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# The Ascott Grapevine



Issue 51

Summer 2006

# 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 Autumn issue of The Grapevine should be submitted by October 4th.

Call 01993 832163 or email:

ascottgrapevine@dial.pipex.com

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

# Church Services

1st Sunday  
10.00am HC C

2nd Sunday  
8.00am HC P  
10.00am Family Service

3rd Sunday  
10.00am  
Benefice Service\*\*

4th Sunday  
10.00am MP P

5th Sunday  
10.00am  
Benefice Service\*\*

\*\*The service will be held at one of the churches in the Benefice by rotation. **Please check Notice Board for full details.**

## 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

## Chase News

Further information about what’s happening in the Chase Benefice is in the *Chase News*, included in the centre of this issue of the Grapevine.

## 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.

## Harvest Festival Celebration

This year's Harvest Festival Service will be held on **Sunday, 7th October, at 4.00pm**. The service will be followed

by what is now becoming a traditional supper in the Tiddy Hall. Once again we will be looking for entertainers to

round off the evening. So please put the date in your diaries now and start rehearsing!

*Tim Lyon*

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## Three men went to mow, went to mow a Churchyard!

Unfortunately the three men are not exactly in the first flush of youth! Keeping the grass in the Churchyard under control is quite an effort, especially in the Spring and heat of Summer. It would be great if some other folk would come forward and undertake to look after a patch. In fact there are many worse ways of spending an hour on a Summer's day than walking behind a mower and reflecting on the meaning of life. It is also very satisfying when it is looking neat and tidy. If you have relations buried in the Churchyard perhaps you could look after the area around their graves. If you feel you could

help out, please give me a call and we can get together and discuss how much you could look af-

ter. Many thanks, Tim Lyon. 01993 832531

*Tim Lyon*

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# Antique or Fake?

Recently, a friend of mine, asked me, "How do you tell the difference between an antique and a fake?"

" You don't " I replied, " you ask me"

A Fake is something that has been cynically created with the intention to deceive. The intended deception is not as common as people think, we don't encounter too many out and out fakes, but likewise we don't encounter lots of really good untouched pieces of furniture either. The real problem with antique furniture is identifying all the changes and adaptations that a piece may have encountered throughout its serviceable life. In the fine art world it is a different story, a recent survey published this year in the Antiques Trade Gazette suggests that ten percent of all the artwork in the UK's Museums is probably fake.

In reality, much of the antique furniture we work on has been re-

stored many times in its life. These operations vary from wonderful metal work repairs by 18<sup>th</sup> Century smithies and very well executed professional restorations, to crude onslaughts by thoughtless people with hammers and nails and saws, inflicting much damage and in many cases huge devaluations. So many pieces we trade in have had changes and adaptations, I was amazed recently when stripping the garish modern covering fabric off a rather plump overstuffed Victorian spoonback chair, to find seven layers of previous upholstery fabric, each upholsterer had added the latest covering with out removing the old one first!

Earlier this year, a customer sent me some photographs of an antique table they had bought in an antique shop in Tetbury, about five years ago. They were moving house and the new house was too small for it. The table was de-

scribed as an antique regency period mahogany triple pillar dining table, with two additional leaves. Circa 1800.

On closer examination of the photos, I quickly realised that it was probably an early 20<sup>th</sup> Century copy, the shape and design of the legs attached to the turned columns, put the table's earliest possible date at 1850, early Victorian. The rather heavy, staid form, and its dull finish, plus the lack of any interesting graining to the timbers, gave the game away, it was a reproduction probably made in the 1920's.

'What do you think the table's worth?' He asked me on the phone that evening,

'I think it has a decorative value of about £4000 to £5000' I replied, 'but first, you would need to spend about £1200 to have it repolished.

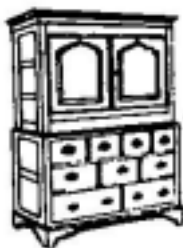
It went very quiet on the end of the phone

line, he thanked me politely, and hung up.

Much later, I discovered he had paid £32,000 for it.

Most reputable dealers will know what they are dealing with most of the time, and as long as their prices represent value for money, and the pieces they retail are honestly portrayed, then its fair. In this case I think the dealer who sold the table was probably a crook, who passed off a cheap 20<sup>th</sup> century copy for a real regency antique table, at a massively inflated price.

Some dealers have a habit of "adding age" to pieces. Early Victorian pieces are sold as William IV period, and William IV as Regency. Late Georgian pieces are often sold as George II etc. Sometimes the dealers selling these pieces are ignorant of the real age and have endorsed the description given to them when they bought the piece!!



## *Robert Gripper* *Antique Furniture Restorer*

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colouring and french polishing, etc.  
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People have always copied good ideas, it is the same with Antiques. Most of these copies are done with no intention to deceive, but with the passing of time they can acquire all the characteristics of a genuine old example, eventually they become very difficult to distinguish from the original. This is especially true of pieces that have lived much of their existence in the public domain, in hotels and pubs. A table can acquire the same amount of ageing in a busy pub for 40 years, as an antique table made in the 17th Century would in

private ownership, and even an expert can be deceived, and has to look very carefully for clues, often the timber used is incorrect, also the brass used for the handles may be too bright and brittle indicating a higher zinc content than brass used in the 18th Century.

Sometimes there is a hint of incorrectness in the overall proportions of the piece or the shape of the bracket feet or the shape of the mouldings. Copies are like Chinese whispers, often there are tiny changes in the detail, and mistakes made in the copying

process! These may not be obvious, but an experienced professional dealer will spot them immediately, often across the room, before close inspection of the piece.

Restoration is sometimes a problem, how much is acceptable? There is an ocean of difference between an honest repair and a cleverly disguised embellish-

ment intended to deceive.

The Italians (and many museums) restore antiquities such as frescos by replacing the missing material in an obviously different textured or coloured material, thus highlighting what is restoration, and what is original. I dislike this approach, firstly it requires no skill whatsoever and sec-

ondly it looks awful. There is no wrong in good restoration, the deception is when the restoration is misrepresented, and the piece is portrayed as original.

My friend and I concluded our conversation, he had the last word, he said "of course, nobody knows about the really good fakes, do they?"

*Robert Gripper  
July 2006*

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# Wychwood Forest Fair at Ascott-under-Wychwood

**Sunday 27 August,  
from noon until 5pm**

This year's Forest Fair, Wychwood's own green country show, will be held at Fairspear Field, Leafield Road, Ascott-under-Wychwood, a site set between two ancient copses of the once much larger Wychwood Forest.

There will be even more attractions than ever. This year's Fair is being held alongside Crown Farm Horse Trials. There will also be a Children's Fun Fair, Children's story teller, Flying Teddies, Ferret racing, several local Morris dancing sides and other entertainments. There will be a large Second Hand Bookstall, a Tombola Stall, various raffles and a Garden Plant stall to raise funds for the Friends of Wychwood - who help support the Wychwood Project.

As well as displays of the Wychwood Project's work, many other local conservation

and community groups will be at the Fair. A wide range of rural crafts will be on display, including stonewalling and black-smithing. There will also be an Arts and Crafts tent, displaying and selling a wide range of goods.

There will be plenty of local food suppliers and farm produce, lots of refreshments, locally produced ice cream and - last but not least - a beer tent selling beer from the local

Wychwood Brewery, based in Witney.

Altogether, there will probably be in excess of 160 stalls and activities for visitors to enjoy.

Follow the signs to the site. Admission £4 per person, under 16s free.

For more information about the Wychwood Project call Project Manager Nick Mottram on 01993 814143, or visit [www.wychwoodproject.org](http://www.wychwoodproject.org)

**Nick Mottram**

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## Ascott Fun Run

The Village Charity and the Pavilion management committee are organising a sponsored "Fun Run" and BBQ on Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> October to raise money towards the upkeep of the sports pavilion and in particular to replace the failing heating system and boiler. The run will follow bridle ways from Ascott to Chilson, follow the road through Chilson and return

along the Evenlode valley. There will be a shorter event for juniors. Medals will be awarded to winners in the various categories.

If you would like to compete start training now!

If you are interested in taking part CONTACT:

John Cull

Stuart Fox 832004

Elaine Byles 831327

Ingrid Ridley 830612



# Have you noticed the loss of Lapwing, Redshank and Snipe along the Evenlode?

## Would you like to help stop the decline?

Drew McVey, RSPB Lapwing Landscapes project officer and Jane Bowley, Parish Conservation Challenge (PCC) project officer with the Wychwood Project will be talking at the Tiddy Hall on Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> September at 7.30 pm about the new RSPB Lapwing Landscapes project. The RSPB Lapwing Landscapes project is being funded through

the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty's (AONB) and aims to work alongside farmers and communities to increase the numbers of stunning wading birds such as lapwings, redshanks and snipe. The project will focus on restoring suitable habitats around the rivers Windrush and Evenlode for these birds which are all on local and national priority conservation lists.

