

The Ascott Grapevine



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 Ascott 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 Ascott Grapevine please contact a member of the team to discuss your ideas.

Articles for the next issue of The Ascott Grapevine should be submitted by 5th May 2016.

Articles submitted after this date may not be included.

Call 01993 831023 or email:
wendypearse@btinternet.com

The Editorial Team:
Stuart Fox, Elaine Byles,
Wendy Pearse, Keith Ravenhill

Content & Editorial Policy

If you have an article, story or poem you would like to submit for publication The Ascott 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.

Opinions expressed in contributions are not necessarily those of the editorial team.

Advertising Rates

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To advertise in our Local Business Directory (see Page 68), please contact Wendy Pearse 01993 831023 or wendypearse@btinternet.com. The cost is £5 per year but inclusion is free for our existing advertisers.

SERVICES AT ASCOTT CHURCH 2016

On Sundays when there is not a service in Ascott there are services across the Benefice, normally 1st Sunday 0800 Enstone & 1000 Spelsbury; 3rd Sunday 0800 Spelsbury & 1000 Enstone. For full details see the Church notice boards. You will receive a warm welcome at any of our services.

Sunday 6th March - Mothering Sunday
10.00 am Family Communion

Sunday 13th March
10.00 am Holy Communion [CW]

Sunday 28th March - Easter Day
6.00 pm Holy Communion [CW]

Sunday 10th April
10.00 am Holy Communion [CW]

Sunday 24th April
8.00 am Holy Communion [BCP]

Sunday 8th May
8.00 am Holy Communion [BCP]

Sunday 22nd May
10.00 am Holy Communion [CW]

Ascott Church is part of the Chase Benefice, comprising the parishes of Chadlington, Ascott-u-Wychwood, Spelsbury and Enstone. For enquiries please contact the Rector: Rev'd Mark Abrey, The Vicarage, Church Road, Chadlington. OX7 3LY. 01608 676572 or rector@thechasebenefice.org.uk

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Local Churches

Wychwood Benefice

Rev'd Kate Stacey Tel: 01993 832514

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Churchwarden James Walmsley
01993 830842

SS Simon & Jude, Milton

Churchwarden Mike Hartley 01993 830160

St John the Baptist Fifield, St Nicholas, Idbury

Churchwarden Pat Yaxley 01993 831385

Society of Friends (Quakers), Burford

Nigel Braithwaite 01993 831282

Wychwood Baptist, Milton

Pastor John Witts 01993 832865

Burford Methodist

Minister Rev'd Peter Goodhall
01993 845322

Westcote Methodist

Tony Gibson 01993 830699
Mairi Radcliffe 01993831472

Roman Catholic

SS John Fisher & Thomas More, Burford

Holy Trinity, Chipping Norton

Our Lady and St Kenelm, Stow-on-the-Wold

St Teresa, Charlbury

Chase Benefice

Rev'd Mark Abrey Tel: 01608 676572

rector@thechasebenefice.org.uk

News from the Church

Letter from the Associate Priest

Dear Friends

It has been, I have to admit, a difficult start to the year for the Anglican Church following the much-reported meeting of Primates – the senior bishops of the 38 Anglican provinces around the world - in Canterbury early in January. Many looking on, both inside and outside the church, will have viewed the discussions as homophobic, and the church as out-of-touch, to put it mildly. For many of us within the Church of England the decision to suspend the Episcopal Church in the US from the Anglican Communion's decision-making process for three years, because of its support of same-sex marriage and LGBT people, has been sad, distressing and shameful.

Here in the four churches of the Chase Benefice (including, of course, Holy Trinity, Ascott-under-Wychwood) we take pride in the decision taken last November to align ourselves with the Inclusive Church movement (www.inclusivechurch.org.uk) in aiming to offer a welcome to all who come, without discrimination. If you look inside the porch at the church you will find a poster produced by Inclusive Church, with this statement: "We believe in inclusive Church, Church which does not discriminate, on any level, on grounds of economic power, gender, mental health, physical ability, race or sexuality. We believe in Church which welcomes and serves all people in the name of Jesus Christ; which is scripturally faithful; which seeks to proclaim the Gospel afresh for each generation; and which, in the power of the Holy Spirit, allows all

people to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Jesus Christ."

