

DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT EDITION FRIDAY 4th APRIL 2003 TO ANNE BRAITHWAITE AT THE MILL, Tel. No: 831282 [e-mail: ascottmill@btopenworld.com].

The Ascott Grapevine was born when The Deanery – the church magazine covering a wide area as far as Chipping Norton and Rollright – was laid to rest. It was conceived as an independent newsletter for Ascott and it set out to cover the full range of activities in the village. Initially paid for by personal donations, it is now primarily funded by the Parish Council and the Parochial Church Council but it retains its independent voice. In the period since its start it has grown, and we have all come to look forward to the historical articles by Wendy Pearse, the wild life commentaries by Stuart Fox, and to enjoy the attractive cover page produced by Viv Lewis.

Time flies - and it is hard to believe that this is the 37th edition and that the Grapevine is now in its tenth year. The decade has brought many changes in the village - a new Tiddy Hall, a new Pavilion, a new roof for the Church, new benches on the village green and playing field, new memorial gates for the church yard, new equipment for the children's playground - but balanced by the loss of the farm shop and then the village shop.

For the Grapevine too it is time for change. The producer, Anne Braithwaite, feels it is time to hang up her quill pen, and serves notice of her intention to “retire” at the end of the year. Volunteers will be needed - an individual or a group of people who would be willing to take over production and to carry the Grapevine forward. Interested parties please make contact!

Time to Think...

I must be getting older. The other day I sat with a friend, reminiscing about the Christmases of our childhood!

One of my friend's favourite moments always came just after the Christmas lunch. When all the grown ups flopped after the washing up and nodded off during the Queen's speech, she would creep upstairs to her bedroom. Once there she went through a sort of ritual, arranging all her presents on top of her bed - even down to the smallest stocking fillers. When they were all neatly arranged, she would stand and look

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at them for a while. For Jane, ‘contemplating’ the gifts in this way became an important part of receiving them, giving thanks for them, looking forward to owning, using and enjoying them.

This act of ‘contemplating’ a gift is at the very heart of the Church's major post-Christmas feast in January, that of the Epiphany. For us in the Western Church, at Epiphany we celebrate the arrival of the Magi with their gifts and watch with awe as these ‘Kings’ pay homage to and kneel before the babe in the manger, the great gift of God for all peoples. However, in the Eastern Orthodox Churches there is a different focus. They remember the Baptism of Jesus in the River Jordan by St. John, when the voice of God proclaims Jesus as God's Son. Epiphany means a divine manifestation in Greek and in that moment of disclosure, the Orthodox Church see not only the confirmation of the divine nature of Jesus but also a revelation of the one God as Holy Trinity: Jesus, the Son, rises from the waters of the Jordan; the Spirit of God descends like a dove, and the voice of God the Father is heard. I think that understanding of the Epiphany is important: whilst we still celebrate the gift of the Christ-Child, we are called to remember and think about the mystery of God as the Holy Trinity.

Just as my friend Jane used to step back and look at her Christmas presents set out on her bed, so I hope there will be time for each of us during this New Year to step back and contemplate God's great gift to us in Christ Jesus and so to receive and enjoy the love that is offered us by God the Holy Trinity: the communion of love by whom we are called together. Happy New Year!

Mark Abrey

From the Registers

Baptism – Thomas Michael Hercules Hill – 8th December 2002

Retiring from Office....

At the Annual Parochial Church Meeting, to be held on Sunday 16th March immediately after the morning service, Anthony Wood and Jim Beveridge will be standing down as Churchwardens after many years of faithful service. We are extremely grateful for all the work that they have undertaken on behalf of the Village and the Church. Neither Anthony or Jim want a fuss to be made but it seems fitting that we should mark their retirement with a service of Choral Evensong from

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the Book of Common Prayer and we are delighted that the Bishop of Dorchester, the Right Reverend Colin Fletcher, has agreed to preach at this service, which will be held on **Sunday 16th February at 6.00 p.m.** Churchwardens are representatives of the people of the Village – parishioners – and I hope that many from the Village will join us for this service.