Joining forces with the Wychwood Project PCC, which is funded by LEADER+, Friends of Wychwood and other local charities, will provide volunteers for the Lapwing Project and additional opportunities for the participants in the PCC to make a difference through conservation work in their own parishes. Free farm conservation advice, school and community awareness talks and farm visits, farmer workshops and the restoration of water meadows will be carried out over the next three years.

If you would like more information about how you can join in with the project in your parish please contact Drew McVey, RSPB Lapwing Landscapes, on 01865 352035 or [drew.mcvey@rspb.org.uk](mailto:drew.mcvey@rspb.org.uk) or Jane Bowley, Wychwood Project Officer, on 01993 814131 or [jane.bowley@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:jane.bowley@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

**Jane Bowley**

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## Clean & Sparkling

Gardeners up and down the country have been using bath-water to keep their plants alive through these drought conditions. (I expect it will be tipping with rain by the time you read this!). This picture comes to mind, of all these gardens clean and sparkling after all the soapy water that's been poured over them.

Wouldn't it be easier to put the sprinkler in the flower bed and then have a shower yourself, perhaps inviting the neighbours to join you?

Each evening you could have a shower in a different garden! It would stop the call to the water board, reporting you for using a hosepipe, but they might 'phone someone else and get you taken away!

Don't forget your houseplants in all this showering, most will enjoy a summer holiday outside, providing they are kept well watered.

Amazingly my new vegetable plot is growing well. I haven't watered it at all, not even with bath water. The

runner beans have reached the top of their canes, have lots of flower and beans are starting to appear. I've left the thinning of the carrots a little late, but I don't waste the small ones using them raw in salads. Try and thin them in the evening and then water them so that the soil closes up around them, protecting them from the carrot fly.

The gardens should be full of colour by now. Deadhead penstemon, rudbeckia, phlox and verbena as

### Bluebells at the Barn

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soon as you can. This will encourage the plants to produce more flowers rather than go to seed. Some seed heads such as poppies, love-in-the-mist and alliums, are attractive in their own right and can be left.

If you grow sweet peas, my favourite, keep cutting the flowers, preferably in the early morning or the late evening. As soon as they set seed the flowers will stop coming.

What could really use some soapy

bathwater to give it a good clean is my new pond. The water cleared after it was first filled, but now it's a "pea-soup" colour. It's not happy with all this hot sunshine. I've planted another water lily and put in some floating plants to cover the water surface, so hopefully it will start to clear again.

More and more gardens are being opened to the public for the National Gardens Scheme and are publicised in their "yellow

book." The money raised goes to local and national charities. I love to visit other peoples' gardens, especially the smaller ones, where every space is used. There are always lots of ideas to take home and try. Perhaps you might be thinking of opening your garden for a village event, it's great fun and what could be nicer on a sunny day than showing-off your garden and enjoying the compliments after all of your hard work.

*AJP*

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## Wychwoods Day Centre

For the past two and a half years I have had the enormous pleasure of organising and co-ordinating the running of The Wychwoods Day Centre in the Beaconsfield Hall, Shipton-under-Wychwood. During this time I have got to know a wonderful group of people, both old and young.

Held on a Thursday, for 48 weeks of the year, the Day Centre aims to provide a safe and happy

environment within which a maximum of 20 members can socialise and participate in a wide range of activities. The word "Day Centre" may conjure up unflattering ideas and visions to many of us, but in our case this is wholly unfounded. I am writing briefly to give a more accurate view of who we are, with the aim of encouraging any tentative volunteers amongst you to come forward and find out more about us.

Set up in 1998 by a determined group of local village members, the Day Centre has gone from strength to strength and provides a much needed facility within the older section of our community. For many, it is the highlight of their week. We certainly **do not** spend our time sitting in a circle looking at each other and snoozing (though that is allowed and generally hard to avoid after the wonderful home-

cooked meal that is provided!).

Our activities are many and varied and include: outings; musical entertainment; visits by local theatres; craft sessions; Flix in the Stix, quite apart from the weekly fiendish games of scrabble and rummicub!

One of the defining things about the Day Centre is that, apart from myself as Co-ordinator, it relies completely on voluntary help from within the surrounding villages, and the selfless time and energy freely given by so many. As is the nature of volunteering it can take up as much or as little of one's time as wished, varying from once or twice a month helping or driving on the day, to once every eight to 12 weeks cooking with a partner. My job is to co-ordinate up to sixty helpers, drivers and cooks to the mutual benefit of all!

If anyone out there would like to contribute



to this valuable facility in however small a way, please do give me a ring or pop in on a Thursday to see us for yourself. Although I am very fortunate in having a great band of helpers I am always on the look out for new faces as inevitably the turnover of volunteers is unpredictable.

We are always happy to see visitors and hold regular coffee mornings, the next of which is on **Thursday 7th September** (with card and plant stall and raffle). We would be delighted to see you all!

Finally, I can honestly say that I look forward to "going to work" on a Thursday each week which in no small part is due to the wonderful atmosphere set by members and volunteers alike. May I take this opportunity to **thank wholeheartedly** all those of you who already give so much time to the running of the Day Centre and I look forward to welcoming any potential new volunteers in the future.

**Katherine Gidman**  
**01993 831479**

## Nature Notes

We often take our surroundings for granted and it sometimes takes a stranger or visitor to point out features that make our local landscape special. Look around and what do you see in the fields, roadsides and in our villages? The answer is miles of dry stone walls in various states of repair.

Most of the upland areas of Britain have field boundaries marked by dry stone walls. Each area uses distinctive methods of construction and finish and the Cotswolds, including the Evenlode Valley is no exception. Upland soils are thin and stony so ploughing always turns up large stones; these were moved to the edge of the fields and used to construct the outer skins of the walls. Smaller stones were also collected and used as infilling between the sturdy outer walls. Very often small local quarries provided the largest stones that were used to

cap the walls or provide foundation stones.

Sadly many walls have fallen into disrepair and few new walls are being constructed, mainly because of the loss of agricultural labour and the need for farms to minimise their running costs in order to survive.

Dry stone walls are constructed without cement or mortar, either in the wall or in the foundations. Such walls can last longer than cement made walls as a well-built dry stone wall can flex and move over time without falling down. A wall that is well maintained will last a hundred years or more and many walls that have been regularly repaired may mark truly ancient field or parish boundaries. If the top stones are lost and water and frost get into the centre of the wall it will soon begin to deteriorate and crumble, finally being reduced to a bramble covered mound.

Apart from their practical uses and as part

of our local landscape dry stone walls offer a sheltered and varied habitat for a wide variety of plants and animals. On the shady side of a wall mosses and ferns will flourish and flowering plants, such as the ivy-leaved toadflax will grow. On the dryer side of the wall a wide variety of lichens, that strange partnership between a fungus and algae, will encrust the stone in a variety of colourful patches. Lichens are often overlooked, yet there are 1700 different species recorded in Britain. They grow very slowly, sometimes no more than half a millimetre a year and many are very long-lived, when undisturbed and unpoluted, so a well encrusted wall may be assumed to have substantial age.

Dry stone walls are also home to many invertebrates, particularly spiders in the upper dryer parts and down below ground beetles, slugs and snails. Field mice and voles will shel-

ter and breed within the wall and occasionally birds, such as blue tits, wagtails and sparrows will nest in a suitable cavity. Weasels and stoats hunt and hide among the stones.

Walls, like hedgerows provide protected “corridors” for small animals to move between areas of favourable habitat as well as shelter, especially in the winter, for larger mammals such as foxes or hares. Unlike hedgerows walls have little legal protection, although schemes such as the one operated by the Cotswolds AONB encourage landowners to maintain and rebuild walls so that they will continue to define our landscape for years to come.

### **Parish Conservation Challenge**

Following the interest shown after the display at the Tiddy Hall the following initiatives are under way or are being discussed:

- Rebuilding the dry stone wall around

the Pound and erecting a small display board to explain its historical significance. This is subject to the Parish Council being successful with its grant applications.

- Producing an archive of old photographs relating to Ascott, with the aim of having these available “on-line” via the Wychwood History Society’s web site.
- A survey of ponds across the Wychwoods and comparing existing ponds to ones shown on old maps. If anyone has a pond on their land we would like to complete a survey of it as part of a

national database.

**Let me know if you have a pond that I could survey.**

- We hope to organise a bat walk in late summer and possibly one to look for suitable sites where owl boxes can be erected.
- Investigations continue over the feasibility of clearing the rubbish from five-shilling corner, capping the site and replanting a small area of woodland.

Other ideas, such as the creation of roadside nature reserves and a living churchyard scheme have not been progressed and because of a shortage of volunteers clearing the sheep wash has not been pursued.

*Stuart Fox*

## **Bed & Breakfast**

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## Village Pig Roast

The threat of rain may have kept us off the Village green, but it failed to dampen the spirits of the residents of Ascott.

Tiddy Hall was full to overflowing when the village turned out in force to celebrate the Queen's birthday with a traditional pig roast.