While the worldwide Anglican Church family shares important beliefs in common, it is also known for holding together quite different strands of thought and tradition in a 'living tension' as it is sometimes called. This is not always a comfortable position to adopt. However, it does allow room for discussion, reflection, the possibility of getting things wrong and, in the end, the opportunity to change and adapt. This can be both a strength and a weakness. When there is disagreement, it can be seen as a weakness because we lay ourselves open to accusations of fudged thinking or lack of credibility. On the other hand, the potential for being open to new ways of understanding scripture in our own times, and the ability to accommodate all kinds of new challenges after due prayer and reflection, can definitely be seen as strengths. But the process of change can seem painfully slow in a world accustomed to speedy, instant reaction.

As with any family, life can be a bit messy, clumsy, and fragile at times. Nevertheless, there are positive messages from the Primates' Conference including: 'It is our unanimous desire to walk together'. There is also condemnation of homophobic prejudice and violence, expressions of sorrow for deep hurt caused, and recognition of the need for healing and exploring differences, 'ensuring they are held between us in the love and grace of Christ'. Amen to that.

Yours inclusively

Marian Needham

www.thechasebenefice.org.uk

Churchyard Trees

By the time that this edition of the Grapevine is circulated, the 25 lime trees in the Churchyard will have been pollarded. Thank you to all those who kindly completed the online survey concerning this work: 44 responses were made with only one objection to the proposed work. But most importantly, thank you again to all those who have contributed to this work.

Wendy Pearse has recently uncovered some more information about the trees and we now wonder whether the trees could have been planted in 1862 Queen Victoria's Silver Jubilee. Let's hope their health and longevity will have been secured for future generations of the village to enjoy.

Mark Abrey

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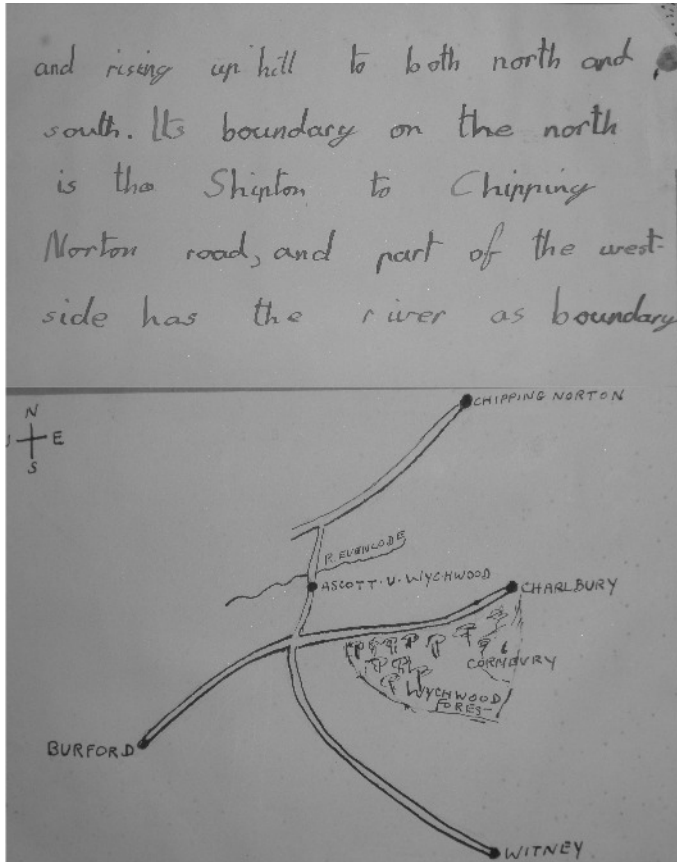
Paints from Zoffany, Designers Guild, Farrow & Ball, Little Green



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Wendy Pearse is the custodian of this document and is willing to allow people who may wish to see the journal to have access to it.





Ascott-under-Wychwood

Ascott-under-Wychwood lies in the valley of the Evenlode, and the railway runs along by it, for part of the way, to Kingham and Worcester in the northwest, and Charlbury to the East. Oxford is 20 miles away, and the nearer small towns are Witney, 8 miles to the south, Burford 5 miles south west and Chipping Norton, 6 miles north.