Annual Parochial Church Meeting

As mentioned earlier in the Magazine, the Annual Parochial Church Meeting [APCM] will take place immediately after the morning service on Sunday 16th March at 11.45 am. This is the formal business meeting of the year where the Parochial Church Council [PCC] presents a report of its finances and business for the previous year and where officers of the Church are elected. This year there will be elections for two Churchwardens and three PCC members.

The Churchwardens are elected by parishioners, in other words anyone living within the village of Ascott-under-Wychwood. Their role is to represent the interests and wishes of the people of the village to the Vicar and those of the Vicar to the parishioners. They also have a legal responsibility as Officers of the Bishop with regard to the property and fabric of the Church. Any parishioner can stand as Churchwarden.

The Parochial Church Council, of which the Churchwardens are *ex officio* members, is the committee elected by those on the Church's Electoral Roll – a register of members. The role of the PCC is to assist the Vicar in running of the Church. Those retiring from office may stand for re-election, as can other member of the Church's Electoral Roll.

A list of the members of the Electoral Roll will be posted on the Church notice board on 9th February. If you wish to take part in the election of PCC members and attend the APCM it is important that you are registered on this Roll. Application forms for membership are available from Jim Beveridge, 18 London Lane or from the back of Church. They must be returned to Jim by 23 February.

Please think carefully who you would like to be Churchwarden and PCC members. Nomination forms and rules relating to the conduct of elections will be posted in the Church Porch on 16th February. Any one wishing to stand for either position is asked to speak to myself or Nigel Hawkes who will happily supply leaflets outlining duties and responsibilities.

Mark Abrey – 01608 676572

Lent Course

Many people have expressed the wish to know more about the Christian faith. To this end we are holding a Lent Course in Ascott-under-Wychwood that will meet at 7.45pm on Mondays during Lent, beginning on March 10. This year we will take a closer look at the Gospels, asking such questions as: 'What is a gospel? Why were they written? What about those gospels not included in the New Testament? What portrait of Jesus of Nazareth emerges from each of the gospels?'

Would you like to know more about the Bible and modern scholarship in a friendly and unthreatening environment? Would you value the chance to discover more in company with others? No previous knowledge assumed!

Interested? Then please let Mark Abrey know, either in person at Church; by email to rector@thechasebenefice.org.uk or drop him a line at The Vicarage, Church Road, Chadlington, OX7 3LY. And watch out for details of the venue, to be posted on notices around the village.

Services at Holy Trinity Church, Ascott-u-Wychwood

Full details of times of services in Ascott and the rest of the Chase Benefice can be found on the notice board in the Church porch and on the various boards around the village. Our normal pattern of worship is:

Sunday	Time	Service
1st	11.00 a.m.	Matins
	4.00 p.m.	Family Service
2nd	8.00 a.m.	Holy Communion
3rd	11.00 a.m.	Holy Communion
4th	11.00 a.m.	Holy Communion

Morning and Evening Prayer are said in Church every Friday at 8.00 a.m. and 4.00 p.m.

Special services January – April:

Sunday 16th February – 6.00 pm Choral Evensong at Ascott-under-Wychwood to mark the retirement of Anthony Wood and Jim Beveridge as Churchwardens. [Preacher: The Bishop of Dorchester]

5th March **Ash Wednesday** –

10.00 am Holy Communion at Ascott-u-Wychwood

8.00 p.m. Holy Communion at Chadlington

Weekly in Lent

- Monday** 7.45 p.m. - Ascott [Lent course]
- Tuesday** 6.30 p.m. - Spelsbury [Compline]
- Wednesday** 8.00 p.m. - Enstone [Lent Course]
- Thursday** 7.45 p.m. - Chadlington [Lent Course]
- Sunday 16th March – Holy Communion followed by the **Annual**