*Photos courtesy of  
T Craig*







## Book Review


You'll find plenty of light summer reading in the newspapers. That's my excuse, anyway. I want to tell you about something very different – a book that's as gripping as a thriller, but infinitely more moving. It's called *An Ordinary Man*, and it's the story of the Rwandan genocide, told by the hero of the film *Hotel Rwanda*.

The Rwandan genocide was not the largest

in history, but it was the fastest: 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus were murdered in 100 days, which means 8000 a day, or 5 every minute. Paul Rusesabagina was the Manager of the Milles Collines, the smartest hotel in Kigali. Over the 100 days he took in everyone who sought shelter there, until there were 1268 people squeezed into a hotel

built for 300. The UN was worse than useless, the US never returned his calls. But somehow Paul himself managed to put off the killers, every time. Finally the UN evacuated the Milles Collines refugees to safety. All 1268 survived.

How did he do it? If this story has already reminded you of *Schindler's List*, it will do so even more now. Like



# COTSWOLD Wildlife Park

— and Gardens —

Visit the Park during the summer holidays to see the beautiful planting displays in the Walled Garden, the herbaceous borders and elegant parterres by the Manor House and the varied landscaping throughout the parkland.

**Special events taking place in August are:**

- Reptile Awareness Days**  
all Sundays and Mondays during the school holidays  
from 2pm-4.30pm (weather permitting)
- Birds of Prey Demonstrations**  
all weekends in August and over the Bank Holiday.
- Plus**  
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[www.cotswoldwildlifepark.co.uk](http://www.cotswoldwildlifepark.co.uk)

Burford, Oxon OX18 4JW ☎ (01993) 823006

**Open daily from 10am. Mid-way between Oxford & Cheltenham.**

Schindler, Paul was a successful businessman. For years he had built up friendships and favours among the 'power web' of Kigali, who gathered around the Milles Collines pool. And when it all began, he went on doing what he had always done. He kept up his friendships with the *genocidaires*, he called in favours, he flattered and bargained and bribed. Even when people came to kill them all, he spoke quietly, and offered them a drink, a deal, understanding of their point of view. No one is completely evil, he says, even the hardest man has a soft side: find it and use it.

If you ever find yourself in a war zone, remember that.

But secondly, and perhaps even more importantly, *why* did he do it? Why did he risk his life to help other people?

Like other rescuers – in the Holocaust, in Bosnia – he doesn't think there's a question to answer. What I did

was not special, they all say, it was just normal. But it is special to remain normal when everyone around you has gone mad. There are always a few who do – tens of thousands in the Holocaust, thousands in Rwanda. But why him? Is there anything we can learn?

Yes. Paul's moral strength was not in-born, but taught him by his father, who sheltered a previous wave of refugees when Paul was a child. His most important lesson to us, therefore, is to set a good example to our children. And to beware the power of words. It was words that started the genocide, he says – the words of each side against the other for generations, the words of the anti-Tutsi media. So: set our children a good example, and teach them to question words that incite to hate and fear. These are the lessons we can learn from this ordinary man (who was a Hutu married to a

Tutsi, by the way.) I can't think of anything more important.

**Carole Angier**

*An Ordinary Man* by Paul Rusesabagina with Tom Zoellner is published by Bloomsbury.

*Hotel Rwanda* is available on DVD. *The Overwhelming*, a new play about the Rwandan genocide, is at the Oxford Playhouse, 5-9 September.

**Apology:** The Grapevine owes an apology to Carole Angier for errors made in typesetting her previous book review:

*The word 'only' was dropped out of line 20: '...we **only** need to know that someone really did these things...' i.e. the moment we know this, we're impressed; not that we have to know it to be impressed, which is what it means without the 'only'. I wouldn't say that! It dismisses the whole of fiction.... Also, the book wasn't only short-listed for the Samuel Johnson Prize, but also won the Guardian Fiction Prize*

# Ascott-under-Wychwood Parish Council

After a busy few months with the Annual Meeting and the monthly Meeting both in the month of May, we saw the sad departure of Nigel Braithwaite, Mike Pearce and Wendy Pearce, all of whom have served the Parish Council for many years and have devoted so much time and effort to the Village. The Parish Council wish to express

their gratitude and best wishes for the future to them all.

The Parish Council welcomes a new Chairman, Mr David Wilkinson and new council members Bridgette Crundwell and Sally Franks.

We have some spare Allotment plots for rent, please do not hesitate to contact the Parish Clerk or one of the

Councillors should you wish to rent a plot.

## **Parish Council:**

David Wilkinson, Chairman 832144  
Stuart Fox  
Responsible Financial Officer 832004  
Elaine Byles 831427  
Bridgette Crundwell 830671  
Sally Franks 831432

*Angela Barnes  
Parish Clerk:  
01608 641045*

## **Pet Service**

More than 60 people, including David Cameron and family, attended a special 'Pet Service' which was held in the open air in Ascott churchyard on Sunday 16th July.



## A Game of Bowl

When I was a lad living in Fifield near Milton-under-Wychwood, I came across this old bowling green and I decided to have a go at it. I did like the game but I did not do it again till the year of 2006 in May, when I went to Wychwood bowl club (behind the Shaven Crown) open day in Shipton and met people from Milton, Shipton and Ascott people as well.

On the day I joined the club and got my bowling shoes and set of bowls with help from the bowl club, I was ready to start for the first time. We all have a get together and have five ends with a team of four.

On the firstend this bloke said to me, 'I was taking my sister for a test drive in my car, coming back from Burford bowl club to Shipton along the A361 doing about 60mph and she started knitting while driving! This police car sees her doing it and

blue light flashing, comes alongside and said, "pull over". My sister said, "No, I'm knitting a scarf".' On that end we won two shot.

On the next end, the lady said to me 'have you heard about the two aerials who met on a roof, fell in love and got married? The ceremony wasn't bad but the reception was brilliant!' We lost three shot on that end.

The next end, saw this bloke who'd come back from holiday. I said, "how was your holiday in Switzerland? Did you like the scenery?" He said, "not really, you couldn't see much as the mountains kept getting in the way." On that end we lost two shot.

Five-two down on the next end, this war hero said to me, "have you heard about the Eng-



lishman, Scotsman and Irishman due to face a firing squad in WWII?" I said 'no'. He told me, 'the Englishman was first to be lined up against the wall, and as the German soldiers raised their rifles and took aim, he suddenly shouted "Avalanche". The German soldiers turned round to look and by the time they realised it was a hoax, the Englishman had escaped. The Scotsman then prepared to meet his doom, but just as the

German soldiers raised their rifles and took aim he shouted "Floodwater". Again, they turned round to look and see what the problem was, and by the time they looked back the Scotsman had escaped. It was the Irishman's turn next. He had been greatly impressed by his two friends and he came up with a similar diversion. So just as the German soldiers raised their rifles and took aim, the Irishman shouted "FIRE!" and five shots

were fired...' We won two shot on that end.

On the next end, this lady said she used to be a tap dancer. I said why did you give it up and she said she kept falling in the sink! On that end we won one shot. So it was a draw, five-five. We all shake hands, it was a lovely game. Then we have a nice cup of tea and some food and a talk as well and I still play bowl during the summer.

*Timothy Ryan*

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## Witney-swapandsell

Hello! I thought you might like to know about the new Witney swap and sell site. It is quite new, but I think it is a great idea especially for those on low income who can't afford new things. You can also put things on their what's on section if you have an event coming up.

Visit [www.witney-swapandsell.co.uk](http://www.witney-swapandsell.co.uk)

Tell all of your friends about this site - you could be helping someone in need!

The idea behind witney-swapandsell is to put local people in contact with other local people who might have something that they want or need. We throw away far too much and your unwanted stuff might be just what someone else is looking for.

For example, you might have hundreds of plastic bottle to donate to a school for art projects, or a second hand computer monitor to give away.

Witney-SwapandSell is simple to use and registering is completely free and simple.

We hope to build the site into a great resource for the local community, and we hope you find what you're looking for.

If you have any comments on the site or if you would like to advertise, please send an email to- [toni@witney-swapandsell.co.uk](mailto:toni@witney-swapandsell.co.uk)

*Nicky Clargo*

## Open Mills Day

On the 14<sup>th</sup> May we opened Ascott Mill as part of the Open Mills week-end which is organised by the Society for Preservation of Ancient Buildings. Open Mills week-end is an annual event which always takes place on the second week-end in May.

We had twelve local crafts people exhibiting their work including wrought iron, jewellery, paintings, cards of all sorts, leatherwork, wood turning, pottery, crochet, knitting, quilts, bags and lots more; there was also a plant/cake stall, cream teas, Chrissie's Owls and a riverside walk.

All the money raised from the afternoon was for The Sai Ram Trust, which is a local charity, whose objectives are "for the relief of poverty and hardship and the advancement of education in the United Kingdom and worldwide and for the relief of suffering and hardship and re-construction following and in response to natural and man made disasters in the United Kingdom and worldwide". In the past the charity has provided drugs and medication for eye operations carried out free of charge by UK doctors in India and Russia, cares for three girls in an orphan-

age in Bangalore, supports the Open Arms project in Malawi which looks after children orphaned by AIDS and has helped with the distribution of Aids Awareness books to schools in South Africa. It also supports the Pennyhooks Project near Shrivenham, which provides education for autistic children.