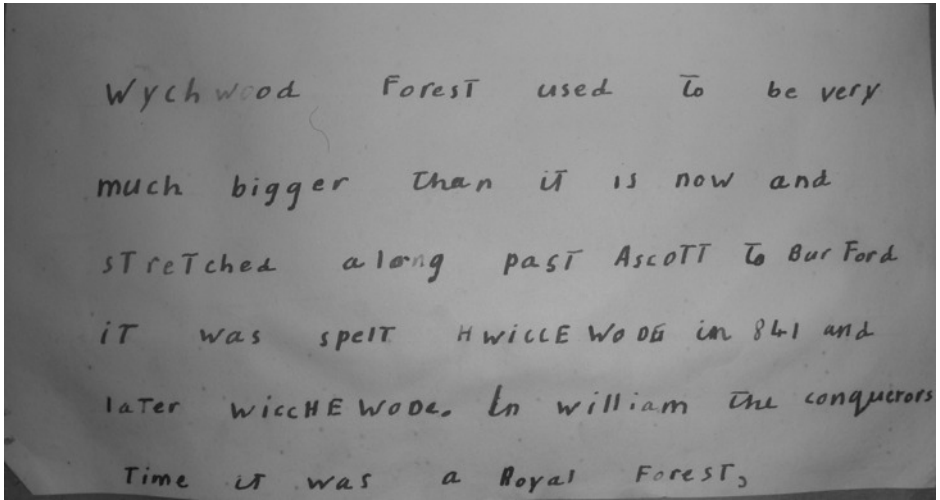
The parish is about two miles long, and one and half miles wide, cut across near the middle by the river and railway, in the valley and rising uphill to both north and south is the Shipton to Chipping Norton road, and part of the west side has the river as boundary.

Early History

This book is really the history as long as anyone can remember but we must tell something of the very old times, because it is interesting, and our village was in the Domesday Book. It used to be called Esthote or Estcott, which means east home or cottage."

Ascott Earl, the west end, was held by Ilbert de Lacy, an important man in Yorkshire, about 1085, and Ascot d'oily, the High Street end, was held by Robert d'oily and

"There was land for 5 ploughs. Now in demesne 3 ploughs and 6 serfs, also 7 villeins who have 4 ploughs."



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Wychwood Forest used to be very mauch bigger than it is now and stretched along past Ascott to Burford it was spelt Hwicce Wood in 841 and later Wicche Wode. In William the Conqueror's time it was a Royal Forest.

Keith Ravenhill

Nature Notes

*In the bleak mid-winter frosty wind
made moan*

*Earth stood hard as iron, water like a
stone.*

When winter arrives we can turn up the central heating, put on an extra layer of clothing and wait until the spring sunshine warms us again. Life is not so easy for our wildlife; they have to face the worst of the winter weather adopting a range of strategies in order to survive.

Of course if you are a Swallow you will have flown south to sub-Saharan Africa, but without wings you have to stay put! Just how animals deal with the winter will depend to great extent on their diet and whether they are warm or cold blooded. Insect eaters have major problems finding food during winter; whereas carnivores and omnivores will find it easier so different solutions have to be found. Cold blooded animals like amphibians and reptiles can only function in warm conditions, in the winter cold they cease to be active and their body temperature falls to that of their surroundings.

The Hedgehog, whose main diet consists of beetles, caterpillars, slugs, spiders and earthworms has no choice. In winter most of their food supply disappears so in order to conserve energy they must hibernate. During the autumn they spend most of their time eating in order to build up sufficient fat reserves to sustain them through their winter sleep and to provide sufficient energy when they wake in the spring. A hedgehog that is too thin will not survive the winter. During hibernation their metabolism slows down, the heart beats at one

tenth of its normal rate, breathing slows to ten breaths a minute and body temperature falls close to that of the surrounding environment. During hibernation, as the excess fat is absorbed, one third of body weight will be lost. Hibernation takes place in a winter nest, usually comprised of a small heap of dried leaves, often in the base of a hedge, under a bramble thicket, or even in a garden compost heap. In a mild winter the Hedgehog may emerge for a short time to forage, before going back to sleep. If this happens too often this depletes their fat reserves and will damage any chance of survival.



Bats face similar problems as they rely on a variety of insects, particularly moths, as their food source, so they too must feed-up in the autumn and then find a suitable winter roost to hibernate. An ideal roost is somewhere cool, with a steady low temperature and with high humidity to stop their wing membranes drying out. An ideal site would be a cave or a disused tunnel. Depending on the species a Bats normal body temperature is around 37°C, but during hibernation this will vary between 0 and 12°C. Hibernation begins in October and will continue until the beginning of April. All bat species will come out of hibernation sev-

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eral times during the winter, with some, like the Greater Horseshoe waking every ten days, regularly changing position. In warmer climates bats are active throughout the year.