Parochial Church Meeting

- Wednesday 19th March **Joseph of Nazareth**
10.00 a.m. - Spelsbury [Holy Communion]
- Tuesday 25th March **Annunciation**
10.00a.m. - Ascott-u-Wychwood [Holy Communion]
- Sunday 30th March **Mothering Sunday** – Family service
4.00 p.m. [there is no Family Service on 6th April]
- Sunday 13th April **Palm Sunday** – Benefice Service at Enstone [with The Benefice Choir]. Those who are able, please meet outside the School at 10.00 a.m. for the Blessing of the Palms. We will then walk to the Church arriving at 10.30 for the start of the service.
- 17th April **Maundy Thursday**
7.30 p.m. - Spelsbury [Holy Communion]
- 18th April **Good Friday** –
10.00 a.m. Liturgy for Good Friday at Chadlington
12.00 noon Stations of the Cross at Enstone
2.00 p.m. Service of Devotion at Ascott-u-Wychwood
- 19th April **Holy Saturday** –
Easter Vigil 8.30 p.m. at Ascott-under-Wychwood
- 20th April **Easter Day** –
Dawn Eucharist 6.15 a.m. in Spelsbury Churchyard
[details on notice-board nearer the time!]
11.00 am Holy Communion

For further details, or to book a Christening or Wedding, please telephone Mark Abrey on 01608 676572

Note for your Diary

**The Church Fête will be held on
Saturday 12th July 2003
on the Recreation Field at 2.00 p.m.**

DING-DONG MERRILY.....

The bells of Ascott Church ring to call the faithful to worship, celebrate feasts, festivals, weddings and important national events.

The earliest recorded mention of Ascott bells was in 1526 when the will of Richard Tayler makes a bequest “to the belles of Ascott, a sheepe.” In 1607 Edward Norcott left money “to those who ring the bells for me.” In 1720 Dr. Rawlinson noted that the tower at Ascott had three bells.

Today our tower has six bells, five of which were made more than two hundred and fifty years ago, in 1744.

Just imagine they would have been rung to celebrate George II’s final victory over Bonnie Prince Charlie’s forces at Culloden in 1746, Wolfe’s capture of Quebec in 1759 and the battles of Waterloo and Trafalgar. There would have also been peals to mark the coronation of nine monarchs.

When I ring the bells today I remember those many generations that performed the service in the past and wonder who they were and what they did and where they lived.

The five oldest bells were made by Henry Bagley III, one of a family of bell founders that were based in Chacombe, Northamptonshire. This family was making bells throughout the 18th century and most bells installed in towers in North Oxfordshire during this time were theirs. In addition to their permanent base at Chacombe they set up a number of temporary foundries, including one at Witney, from which our bells probably came. Other churches, in this area, that had bells made by the Bagleys include Fulbrook, Witney, Langford and Shilton.

A small bell for the clock, which hangs in the penthouse on top of the tower, was added in 1797.

In 1905 the tower and bell frame was overhauled and a sixth bell, the treble, was added. This bell was made at the Whitechapel foundry, in London and was a gift to the village from the Cornbury Estate.

Our largest bell, the sixth or tenor, weighs 7½ cwts (381 kilos) and is 34 inches wide (86 cms). The smallest, the first or treble, tips the scales at a mere 3 cwt (152 kilos).

Traditionally church bells bear inscriptions indicating the maker or benefactors and some suitably uplifting text. Our second bell’s inscription reads, “Sing unto the lord a new song.” The third says “Fear God and honour the King.” The fourth says, “Henry Bagley made this peal, it is pure in the year 1744.”

In addition to the above uplifting texts the second, fifth and sixth bells mention the two Church Wardens of the time, John Chaundy (1722-1788) and Michael Rose (1703-1765).

The Chaundy family lived in Ascott from the late 16th century until the male line ended in 1960. The family produced a number of bell ringers and churchwardens in the 16th and 17th centuries including one especially famous ringer Fulke Chaundy (1618-1694).

Michael Rose (1703-1765) was a farmer, both owning land and leasing land from the Duke of Marlborough's estate, in all he farmed over one hundred and sixty acres of which he owned the freehold of fourteen. The Rose family was first mentioned in Parish records with the birth of Jane in 1701. The male line disappeared after 1800.

