
The Ascott Grapevine



Issue 45

January 2005

Grapevine Appeal

The Ascott Grapevine is provided FREE to every household in Ascott and we wish this to continue for a long time to come.

Although 'The Grapevine' does receive support from the Parish Council and the PCC, it only raises a limited amount of revenue from advertising. 'The Ascott Grapevine' survives mainly on donations. If you would like to help The Grapevine continue, any donation large or small would be appreciated. You can give a donation to any member of the editorial team.

If there is an aspect of village life not already covered in the Grapevine please contact a member of the production team to discuss your ideas. Articles for the April issue of The Grapevine should be submitted by April 4th.

Call 01993 832163 or email:

ascottgrapevine@dial.pipex.com

**Stuart Fox, Kingsley,
Wendy Pearse,
Karen Purvis**

Services at Holy Trinity Church

06 February
10.00am HC C
6.00pm EP P

**13 February/
1st Sunday of Lent**
8.00am HC P

**27 February/
3rd Sunday of Lent**
10.00am HC C

**06 March/
4th Sunday of Lent/
Mothering Sunday**
10.00am FC
6.00pm EP P

**13 March/
5th Sunday of Lent**
08.00am HC P

**27 March/
Easter Sunday**
10.00am FC

What's what

EP = Evening Prayer/
Service

FC = Family Communion

HC = Holy Communion

MP = Morning Prayer/
Service

QP = Time of Quiet
Prayer

BS = Benefice Service

Bapt = Holy Baptism

C = Contemporary Language

P = Book of Common
Prayer

Content & Editorial Policy

If you have an article, story or poem you would like to submit for publication the Grapevine editorial team would love to hear from you. Material for publication is gratefully accepted. Due to space considerations material may not be used immediately but may be held over to be included in a later issue.

The Grapevine editorial team reserve the right to shorten, amend or reject any material submitted for publication.

Deaths

On 15th October 2004
- Isabella Moss aged 74
years.

On 29th November
2004 - John Charles
Niebuhr aged 60 years,
formerly of Ascott-under-
Wychwood.

Poppy Appeal

Thank you to every-
one.

The 2004 Poppy
Appeal raised
£526.60

Mary Barnes

Isabella Mary Moss 1930 -2004

My lovely sister Bell was born on the 14th June 1930 to Bob and Evelyn Storey. She attended Ascott C of E School, then Shipton School aged 11 years, leaving school at 14 to become an apprentice of ladies' tailoring at Badcocks of Oxford. Bell was at school with Hardy, whom she later married. They had two children Stephen and Susan and two grandchildren. When Smiths Industries started at Witney, Bell and Hardy went to work there. Be-

fore there was any transport they used to cycle there every day. Sadly Hardy died 10 years ago, for Bell the grief never got any easier. Bell was interested in the Women's Institute for many years. She was also a member of the Wychwood Choir. When we had made the tapestry for the Church, Bell helped to join it all up.

Bell died on the 15th October 2004 in Katherine House Hospice, one of the most calm and peaceful places I have ever visited.

Jill Greenaway

Tsunami Earthquake Appeal

The Village Charity in conjunction with the Shop is going to run a raffle, during February, to raise funds for the above Appeal. All

money raised will be sent to The Disasters Emergency Committee.

Tickets will be on sale in the shop during normal opening hours and

the draw will take place in the shop at 3.30pm on Saturday 26th February.

Please support this worthwhile cause.

*Management Committee Ascott Village Shop
Trustees Ascott Village Charity*

Ascott Church – The New Services

At last!

May I start by wishing a very happy New Year to everyone. The Chase Benefice starts the year delighted that Mark is now well on the way to a complete recovery and is back with us full time, but rather sad that Hazel Scarr has now left us as she takes up fresh challenges in a new Parish. Hazel's departure has prompted us to look at the pattern of services and to recognise that Mark, and the volunteer priests who support us across five Parishes, can only do so

much. The downside to this is that the number of services at Holy Trinity must reduce, the positive side is that the increased number of Benefice services gives us the opportunity to spend more time meeting and worshipping with our friends across the Benefice. From January 2005 the pattern of services for Ascott looks like this:

1st Sunday in the month

10.00am Common Worship Communion
6.00pm Evening Prayer

2nd Sunday

8.00am Holy Communion - Book of Common Prayer

3rd Sunday

10.00am Common Worship Communion - a Benefice Service at either Chadlington, Heythrop, Ascott, Spelsbury or Enstone.

This will be by rotation and the location advertised on the church and village notice boards.

4th Sunday

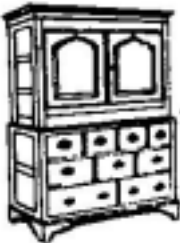
10.00am Family Communion

5th Sunday (when applicable)

10.00am Common Worship Communion - a Benefice Service.

Details of all services can always be found on the notice boards and we look forward to seeing you all in 2005.

Tim Lyon
Church Warden



Robert Gripper
Antique Furniture Restorer

Repairs, veneering, woodturning, carving, colouring and french polishing, etc.
Trade or Private

Manor Barn, Ascott-under-Wychwood, Oxon OX7 6AL
Telephone: 01993 831960 Fax: 01993 830395

From the Rector

On the morning after Christmas, the strongest earthquake seen in forty years triggered huge waves, tsunamis, that engulfed islands and drowned untold thousands. The images that we have seen on our television screens have been horrific and beyond comprehension: families playing on the beach suddenly engulfed by water and swept out to sea; a baby found alive floating on her mattress two days after the current snatched her from her family. But where are her parents now? Amongst the 150,000 plus who have perished or amongst the millions left destitute?

I write this on the eve of the New Year: the time that most of us greet each other with good wishes for the coming year. This year, many will be wondering how we can say 'Happy New Year' when so many have died and so many face death. Yet it is important that we do so and even more important

that we do all that we can help our sisters and brothers who have been affected by this catastrophe. Some are saying that this is the largest single disaster to occur upon our planet in recent history. It calls for prayer and tangible human response – such as the tremendous giving that has come from the British public so far.

John Humphries, a few days ago on Radio 4, asked the Archbishop of Canterbury "Where

was God in this?" And his answer, without hesitation was: "Where God always is - at the middle of it. If you were there, and looked around, you would see individuals helping and comforting each other, even putting themselves at extra risk to save others." (paraphrased)

In that display God is made known: he is Immanuel, 'God with us'.

*With my love and
prayer
Mark Abrey*

Direct donations towards the Tsunami Earthquake Disaster Fund can be made at any bank; by telephoning 0870 606 0900; or on-line at www.dec.org.uk

Lent is upon us!

Easter is early this year and therefore Lent starts early too! – with **Ash Wednesday** falling on **9th February**. On that day there are two services across the Benefice: at Ascott-under-Wychwood at 10am and Chadlington at 7.30 pm. Chadlington will be hosting the **Palm Sunday Service** on Sun-

day 20th March. The service will start at the Memorial Hall at 9.45 am with the Blessing of the Palms. We will then walk to Church arriving at 10 am to join those unable to walk. For details of the services during Holy Week and Easter, please see the rota on page 2.

Farewell from Hazel Scarr

Dear Everyone,

Well, I hardly seem to have arrived and I'm off again. Yes, of course I knew that my 'job' here was temporary. One of the main reasons that I came was to hold the reins while Mark remained ill and to support him as he returned to health. No-one knew how long that would take but it's great that he is now so much stronger and working full time again. So - my role has passed and I move on to a post of collaborative ministry with another priest in a benefice with six churches just over the Wiltshire border in Somerset and not very many miles south of Bath.

When I came to Ascott it was with some trepidation. I knew that there was, shall we say, some 'disquiet' within a few people about women in the priesthood. It has therefore been particularly encouraging to have received so much genuine

support and encouragement - and also to have become friendly with some dissenters!

Among the first visits I made in Ascott was to the school and links have been forged which I pray will continue. They now use the church regularly for assemblies and I've been privileged to be a part of super Harvest and Carol services, into which much thought and preparation had clearly gone. It's so important that young people, whether from this village or others, are made to feel welcome and comfortable in any church and Ascott is now playing a great part in this ministry.

By contrast, it has happened that I have also taken the most funeral services of my seven months here in Ascott. These are special times for all concerned and enabled me to meet many in the village who aren't otherwise regular attenders at services.

Through them I came to appreciate just how much the families intertwine and inter-depend and also the true community spirit this village has.

So now John and I move to live in The Rectory in Rode to begin a five year post. A new challenge, but one that I will face with the added experience and preparation that serving in Ascott, together with the rest of the benefice, has given me. As I go I take with me both happy and poignant memories. I will carry your village in my prayers and ask that you spare a thought for John and me as we start afresh where we believe God has called us. I wonder what he wants this time?