Remembering the Mad Hatter's Tea Party, one character, the Dormouse, was always falling asleep and in real life this is also true. This small rodent lives within woodland copse, thick hedges and bramble patches, mainly active at night climbing through the canopy. It enjoys a diet of wild fruits, nuts, haws, blackberries and will even drink the nectar from honeysuckle flowers. By the end of October these food supplies will be exhausted and the dormouse will build a nest under leaf litter in the base of a hedge or in a hollow tree stump sleeping until April or May. In a mild period it may wake and be active for a short while before returning to sleep.

Not every small creature hibernates. The mole is active throughout the year pursuing its main food, the earthworm, in its underground tunnels. As the winter weather worsens and the ground freezes the earthworms burrow deeper into the soil and the Mole follows them down. In the summer the moles will be working in the upper soil levels where ground is quite soft and they are able to virtually 'swim' along, but in the winter working at a greater depth a lot more

digging of compacted soil is required resulting in more mole-hills as the excess soil is ejected through vertical shafts.

For one group of small mammals, the shrews, winter is especially hard. They



hunt for small invertebrates in the leaf litter and along shallow tunnels or runs in grassland. They must catch and eat their own body weight each day! The common shrew would starve if it went without food for three or four hours and the Pygmy Shrew needs a meal every two hours. The Pygmy Shrew weighs about the same as a 10p coin and this puts it at close to the limit at which a warm blooded animal can exist. Because its surface area is great relative to its volume it loses body heat very rapidly and needs a constant supply of food to maintain its body temperature. Winter is devastating for the Shrew population, numbers tumble and their survival depends on high birth rates during spring and summer. Common Shrews rarely live for more than one year, Pygmy Shrews even less.

Unlike Shrews Voles tend to feed on vegetation, eating fruit, seeds, leaves, roots and flowers but will also take insects and worms if available, so they have a better chance of surviving the winter. In mild winters they may even continue to breed. Vole populations tend to go through a three of four year cycle with a population spike followed by a crash. This cycle has a major impact on

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Tawny Owls, Barn Owls and other birds of prey as Bank and Field Voles form a major part of their diet.

Mice too are active throughout the year. The wood mouse population peaks in December, the end of the breeding season, falling during the winter until May or June when the population is boosted by the arrival of the new season's juveniles. Very few mice survive more than one winter.

The Harvest Mouse is the smallest Brit-



ish rodent weighing 5-8gms (approx. 1/4oz) and is unique in having a partially prehensile tale, which is used as a fifth limb as it moves about in tall grasses and reeds, hunting insects by sight and sound. They are active during the day and night, but seek shelter during heavy rainfall as they easily succumb to the effects of exposure. During the winter they become ground dwelling living in the base of grass tussocks, straw bales and occasionally enter farm buildings or houses. Mortality in winter is very high and the average life-span of a Harvest Mouse is six months.

Another rodent that does not hibernate is the Grey Squirrel, but they do become less active in the winter month spending more time sheltering in their nest (drey). This woven twiggy structure is lined with leaves, dried grasses and soft strips

of bark and shelters them from the worst of the winter weather. They are particularly susceptible to fatal chilling when it's cold and wet so they may remain in their dreys for three or four days at a time in bad weather. Prior to winter they will feast on Hazel nuts, Beech nuts and acorns often burying the surplus for retrieval during the winter. If a Hazel seedling suddenly appears in your flower border or lawn, blame the squirrels! The squirrel is a true omnivore and will take bird's eggs, nestlings, fruit, flowers as well as stripping bark from young trees. This makes them a forestry pest.

Our native amphibians, being cold blood-



ed, become completely inactive during cold weather only coming out of hibernation when the night-time temperatures exceed 5 degrees C. Frogs and newts often hibernate in the mud at the bottom of a pond as they are able to absorb oxygen in the water through their skin. Some will choose to bury themselves in deep leaf litter, in compost heaps and under garden decking. For those at the bottom of a pond the biggest risk occurs if the pond is frozen over for long periods allowing the build-up of poisonous gasses from decaying vegetation. Their body temperature falls to that of their surroundings, but they cannot survive being frozen. Toads will have left their home pond af-

ter breeding and will spend the winter in a sheltered spot, often buried below the level that frost penetrates.