Next time those of you living around the church hear our sometimes less than perfect practice sessions, remember, it has been a feature of our village life for several hundred years. So please be as forgiving as past generations, and I hope that the bells will continue to ring for many years to come.

Stuart Fox

(With thanks to Wendy Pearse and
Ken Wakefield of Spelsbury for their help)

ASCOTT-UNDER-WYCHWOOD PARISH COUNCIL

The New Year has started with a busy Agenda for the Parish Council particularly regarding recent planning applications. The Parish Council meeting held on 6th January was attended by 30 villagers and strong feelings were aired regarding the planning application to build 14 houses on the site at 18 Shipton Road. A letter has now been sent to West Oxfordshire District Council reflecting the views of that meeting and we await the outcome of the planning meeting. As you will know from the recent questionnaire we hope that planning consent will soon be granted for the Corner House Farm site including a village shop. The public meeting on 10th February and the results of the questionnaire will determine if there is enough support for a shop and the steering group can then proceed accordingly.

Work has started on the footbridge over the Evenlode near Manor Farm and we are pleased to report that there will be an extra handrail at child height added to this bridge and the footbridge near The Mill.

The hedgerow has now been cut back on London Lane opposite the

Green making it easier to walk along the footpath.

From February 2003 it will be mandatory for all Parish Councils to adopt a Publication Scheme under the Freedom of Information Act. The aims of this Act are to develop a culture of openness amongst public authorities and we are required to raise awareness of the existence of information relating to Parish Council business and this information must be available for inspection. Parish Council meetings are always open to the public and documents relating to these meetings have always been available for inspection but we are now required to show how it is available and in what format. Look out for notices, information on the web site and in the Grapevine if you wish to access Parish Council information.

Chipping Norton Road from the level crossing to the junction with the A361 will be closed for approximately 3 weeks from Monday 10 March due to edge strengthening road works.

Wishing everyone a Happy New Year from the Parish Councillors.

Margaret Ismail, Parish Clerk

ASCOTT'S STORY

The Mill

Ascott on its present site has existed for well over 1,000 years. Certainly people were living in the parish in Mesolithic [evidence found below the barrow on the Charlbury to Burford road], Neolithic [the barrow itself] and Roman times [much evidence from chance finds to the presumed villa on College Farm]. But the village near to the river was probably established in the Saxon era when the Open Field System of agriculture brought all the inhabitants into one block of dwellings surrounded by their communally worked 'open fields, meadows and pastures'.

Certainly by Norman times when the motte and bailey castle at Manor Farm was built, earthworks show that the village then lay to the north of the railway adjacent to the castle. Nevertheless the layout of the present High Street, London Lane, the area around the church and Shipton Road were all probably established not so very long after when the separate townships of Ascott D'Oilly and Ascott Earl came into being, the church established between the two by the end of the 12th century.

Over the years I have collected various documents about the village and

despite the fact that they constitute only a tiny window on Ascott's long history I thought it would be interesting to commence a walk around the village detailing those facts I have uncovered.

The true starting point must surely be The Mill since it is mentioned in Domesday and therefore must be the site of the earliest known dwelling, the building itself being replaced through time as ideas developed under different regimes and conditions. The need for grinding corn into flour [previously by hand held quern stones] became mechanised due to the development of the water mill and this procedure continued at Ascott through the subsequent centuries. The mill was also used to grind corn for cattle feed and other farm animals. Water mills were well established by the latter part of the Saxon era and the one at Ascott was valued at 5s. in the Domesday Book in 1086. Robert D'Oilly the Norman Constable of Oxford Castle was given the larger of the two manors at Ascott which included the mill but Roger D'Ivry [Robert's sworn brother] held it from him. Roger D'Ivry was one of the greatest barons in Oxfordshire at the time but when William the Conqueror died Roger fell out with his successor, William Rufus, forfeited his land and went into exile. The land reverted to the D'Oilly family and eventually to the Earls of Warwick.