*With love and
blessings,
Hazel Scarr*

Letters to the Grapevine

Any views expressed on the letters page are the personal views of the contributors and are not those of the magazine.

Sir

Having been a smoker for some 45 years and a proud non-smoker for the past 5 years, I am purported to be the worst possible type to join the anti-smoking brigade! Indeed in certain situations I would consider this to be true. In fact in some circumstances I do hate smoking. Having said that I strongly disagree with the total ban on smoking at Ascott's Tiddy Hall.

Not once during fund raising to re-build the hall did I hear it mention that it was be for the sole use of non-smokers. Villagers were led to believe that the hall would be available for everyone to enjoy, not just a chosen few. A total ban on smoking now excludes those, with family and friends who still smoke, from hiring the hall for any private events. I cer-

tainly would not feel comfortable dictating terms and conditions of attendance to my guests.

It is a great pity that such a magnificent achievement should be tainted with so much discontent. In an ideal world nobody would smoke and none of us would have any vices! Unfortunately life is not like that.

It should be obvious that the fairest solution would be to let the organiser of the function decide whether it will be a smoking or a non-smoking event. This would maintain choice - to attend or abstain. Smokers are now left with no choice other than refrain from using the hall.

Since the duration of most functions does not usually exceed four hours and given the size of the hall and the small

percentage of smokers what harm can possibly be done? I personally feel more intimidated by the excessive consumption of alcohol and the problems that can cause.

I am mindful of Government Policy, which seeks to impose a ban on smoking in public places, but even they had to concede some exemptions for private events.

Finally, I am left wondering what Mr Tiddy would have made of this dictatorial rule.

He gave his life, along with many others, for our freedom and democracy.

***Eileen Benfield
Ascott-under-
Wychwood***

The Tiddy Hall Committee considered a smoking ban in 2003 and at meeting held in October 2003 voted for a ban which came into force in January 2004.

- Ed.

DON'T FORGET....

♥♥♥ Valentine's Day (14th February) ♥♥♥

♥♥ Mothering Sunday (6th March) ♥♥

Bluebells at the Barn

Crown Farm, A-U-W

Providing flowers for all occasions:

Hand tied bouquets and arrangements

Wedding flowers

Corporate events

Funeral tributes

01993 830730 or 07789 501741



Ordering from the Village Shop

Did you know that you can order Fresh Meat, each weekend, delivered straight from Callows Farm to the Village Shop?

We can also supply vegetables and newspapers to order.

Why not visit the shop to see the wide variety of goods we have on display or Telephone



831240 to discuss your requirements.

Many thanks to all those customers and volunteers that helped make 2004 so successful, we look forward to serving you in 2005.

In touch with Hilary Biles, District Councillor

May I take this opportunity to wish all of you a very happy & healthy 'New Year'

It seems hard to believe that another year has passed by. It seems like yesterday that I became your Councillor. I continually learn new rules and regulations – some good and some not so good.

I attended the recent Licensing training for members. As you will remember the District Council are to be responsible for issuing all licenses from this year. That means if anyone is holding a function and selling alcohol or accepting donations for alcohol you will now need a license. If you are having entertainment – you need a license. I think until everyone gets to know all the rules it is better to be safe than sorry. If in doubt, call the council offices to check the requirements.

Just recently I was contacted about a planning matter. It appears there were objections to

a proposed development but the objector did not let the Parish Council know and did not let me know. We now have delegation of planning applications (government targets!!!). If there are objections or indeed support for development and it needs to be brought to the Uplands Planning Committee you need to contact me. If there are good planning reasons, I can ask for the application to be brought before the members of the planning committee, rather than be dealt with by delegation. Remember, there must be good planning reasons to do this. It is too late after the event.

How is your recycling going on? If you require extra boxes or lids you just need to contact the Council and they can be delivered. If anyone is elderly or disabled and cannot carry the boxes please let the Council know and they can arrange for collection at the door. Some of you

may get a questionnaire on waste. The Council wish to know views on recycling green waste. If you think it is a good idea, let me know, or indeed the Council.

We seem to be getting somewhere with the Minor Injuries Unit at the proposed Chipping Norton Health Unit. After the meeting David Cameron M.P, Barry Norton Leader of the District Council and me, had with Cherwell Vale Primary Care Trust, the PCT are working towards a paramedic being based at the hospital overnight. This will be much better than having to go to the Horton in Banbury. We have not had the 'i's dotted or the 't's crossed as yet but it is a huge move forward.

Watch this space....

Once more, if I can be of help... please contact me on 01993 831822

Hilary Biles
District Councillor

Ascott-under-Wychwood Parish Council

The Parish Council has had a busy agenda over the past few months. A lot of work has gone into producing a risk assessment of all areas owned by the Parish Council which we are now obliged to do by the Health and Safety Executive. Work has been done around the village particularly in the playing field to replace worn items such as handrails and flagstones and old equipment removed. This work will be ongoing for some time. Oxfordshire County Council has completed the transport survey and the Charlbury Taxi Bus service has been improved. Timetables and details of the service are available in the shop. The bus service to Chipping Norton on Wednesdays has changed from an afternoon service to the morning. The new timetables were on the notice boards but unfortunately they do not last long due to the weather. We are awaiting new

timetables from the County Council. Unfortunately there have again been incidents of vandalism around the village. Four street signs have been stolen and the signpost on the green has been damaged. There have also been incidents of young people using very offensive language. The Parish Council works closely with the local beat officer P C Barnes regarding these incidents and it is important that anyone witnessing these events or experiencing any acts of vandalism reports them on the incident number **0845 8505505**. Many people are now keeping incident diaries and these will be the evidence which will enable anti social behaviour orders

to be served on the perpetrators. Please contact me if you wish to keep one of these diaries. Cornbury Estates have cut the hedge on London Lane making it easier to walk along the path and particularly the pavement opposite the green. County highways have done some work on Chipping Norton Hill to try and stop the water pouring down and have replaced a broken drain cover at the bottom which was dangerous especially at night.

Margaret Ismail
Parish Clerk (832829)

Parish Council:

Nigel Braithwaite,
Chairman 831282
Mike Pearce 830058
Wendy Pearse 831023
Elaine Byles 831427
Stuart Fox 832004

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Advertise in The Grapevine and reach all the households in Ascott-under-Wychwood in one go!

email: ascottgrapevine@dial.pipex.com
or phone: 832163 for details.

PC Barnes writes...

At this time, and as the nights draw in, it seems that this is the time the youths of the villages tend to become a nuisance. I have now had several calls to the villages I police regarding anti-social behaviour of a small number of youths. Their behaviour is causing annoyance, and a little fear, in the people living in and around their 'activities'. I can attend these incidents, and talk to the youths concerned. I can also talk to the parents and attempt to get them 'on-side'. I am not the one who can stop the behaviour; the only people who can stop

such behaviour are the youths themselves and the parents of those youths. However, there is another stick I can, and will use. Anti-Social Behaviour Orders! I can, and if required, will get enough evidence against such youths and get the orders in place. The idea is for everyone to live in peace, if a hammer is needed to crack a nut, then so be it. I will use the ham-

mer. So before I need to take such measures, I would like to think that a little more responsibility will be taken by both the youths and parents alike. It may also help if those that feel aggrieved feel able to speak to the parents of the youths who are causing them distress. I look forward to quieter nights and fewer calls about youths.

Rich Barnes



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Evenings and Weekends

Quotes given for any UK destination

Can accommodate up to 6 passengers at a time

Transport Information

Service/Day	Departs	Time	Arrives	Time
Bakers 5 Tuesday	Ascott u Wychwood, The Swan	0946	Moreton in Marsh	1031
	Moreton in Marsh	1245	Ascott u Wychwood, The Swan	1330
Bakers 34 Wednesday	Ascott u Wychwood, The Swan	1403	Chipping Norton, Council Hse	1429
	Chipping Norton, West St	1630	Chipping Norton, West St	1430
	Chipping Norton, Council Hse	1631	Ascott u Wychwood, The Swan	1656
Pulhams 9/806 Thursday	Ascott u Wychwood, The Swan	0945	Chipping Norton Coach Stop	1000
	Banbury Bus Station	1340	Banbury Bus Station	1030
			Chipping Norton Coach Stop	14.10
			Ascott u Wychwood, The Swan	1425
Villager 20 Thursday	Ascott u Wychwood, The Swan	1335	Witney, Buttercross	1405
	Witney, Buttercross	1600	Ascott u Wychwood, The Swan	1628
Worths 72 Rail Link	Ascott u Wychwood, The Swan	New timetable available from the Village Shop		

Ring a Ride Scheme

This is operated by The Oxfordshire Council for Voluntary Action. It is for people who are unable to use ordinary buses due to temporary or permanent disability. The scheme can be used

for transport to work, shopping or visiting friends but not for hospital or day care. These journeys are carried out by the Ambulance Service and Social Services. Call 01865 744478 be-

tween 9.30 am - 12.30 Monday to Friday. Journeys can be booked up to 7 days in advance. Journeys cost no more than £1.50 for a single journey and £3.00 for a return.

