to catch up with friends and also talk with visitors attending the services for the first time.

In the evening we attended the bonfire and firework display at the Rifle Range on the Stourport Road. The constant rain of the previous week had made for very muddy conditions underfoot but again the rain held off for the event which was organised by the parent associations from local schools and was well attended by people of all ages. At 5.30 I was taken to the centre of a field and pressed the plunger to light the fire – at first I thought it hadn't taken but within a few minutes there was a fine blaze. At 6pm. The firework display started and this was a truly magnificent affair which could be seen for miles around.

The next morning was the Remembrance Day service. It was a drizzly morning and we kept receiving text message that the parade from the Conquest car par to the church was "on" then "off" and finally "on". There was a good group of Army cadets plus the local British Legion, the Guides and Scouts and others who wanted to march. The Town Crier Peder was to lead the procession followed by the Rev. Phil Millar from St. Peter's and me. Peder set off at a ferocious pace despite the "light drizzle" which was falling. The vicar and I were followed by the military contingent and all I could hear was the command "left / right" and thinking to myself "I'm never going to make it" especially as we took the long route down High Street and Broad Street and up Church Road. I was so relieved to arrive at the church but then had to wait for members of the public to find their seats before I was escorted up the aisle to my seat in the front row. The service itself was very well organized and despite attending many times I never cease to regret the loss of talent when the names of those lost in wars and conflicts from the Boer War to the present day are read out. For a short space of time each name becomes a living person mourned by their families – and this just in Bromyard. The loss throughout the country is immeasurable. After the service it was a quick trot for the Deputy Lieutenant and myself to take the salute outside Oaklands in Broad Street and finally back to the Public Hall for refreshments.

Then the town started preparing for the Lights Switch on at the weekend. Shop windows were cleared to make way for displays on the theme of Christmas carols or songs which gave great scope to the creativity of the displays. The actual judging took place on the Friday by pupils from Queen Elizabeth School. Saturday morning was almost dry and preparations started early for the street market and the various Christmas Fairs and craft fairs taking part. Roy and I started early with a good breakfast at the Cosy Cafe and then called in at many shops and visited the various events. My collection of raffle tickets grew and I won a miscellaneous selection of tombola prizes. By mid-day I was strolling round Pump Street waiting for Father Christmas when I received a phone call from Peder telling me I should be at the Conquest Theatre for the Father Christmas' procession. So another fast trot through the town and mercifully this was a slow procession as Father Christmas' sleigh was being pushed. Roy and I visited the grotto where queues of excited children were being arranged into order. Then back to the Oak Room at the Falcon for the Mayor's reception and the arrival of fellow Mayors and other invited guests who were able to watch the large crowds from the upstairs windows. At 5pm. Peder invited everyone downstairs to line up and wait the arrival of the drummers and the lantern parade. As we walked up the street to the podium outside Oaklands the crowds parted and we made our way through. I was glad to be on the podium looking out across the

square as the whole area was packed with people, dogs and prams. The countdown began and then the lights were switched on and the culmination of weeks of hard work by the Lighting Brigade sprang into life and the whole town lit up to the delight of everyone. Once again Bromyard became the centre of the Universe.

The following weekend was the Christmas Tree Festival at St. Peter's Church with a magnificent turnout of trees decorated by various organisations throughout the town. I had the unenviable task of judging the trees for the "Mayor's Award". After an hour of deliberation and making notes I chose the Bromyard Brownies for the children's section and Bromyard Methodist Church for the adult section. Once these trees had been identified the open voting could begin for members of the public and these awards went to St. Peter's School and the Bromyard branch of the Royal British Legion and I will be presenting these awards in the next few days.

"Late Night Shopping" proved very popular and once again I had my picture taken with the "gentleman in red" – on a sleigh this time.

During the final run up to Christmas Roy and I shall be taking part in various Christmas activities: in the Nursing Homes, the Candlelight service at St. Peter's Church and assembly at St. Peter's School. We will also helping out at Warm Spaces and the Food Bank.

So it only remains for me to thank you all for you support throughout 2023 and wish you all a well deserved Christmas break in whatever way you wish to celebrate.
Let us hope that 2024 sees some resolution to the conflicts throughout the world.

Cllr Dee Dunne-Thomas
Chairman of the Council
13.12.2023