Snakes, also being cold-blooded, cannot function once the temperature falls and must seek shelter during the winter months to avoid freezing. In cold blooded creatures their winter sleep is triggered by a fall in temperature and decrease in day length and is called brumation. This is similar to hibernation in mammals. Snakes spend the winter in animal burrows, rotten tree stumps, old stone walls, building foundations and log piles, preferably with a south facing aspect in full sun. Once the ambient temperature rises they will come out to bask on sunny days raising their temperature which allows them to hunt and feed again. The adder is found all over the British Isles, including Scotland, but the Grass Snake is confined to southern regions. Both snakes are absent from Ireland. The smooth snake is restricted to few areas in the extreme south of England.

Also being cold blooded our other native reptiles the Common Lizard and the

Slow Worm also become inactive during the colder months of the year. The Common Lizard will find a suitable crevice, perhaps in a dry stone wall where they may remain from October to March. It has been observed that several lizards will hibernate together. Slow Worms are legless lizards and tend to be very shy. They are found in a variety of habitats, including gardens, thick vegetation, crevices in rocks and un-compacted soils in which they burrow. During the period October to March they will find a sheltered spot in a wall, under a hedgerow or even a garden compost heap in which to sleep.

Many of our larger native animals, such as Badgers, Deer, Foxes and predators such as Stoats and Weasels will continue their activities throughout the year. Rabbits and Hares will still be seen although they will seek shelter from the worst of the wet cold weather, Rabbits in their burrows and Hares in simple scrapes in the ground.

Stuart Fox

90th Birthday Celebrations!

There are parties planned up and down the country this Summer to help celebrate The Queen's 90th Birthday weekend, so on Sunday June 12th, Ascott under Wychwood will be holding a Village Afternoon Tea! Further information and ticket prices will be available early April, so look out for flyers on notice boards and in the next edition of The Grapevine.



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THE ASCOTT GRAPEVINE

Looking to the Future

The first edition of our village magazine was published in January 1994 in response to the demise of the local Deanery newsletter. Its sixteen pages contained church news, and items from the Tiddy Hall, the angling club, the Ascott young farmers, the cricket club, the acorn club (for the over 50's), stories from the local schools and news from Bob Salmon our village policeman.

Over the last twenty years we have gradually increased the size of the magazine (the latest issue was seventy pages long) allowing us to include many items of local interest, news from the Parish Council, articles relating to the history of the village whilst still reporting from all the local societies and organisations.

We hope that you enjoy reading the Grapevine and look forward to its arrival every three months. Remember it's your magazine so feel free to contribute articles, letters to the editor, photographs and details of any event or activity that you would like to include. The magazine is delivered free to every house in the parish and a small number are distributed via the shops in Shipton and Milton in the hope of gaining more advertising revenue.

In recent years the magazine has been running at break-even covered by advertising revenue, a grant of £400 from the Parish Council and ad-hoc donations, such as the recent **generous contribution of £222 from the village pantomime collection**. We have also benefitted from highly subsidised printing costs of £296 per issue, thanks to the generosity of a local printer.

Sadly our printer has now ceased trading and we were shocked to realise the true cost of printing the magazine. We approached nine local printers and the quotes varied between £600 and £800 per issue, fortunately we eventually did find a company that specialised in producing local newsletters and they quoted a more reasonable £420. However this still leaves us with a funding shortfall of £500 a year, assuming continued support from the Parish Council, and we have to consider how this can be covered.

We will be able to produce the magazine for most of 2016, but unless we can generate additional income we wouldn't be able to continue with the Grapevine in its present format into 2017. We will have to substantially reduce the size and content and perhaps publish three times a year rather than quarterly in order to balance costs and income.

We welcome your thoughts about the future of your magazine including:

- Ideas for fund-raising.
- Obtaining more advertisers.

Continued over page

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- Comments about the current format of the magazine, -should we try and continue as now or cut it back to a quarter of its present size?

Remember that it's your magazine we are only the current custodians. The future of the Grapevine is in your hands!