We were blessed with a fine afternoon [luckily the forecasters got it wrong again!] and over 200 people came along. The afternoon raised £780 for The Trust and we are really grateful for such wonderful local support.

*Nigel and Anne  
Braithwaite*

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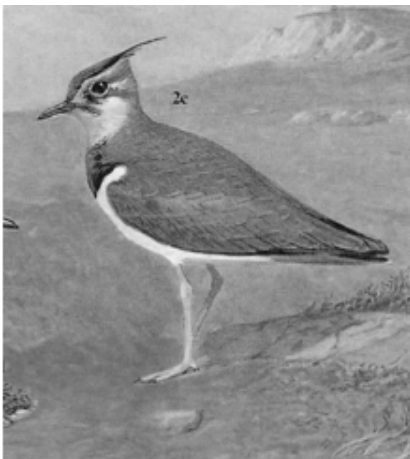
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## Memories of Coldstone Part 4

Firstly, a sequel to Part 3. I wrote about peewits and their nests and this spring of 2006 when I was rolling the spring barley in April, I spotted a peewit sitting on the ground in the crop. I took note of a couple of points across the field which lined up with the nest because on warm sunny days these birds often leave the eggs and go feeding on the other side of the field. The nest is then almost impossible to find as it consists of only a few dead stems round a small hollow in the ground and the eggs are brownish green colour with dark blotches.



With traditional reaction this peewit took off and flew a short distance to the side when I approached on the tractor and then toddled back to the nest each time after I had gone past. There were four eggs so hopefully four more peewits successfully reared.

Reverting to Coldstone memories, there were several interesting features on the farm apart from the farm buildings. There was a small plantation between the corner of the field by Coldwell Brook or Cordle Brook as we called it, and the Charlbury to Burford road. This had a variety

of trees and surprisingly, in the middle of it was the main source of the brook flowing freely out of the side of the sloping ground.

Near the other corner by the road

and higher up the hill was a stone quarry with an iron railing around it constructed of iron hurdles. The sides of the quarry consisted of flat stones much thinner than the usual local stone and they were in layers just like a man made stone wall. In 1913 Coldstone Farm was owned by Lord Sanderson Furniss, so this quarry was dug for the stone when he had his new house built. He built it in a small grass field named Chestnut Close and gave this name to his house. Later occupants changed the name to Wychwood Manor.

Between the plantation and the quarry was a small grass field owned by the Council. This contained a long barrow which was threatened by a road straightening scheme in the late nineteen fifties to sixties, so it was excavated. There were some stone built sections containing bones of inhabitants of Ascott parish from six



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## Memories of Coldstone continued...

thousand years ago, with a flint arrowhead embedded in one bone. It was interesting to see that the walls were just like the stone quarry face.

Further on down Cordle Brook not far from the Ascott to Shipton road is a fishpond and sheep wash pool lying parallel to the bank of the brook. Documents record the fishpond owned by an occupant of Coldstone Farm in the seventeen hundreds, and the stone built sheep wash pool was added to the end of it much later. We always knew it as the "sheep wash". Crossing

under the road the brook ran through the orchard and into a large glazed pipe with a grill across the opening. This lent itself to a variety of games etc., for young children. I found that a hessian sack placed across the grill would soon build up the water into a nice pond and when it was dragged out again the water would slosh down the pipe with a good whoosh. We were having a go at this one day when Percy Townsend walked round the road close by. He was Ascott's regular roadman and he did shout at us!

On the hillside which is now Honeydale Farm is a spring and a reservoir. This was utilised by Lord Sanderson when he built his house. He put a pipeline down the fields under the railway bridge and river to supply the farm and also carry the water by gravity up to large tanks in the top of his new house. The overflow water at the spring felt icy cold on hot summer days but on frosty winter mornings it steamed all down the ditch.

By the main A361 where the television relay mast now stands was a Royal Observer Corps

Post. A wooden hut with a square lookout section on the end about twelve feet high, this had an apparatus on the top for measuring the distance to aircraft. There



was also a heating stove and a toilet hut. The post was manned day and night throughout the wartime by people from the Wychwoods including Jack Young the wheelwright from Ascott, Reg Bradley the garage owner from Shipton and Charles Wells from Poplar Farm, Milton. When they were on the top wearing their large headphones and scanning the sky with their binoculars they looked quite weird to young children riding close by on a harvest wagon. I remember times on cold winter nights when the gale force wind was lashing the rain against our window mother would say she felt sorry for the people up there in that hut. After the war the hut was abandoned for several years but was used for shelter by tramps on the road. They

broke off boards and burned them for warmth.

There were some reasonable livestock about in the wartime so there must have been some good meat somewhere but meat was rationed and most of what we had was on the tough side. We were supplied by Mr Davy the butcher from Milton and one joint was so bad that mother said you didn't know whether to try to eat it or use it to mend your shoes, so that like a number of other Ascott people we were glad to have our own pig in the sty. I had four uncles who had farms so when we needed a small pig we visited one or

other of these and brought back a young weaner about seven or eight weeks old, in a sack on the floor of the old Morris 8. Pigs naturally root up the earth in search of roots and other delicacies so to prevent damage to the floor of the sty, a brass ring was soon clipped onto its nose. A close observation of our fellow human beings may reveal that for some people this practise still continues today!

Mother was in charge of pig feeding and we had a pig bucket standing under the kitchen sink for potato peelings and all other food scraps. These were boiled everyday and



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mixed with bran, toppings and barley meal. We also took the pig a brussel sprout or other stem when they were in supply. I remember it was occasionally given a shovelful of nutty slack coal, presumably to help with digestion. Bacon pigs of today are slaughtered when they are little more than half grown but these home kept pigs were allowed to become fully grown and mature.

**People of a sensitive nature may not find the following to their taste!**

After feeding them for many months Bill Benfield would arrive in his lorry for pig killing day, usually late Autumn. He was the regular man for the job in this area. A cleanish grassy patch would be selected in the yard and the gun and a long sharp knife laid ready. The pig would be led from the sty squealing and shaking it's head, not liking the cord tight around it's upper jaw. The grassy patch is reached,

the gun barks, the pig drops, the knife stroke brings hot blood gushing from the slit-open throat. At this time the pig would writhe and kick. Some people were upset by this effect when they saw animals slaughtered during the foot and mouth outbreak and were afraid the animals were suffering but this is only caused by the reaction of the body nerves. If you pull a hen's head clean off it's neck, the body will run about with wings flapping furiously, hence the saying "dashing around like a headless chicken". I was always surprised at the quick effect of the gunshot. Instantaneous total collapse on the B of the bang, the pig certainly didn't know much about it.

It was important to draw all the blood out before the heart stopped beating, otherwise the meat would be spoilt. Some people caught the blood in a bucket to use in black puddings but ours just drained into the ground. Wheat

straw was shaken all over the pig and set alight to burn off the hair and bristles, then it was rolled over to do the other side. The belly was slit open full length from the throat and the organs removed. Clean bowls were ready for the heart, lungs and the liver. A white enamel bath was used to hold the intestines. The fatty layer inside the body wall was pulled out, we called this the leaf but some people knew it as the flear. In cattle or sheep this would be the suet. This was hung up to set and could be weighed to gauge the full weight of the pig. A fifteen pound leaf meant a fifteen score pig. A score was twenty pounds. The bladder could be blown up and used as a football for a while. When remains of the bristles and ashes were cleaned off the carcass was taken to the lower end of the house. With a hook under the lower jaw it was pulled up to a beam with Bill's pulleys and the sides were propped open

with a stick to help it cool. A strong smell of burnt hair hung about for a day or two. The leaf was cut up into cubes about half an inch thick and heated by the fire, it melted into liquid which was strained through a muslin cloth and put into bowls to set into lard. The remaining solid bits in the cloth were the scratchings. Slices of bread and lard made a good supper. The intestines were cut into lengths about a metre long for chitterlings or chitlings as we called them. They were washed and turned and soaked in water for three days, being washed and turned inside out each day, then they were plaited up and cooked. A chitling plait is made with one length threaded loop through loop similar to chain stitch in embroidery. They reduced to about one third of the size when cooking.

After two days Bill came back in the evening and in the flickering light of four or five

candles the pig now stiff and set was lowered onto our solid wooden bench. The head was removed with a sharp knife and a saw and the carcass was cut full length down each side of the backbone. A proportion of the ribs were cut out and the hams were cut from the sides. The head was split open with the meat axe and the eyes and the brains were discarded. The meat from the head was used for brawn. The backbone was chopped into lengths suitable for backbone pie which was always full of jelly when cooked.