In 1279 The Hundred Rolls list the name of Wills Molendinar the miller who held land and the mill as a free tenant. It seems that the mill, the manor and some land had already been given by the D'Oillys to St. Frideswides Priory in Oxford and certainly by the late 16th century. Three cases were brought before the Archdeacon's Court in Oxford in 1572 concerning the ownership of certain tithes. These were a tenth of all types of produce to which by law the church was entitled. The particular items mentioned were eggs and hemp and the miller at the time, Richard Andrews and his wife Katherine, were sued by the lessees of the parish tithes. It was argued that the Priory land and buildings purchased from the king after the Dissolution of the Priory, had never paid tithes to the parish and therefore were still not required to do so. In 1591 when a Survey of the Manor of Ascott D'Oilly which then formed part of Queen Elizabeth's Duchy of Lancaster, was made, Richard Andrews was a member of the Jury at the Court of Survey. The land which he held from her Majesty is listed. This included the mill and water course, two doses and a number of individual strips scattered all over the parish, as far apart as a strip abutting Lyneham Field north of the A361 and another up the top of Brazil Lane. The rent

of the above was 40s. This particular Survey concludes "There is a proper River Rununge thorough yeldinge divers sortes of fysshe. The meadows upon the sayd Ryver ar verye fertile. It standeth easte 3 myles distant from Burford from Oxford 9 myles". The Andrews family remained at the mill for at least two generations and a Richard Andrews is mentioned at the mill in 1617.

In 1764 the then Duke of Marlborough initiated a definitive survey of all the lands included in the Blenheim Estate. The lands were detailed strip by strip, but there appears to be no mention of the mill. There is a suggestion that the mill was owned by Pudlicote Estate at one stage, so this may explain the omission. However by the time of the Ascott Enclosure in 1838 the mill is listed under the ownership of Lord Churchill, Ranger of Wychwood and son of the Duke of Marlborough. It appears to have been a policy of the Blenheim Estate to enlarge their holdings as land became available and obviously the mill had been gathered into this extensive system. Mr. Haines was the miller in 1819 but by 1821, the Holyfield family had taken up residence and remained therefore a good part of the 19th century. One of the responsibilities of the Court Leet and Court Baron of Ascott D'Oilly held each year in the village, was the maintenance of roads and bridges. In 1821, the Jury "presented a bridge for foot passengers over the Mill pond adjoining Mr. Holyfield's Mill which is in a dangerous state. And it was agreed that a New Bridge should be built by the Overseers of the Parish of Ascott. Lord Churchill providing timber and Mr. Holyfield to be at the expense of putting up the bridge on being paid 10/- by the Parish". Since Mr. Holyfield is first listed on the Jury for that year, it seems that he may well have been the instigator for the new bridge. In 1775 William Holyfield of Temple Guiting had married Mary Moss a widow of Ascott. Four children were subsequently baptized at the church, William the eldest and future miller in 1778. In due course this son married another Mary and their children, Thomas and Mary, were born in 1809 and 1812 respectively. William took over the mill around 1820 and presumably lived there until his death in 1850. Thomas already assisting his father, took over the mill and lived there with his wife Ann and their growing family of five boys and four girls, together with his mother who lived at the mill until her death in 1868 aged 87. Between 1871 and 1881 Thomas and Ann left the mill and went to live in Charlbury.

In 1881 the Census lists a Joseph Baxter, his wife Caroline and son

Richard at the mill. They do not appear to have remained very long because by 1883 James Cooper with another large family of children had taken over the lease. It is believed that this is the time when the mill was rebuilt into its present form. James' father Richard had been Steward of Cornbury for many years and lived with his family at Rangers Lodge in Wychwood. In that capacity as bailiff of Ascott D'Oilly Manor he had a long association with the village. When James married Ann from Pudlicote, they moved to Sandford probably living at the mill there before returning to take over Ascott Mill. James remained the miller until his death after which his son and assistant Martin took over. Eventually Agnes Meadows came from Lower Leamington to be housekeeper and in the course of time married Martin. Martin was also a horse breaker and one day whilst riding a newly broken horse around the deep dip on the road to Charlbury, he met a pair of high flyers being driven by the Prince of Wales. Martin's horse took fright, threw him and he sustained a broken leg. The Prince of Wales was justly concerned and for many years the family at the mill received a hamper from the Palace at Christmas. A son James was born but this James was not cut out for the miller's life.