Any comments can be sent to stuart.john.fox@gmail.com

Wendy Pearce

Elaine Byles

Keith Ravenhill

Stuart Fox

PS

The Rev Mark Abrey is investigating the possibility that some church funds could be available to assist the funding of the Grapevine as it is effectively a parish magazine.

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DID YOU KNOW

The 1838 Enclosure Award Map now in the Tiddy Hall cupboard, marked the instant when the whole landscape of Ascott changed. The two large open fields, one each side of the river, and the smaller one on the eastern parish boundary, had originated in Saxon times. These open fields were dotted with small strips of land, evidenced by today's few remaining ridge and furrow fields. The tenants each held a number of strips spread across the whole of the parish. Imagine how difficult their farming life must have been when they had to travel throughout the parish to cope with their farming practises.

Most animals were grazed on common meadows and pastures which were first used each year to produce hay for winter feed. Probably the individual pieces were randomly allotted each year.

The Ascott Enclosure Award changed the system completely. There were only four major landowners in the parish, their land farmed mainly by tenants. Lord Churchill from Cornbury, owned two thirds of the land, known as Ascott Doyley Manor. (A manor denoted an area of land, not a house.) Lord Churchill instigated the Enclosure. In 1836 Parliament had made a law stating that a parish could be enclosed without an Act going through Parliament, provided that two thirds of the land owners agreed.

The allotted land had all to be fenced and enclosed within a matter of months. This cost considerable money, and the few smaller landowning individuals were soon bought out by Lord Churchill. Hyatts, for example, who had lived at Ascott Earl House for probably a century and farmed about 40 acres, were one of these and they became tenants on land they had previously owned.

New roads were constructed, their widths designated, and public footpaths laid out. Their actual siting is still relevant today. Later, Ascott Common, up near the Forest, suffered the same fate. Only enclosed and privately owned farming land then existed in the parish.

Wendy Pearse

Getting My Leg Over

Gone are the days
The main chance I would seize
No plan of attack showed me how
Through life I would breeze, and take it with ease
But I can't get my leg over now

I could run a few miles
Across country trails
Sometimes chased by a bull or a cow
I could leap with a smile
Over fence or a stile
But I can't get my leg over now

Many times I would like to get on my bike
Through the mud and the mire I would plough
Now my bones start to creak
My knees start to ache
And I can't get my leg over now

Can there be nothing done
Now I become an old man
To the passing of time must I bow
Is it just nature's plan
Since all life began
That I can't get my leg over now?



Fred Russell

DO DOGS HAVE A SENSE OF HUMOUR?

My dogs have been a joy of my life. Faithful true friends and playful until their final days. My dogs have been badly trained. They jump up at people because they think everyone wants to be friends with them.

My present dog, Joy, one Sunday morning ran into the lane and jumped up at a local lady who was walking down the lane to get her Sunday newspaper from the shop. She was looking very smart in a white skirt and jumper. I apologised for my dog's behaviour and said that I was off to church and would say a prayer that Joy would be better behaved. The lady replied, "It will take more than your prayers to get my clothes clean. It will take half a packet of Daz."

How different from that dear old gentleman Mr Vizor. He is always so friendly when he sees my dog in the lane. But he and I come from a different generation. We remember a time when the village

was more simple and friendly. In those days people never locked their doors. It wasn't unusual in those times for the head of the house to come home late from the pub and go through the wrong back door, only to find the following morning he was in bed with his next door's neighbour's wife. Sometimes the husband was still asleep in the same bed. What jolly simple times they were!

I am beginning to drift from the idea that dogs don't have a sense of humour. Why not try this experiment? When you are sat comfortable in your armchair in front of a warm fire with your dog at your feet, looking at you in a quizzical way, point at them and start laughing. They won't like it. They will soon get up and walk away, which makes me think, dogs do not have a sense of humour.

Fred Russell

Wychwood Forest FC Renamed AFC ASCOTT.

Ascott football team are doing very well. Coming to the half way stage of the season the first team are currently top of their division 3 with games in hand. They are playing really well and hope to remain top of the league until the end of the season. If anybody would like come and watch and support or would like to get involved with the club they are very welcome to join in, or even play!

The Ascott second team are doing very well still finding their feet as they are newly formed. They are currently in the lower half of league div4, but improving all the time creating a lot of interest money wise and player wise. Both Ascott teams have big squads which is brilliant. They are now sponsored by the Swan at Ascott so a big thankyou to them.