I think you must have needed a permit to kill a pig in the wartime because our pigs were usually fourteen score or so and when Bill was filling in the form, he always used to say to dad, "We'd better make him ten score then hadn't we Master Arthur". The main job the next day was salting down the sides of bacon and hams. Salt was rubbed into the meat all over and saltpetre was applied to the cut surfaces and any exposed blood vessels. The back fat on these sides of bacon was usually four

# W. J. Wright

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inches thick. When it was cold after being boiled it made delicious bacon sandwiches for breakfast or working dinner in the field. The hams bore no resemblance to those of today. The paperthin tender

slices at the supermarket are insignificant in comparison to the big full flavoured slices that could be cut from a home produced ham.

Various pieces of the pig meat were passed on to friends and relations,

then when they had a pig killed, they sent some to us in return. Before too long it would be time to collect another weaner pig and the whole cycle would begin again.

*Jim Pearse*

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## Pilates on our doorstep

If you've got a bad back – and as it strikes 60 percent of the population there are few of us who escape it – you face a number of different treatment options. From painkillers and surgery to the healing hands of chiropractors and osteopaths it can be a bewildering choice. But new research has shown that Pilates – the controlled programme of strengthening and stability exercises all the craze with models and actors – is at least as effective as any other kind of intervention for back pain.

The even better news is that we now have a highly experienced and qualified physiotherapist now holding Pilates classes in our midst.

After 17 years of sorting out back, neck and joint problems, eight of them in the Witney area, Leaffield-based chartered physiotherapist, Clare Lewey has undergone extensive training in Pilates. This means she can offer the unique proposition of a Pilates class individually modified to suit your pain or problem. This is classical Pilates broken down into user-friendly modules appropriate to the individual.

After giving birth to three (large) children in only a few years my stomach muscles had the strength and tone of old knicker elastic. This lack of support at the front of my body put undue strain on my spine and I found myself

regularly doubled up with sciatica. A visit to Clare swiftly sorted out the pain, but she recommended a course of Pilates to strengthen the muscles of my tummy and torso to protect my back from further injury. I figured if it is good enough for Madonna and every other lithe and winsome celebrity you could care to mention, it was good enough for me.

I thought it might be fun, and interesting. I had no idea what incredible impact Pilates would have on my life.

After an initial one-to-one assessment session with Clare I joined a class of seven others (there's a rule on no more than eight in a class). To a calming

background of gentle music, Clare led us through a series of deceptively easy exercises. After demonstrating the move, she walks among us, ensuring we're achieving maximum benefit and minimum pain each time. The intensity builds only very gradually as the course progresses. You work at your own pace, and Clare ensures everything you do is within your own limits and doesn't antagonise your back problem.

At the early classes you spend a lot of time concentrating on breathing in and out at the right time, and I have to admit there were times when I wondered what possible benefit this could be achieving. But as things progress, the focus shifts to keeping every muscle in your body aligned and relaxed while you perform an isolated exercise, and the exercises become more and more strenuous to the point where you can find yourself

building up a bit of a sweat.

I don't know whether it's the hour of steady deep breathing, or the intense focus on specific muscle groups, the satisfaction of gliding through an exercise I found challenging the previous week, or the utterly blissful meditative relaxation routine at the end of each class, but I always leave with a deep and lasting sense of euphoria. The classes have become really quite addictive for me. My stomach muscles are toughening up nicely (when I hold them in, they stay there), and I haven't had a twinge of sciatica since I started.

Don't be fooled. Pilates is definitely not a girl thing. There are men in the classes too (one local horseman swears by Clare's Pilates for his riding induced back pain), and Clare is currently teaching people aged between 18 and 70. She has tailored the classes for fit, healthy people as well as those

with back or other aches and pains, or for those who want to strengthen up post ante- and post-natally.

After a break for the summer, classes will be starting up again, in Witney, in September. The cost is £60 for the initial one-hour consultation and assessment, then £15 per class, with classes running as a course of six weekly sessions.

If you're interested, call Clare at Cotswold Physiotherapy on 01993 705533 or 07817 796 511

*Louise Woods*



# Wychwood Project Proud to Receive the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service

The Lord Lieutenant of Oxfordshire, Hugo Brunner, joined members of the Friends of Wychwood and other guests at the presentation of the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service to the Wychwood Project at Breach Wood Community Woodland in Hailey, on Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> June.

The Queen's Award "recognises the vital role played by the hundreds of thousands of 'unsung heroes' of the voluntary and community

world and emphasises the importance of continuing recognition of their work". The Wychwood Project was given the Award for its role in encouraging people to understand, conserve and restore the landscape and wildlife habitats of the former Royal Forest of Wychwood.

The choice of Breach Wood as a venue for the ceremony was particularly fitting as this is a community woodland created and is managed by volunteers from the local community with the assistance of the Project.

After presenting the Project Chairman with an engraved crystal award Hugo Brunner offered his support for the



ambition of the Project to create a new big community woodland and encouraged owners of land that might be made available for this purpose to come forward – "Breach Wood is a fine example of what can be achieved by local people but the support of a willing landowner is vital" he said, "it would be marvelous if it were possible to replicate this in another location at a larger scale".

On receiving the Award Alan Spicer, Chairman of the Wychwood Project and Ken Betteridge Chairman of the Friends of Wychwood gave their thanks to all the volunteers whose hard work lies at the heart of the Wychwood Project.

**Nick Mottram**



## **‘Things to do’ around Ascott this Summer**

### **Sailing with Oxford Sailing Club, Farmoor Reservoir**

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Windsurfing and Power-  
boat Courses.  
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Farmoor Reservoir, Ox-  
ford OX2 9NS. Tel:  
01865 863201

### **Giffords Circus Marlborough Common, Wiltshire.**

**Saturday 19th August to  
Tuesday 29th August.**

Saturday 19th August at  
11.00am, 2.30pm &  
7.30pm

Sunday 20th August at  
11.00am, 2.30pm &  
5.30pm

Monday 21st August at  
5.00pm & 7.30pm

Tuesday 22nd August  
at 5.00pm & 7.30pm

Thursday 24th August  
at 5.00pm & 7.30pm

Friday 25th August at  
5.00pm & 7.30pm

Saturday 26th August at  
11.00am, 2.30pm &  
7.30pm

Sunday 27th August at  
11.00am, 2.30pm &  
5.30pm

Monday 28th August at  
11.00am & 2.30pm

Tuesday 29th August at  
2.30pm

**Marlborough Com-  
mon, Wiltshire.**

### **The Fairford Traction Engine Rally and Show Veteran & Vintage Vehicles**

**19th–20th August**

Full Arena Programme;  
Working Section; Fun-  
fair: Live Music Fairford  
Park, Fairford TBC Con-  
tact: (01285) 712232

**Fairford Park, Fairford**

### **‘Sculptree 2006’**

**21st 28th August**

**(Festival of Wood  
25th\_28th August)**

Giant trunks trans-  
formed into amazing  
works of Art through-  
out the week and auc-  
tioned on Bank Holiday  
Monday.

Westonbirt, The Na-  
tional Arboretum,  
nr Tetbury Contact:  
(01666) 880147

### **Living Heritage Oxfordshire Craft Fair**

Saturday, 26 August  
2006 to Monday, 28  
August 2006

A collection of over  
100 stalls offering a  
range of traditional and  
more unusual crafts,  
with arena activities and  
kiddies’ amusements  
throughout the day.  
Admission included.

**Blenheim Palace,  
Woodstock.**

### **Birds of Prey Demonstrations**

**Saturday, 26 August  
2006 to Monday, 28  
August 2006**

Come and watch these  
majestic birds in flight.  
Demonstrations by  
Geoff Dalton. Please  
phone to confirm de-  
tails.

Cotswold Wildlife Park  
and Gardens, Bradwell  
Grove.

### **The Emma’s Trust Festival 2006**

**1st and 2nd September  
2006**

New Chalford Farm,  
Chipping Norton OX7  
5QR

[www.emmastrust.com](http://www.emmastrust.com)

Tickets: 01608 642350,  
Information: 01608  
641404

The Festival is the  
main event of the year

## More 'Things to do...'

organised by 'Emma's Trust'. It's a charity set up to assist young people with sport and performing arts in Gloucestershire, Oxfordshire & Warwickshire. The two day event will feature over 50 live bands on an outdoor stage, a DJ and comedy tent, children's workshops, market stalls, skate park and climbing wall plus much more. Tickets from Chipping Norton Theatre Box Office.

**New Chalford Farm,  
Chipping Norton OX7  
5QR**

**Giffords Circus  
Stratton Meadows,  
Cirencester,  
Gloucestershire.**

**Friday 1st September to  
Monday 11th September**

Friday 1st September at  
5.00pm & 7.30pm

Saturday 2nd September at  
11.00am, 2.30pm  
& 7.30pm

Sunday 3rd September at  
2.30pm & 5.30pm

Monday 4th September at  
5.00pm & 7.30pm

Tuesday 5th September at  
5.00pm & 7.30pm

Thursday 7th September at  
5.00pm & 7.30pm

Friday 8th September at  
5.00pm & 7.30pm

Saturday 9th September at  
11.00am, 2.30pm & 7.30pm

Sunday 10th September at  
11.00am, 2.30pm & 8.00pm

### **Moreton Show**

**Sat 2nd September**

Major one-day Agricultural & Horse Show,  
Showing of Rare Breeds, Arena Displays, Trade Stands  
**The Showground,  
Moreton-in-Marsh**  
Contact: 0870 8777 409

### **Blenheim Palace Jousting Tournament**

**Saturday 9th/Sunday  
10th September**

**"The Knights of Royal  
England"**

A Spectacular event set on the South Lawn. BBQ and refreshments available.