David Simmons [father of Dorothy Harrison and Carol Hawtin] back in Ascott after many years in the Royal Garrison Artillery and having spent practically the whole of the First World War on the Western Front, began working for Martin Cooper. He drove the mill lorry with solid tyres around many of the local villages and farms to collect the grain from the farmers. This was stored in 21 cwt. sacks which David used the accumulated practice of centuries lifted seemingly effortlessly. He then took the sacks of grain back to the mill for grinding before returning to the farms with the ground up meal. This was used to feed the cattle and other farm animals. He also collected the barley grown on the allotments by many of the villagers. After grinding this was a prime source of feed for the pig kept in the sty at the bottom of many gardens providing the villagers with their major meat ration throughout the year. The outer, rougher part of the grain, known as toppings, was also delivered back for animal feed. Grain was ground for local bakers and the work continued throughout the year coping, as it must have in the past, with times of flood when the mill was cut off from the village and the miller's family lived on the upper floor.

The mill continued its work of centuries until the 1930s but eventually

its use was discontinued. Martin, severely doubled over by his long life of heavy toil, died in 1940, his wife and son moved on and the mill was taken over by Jack Craft's family working the land solely as a farm during the 1940s.

Eventually the bottom of the mill wheel was sawn off preventing any possibility of future use but the machinery will remain in place, finely preserved by Nigel and Anne Braithwaite during their restoration of Ascott Mill.

With grateful thanks to Cyril Edginton, Sonia Edginton, Dorothy Harrison, Carol Hawtin, Eric Pratley and Joy Timms.

Wendy Pearse

WYCHWOODS LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

On Thursday 20th February 2003 at Shipton Village Hall popular speaker, Martin Way, will give a talk titled "What a Century" Carterton and Brize Norton. As usual the talk will begin at 7.30 p.m.

Then in March Ascott resident, Carol Anderson, Curator of the Oxfordshire Museum at Woodstock, will tell us about the new museum; her talk is titled Moles, Magnets and Mortaria - a look inside the new Oxfordshire Museum. It will take place at Milton Village Hall on Thursday 20th March 2003 at 7.30 p.m.

In April the Map Librarian from the Bodleian Library, Nick Millea, will be talking on The Oldest Maps of North-West Oxfordshire. This again will be held in Shipton Village Hall on Thursday 17th April 2003 at 7.30 p.m.

Old and new members are welcome. Subscriptions are £5 for an individual and £8 for a couple which includes a copy of Wychwoods History when published. Visitors welcome at any meeting at £2 per person. Further details from Wendy Pearse on 831023.

POPPY APPEAL 2002

I would like to thank all villagers who gave to the Poppy Appeal and thanks to the Church for their donation.

We made £463.00

Thank you. Mary Barnes

<p>FOLK NIGHT Tiddy Hall Saturday 1st March featuring NOEL MURPHY also The Last Straw and other artists Doors open 7.15 p.m. for 8.00 p.m. start Proceeds in aid of Ascott Sports Club BAR Tickets £8.00 01993 830114/830227</p>	
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CHADLINGTON DANCE

This group is now in its second year; it was set up to organize monthly dance sessions from September to June. These are open to all residents of Chadlington and the surrounding villages - offering the opportunity to learn a variety of dance styles, to socialize and have fun and exercise. It is a very friendly group - do come and join us. Dates for your diary:

- 12th February - African dancing
- 12th March - Modern jive
- 9th April - Irish dancing
- 7th May - tba
- 4th June - A ceilidh to end the season