New Bus and Train Timetables for 2006

Trains

Trains to Oxford and London stop at Ascott at 7.45 Monday to Friday and 8.04, 10.04, 16.10 & 19.12 on Saturday. There is no Sunday Service.

Trains from Oxford and London travelling on to Malvern/Hereford stop at Ascott at 17.55 Monday to Friday and 7.59, 16.06 & 18.07 on Saturday. There is no Sunday service.

Wychwood Community Transport

This is a local transport scheme run by the Wychwood Surgery in Milton for those who do not qualify for ambulance transport and have no means of transport. Information can be obtained from Mrs Vanessa Newman at the surgery 01993 831061. There is a charge for this service

Cotswold Line Rail Bus (C1)

A full timetable for the revised service is now available from the Ascott Village Shop.

The standard fair is £1.75 single and £ 3.00 return. The normal pick-up point for Ascott is the Swan, although it operates on a hail & ride basis and will stop wherever it is safe to do so. The normal timetabled services run from Mondays to Fridays during the morning and evening peak times in order to connect with trains to and from Oxford, Reading and London. At other times a demand response

service can be arranged in advance by telephoning 01993 869100. This will cost £15.00.

Journeys to Charlbury leave the Swan at 6.56, 8.06, 9.06, 10.56, 12.21, 17.37 and 19.22.

When travelling back from Charlbury the bus arrives at 12.07, 13.39, 19.08 and 20.09.

Passengers should note that the bus only waits at Charlbury Station for five minutes for late running trains! The one exception is the last train, which is due at Charlbury at 19.45 when the bus will wait for twenty minutes.



A Wartime Journey

When our sainted editor asked me to write an article for the Grapevine I wondered what to write about. Should I shake my literary walking-stick at the current misuse of the English language? No, I thought, better to stick to my professional last and write something historical; but not the Balkans, not Eastern Europe. So I decided instead on a piece of

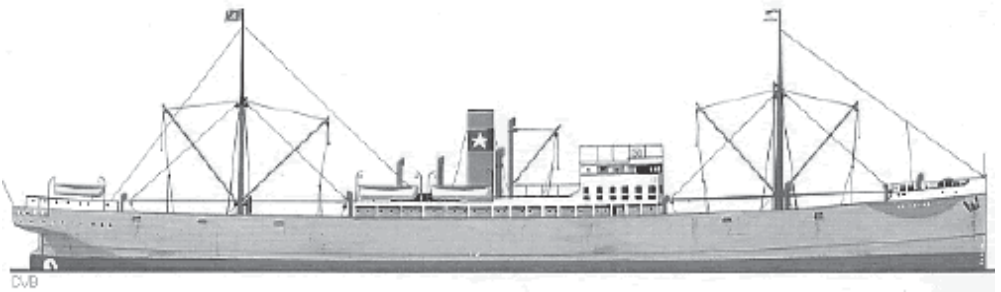
historical investigation much nearer home, one which, in fact, could hardly be any nearer home for me. It is about my wife and an episode in her childhood.

Celia was born in Nyasaland (now Malawi) where her father was the Resident Engineer with Nyasaland Railways. Tragically, he was killed in an accident on the line. As

the family home was a company house Celia's mother had to pack up and leave, and take her three children, of whom Celia was the youngest, back to her own native Ireland. Half way across the Mediterranean their ship was sunk by a German bomber. The family joined the rest of the passengers and the crew in the lifeboats; Celia, being too small to climb down

DECEMBER 1945						727
DATE	TRIP	TRAIL	TRUCK	CARGO	CREW	REMARKS
15	INDIAN	By 7466	Liverpool, Glasgow & Tainard for Lagos & Beira.	3220 tons general, 2524 tons Government stores & about 100 large mail.	5 S.S., 2 AT W.	2. Crew 73, 10 gunners & 23 passengers. 4 crew, 3 gunner & 23 passengers lost. 2 crew p.s.w.
21	INDIAN	By 6485	On. via (R) for London.	111 tons flour, 1800 tons wire, 540 tons stores, 707 tons ammunition, 627 tons military supplies, 60 tons iron pipe, 25 tons machine tools, 230 tons gun & aircraft.	53 50 17 S., 1 21 14 E. W.	Crew 26, 4 Wreck in 50 50 S E., gunners & 1 1 15 1 E. To be dispersed. pilot, 3 crew, 1 gunner & pilot lost.
22	ALBERT	By 5723	Beira, Durban & Port Said for S.E.	7021 tons general int. 25 20 S., 17 4 S. W platinum, copper, copper ore, tinore, tea & iron sugar.	35 16 S., 16 58 E. 25 20 S., 17 4 S. W	4. Crew 65 & 24 passengers. All saved.
23	INDIAN	By 7434	Beira, & Tainard for S.E.	3083 tons general & 1520 tons Government stores. 121 1/2 tons blanking powder.	11 11 W., 50 18 S.	8. Crew 105 & 3 gunners. All saved.

The relevant page of the Lloyds Register.



The SS Alpherat.

the rope ladder, was thrown down from the sinking ship to a sailor in the lifeboat. After a few hours they were rescued by a corvette from the convoy escort and taken to Gibraltar and then on to Glasgow aboard HMS Stork, a destroyer whose submarine killing exploits earned her a special mention in the war memoirs of Winston Churchill. The family spent the Christmas of 1943 on board the Stork.

For years we in the family wanted to reconstruct what we could of the journey, and above all the bombing. We knew the name of the corvette, HMS Saxifrage, but when I went to the Public Records Office (now the National Archives) in Kew, the ship's log was missing; this is unusual but by no

means unknown, some logs having been destroyed by enemy action or simply lost. I told one of the PRO officials why I had wanted the log and asked what else I might do to find details of the incident. He said that unless I knew the convoy number or the name of the merchant ship concerned I had reached the end of the road.

And so things remained for almost twenty years until, when reading a book on the battle of the Atlantic, I saw reference in a footnote to a recent work published by Lloyds of London which listed all allied merchant vessels damaged or lost during the second world war. The next morning I rushed into the Bodleian Library in Oxford and ordered the book. Its information on the af-

fectured vessels is given in a series of columns, one of which is of the dates various ships were attacked. As we knew, roughly, when Celia's ship was sunk it took but a few minutes to find what I wanted. The SS Alpherat, a Dutch-owned ship sailing from Beira and Port Said and bound for the UK. Celia's mother had said that the captain of the ship was Dutch, carried a cargo of demerara sugar, and that the ship had sailed from Beira via Port Said. All that fitted, as did the date, 21 December 1943. Further confirmation was provided in the column giving the latitude and longitude of the sinking; the Alpherat went down to the south-east of Malta. The final column, 'Personnel, Remarks', said simply: 'Crew

65 & 24 passengers. All saved.’ To see that still brings a lump to my throat. It was a feeling shared by the assistant in the library who showed me how the new photocopier worked; she said she had not seen anything like the Lloyds book before and asked what it was. When I explained and said that amongst those 24 passengers, all saved, was a little girl who had just ‘celebrated’ her second birthday and who for over three

and a half decades had been my wife she cried, ‘Oh! how wonderful. How romantic’.

Once the information in the Lloyds book had been uncovered it was easy to find more, thanks mainly to the internet, through which I secured the photograph of the Alpherat. We discovered, for example, that the convoy the family had travelled in was the first across the Mediterranean since the opening of the U-boat campaign.

They had had to wait in Port Said whilst the convoy and its escort were assembled and Celia’s mother told of how, one evening during the wait, she was taken in the greatest secrecy to see a special sight. It was Winston Churchill sitting on a balcony; it must have been when he was en route to the Tehran conference with Roosevelt and Stalin.

There was another twist to the story. Our younger son was reading a book on convoys. He discovered



Some of the survivors from SS Alpherat aboard HMS Stork, Gibraltar, December 1943. Celia’s mother is on the extreme left; she is holding a child’s harness at the other end of which is Celia the top of whose head is just visible.