**Blenheim Palace,  
Woodstock**

### **Days Out with Thomas**

**30th September-1st  
October**

Thomas & friends take over Gloucestershire Warwickshire Railway  
Fun for all the family.  
Contact: (01242) 621405

### **Buscot & Coleshill Mill Open Day**

**Sunday 8 October 2006  
2pm - 5pm**

Coleshill Mill has recently been restored to working order and is open to the public every second Sunday in the month during 2006.

**Buscot & Coleshill  
Mill**

### **Charlecote Park Deer Park Safaris**

**Saturday 14 October  
11.30 & 2.30**

**Sunday 15th October  
11.30 & 2.30**

Get close to our Deer on our tractor pulled trailer safari

Pre booking essential.  
Contact: 07788 658495

~~info@charlecote-park.co.uk~~

**Charlecote Park,  
Warwickshire**

# Costa Rica Coast to Coast Challenge

In February 2007, Gareth Evans from Ascott-under-Wychwood and a team of 5 of his colleagues from Portrait Software in Henley-on-Thames are undertaking the Costa Rica Coast-to-Coast Challenge to raise money for the Prince's Trust.

The team to date has raised £10,500 of its minimum £17,000 sponsorship target.

It isn't a holiday, we'll be doing hard

physical activity for at least 8 hours a day non-stop for 7 days. We'll be crossing the Continental Divide, from sea level to 2330 metres and if that's not hard enough we'll also be competing against other teams.

This is a tough challenge ([www.princes-trust.org.uk](http://www.princes-trust.org.uk) for a full itinerary) and we've started training already. We will need overall stamina to cope with the heat, be equally competent at hiking

uphill and cycling both on and off road, and we need to develop upper body strength for the rafting and kayaking.

Although harder than all this physical activity, will be raising the sponsorship money. Watch out for fund raising events in Ascott in the near future which I hope you will support!

Donations gratefully received at [www.justgiving.com/costarica-portrait](http://www.justgiving.com/costarica-portrait)

*Gareth Evans*

---

## Cook's Corner: Ascott's Favourite Recipes

### Golden Jubilee Chicken

*This is a quick easy recipe - just right for hot summer weather!*

#### Ingredients

1 mango cut into small cubes  
2 spring onions, finely chopped  
1 red chilli deseeded and finely chopped  
Juice of 2 limes  
1 cold cooked chicken breast, cut into chunks  
1 Little Gem lettuce, sliced or shredded

Handful of coriander, chopped  
1 teaspoon ground nut oil  
few drops of toasted sesame oil

#### Directions

Put mango cubes, chilli, spring onions and lime juice into a large bowl

and mix well. Then add chicken, coriander and lettuce. Mix all together gently. Serve with either crusty bread or new potatoes.

Serves 2 -3. Just double the portions for 6 people.

Couldn't be easier and tastes delicious.

*Margaret Ismail*

*Have you a favourite or seasonal recipe you would like to share?*

*Then please jot it down and hand a copy to*

*Stuart Fox, Wendy Pearse, Karen Purvis or Kingsley or email it to:*

*[ascottgrapevine@dial.pipex.com](mailto:ascottgrapevine@dial.pipex.com)*

# Mystery and Legend

## Tales of the Unexpected

We are beginning a new series of mysteries, legends and other strange happenings in our locality. Many surprising and unexpected stories flourish in the region of the Evenlode Valley, some well known, some less so and others I am sure which only you may be aware of. Why not share them with us? Please contact me with any tale which you believe our readers may find interesting.

We will begin with a strange story concerning the last hereditary baronet of Shipton Court, Sir John Reade, who died in 1868 aged 83. Based on true facts and real people, the mystery of the butler Sindon's death has never been solved and there is a legend that his blood can still be seen on the floor of the room in which he died.

The story is told by Sir John's former housekeeper Martha Jackson. It is one year after Sir John's death and Fred,



Martha's husband, is  
busy in the garden.

Leave moulding they taters Fred. Come get your  
tea.

For I've such a strange story to tell to thee,  
I met Walker the carrier down by Kingham Brook.  
Seems they folk down in Shipton be shaken and  
shook.

They say Sir John Reade be walking though I know  
he be dead,

For I se'ed him meself a-laid on his bed.  
Peggy the housemaid met he on the Court stairs  
And he frit old Josh Walton a saying his prayers.

Josh he were kneeling his sins to confide  
When he turned and there were Sir John at his  
side.

Well he passed clean away and when he come  
round

Of poor old Sir John there were nair sight nor  
sound.

Old Molly's granddaughter whilst turning the hay  
Bobbed Sir John a curtsy and bid him good day.

Accused her old grandma of telling a fib  
When she told all the neighbours that Sir John  
were dead.

Leave that drat greenfly and heed what I say,  
For Mr Hall at the Court then called it a day.  
He summoned the Bishop of Oxford, no less,  
And a parcel of clergy to Shipton progressed.  
They met at the Lamb and a conflag commenced.  
Seems Sir John must be laid. They would spare no expense.  
With bell, book and candle went a solemn parade  
To ensure that poor ghost should be made to behave.  
His status in life would command no privilege  
In a watery domain beneath Shipton Bridge.

Leave tending they dahlias, I've lots more to tell.  
I wonder if Joe Wakefield knows what befell.  
He were a staunch pillar to that poor old man,  
Yet according to some folk helped carry the can.  
Assisted his lordship 'gainst the law to conspire  
When Sindon the butler on the firedogs expired.  
After the death Sir John were a changed man,  
No more wild oats he scattered, the nightmares began.  
In hopeless remorse he spent endless long hours  
Whilst efforts to calm him took all of Joe's powers.  
He clung to Joe when he trembled at times in his bed  
And said over and over 'twas he should be dead.  
More than twenty years he lived and endured  
The fear that his failing a man's death had caused.  
Eighteen years as his housekeeper my mouth I kept mum,  
For me and Joe reckoned squire's feelings were numbed.  
And you Fred, a journeyman mason can tell,  
When you come on your visits, Joe treated him well.

When Sir John were a-dying he begged Joe and me  
To ensure that his body sad Shipton should leave.  
His old bones to Little Rollright, the hearse led the way  
When they finally laid him to rest, as they say.  
'Twere sad, all his family died young,  
His wife, his daughters and even his sons.  
Only one of his childer were left still alive  
And her were always a bit on the queerish side.  
Didn't live with her father but in Oddington dwelt  
And even at the funeral were snooty, I felt.

He left Joe his lands, his house and contents  
And Joe bought this cottage and sent us two hence.  
“For Martha,” Joe told me, “ Sir John did commend  
You and Fred should be settled until your lives’ end.”  
And yet Fred, why should that lost soul haunt the Court  
When we know from it’s horrors a refuge he sought?  
I do hope now the clergy have performed to their best  
That poor old man’s spirit by the river can rest.

And as for you Fred, you be too late.  
Your tea be stone cold.  
Your bacon be burnt,  
You should come when youm told.

*Wendy Pearse.*

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## Children of the Valley

### The Arrowhead

The girl they called Wyn and the boy Tor. Wyn’s curly black hair fell in tendrils over her shoulders. She disliked tying it back for she enjoyed the feel of the individual curls caressing her cheeks. Her eyes were palest blue contrasting sharply with the olive glow of her skin. Her young brother, four years her junior, displayed similar features although their mother had used her sharp flint knife to crop his curls closer to his head. As they climbed gradually up the slope of the hill,

Wyn stopped and look back along the pathway they had followed. “Where’s Shan?” she exclaimed. At that moment a black and white terrier type dog appeared from a stand of bushes. Wyn and Tor adored Shan and she in turn adored them. “Come Shan.” Wyn called, “If you don’t keep up you will lose sight of us.” Before hoisting her rush basket higher onto her shoulder, she looked back down into the valley. The river glinted serenely in the sunshine. It did not have a name.

Everyone knew it as the river. There was no other so it needed no name. The valley also did not need a name. It was always and ever simply the valley. A small settlement of huts stood on the far side of the river, on a terrace where the sticky mud beside the river gave way to gravel. The dry weather had turned the bare earth of the pathways to





dust and across the opposite side of the valley, as Ham the shepherd urged his flock away from the settlement, a cloud of dust followed their progress. In the meadows beside the river a group of men were busy working amongst the cut grass, turning the rows with long forked sticks hoping to shorten the process of turning the grass into the hay which would be needed to feed the livestock during the long cold days of winter. Wyn could just make out the small wooden dugout canoe which was tied to a tiny jetty beside the river. The river was much wider and deeper than today and a few moments ago she, Tor and Shan had been in that boat being paddled across the softly flowing water by Bran the boatman. Now they were climbing to the top of the high ridge before making their way down into the next valley where their grandmother lived. Their mother should have been with them but the

young woman in the neighbouring hut had suddenly been brought to bed for the birth of her child and needed their mother's skilled assistance. Many times Wyn had taken this path with her parents and had no doubt of her ability to find the way. She felt very responsible as she shepherded Tor and Shan up the hillside.