Ann Morton 01608 676302

TIDDY HALL

A row of bollards have been placed at the top of the steps to Tiddy as we have had a couple of incidents where cars have accidentally driven over the top. We also re-laid the steps as the fronts of the facing bricks had deteriorated badly and some of the paving slabs were loose. To improve the general appearance of the site Simon Gidman has kindly designed a simple landscaping scheme which we plan to implement this year. We were sorry to have to cancel the Anniversary Dance on 25th January, but unfortunately after putting the notices on the village boards the disco cancelled our booking due to a clash of dates. Then on Sunday 19th January the band had to cancel due to illness. As next year will be the 10th anniversary we will try to make it up to you by holding a bigger and better celebration!

Future Events:-
Saturday 1st November 2003 - Folk Night
Saturday 8th November 2003 - Craft Fair
 Cost £12 per stall [to book a stall contact Ros Harbour on 830227 or Kathy Pearce on 830058]

Tiddy Hall is available for all those family and social events that just won't fit into your own home, i.e. children's parties, birthday parties, anniversary parties, wedding receptions etc. New cutlery and white Wedgewood crockery is available for hire. For further details contact:
 Booking Clerk, Rosemary Dawbarn on 831632.

LEAFIELD SCHOOL NEWS

What an eventful term we had at Leaffield. Half term came slightly earlier and was longer than usual when the School was forced to close due to flooding. The Governors, who, ironically, were meeting the evening the rain poured in, to discuss future repairs and building works, certainly had first hand experience of where any weaknesses were, but also were able to witness how willing our staff are in a crisis to roll up their sleeves and get stuck in with mops and buckets. Our thanks go to all those who helped, for their hard work during the crisis and through half term so the school could be dried out and necessary repairs undertaken and the children could get back to school on time. We had a well supported Harvest Festival where the children sang and performed with their usual enthusiasm. Donations this year went to the El Shaddai Trust and the Oxford Refuge. Our football team played well again at the Tackley Tournament, and though not winning all their games, most importantly enjoyed themselves. Hockey has been added to the after school activities which has been very well supported and enjoyed by all who take part. School has a new English Spelling Scheme which was partly funded by the 200 Club. The Annual Governor's Meeting for Parents was held with a very informative and inspiring talk from our Head, Mrs. Ryde. December brought confirmation of news that all those involved with Leaffield School already knew. Leaffield School was amongst the top performers in the County, in fact it was 4th out of some 200 schools in

the Primary School Performance Tables showing the 2002 Key Stage 2 Results. Our Head Teacher, Mrs. Lesley Ryde, who joined the school in September 2001 bringing with her an invaluable amount of teaching experience, gives credit to the teachers and classroom assistants, and to the children for all their hard work which included attending extra booster classes where necessary. Not only do the children learn to enjoy and express themselves through their dramatic productions, but they also perform well academically. It is a great achievement for this small village school to attain an average points score, which takes into account all the tests in English, Maths and Science, of 31. This is not only above the national average but exceeds the county average of 27.

Christmas came around all too soon it seemed, and thanks to all the staff the children enjoyed lots of activities to include a trip for the whole school to see the pantomime in Chipping Norton, various Christmas parties, the usual talent show and an excellent performance by all the children in the Village Hall of 'It's a Baby'. Our Christingle Service was held, Christmas Lunch enjoyed and term ended on Friday 20th December. The New Year and new term will have started by the time this is published and we will have welcomed some new "rising 5" children into our Reception Class where they will certainly benefit from being in a small class with lots of attention as they start "big school".

Leaffield School is always open to visitors who wish to look round at any reasonable time, although an appointment will ensure the relevant staff are available for discussion if necessary. For further information please contact the School Secretary, Mrs. Deb Brown on 01993 878273.

Vicky Greves, Governor

SOCIETY OF FRIENDS (QUAKERS)

Burford - Friends Meeting House, Pytts Lane (off Witney Street) - Sundays 11 a.m.

For further information, contact Nigel Braithwaite on 01993 831282

Charlbury - Friends Meeting House, Market Street - Sundays 10.30 a.m.