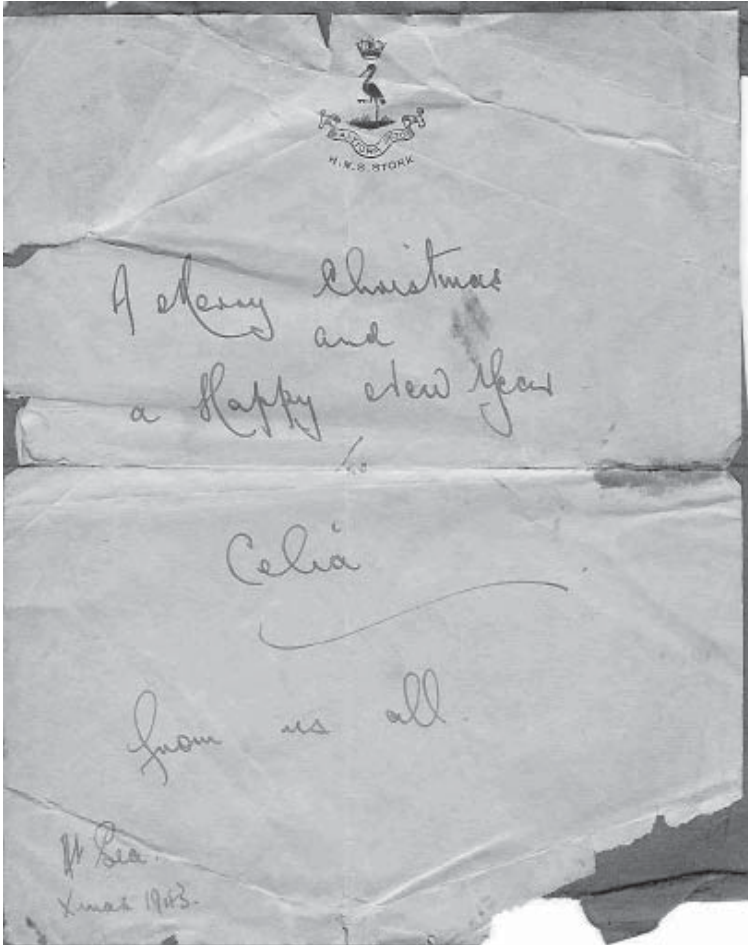
that in March 1943 a sister ship of the Alpherat, the SS Alderamin, was sunk in the Atlantic. She went down very rapidly but all her crew were saved not least because her master, Captain C.L. van Os,

swam around the lifeboats and then right around the rescuing corvette to make sure that all his men were safe. That corvette was none other than HMS Saxifrage which a few months later was to rescue

Captain van Os a second time.

And it was my great fortune that once again all his crew and passengers survived.

Richard Crampton



Christmas 1943 on HMS Stork. In addition to the card pictured above many of the crew gave presents they had bought for their own families to the surviving children.

Jottings from the Potting Shed

Another year has gone by and it is time once more to start thinking about the new season in the garden. Time once more to start buying seeds etc. although if you have followed these jottings over the past year you will know that I don't advocate sowing too early. For me April is early enough around here. Let the soil warm up - once that happens seeds, especially the small ones, can germinate quickly and get away without any check. Earlier sowings always run the risk of rotting off in cold damp soil.

Do you grow your own potatoes? - not many people do today and if you have limited space I can understand that you may wish to use valuable garden room for other more interesting crops. I think it is always worth growing a few earlies even if they are planted in a large tub or butt. There is really nothing like digging those first potatoes - you just can't com-

pare the flavour with any that you can buy in shops. If you want to give them a try I would suggest a good early like Charlotte. Good size, waxy and an excellent flavour. One of the best places around here to buy seed potatoes is from Hilltop Garden Centre at Ramsden. They have a wide choice of varieties many of which you would find it hard to obtain locally. You might be tempted to try something different and be pleasantly surprised. I think you know by now that I am a great one for trying a few new varieties of seed each season. If you do decide to try some potatoes make sure when you get them home to stand them upright in a tray or if you haven't got many an egg tray will do. Look at the potato and you will see a scar at one end where it was joined to the mother plant. Put that end at the bottom of the tray and when you have filled your box or tray

put them somewhere that is light, cool but frost proof. When they start to chit wait until the chits are about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch long before planting out in the garden. I normally rub off all but 4 or 5 chits as it allows the tuber to produce a stronger plant and usually a heavier crop.

Once the soil has warmed up make a sowing of parsnips. They need to go in as one of your first sowings as they take a long time to germinate. Some folk sow them with radish seed, which is quick to germinate and makes it easier to pick out the row when weeding. Always remember whatever you are sowing to sow thinly and to thin young seedlings out to allow the plants you want to keep to grow on strongly. A strong plant has a much better chance of fighting off pests and disease. Whatever you grow in the vegetable garden try to keep the rows weeded either by hand or by hoe. Weeds take

moisture and nutrients from you plants, provide somewhere for pests to hide and, if left to grow too large, will swamp out your plants making them weak and spindly. Nature is always trying to get one step ahead. It is a continuous battle especially in the early months but do keep at it as you will reap rewards later in the season.

*Happy Gardening
Curly Kale*

Wychwood Wrought Iron 

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Cook's Corner: Ascott's Favourite Recipes

Easter biscuits

Pre-heat oven to 170C/
325F (Gas mark 3)

4 oz. butter
4 oz. caster sugar
1 egg yolk
8 oz. plain flour
2 oz. currants
1 oz. chopped peel
Milk to mix

For the glaze:

1 egg white
Caster sugar

Cream the butter and sugar until fluffy. Beat in the egg

yolk. Fold in the flour, currants and peel, and mix well. Add milk a little at a time, and mix together until the mixture forms a fairly stiff dough.

Roll out to about 1/8 inch thick and cut into 2 inch rounds.

Place on a greased baking sheet and bake for 15-20 minutes. Remove from oven after 10 minutes and quickly brush biscuits with egg white and

sprinkle with caster sugar. Return to oven for 5-10 more minutes to finish baking.

Cool on a wire rack.

Do you have a favourite recipe you would like to share? If so, the Grapevine would love to hear from you.

Further contributions to 'Favourite Recipes' would be appreciated for publication in future issues.

A Happy Mother's Day Present!

This is a very simple present you can put together, and give as a present this Mother's Day.

You will need:

A small piece of wet Oasis.

A lined container, big enough to take the wet oasis.

9-12 roses, or similar flowers.

6-9 pieces of greenery from the garden.

Step 1: I have used a small hessian bag with a plastic lining. If you need to line your container, a quick way is to put your wet oasis in a freezer bag, and cut the bag according to the size of it.



Step 2: Next get your greenery and place 2 or 3 pieces in each corner of the oasis, and then 1-2 pieces around the remaining edges.

Step 3: Cut the stems of your roses to about 3" ensuring you strip all the leaves off.



Step 4: Place the first rose in the middle of the oasis, and then one in front and one behind, so that a line is created.





Step 5: Repeat this, until there are no spaces left to fill. You may find you won't need to use all the roses, however if you do and you can still see



spaces, then fill these in with small pieces of greenery.

Step 6: This can be made the day before and kept in a cool place overnight ready for you to give on Mothering Sunday.

Debra Harvey



Wood Warms the Heart and Cools the Planet

From the Wychwood Project

From the earliest days of pre-history woodland provided mankind with an essential commodity - heat. Whether for heating humble cottages or manor houses, fuelling the wheels of local industries or cooking, a steady supply of wood was for many centuries an essential requirement for each local community. Villagers in the Wychwood area would have had rights to collect dead and fallen wood without penalty and it is understood that the people of Ramsden were still claiming this right in the 1960s. But deadwood could not supply all a community's needs. Large amounts of fresh wood were cut and sold in a variety of forms. Small twigs and sticks from coppicing hazel and other underwood species were bundled and tied to produce a *faggot* that burnt hot and quickly - ideal for the

village bread oven. Larger, solid wood was sold as logs. Different sizes of fuelwood 'log' had different names - a *billet* and a *shide* being just two of many. Charcoal was common as an industrial and urban fuel but may have been of less importance in the Wychwood where the economy was based upon agricultural products.

In the last three hundred years first coal, then gas and electricity replaced wood as a fuel. However, increasing concerns about the link between burning fossil fuels and global warming is once again focusing attention on wood as a source of heat and power. In this respect wood is a relatively neutral fuel - the carbon that is released by burning having been absorbed from the atmosphere by the growing tree. Wood is becoming a viable alternative to heat large buildings

such as schools and industrial units, as well as houses. Modern heating systems for large buildings are designed to use wood chip or wood pellets rather than solid logs. With continuing support for both local fuel wood merchants and for new wood-fuelled boilers we may once again see our woodlands helping to meet our local energy needs, to the benefit of us and our environment.