Flowers bloomed all around them. Not wild flowers, simply flowers. In those days there was no distinguishing between the floral species. They were all plants, some of which were used to treat illnesses and wounds. Others should be treated with caution. To eat them was a danger to both man and beast. But the golden cup like flowers bloomed in abundance amongst the grasses together with the small white stars with golden centres and the purple globes with deeply cut leaves which the small black cattle loved to eat. The song of the skylarks rang all around them



whilst blue tits and great tits hunted amongst the trees and bushes for food for their growing families.

Up on top of the ridge stood the ancient tree. It's trunk was so wide that a whole group of children could be hidden behind it and on one side was a narrow slit through which could be seen the hollow inside the trunk. Wyn thought that they would stop for a short while and sit in the tree's shade before walking on down into grandmother's valley. Her basket was heavy. Mother had packed some nourishing food and drink for grandmother who had become very pale and weak of late. Tor did not want to sit so he and

Shan explored a nearby hole leading down into a rabbit's burrow. "Look at this Wyn." Tor called. In his hand he held a small leaf shaped object. It was white and sharp around the edges. The surface seemed scored with tiny cut marks. "What is it?" Wyn took the object. "Why," she said "Its an old arrowhead made of flint like mother's knife. Father showed me one a long time ago. He said it must have belonged to the people who built that great mound up on the skyline. He said that several arrowheads were found up there when he was a boy. In a hole which someone dug into the side of the mound." They both turned and looked across at the opposite ridge where it rose up above the settlement. Much of the land was covered with trees but in a clearing on the right hand side a large earth structure could be made out running across the hillside. Many of the people avoided the site. There were stories of

strange happenings and eerie noises and in those days there were no explanations for many happenings which we understand today.

"Shan's disappeared again." said Wyn in exasperation. "Where is she?" Abruptly a muffled bark sounded behind her. Tor looked excited "She's gone through the slit into the tree trunk. I had better go in and fetch her out." "Well be careful." Wyn warned. With a squeeze Tor managed to slip through the trunk. "Come on." said Wyn. "We will be late getting to grandmothers if you don't stop messing about."

"My tunic has caught on a sharp piece of wood and I can't reach it!" said Tor. By now Wyn was really exasperated. "You are hopeless Tor. Now I shall have to try to squeeze in." It took a great deal of effort but finally Wyn managed to get inside the trunk. Shan lay blissfully chewing a strip of wood whilst Tor looked shamefacedly up at his

sister. As Wyn struggled to release her brother a voice suddenly spoke outside the tree trunk. Both children froze but not before Wyn had gripped Shan's muzzle with her hand. Up here beside the old highway which ran along the ridge, danger could lurk and the children had been well taught by their parents to be wary at all times. A second voice spoke. "Tonight then. All's ready. That group in the settlement won't know what's hit them. I've watched that old boatman for several days. He always leaves his boat tied to this bank when he comes to check his snares in the evening. We can soon deal with him then we shall be able to cross the river in secret. Get the lads to meet here at dusk."

The children's eyes widened. Wyn was afraid Tor might say something so she quickly put her fingers to her lips bidding silence. They waited, hardly daring to breathe. When some time had passed Wyn decided the

men must have gone. “We must go back Tor and find father. I’m sure those men mean to cause harm. We must warn the people. Be quick! Get out carefully now I have released you. And Shan, please, please don’t bark.” Shan wagged her tail obligingly but Wyn still kept her fingers crossed. They wriggled out of the trunk and oh so carefully peered around the tree to the highway. No one was in sight and like fugitives the children flew down the pathway to the river.” Please let Bran be nearby.” Wyn murmured as they approached the crossing site. Against a tree on the opposite bank a figure reclined, quietly dozing. “Bran, Bran.” the children shouted. Reluctantly Bran forced his eyes open. He had been having such a lovely dream. There was a feast with plenty of food and drink and it had been such a rare treat. Suddenly he became aware of the children on the other bank.

“What’s up?” he called “You are soon back.”

In no time the children and Shan were across the river and running with Bran towards their father and the other men in the meadows.

That evening when the raiders reached the river every man from the settlement, weapons in hand, was silently waiting, hidden behind trees and bushes near the jetty. The raiders seemed bemused and arguments could be heard. Swimming across was a possibility but the wind had risen and the earlier tranquil river had come to the aid of the settlement. Now the waves rippled sharply as the current raced ever faster downstream. Finally the headman of the settlement rose to his feet and brandished his long lance above his head. He sternly threatened the raiders with dire consequences if they attempted to cross.

The raiders refused the challenge and those listening in the settlement could at last breathe freely once more.

But that evening Wyn could hear Tor quietly crying into the bracken of the bed where he lay beside her. “What’s the matter?” she whispered gently not wishing to wake their parents. “I’ve lost my arrowhead. When we raced down the hill I must have dropped it.” “Never mind,” Wyn replied “Perhaps we will find another one.”

And more than 2000 years later I found that little arrowhead, near the top of the ridge where the present road runs down to Shipton village, which lies a little further up the valley from the children’s old home.

*Wendy Pearse*



# **WYCHWOOD FOREST FAIR**

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**SUNDAY 27<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST 2006**  
**Noon till 5pm**

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**At Fairspear Field, Leafield Road,  
Ascott-under-Wychwood**

**Hatwell's Fun Fair • Arts & Craft Tent**  
**Green Man Storyteller • Local Foods**  
**Teas & Refreshments • Local Farm Produce**  
**Plant Stall • Morris Dancing**  
**Rural Craft Displays • Beer Tent**  
**Conservation & Community Groups**  
**Book Stalls and many other attractions**

**Entry £4, under 16s Free**



Organised by the Friends of Wychwood, reg. Charity no. 1084259 in support of the Wychwood Project, which uses the focus of the Royal hunting Forest of Wychwood to encourage local people to understand, conserve and restore its rich mosaic of landscapes and wildlife habitats. For more information about the Project, contact the Project Manager on 01993 814143.



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# Yesterday's Heroes

On a par with the rest of the United Kingdom, West Oxfordshire has a large number of War Memorials mostly dating from the First World War. Their inscriptions record the names of men and sometimes women who participated in brave and stirring events during those years of conflict.

Beside the pond at Westwell is a rather unusual memorial in that it commemorates two brothers of the then Lady of the Manor Stretta Aimee Holland. The brothers were Lieutenant Harold S. Price who died at Ypres and Lieutenant Edward John Price of the Royal Navy. Their names are inscribed on a brass numeral which formed part of the clock on the Cloth Hall at Ypres. It was retrieved by Harold Price after the destruction of the Cloth Hall in the early months of the German bombardment. He brought the numeral back to England before returning to



the hell of the Ypres Salient and dying there on 24<sup>th</sup> May 1915 during the Battle of Bellewaarde Ridge.

When war broke out Harold Price was a member of the Regular Army serving in India in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Bn Royal Fusiliers. The Battalion returned to England, formed part of the 28<sup>th</sup> Division and landed at Le Havre on 18<sup>th</sup> January 1915. The Second Battle of Ypres began on the 22<sup>nd</sup> April with the German's first use of gas warfare. The 28<sup>th</sup> Division were holding the front line not far from the point of release of gas. However Harold Price survived until practically the end of

2<sup>nd</sup> Ypres when at the Battle of Bellewaarde Ridge the German's largest gas attack to date, was released, followed by infantry assaults and hand to hand fighting. This time the 28<sup>th</sup> Division was directly in line with the released gas and Harold was one of the 15,533 casualties which the 28<sup>th</sup> Division suffered during 2<sup>nd</sup> Ypres. His body was never recovered and he is commemorated on the Menin Gate Memorial.

The Price family came from a Canadian background, both parents Edward and Henrietta having been born in that country. However these two settled in England



and produced a family. They had homes at Broadwater, Godalming and near Hyde Park in London. In the 1901 Census Edward is listed as a Wood Merchant and his eldest son Keith as a Timber Agent so it seems likely that they had contacts with the Canadian Timber Industry. Stretta Aimee Price married Sir Reginald Sothern Holland, a man of English parentage but born in South Africa where he had been Private Secretary to a number of Prime Ministers. In 1912 Sir Sothern bought the very dilapidated Manor House and Park at Westwell

from Christ Church College and later following a careful and traditional restoration of the house, bought the Lordship of the Manor and gradually acquired three quarters of the land of the parish. Dedicated to the welfare of the parish and people Sir Sothern and Lady Stretta became great benefactors and friends of the parishioners for nearly forty years.