For further information, contact Andrew or Patricia Pymmer on 01993 882848

.....THE HOLLY BEARS THE CROWN

This popular carol celebrates the holly as a part of our Christmas festivities. Since Roman times the holly has been associated with winter celebrations. The Romans sent their friends sprigs of holly, during the festival of Saturnalia, as a token of good wishes. Christians adapted this custom to coincide with their own winter celebrations and decorated their churches and houses with boughs of holly laden with scarlet berries.



Early Christians believed that a branch of holly would prevent demons crossing the threshold and even gave it religious symbolism. The spiny leaves represented the crown of thorns, the white flowers purity, the red berries drops of Christ's blood and the bitter bark his suffering and passion.

In Wychwood the holly is a common hedgerow tree, often growing as a standard. In woodland it is one of the few woody plants that will thrive under the dense shade of beech or ash. In ideal conditions it will produce a 40-50feet high specimen.

The holly is our only broad-leaved evergreen; its tough, waxy leaves helping it to retain moisture when the ground is frozen.

Not surprisingly many uses have been found for holly, other than decoration. Its berries were used as a purgative or emetic and its leaves were regarded as a cure for fever. An "old-wives" tale suggested that chilblains could be banished if beaten with a stem of holly---ouch! The leaves and young shoots were collected and dried and used as winter cattle-fodder.

The wood of the holly-tree is dense, fine-grained and white and was widely used for inlay work and making small items such as chess pieces and printing blocks. It could also be dyed and when coloured black was often "passed-off" as ebony. It also produces some fine walking sticks.

Unlike many of our native trees the holly isn't host to many insect species. The best known is the holly blue butterfly whose eggs are laid on the holly's flower buds in May. These eggs produce adults that will be on the wing in July and a second

brood can appear in September if the weather is good, but normally they will over-winter as pupae emerging in April and May.

Thanks to passing birds holly seedlings often appear as uninvited guests in our gardens. Instead of uprooting them all perhaps we can let one or two flourish to prevent demons crossing our thresholds!

In the two weeks before Christmas the fieldfares and redwings arrived from their homes in Scandinavia using the fields and hedgerows of Ascott as a “motorway service station” feeding on insects and berries to provide energy for their southern migration.

In early December another visitor, a young buzzard, took up residence by the playing field, sometimes sitting on the fence posts and sometimes in the surrounding trees. With his arrival the term “bird feeder” took on a new meaning as he was inclined to help himself to the occasional blue tit.

One unusual visitor was reported in December, a raven. This bird, the largest member of the crow family, is usually found in western Britain and Scotland. Its normal habitats are mountains, hills and sea cliffs where it eats a wide range of animal and plant food. It has a wingspan of 64cm compared with crows 47cm and a much more massive bill. The best means of identification is its distinctive, deep “prruk-prruk” call.

It’s almost too late to wish you a happy New Year so I’ll look forward instead to an interesting “wild-life” spring!

Stuart Fox

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Chipping Norton -Holy Trinity Church
Sundays at 10.30 a.m.; Holy Days 9 a.m. & 7 p.m.

Charlbury - St. Teresa’s
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Dates for your Diary:-

<i>Monday 10th February</i>	<i>Public Meeting, Tiddy Hall</i>
<i>Sunday 16th February</i>	<i>Choral Evensong, Holy Trinity Church</i>
<i>Saturday 12th July</i>	<i>Church Fête, Recreation Field</i>
<i>Saturday 1st March</i>	<i>Folk Night, Tiddy Hall</i>
<i>Sunday 16th March</i>	<i>Annual Parochial Church Meeting in Church</i>
<i>Sunday 30th March [Mothering Sunday]</i>	<i>Family Service in Church</i>
<i>Sunday 13th April</i>	<i>Benefice Service at Enstone</i>
<i>Saturday 1st November</i>	<i>Folk Night, Tiddy Hall</i>
<i>Saturday 8th November</i>	<i>Craft Fair, Tiddy Hall</i>

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