Nick Mottram
Project Manager



Gertrude Pearse Remembers Ascott School 1944-1951

I started going to Ascott School in 1944. The teacher was Mrs Lewis. The whole school was in one room. It was heated by a coke stove, known as a "tortoise." These stoves also heated the church and the Tiddy Hall. The windows at school were up high so we could not see out. Mrs Lewis wore a black apron. She also took her black cat to school. The desks and their seats were made all in one piece in an iron frame. There was a ledge under the lid to put books. The seat folded up when we stood up. When we progressed from writing in pencil we wrote with a pen which we had to dip in an inkwell. It could be very scratchy. Like much of the village the school did not have electricity. There were some gas lamps at school but these were not lit very often - probably only in the later part of the afternoons in December. It must have been quite difficult

to see what we were doing at times.

When Mrs Lewis retired Mrs Clements took over as Head. Mrs Green came from Chilson to teach the newly formed infants class in the small room. Mrs Clements would often go in there during lessons. If anybody was misbehaving when she came back it was quite normal for them to be caned. This was quite a common occurrence. I was caned on two occasions - once when she said I had copied the answer to a sum from the answer book. I don't think I should have been marking my own sums - that was the teacher's job. I certainly couldn't remember copying the answer.

At playtime in the morning the van arrived from Charlbury with the canteen dinners, which I never had so I don't know what they were like. Towards twelve o'clock Mrs Rainbow came to get things ready for dinner and pre-

sumably washed up afterwards, with no sink or running water. Also at playtime in the morning we had to drink our milk. We didn't have any choice. I hated it. It came from Yew Tree Farm. Sometimes in the winter it was full of ice and used to be put round the stove. I thought warm milk was even worse than very cold. After we had drunk our milk we had to wash the bottle - in cold water, even in winter - no towel to dry our hands. Somebody had to go across the Green with an enamel jug to get the water from the tap and pour it into an enamel bowl on the playground. When I first went to school the playground was just bare earth. I can remember the asphalt surface being put down during school time.

As Ascott was a church school it had close connections with the church. Every Friday morning the vicar - mostly Carey Cooper

when I was there - came to talk to us. On several Saints Days the whole school would attend church first thing in the morning. The best day of all was Ascension Day. We went to church, then back to school to drink our milk, then the rest of the day was a holiday.

Lessons then were very different from today. There was no P.E. The school didn't have much in the way of equipment, although there was a communal box of plimsolls. As the size of each pair was called out you put up your hand when your size was called and got a pair to wear for the lesson which was- country dancing my favourite lesson. We had to push the desks up to one end of the room to make enough space. The music was provided by Mrs Clements playing the piano. Otherwise if it was fine we went outside for

“drill” which was mostly exercising in whatever way we were told. We each had our own small mat.

Mrs Clements was very keen on nature especially wild flowers. Quite often in the summer we would all walk over the river bridge and up the hill for a nature lesson. Also very often we had to take our own flower to school in the afternoon to identify, draw and write about. Failure to take a flower would mean having the cane. Mrs Clements was a keen gardener. She sometimes took a clump of flowers from her garden and divided them up for us to take home and plant. I can

remember planting a wallflower she had given me which flowered for years after. She also took tomato plants for us all. They grew very well too.

Mrs Clements was also very keen on rush work. She used to get rushes from the river and make them into shopping baskets and table mats. She brought some rushes to school for us to make mats and baskets and I made a basket. It was very strong and I used it for years afterwards carrying my cookery from Burford Grammar School.

The last two years I was at Ascott School Mrs Clements would quite often use me as an



“assistant.” I would listen to children reading and also mark their sums. During the last year I was there she gave me my own group of four girls to supervise. These were probably top infants, aged seven. When I had been doing this for about three days at a time Mrs Clements would say I should do some of my own work because of the impending exam - known then as the “scholarship”, later called the “eleven plus”. Four of us passed the first part. The second part was taken at Milton. I remember the

vicar, then Mr Nickalls, taking us in his car.

I think I can say I enjoyed my time at Ascott School. I can remember most of those who attended when I was there. I am still always pleased to hear any good news about them. I do not think I had a very broad education. When I went to school at Burford the standard of my English and Maths was as good as most of those in my class, but I was certainly lacking in knowledge of Geography. I knew very little local geography, even less about the Brit-

ish Isles and almost none about the world as a whole. My general knowledge was also very lacking. The School was not inspected in the way that schools are today.

Gertrude Pearse.

Your memories wanted!

Moving on to the 1950s, please would some of those who attended Ascott School in that decade like to contribute their memories so that we can continue the school's story.

Contact Wendy Pearse 831023.

Performance and Stagecraft Techniques

A new production company called Curtain Call is running a course at Tiddy Hall offering performing opportunities to people of all ages and abilities and will be a weekend of Performance and Stagecraft Technique focusing on acting as a singer, emotional content and the drama of performance.

Alongside the performing there will be tuition in Yoga, Relaxa-

tion, Reflexology, Nutrition and Life-Style changes. All the tutors are professionals, highly regarded in their field so the course promises to be an intensive weekend of music performance and energy culminating in public performances of work studied and staged.

The course is run from Friday 25th February to Sunday 27th February 2005. There will

be a public performance on Saturday evening and an informal concert on Sunday afternoon at a cost of £5 - one ticket covers both shows.

For a brochure and more details about the course, or if you would like to book a ticket for the performances, please contact Robin or Lisanne Martin-Oliver on 01993 832629 or email Windrush.lisbin@virgin.net

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Nature Notes

This is all about the three R's, no not reading, writing and arithmetic, but Redwings, Wrens and Ravens. The first arrives here from Scandinavia to avoid the harsh northern winter, the second struggles to survive a cold winter and the last may be



moving into the Wychwood area from the west.

This year a large flock of Redwings arrived in Ascott during the Christmas holiday pushed south from their summer breeding grounds, by bad weather and lack of food.

Some may stop in England throughout the winter, but others will continue south to Portugal, Spain and Italy. They can first appear in September or October and may stay

until March or April. They usually migrate at night hence their apparent sudden arrival.

Redwings are members of the Thrush family but are somewhat smaller than our native Song Thrush. Their distinguishing features are their orange/red flanks together with a prominent cream stripe above the eye.

Their normal food is worms and insects but during the winter, when the ground is frozen, they will happily strip berries from the hedgerow trees, or visit orchards to feed on fallen apples. Once the local food supply is consumed they will continue with their southerly migration. Sadly, in severe winters, when overtaken by bad weather conditions, there is a high level of mortality, especially if native Thrushes and Blackbirds have already taken most of the berries.

In amongst the Redwings you may spot a slightly larger bird,

with a grey head and rump, these are Fieldfares another migrant from the north.

One bird that is with us throughout the year is the Wren, our second smallest native bird, weighing between 7-12 grams. Walk through any garden or woodland and from the corner of your eye you will see a flash of brown, moving



at speed and hear an alarm call that sounds like two pebbles being knocked together. Rarely does the Wren stay in one place long enough for a clear view. It is always searching for insects and spiders, behind tangled ivy, in between tree roots and hedge bottoms and will even disappear inside a dry stone wall only to reappear several feet away. Its Latin name is Troglodytes, meaning cave dweller, which is very appropriate.



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Surprisingly for such a small bird it has, in the breeding season, a very powerful song, a loud warble ending with a shrill trill. The male is also very busy in the spring, as he will start to build several nests choosing holes in walls, hedgerows, thickets and even under fallen trees. The female will select the one that suits her best and this will be finished and lined with wool, hair or feathers. The nests are roughly spherical with an opening on one side and are woven from leaves, grasses, moss and lichen.

Five to ten eggs will be laid and incubated for up to eighteen days, the young leaving the nest after a further fourteen to twenty days. Each year there will normally be two broods, one in April and the second in July.

Our winters can be especially hard for such a small bird and the numbers of breeding pairs can fall dramatically after hard weather. Today, after several mild winters, it is estimated

that there are seven million breeding pairs of Wrens. On cold winter nights this normally solitary bird will roost communally, using old nests, nest boxes and snug holes; one report speaks of sixty Wrens roosting in an old nest box!

Wrens will rarely visit a bird-table but, when insects are scarce, they will occasionally take seed or cheese from a ground feeder.

Our last bird is not usually associated with this area. The Raven, which is the largest member of the Crow



family, is normally found in the mountains and wild places of Western England and Scotland. However in recent years there has been a decline in numbers in northern Britain and an increase on the English-Welsh border, with

some sightings in lowland England. Until recently the closest reports to our village were from an estate near Stow-on-the-Wold, but there has now been reliable reports that the bird has been seen here.

The Raven is a very large bird, larger than a Buzzard, with black glossy plumage and a very thick bill. Its call is very distinctive, a deep-throated croak “prruk-prruk.”

In flight the wings are narrow with widely spaced flight feathers, extended like fingers, and it is given to spectacular aerial acrobatics. Its most distinctive feature in flight is a wedge-shaped tail. Its wingspan is sixty-five centimetres.

Please, keep a look-out for any unusual bird or animal seen in the parish or surrounding area and contact me so that the report can be included in future articles. My email address is stuart@wychwood.me.uk.