Only one man from Westwell was killed in the Great War, the son of the rector, Captain H. Sharpe and he is remembered on a tablet in the church. However Stretta wished to establish a memorial to her two brothers and in 1920 a great monolith of Cotswold Stone was brought from Heythrop Quarry by a team of 18 horses and erected beside the pond on top of base stones from Brasenose Quarry. The engraved numeral from Ypres Cloth Hall was inserted into one side of the monolith. The memorial is visible from

Stretta's garden over the roadside wall. Harold was approximately one year older than Stretta so it seems likely that the two spent much of their early life together. With the news of Harold's death on the 24<sup>th</sup> May 1915 Stretta was dealt a hard blow especially since she had probably recently learnt of the disaster which had overtaken her younger brother Edward John on 17<sup>th</sup> April 1915.

Edward John was a lieutenant on board the British Submarine E15. On the whole little is remembered about British submarines in the Great War. At the beginning they were few in number but that total soon increased during the War. Still very experimental they performed great feats of daring during 1914 and 1915 in the Heligoland Bight and the Baltic Sea, where they attacked German supply ships. The Ottoman Empire declared war on the Allies on 1<sup>st</sup> November 1914 and in January 1915 a decision



was taken to force a passage through the Dardanelles by submarine, to attack enemy shipping in the Sea of Marmara. Lieutenant Commander T.S.Brodie of Submarine E15 volunteered to be the first to attempt to reach the Sea of Marmara. At dawn on 17<sup>th</sup> April 1915 E15 left the island of Mudros followed by three Royal Naval Air Service seaplanes on board one of which was Commander Brodie's twin brother C.G.Brodie. Submerged to avoid lines of mines in the Dardanelles the E15 was suddenly caught by a strong current. This swept her ashore on Kephez Point where the heavy guns of the Turkish fort of Dardanus had her full in their sights. The Commander tried to run her full astern to break away but only succeeded in immuring her deeper into the mud. Shells rained down from the fort and a Turk-

ish torpedo boat closed on the stricken vessel. As Commander Brodie emerged from the hatch, he was instantly killed by shellfire whilst another shell exploded in the battery compartment, six of the crew soon succumbing to the effects of dense chlorine gas. The remainder struggled up the hatchway to surrender and as they were taken away they watched the torpedo boat hook a line over the submarine, a prize well worth salvaging. The British seaplanes hovering overhead swooped in low, C.G.Brodie probably

already aware of his brother's fate, and bombed the torpedo boat forcing it to flee, then the planes rapidly returned to base where urgent plans were discussed about how to prevent the E15 and her secrets being salvaged into enemy hands.

Within an hour B6 one of the smaller type submarines was sent to Kephez Point where amidst enemy bombardment she still managed to release her two torpedoes but unfortunately both failed to make contact with E15. As nightfall approached two destroyers were sent

*Turkish sailors aboard the stranded E15.*





forward to attack but the Turks raked the straits with searchlights and caught in the beams the destroyers were unable to continue. The seaplanes tried another bombing mission the next morning and then another B type submarine went in with torpedoes. However heavy mist hung over the Dardanelles and the B type submarine could not locate E15. Then the turn of two battleships, the Triumph and the Majestic, but murderous crossfire erupted from both shores and

even these monsters could not close near enough to register accurate gunfire.

The Turks moved in more guns as salvaging proceeded but the staff on the Allied Flagship would not be beaten. It was decided that when darkness fell, two picket boats, one from each battleship, fitted with two fourteen inch torpedoes and dropping gear, would head for Kephez Point. Lieutenant Commander Robinson from Triumph's boat was given command. Hopefully

the small size of the boats would evade the searchlights. But no, caught in the beams they were soon under fire and as Triumph's boat ran in towards E15 a sudden beam from a nearby searchlight blinded the helmsman and the first torpedo was deflected. Triumph's boat came round again with the second torpedo but a stray searchlight suddenly illuminated E15 and Claude Godwin in charge of Majestic's boat released both torpedoes simultaneously. There

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was a terrific explosion as E15 rose from the mud and shattered. At the moment of success Godwin's boat was hit by a shell but Robinson swung Triumph's boat round and amongst overwhelming shellfire managed to rescue Majestic's crew and flee the scene. Only one of these gallant picket boat volunteers later died from his wounds.

But had E15 and all her secrets been sufficiently destroyed? The following morning B6 with the deceased Brodie's brother aboard crept silently deeply submerged to Kephez

Point. As she rose to periscope depth the same current which had hit E15 claimed another victim. B6 grounded within 100 yards of E15. Fortunately Brodie musing on his brother's death had the answer. Instead of attempting to lose weight and float up to where the current took command, he suggested full astern with negative buoyancy, and to the crew's great relief the little craft extracted herself from the mud and bumped slowly along the bottom of the seabed before escaping into open water. Reach-

ing base Brodie was able to report that E15 was completely wrecked.

In a British newspaper on 25<sup>th</sup> April 1915 it was reported that 20 prisoners of war, members of the crew of E15, had reached Constantinople. Several died in the ensuing years of captivity and Lieutenant Edward John Holland survived as a prisoner of war until 16<sup>th</sup> October 1918 when unfortunately he died barely a month before the cessation of all hostilities. He is buried in Baghdad North Gate Cemetery.

*Wendy Pearse*

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## Wychwoods Local History Society

The new season of meetings will begin on Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> September 2006 at Milton Village Hall when popular speaker Tim Porter will give a talk on Nature and Mediaeval Art. Then on October 19<sup>th</sup> 2006 at Shipton Village Hall, Dr Melanie Dubber's talk will be on Work-

ing Lives of Victorian Women in West Oxfordshire.

Old and new members are welcome. Subscriptions are £6 for an individual and £9 for a couple which includes a copy of Wychwoods History when published. Visitors are welcome at any meeting at

£2 per head. More information about the Society can be obtained from Wendy Pearse on 831023.

*Wendy Pearse*

## Ascott-u-Wychwood Cricket Club

After all of the May fixtures were washed out, Ascott's season finally got under way with a spectacular draw in June. At the time of writing we'd played four games, losing two and drawing two. The main feature of the season so far has been injury; with an average of two injuries per game. Well none of us are as young as we used to be.

Anyone interested in playing should contact our captain Clive Jowett on 07921 786355 (please!).

If you don't feel up to playing, please feel

free to come along and lend your support, be entertained by our international-class players (well we have two South Africans and a Welshman) or just have a chat.

There have been a few amendments to the fixture list. These are the remaining home fixtures for the season (all September's games are away).

### Home Fixtures for 2006:

**Aug 20<sup>th</sup>**  
Swinbrook

## Wychwood Library

### Opening Times

#### Monday:

2pm to 7.00pm

#### Tuesday:

Closed

#### Wednesday:

9:30am to 1pm/  
2pm to 5pm

#### Thursday

Closed

#### Friday:

2pm to 7pm

#### Saturday:

9.30am to 1pm

### Activities in the school holidays:

#### Wednesdays:

School Holiday Story Sessions

3:45 to 4:00 pm

There will be a summer reading mission where children will be asked to read 6 books, during the holidays, and those that succeed will receive a certificate and medal at a prize giving to be held in mid September. Last year 130 youngsters entered.

*Beryl Brown,  
Library Manager  
01993 830281*

## FARMERS MARKETS 2006

**Witney** - 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday  
of the Month

**Woodstock** - 1<sup>st</sup> Saturday  
of the Month

**Chipping Norton** - 3<sup>rd</sup>  
Saturday of the Month

**Charlbury** - Quarterly  
on Saturdays (Dates to  
be Confirmed)

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0870 2414762

or

visit the web site at:

[www.tvfm.co.uk](http://www.tvfm.co.uk)

# Tiddy Hall

## Regular Activities

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

### Friday Mornings

Mother and Toddler  
Group. Contact  
Pauline Plant  
07968006451.

**Wednesday Afternoons**  
Piano Lessons in the  
Committee Room.  
4pm - 7:30pm Contact  
Pauline Carter 01993  
774568

### Wednesday Evenings

Badminton. Contact  
Chris Morgan 01993  
831958.

### Saturday Mornings

Dog Training. Contact  
Sharon Wilson 01993  
831801.

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## Special Events

**Summer Yoga**  
**Tuesday & Thursday**  
**Evenings (July/Aug)**  
7:30pm - 9pm. Con-  
tact Jan Holah 01608  
810620

**To book the Tiddy Hall contact:**

**Ingrid Ridley: 01993 830612**

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**LEAFIELD PLAYGROUP**

Playgroup Room, At the Village Hall, Leaffield

### **We have extended our opening hours!**

Leaffield Playgroup can now offer places from 9.00am to 3.00pm for children ages 2 to 5 years.

We aim to provide a safe and secure environment, with equality for all individuals—a place where children can develop learning through play.

We have:- a purpose built room, outside safety play area, computer area, home corner, dressing up, reading area, arts & craft area, physical activity area.

For more information, a look round or to book places please either contact Joanne Williams on 01993 878062 or 878667/Jackie Harper on 01993 878218 or Lisa Marstin on 01993 878122

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