I know it's a bit late, but a Happy New Year.

Stuart Fox

Wychwoods Local History Society

A large audience thoroughly enjoyed Ralph Mann's talk in November about the fascinating origins of Kingham Hill School.

On 17th February at 7.30.p.m. in Shipton Village Hall local speaker Margaret Ware from Shipton will give a talk entitled The Shipton Constable. Margaret's talk will cover the work of the Village Constable during the nineteenth century a rather different story than the title may portray. In March Jane Cavell will talk about Sir Henry Box the founder of the Henry Box School in Witney. The venue will be

Milton Village Hall on 17th March at 7.30.p.m. Then in April on 21st at Shipton Village Hall at 7.30.p.m. Richard Martin's talk is entitled A Ramble Round the Cotswold Woollen Heritage.

Further information about the Society can be obtained from

Wendy Pearse 831023. 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 head.



Shipton-under-Wychwood Women's Institute

A warm welcome awaits the ladies of Ascott-under-Wychwood. Our Institute meets monthly on the second Thursday at the New Beaconsfield Hall.

We are a friendly group and offer a varied programme covering se-

rious and light-hearted subjects. We participate in many events and outings organised by the Oxfordshire Federation, as well as arranging our own outings and monthly walks.

Visitors are welcome at any of our meetings (entry to visitors is £2).

For any further information please ring President Pat Bannister on 830365 or Secretary Rosemary Wilson on 831810

Stella Perceval

African Safari - The Nyika Plateau, Malawi

Covering some 3,200 sq km, the Nyika Plateau is over 6,500 feet above sea level. The lower slopes of the plateau are hidden by woodland but the terrain opens out into a vast expanse of rolling grassland that stretches far, far into the distance. Patches of evergreen woodland break the grassland hills; there are rocky outcrops dotting the hillsides and many trout filled mountain fresh streams and bigger rivers and waterfalls for swimming. The Nyika is the source of four major rivers, which tumble up to 1,500 feet down the escarpment in spectacular cascades. In summer flowers carpet the grasslands with brilliant colours. The rolling landscape provides perfect going for horses and is untouched by man except for the violation of poachers.

The Nyika is probably best known for its stunning wild flowers with over 130 species of orchid as well as blue and white wild irises,

pink tinged crinum lilies, gladioli, delphiniums, aloes and many species of protea. It is also home to more than 400 species of colourful, spectacular and rare birds. The environment is ideal for some of the more unusual species of game - there is a large population of rare roan antelope, many zebra and large breeding herds of eland, often numbering 200 or more with the larger males weighing up to a ton. Other antelopes include reedbuck, bushbuck, duiker and the extraordinarily agile klipspringer, that run round steep rock walls at speed with easy grace. The main predators are spotted hyena, jackal and leopard. Elephants are naturally shy, but dangerous and avoided by all animals - small



herds are fairly common but it is amazing how difficult it is to spot them.

In September, I got my first taste of 'The Nyika'. Flying onto the plateau in a single prop Cessna was a good introduction to what is surely the most spectacular part of the world I have seen. Nine days riding from dawn to dusk, with six nights in tented camps, made it possible to quarter

the country and experience its grasslands, steep sided valleys, high hills, massive granite outcrops and miombo



Eland on the Nyika Plateau

and brystigia woodlands. The grasslands are peppered with acacia, juniper and spectacular coral trees and the flowers are stunning in their variety and often giant-sized.

We (there were five of us with two guides) came upon a herd of four elephants on the third day and tracked

them for an hour or so, making us late into camp, which we approached in the dark with the campfire visible and welcoming, though I felt like riding through the night, for the last couple of miles. The following morning there were bucket shaped holes in the soft

Curry and the Nyika Grasslands



ground near the camp's river to show the elephants' passing. On the fifth morning my horse 'Curry' (a spirited, friendly 16.2hh thoroughbred) was nervous, possibly sensing a leopard but I never saw one, only the spoor and a seriously damaged tree used, probably that same morning, to sharpen its claws.

Long days in the saddle were made even more pleasurable by the climate that, at only 10° below the equator but at 6,500 feet, was warm and generally sunny with cool mornings of crys-

tal clear air perfect for early bird watching. The riding was taken at a good pace, with long exhilarating canters; the horses are very fit and in as good condition as any I have come across anywhere - they need to be. Attacks by game animals are rare but not unknown; only two weeks after my return to

Ascott, our guide and owner of the Safari Company told me one of our horses had been gored and killed by an eland or roan antelope.

The highest point on the Plateau is Mount Nganda at 8,500 feet. To the northwest runs the great Chipome valley - apparently unexplored by man, an el-

phant trail can be seen from the air, winding through grasses that grow up to 20 feet. Three of us from this year's trip are returning next September to experience the Nyika again - and to be, perhaps, the first English people to spend three days riding and rough camping in the Chipome valley.

Nick Leadbetter

Friends across the World

It was just an ordinary day at Chipping Norton Police Station some ten years ago during one summer, when a lady made enquiries at the front counter. The station duty officer was unable to assist her request and so the inspector was summoned. His knowledge of local history was some what limited as this visit related to the village of Ascott-under-Wychwood.

At that time my husband Pc Bob Salmon came into the station to take a well earned break after dealing with a particularly awkward do-

mestic dispute. The inspector passed the lady's enquiry to him. It is hear that our ten year friendship began with a family from the southern hemisphere.

The lady in question was Mrs Beverley McCoombs (nee Pratley) from New Zealand who was tracing her family tree, and the connection with The Ascott Martyrs. Although she had made many trips before, this was the first time she had visited Chipping Norton Police Station. My husband and I knew some of the story of the

Ascott Martyrs, but Beverley brought such life to the individual characters and had the ability to transport the listener back in time.

Beverleys's relations emigrated to New Zealand in the nineteenth century, and although Peter and her have made many trips to the U.K. searching out their relatives, it was not until 2003 that Bob and myself took five weeks off work and travelled to New Zealand via Tahitti, Tonga and U.S.A.

We started in the South Island staying in Christchurch with

Beverleys's sister. There are a lot of English names there, many brought by as the early



settlers. We were lucky to see the beauty of Milford Sound waterfalls and rock formation, and the stunning glaciers of Franz Joseph as the weather was kind to us.

On the North Island, Wellington was a buzz with the premiere of Lord of The Rings due in four days. Buildings in the city had enormous characters from the film bolted to them, and the whole country seemed proud of its production. We spent two days with The McCoombs, thoroughly enjoying their company, with Beverley reliving stories of her ancestors. We visited the Te Papa museum and

saw a video showing the connection between The Wychwoods and the early New Zealand immigrants which was partly narrated by Mrs Wendy Pearse.

We proceeded north stopping at Rotorua where the maori's entertained us with past traditions, to one of the early settlements at Russell. On the West side we found Opononi, a quiet area with unusual sand dunes.

After our five week tour we arrived home tired but full of wonderful memories, and wondering whether this trip would have occurred had we not met Beverley and her intriguing story of The Ascott Martyrs, which we are assured will be in print within the next eighteen months.

Sheila Salmon

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Muck Spreading

Farmyard manure is a fascinating material when studied in detail. It is one of the organic fertilizers such as garden compost and peat which are all made up of animal and plant residues.

From the time when man progressed from being a hunter gatherer to a farmer producing crops and livestock, manure has always been highly valued as a source of fertility for the soil and a means of increasing crop production.

Ways were sought of increasing the quantity of manure produced

and when cattle were kept in yards for shelter in winter the straw put in for bedding was increased to the maximum amount that could be incorporated with the dung to become manure. With stables and milking sheds the dung and wet straw would have been taken out and fresh bedding put in every day but in the cattle yards the manure could be up to four feet deep by the time the cattle were turned out after the winter. The yards would then be cleaned out by men with four-grained forks

(four tines) loading horse drawn carts.

The horse and cart was the “maid of all work” on farms! The cart bed was about four and a half feet wide and six feet long with sides and front about twenty inches high and a tail-board across the back. It ran on two large wooden wheels with iron tyres, the axle was just slightly behind half way back so that the horse didn’t carry all the weight on the shafts and when evenly loaded a man could release the front and lift it to tip the load out of the back.



The cart would hold one cubic yard of material and practically everything could be carried in it: stones, gravel, sacks of grain, coal, firewood and even furniture when moving into a farm cottage.

It was quite hard work filling the muck cart after heavy cattle had spent the winter treading the straw in, not too bad for an experienced man but a case of backache and blisters for one new to the job. The clever bit was knowing which forkful to lift first. The manure is stable and preserved when it has been trodden down tight by the cattle but when the loads are drawn out and stacked into a heap it is exposed to the air and quickly

begins to ferment and will heat up after a day or two. This process has a sterilising effect and kills all the seeds; if the manure was spread straight from the yard grass and weeds would grow from it.

When small carcasses such as still-born pigs or lambs or dead hens were buried in the heap they would be rendered down by the acid, heat and bacteria and would totally disappear in a few months, but this practise has now been made illegal and owners of fallen livestock have to pay to have them disposed of in a purpose built incinerator or something similar.

When farm labour was cheap and plentiful some farmers would have the muck heap com-

pletely turned and restacked to boost the composting effect so that it would all be well rotted, short and easily incorporated into the soil. Some even had a hurdle buried under the heap when it was first stacked so that when the hurdle was exposed again they would know that the stack had all been moved otherwise some workers were clever enough to just move the outside to make it look like a complete job.

By autumn it was time to load the manure from the heap into the carts again and draw it onto the field for spreading. The load was tipped up a bit at a time and unloaded into about five small heaps twelve-fifteen feet apart in a row which would extend all across the field with other parallel rows all about fifteen feet apart. A robin or two would usually be present at this time looking for worms to eat.

The next job was spreading. The man



worked backwards once round each small heap in a clockwise direction using the four grained fork to give an even spread by moving each forkful from the heap with a swing to the right and a flick of the tines, then moved on to the next heap until the job was completed. The field was then ready for the ploughman to incorporate the manure into the soil.

Manure can also be spread onto grassfields to boost the pasture provided it is well rotted and short enough for worms to pull it into the ground. During the years when spreading was done in this way the winters were generally much more severe than in recent decades and heaps in the field were often frozen solid. They were so slow to thaw out it was sometimes necessary to have two spreading sessions taking the outside when it was ready leaving the middle for a day or two longer to thaw.

Some other forms of fertility supplements

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were available in the first half of the nineteenth century. Guano was brought in ships returning from South America and was used as a top dressing. Wood ashes were also used when available and superphosphate was found to be beneficial on stone brash soils. Traces of a bone mill are still visible at Chalford just east of Chipping Norton, the ground up bones were dissolved with sulphuric acid or decomposed in heaps covered by ashes and liquid manure. Woollen refuse from Witney Blanket factories was used for wheat and also for grass leys. Gypsum was applied on clo-

ver crops and salt was broadcast on wheat in the spring. Lime was also used but basically there was just never enough farmyard manure.

By the early years of the twentieth century however, artificial nitrogen, phosphates and potash were available and by the nineteen fifties compound fertilizer mixtures were there in varying ratios to suit the needs of different soils. Since then it has been possible to grow good crops without using organic fertilizer but a good coat of manure will stimulate the earthworm population, help retain moisture in a dry

season and improve the structure of the soil thus providing a crumbly texture to help seedbed preparation and also reduce the sticky effect in a wet season.

In the nineteen forties tractors and tipping trailers replaced the horse and cart but this did not really reduce the hard work as the loads were bigger and therefore took longer to fill.

The first attempts at producing a mechanical manure spreader were made in Canada in the early nineteen hundreds but effective spreaders were not widely used until the nineteen fifties. Fore-end loaders were also fitted on tractors at about this time, which made the job very much easier and quicker. Now, in this juggernaut age the manure is picked up and loaded by large fork lift trucks and spread very quickly by spreaders carrying many tonnes at a time. The whole process is basically unchanged but the work is completed in a fraction of the time it took in the past.

Jim Pearse.

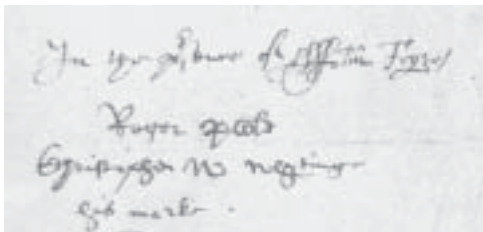
My Second Hatt

A woman named Anne Chaundy lived in Ascott Earl in 1621. The probable site of the farmhouse in which she lived is in today's Andrews Yard. She was a widow. Her husband Fulke had died two years previously and she had five grown up daughters. In January she was very ill and it became obvious that she must make her will.

Amongst the documents held in Oxfordshire Record Office are a number of wills and inventories from the early years of the 17th century. Inventories were compulsory lists of a deceased's goods and chattels required for probate purposes. Between 1615 and 1633 these documents were mostly neatly written by John Fryers, the vicar at that time. Few of the testators or compilers of the inventories could write so

John Fryers normally finished the documents with the names of the people involved and beside various strange little symbols he would write 'his or her mark'. The Chaundys could be the family with the longest continuous residence in Ascott. This dates from at least the second half of the 15th century until well into the 20th century. The will of Anne Chaundy who died in 1621 is particularly interesting especially since there exists very little writing by the women of the village prior to the 20th century. Despite the fact that Anne was one of those who signed with a mark, I feel that we can almost hear her speaking as we peruse her will.

Anne's and Fulke's inventories written by John Fryers were very similar. A fairly affluent farming fam-



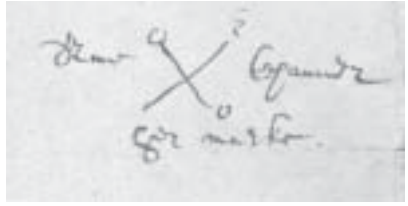
*In the presence of John Fryers. Roger Poole
Christopher Whiting (his mark)*

ily their house consisted of a hall (main living room) and a parlour with a chamber above. In the chamber was a substantial wooden bed probably with backboard and tester and equipped with feather bed, bolsters, sheets, pillows, blankets and bedspread. Amongst other equipment were a sturdy chair and three coffers or chests, the contents of which included tablecloths and table napkins. The hall held a large table on a frame with two more chairs and forms, benches and stools. In the kitchen which may have stood separately from the house, were utensils of brass, pots, pans and kettles and pewter platters, salts, spoons and candlesticks. And in the buttery (food store) were barrels, churns, tubs, pails etc.

On Fulke's inventory the farm animals are listed. Two working horses, three cattle and three pigs. His farm equipment consisted of a cart, a plough, some harrows and the hames for use with the horse harness. He also owned corn, some gathered and stacked in the yard, but since he died in

September, some corn was still standing in the fields awaiting harvesting. The total value of his inventory was £33.6s.6d. quite a reasonable sum at that time. When Anne died, no farming equipment or animals were listed but her total of goods and chattels still came to £24.

Returning to Anne's will. Unfortunately she may have been an invalid for a matter of months before her death since the will in which she states 'sicke and weake in body but of perfecte minde and memory' was written six months before she actually died. She began by commending her soul to God and asked that her body be buried in Ascott Churchyard, Then Anne left money to Ascott Church and for the aid of the Poor of the Parish. However once these priorities were settled, her main preoccupation was with her clothes. We can see that even in a small village like Ascott in the 17th century, clothing mattered. Cer-



*Anne Chaundy
(her mark)*

tainly clothes were made to last longer in those days but clearly they had a greater status value than we in our throw away world of the 21st century may be aware. Anne had these five grown up daughters and obviously despite her ill health had put great thought into the dispersal of her clothing. 'I give unto my daughter Elizabeth French my best brasse pott and one of my hollen aprons'. (Hollen was coarse unbleached linen.) 'I give unto my daughter Susan my second gownde and my second hatt with one of my best carcheifes and one of my worser partletts.' (A carcheife covered the head and a partlett went around the neck and shoulders.) 'I give unto my daughter Anne my best hatt one hollen carcheife and one hollen apron.' 'I give unto my daughter Isabell my

best gownd and my new flaxon apron.' 'I give unto my daughter Rebecca my best covered one mattress one brass pott and one boulder one sheete and one pillowe.' 'I give unto Susan the daughter of my daughter Elizabeth my old gownde.' This sounds a rather offhand bequest but perhaps the gown was to be cut down to make a dress for a child. All the rest of Anne's goods and chattels were to go to her son-in-law John French, Elizabeth's husband, who was to be executor of the will. It seems that he was landed with the excess aprons, carcheifes and various undergarments.

Unfortunately I know nothing further about these sisters. Whether Anne was being diplomatic by making these decisions for them and whether arguments, sulks, joy or pleasure were the outcome we can never know. But Anne's will certainly opens a window onto the fact that clothing mattered just as much to 17th century women as it does to women today.

Wendy Pearse

School News

Ascott Pre-school

A number of new children and 3 new members of staff have joined the pre-school this term. The new staff will fill the vacancy left by Frances Nisbet who has taken up a position at Wychwood School and cover staff training, absences and make up staff numbers now necessary due to the increased number of children attending the pre-school.

The new staffing rota can be found on the information board. Some of the keyworkers have changed since last term, so please check the board for an updated list of names.

The theme for this term is growing and through a large variety of activities, the children will explore many aspects of this subject.

Toddler group is now going to be held on Tuesdays at the cricket pavilion from 9.30 to 11.30. The change of time is intended to help those with small children from the age of 0-3, who have siblings at pre-school or at a nursery in the morning. Please come

along for a coffee and a chat. It's a really good way of meeting new people.

Ofsted will be visiting the pre-school this term to do an education inspection. This is an important visit for the pre-school. They may want to speak to some of the parents to complete their report.

A big thank you to all those who supported the shopping evening before Christmas. It was a tremendous success and everyone enjoyed the event. Approximately £800 was raised towards pre-school equipment and activities.

Thank you as well to everyone who supported our Christmas concert. The children performed well and it was a lovely way to finish last term. The children also thoroughly enjoyed their Christmas party and the surprise visit by Santa. We now look forward to 2005 with great enthusiasm and commitment to ensure that the pre-school continues to build on its successes.

Windrush Valley School

We certainly packed a lot into last term! The children and staff all worked very hard to ensure the Christmas productions and other seasonal activities all ran to plan.

To round off the year, the Foundation Unit and Form 1 performed 'Robins First Christmas' at Tiddy Hall with outstanding costumes and excellent singing. Not to be outdone, the Upper School's production of 'A Child is Born' told the Christmas story. Again, costumes and singing were of a very high quality and we were all treated to a fun belly dance.



At the end of term the Rev Hazel Scarr led our Carol Service. As always, this was very well attended and parents and friends heard pupils perform a variety of seasonal readings, poems and songs in addition to joining in with some favourite carols.

The children all enjoyed a Christmas treat - the Foundation Unit and Years 1& 2 had

Christmas parties in school and at Tiddy Hall respectively with both parties featuring a visit from Father Christmas. Years 3-6 enjoyed a skating trip to Oxford Ice Rink.

As part of our end-of-term Activity Week, a number of pupils went to Enstone House - a residential home for the elderly - to perform some of the carols and songs learned during the term to the residents.

This was rounded off with tea and cakes.

Away from their thespian activities, various trips were arranged to supplement the children's academic work. This included a visit to the Corinthian Museum by Year 4 to see a Roman Play while Year 2



visited Witney War Memorial as part of their work on Remembrance Day.

Outside of the classroom, a penalty shoot-

out raised £541 for Children in Need.

After a well-earned break all children and staff have returned refreshed and ready for

the new term which we will tell you about next time....

Leaffield School

The builders worked extremely efficiently all through the summer holidays and after a huge amount of hard work from the teachers, staff, their husbands and friends, which involved unpacking a mountain of resources, dusting and cleaning, school reopened in September albeit a few days late with 76 children on roll and more to come.

Inside the school is now very different with a dedicated ICT suite, 4 classrooms and a Hall, a private staff room, offices, reception area and lovely new toilets. A comment from one child was "it's like a proper school now"!

The Friends of Leaffield School and the 200 club have been very busy raising a huge amount of money which has been used to

buy furniture and other necessary items for the new building. Many thanks to all those who help and support this fundraising. Despite the foul weather the Ladies Gift Night was a great success with lots of favourable comments from those that attended and the stall holders. Harvest Festival was well supported with all donations going to the night shelter project in Witney and Oxford. The Christmas services were also well attended and parents enjoyed an excellent performance by class 2 and some of class 1.

As to other school activities, we had a busy first term with swimming getting under way for years 4, 5 and 6 who are very lucky to have a host of volunteers to help including an inter-

national swimmer who brings a wealth of experience to pass on to our very fortunate children. Football started again and music lessons including Violin and Recorder.

A group of 30 - years 4, 5 and 6 - spent an excellent week at Yenworthy in North Devon at the end of November - we hope to see the pictures and video production this term! A very successful sponsored spell was held which not only inspired the children to learn some very difficult spellings but also again raised valuable funds towards playground equipment and blinds for the Hall.

For any further information please contact the school secretary Mrs Deb Brown on 01993 878273.

Sport

Wychwood Youth 2004/2005



Top row from left: Tom Perry, Shaun Kench, Ian Wright, Shaun Green, Luke Ford, Tim Allen, Tom Haines

Bottom row from left: Michael Johnson, Mike Hornsby, Daniel Bishop, Tim Barnes, Ben Greatbatch, Godric Kwan

League games

February 13th Away
Summertown

February 20th Home
Bullington

February 27th Home
Easington Sports

March 6th Home
Oxford City

JB Cup onwards

Wychwood Under 12s 2004/2005



Under 12s Fixtures

30/1/2005

CUP 3rd Round

6/2/2005

(H) Chipping Norton

20/2/2005

(A) Cumnor Minors

27/2/2005

(H) Moreton Rangers

6/3/2005

(A) Tower Hill

U12 Squad consist of:

*Josh Ridley , Edward Saltmarsh ,
Toby Case , Ralph Cattermole ,
Henry Stratford , Luke Agnew ,
James Trevers , Sam Taylor
Jamie Hazell , Ryan Wozencroft ,
Rob Watts (not pictured) , Michael
Secker*



Coldstone Angling Club

Like everything else in life the angling club especially in the last few years has experienced many ups and downs. One of the major sources of income in running a club is its membership in which in recent years we have witnessed a steady decline in membership in both seniors and juniors. Consequently we have had to raise money mainly through fund raising functions to survive.

Over the years we have enjoyed good support of fund raising functions, but this year especially the support we have received from the village has been outstanding. First of all we organised a supper/dance evening at the Village Hall, this being the first time the club had organized anything on this scale for a long time we were a little pessimistic as to what response we would receive, needless to say we had a very enjoyable evening. The

feedback we received the following day was very encouraging. Many thanks to those who made this a memorable evening.

The next function we held was the club's annual Christmas bingo which we have been running for numerous years and in all that time we have been very fortunate in that we have not had to purchase prizes for which we owe a big Thank You, especially to a lot of people not even connected to the club. This year being no exception and with a good attendance we as a club once again benefited.

Receiving a phone call from Donald Barnes who reported to me that the Club had received a contribution from the organisers who ran the New Year's Eve party at the Village Hall came as a big surprise, not being aware that we were receiving a contribution, once again thank you to the persons concerned for this kind gesture.

So at the beginning of the season of which we anticipated we might have to forgo some of our waters to survive, thanks to the support we have received for which we are duly grateful, we have been able to function without losing our assets of which we have been able to retain.

One item we organized in the summer was a tuition morning for youngsters at the lake. This was very well received by those who attended. This season we will try to organise a similar morning which would be open to all youngsters who would like to attend, a date and time would be posted around the village.

Last of all I am organising a Questions and Answers Evening with the Environment Agency at the Tiddy Hall on the 4th March at 7.30 p.m. I hope many of you will try to attend this function, with any

questions you may want to put to the Agency regarding rivers/lakes etc..

Once again on behalf of the Club many thanks for all your support.

Peter Moss
Secretary



Tiddy Hall

Regular Activities

Monday to Thursday Mornings Pre-School-
Contact Pauline Plant
07968006451

Friday Mornings
Mother and Toddler
Group. Contact
Pauline Plant
07968006451.

Tuesday Evenings
Yoga. Contact David
Billham 01993 842061.

Wednesday Evenings
Badminton. Contact
Chris Morgan 01993
831958.

Thursday Evenings
Yoga. Contact Chris Set-
ters 01608 676236

Saturday Mornings
Dog Training. Contact
Sharon Wilson 01993
831801.

Special Events

Saturday
5 February 2005
Tiddy Hall Anniversary

Friday 25 February -
Sunday 27 February
2005
Weekend of Perform-
ance and Stagecraft
Technique
Contact: Robin Martin-
Oliver 01993 832629

Friday 18 March 2005
Quiz Night
Conservative Party

To book the Tiddy
Hall contact:
Rosemary Dawbarn
01993 831632.

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Wychwood Library

News from your Local Library

New movie releases are now available on Video and DVD, almost on the day of release. In the past it took six to eight weeks for new titles to arrive. Support your local library and hire

Videos and DVDs at £3.50 per week. The income generated helps fund the Library Service.

Opening Times

Monday: 2pm to 5pm/
6pm to 7.30pm

Wednesday: 10am to
noon/2pm to 5pm

Friday: 2pm to 5pm/
6pm to 7.30pm

Saturday:
9.30am to noon

*Beryl Brown,
Library Manager
01993 830281*

FARMERS MARKETS 2004

Witney - 3rd Thursday
of the Month

Woodstock - 1st Satur-
day of the Month

Chipping Norton - 4th
Friday of the Month

Charlbury - Quarterly
on Saturdays (Dates to
be Confirmed)

Further details from
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tion on:

0870 2414762

or

visit the web site at:

www.tvfm.co.uk

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