ASCOTT FC FUN SOCCER ACADEMY is brilliant with at least 20 children turning up every week and we are gaining more as we progress meeting every Sunday morning. We are looking to form an under 10s team for next season perhaps 2 teams depending on interest. A big thanks to the parents who have stumped up a massive amount for kit and equipment. If there is anybody in the village who would like to get involved, helping with the kids, they would be very welcome.

We are currently in the final stages of organising a village 6 mile sponsored walk to raise funds in aid of the sports ground drainage and surface improvements. For information or if you would like to help or take part please give me a ring on 01993830170 or 07928722367 or finalgoal7@aol.com many thanks.

Mike Ody.

Death

On the 4th February 2016, Dorothy Cook aged 97 years.

Vet's Advice

Last week The Times carried an article on its front page, no less, about the advice of a vet not to throw sticks for your dogs. While not convinced that this advice should be allowed to relegate the news that the world was falling apart to page 3, I do agree that this is important advice.

Having attended a lecture last year by an eminent American professor of veterinary surgery about the surgical approach to stick injuries, I needed very little persuading that sticks are dangerous. She showed us a myriad of cases, with photographic evidence, of the injuries that dogs could sustain. The most common, which we do see quite frequently in our practice, occur when a dog is running with a stick or catches one and manages to stab itself in the mouth or throat. Frequently the tip of the stick or a splinter is left behind - not always easy to find. Swelling in the neck region can cause breathing and swallowing difficulties, and pain. All stick injuries will result in some infection as they are always dirty and this complicates the surgery.

I have seen a few cases where the dog has crunched down onto a stick and caught it between the teeth on the hard palate or between the teeth. It usually requires a simple flick of an instrument to remove it. However, the dog has to be a bit compliant and they are usually quite stressed when this happens, so occasionally we need to anaesthetise them before being able to perform this simple procedure.

The professor works at a referral clinic of a university, so her cases were quite spectacular. From tiny splinters in armpits close to major blood vessels to large branches right through the torso of a dog. Needless to say, her surgery skills were incredible - not a matter of simply pulling out the stick!



So the advice is to not throw sticks. Use balls, frisbees and toys. There are a number of very good rubber/plastic sticks available for dogs. I shall try to stick to this advice myself the next time Brian brings me a stick.

The news has also been full of reports on 'Alabama rot'. The most recent cases in Swindon affected 2 dogs belonging to a veterinary nurse. One of her dogs, Pippa, was eventually euthanized, despite the best possible treatment. The disease is called *idiopathic cutaneous and renal glomerular disease* (CRGV). Idiopathic says it all - it means that we do not know the cause. The problems start with skin lesions particularly on the extremities and develops into kidney failure. Research is currently being undertaken by Anderson Moores Veterinary Specialists into both the cause and the possible treatments. I wish I could give you some sensible advice about how to avoid this disease but at present there is just not enough information. Fortunately it is not common, there have been about 16 cases identified in Britain so far. Be vigilant but don't panic.

Karen Kappen

WYCHWOOD

They say the Forest was named for the Hwicce
Whose tribal lands lay nearby in Gloucestershire.
It was a frontier land, overlorded by the Saxon, Penda.
But long before, hunter gatherers roamed the glades.
They settled, lived and buried their dead there
In woods already cleared. And then the Romans swept
all away,
Claimed the land and made it their own.
But when their allotted span fled past
Desolation took hold and the Forest regained control.
Mighty trees established themselves, with no man's
hand to tame
Until the Saxon Hwicce arrived and brought the land
their name.
Timber was the Saxon's lifeblood.
They revered their woodland, trees were their mainstay
For their homes and all necessities of daily life.
Even when Christianity beguiled them they built their churches of wood
With glorious carvings, the work of skilled hands.
These Saxons managed the Forest, ensured its survival
By careful regime of pollarding and coppicing.
They praised the Lord for the blessings he gave them
Until the Normans arrived and imposed their Forest Law.
For the first time, common man lost all rights in the Forest,
It's prime purpose then, the Chase.
Deer with their destructive powers had priority
Rangers and keepers ensured strict control of the Forest
To ensure the glorious Chase for the privileged few,
The men with power of life and death
Over common man and his endeavours.
Centuries passed, her value decreased
And desolation once more invaded the Forest.



The Ascott Grapevine

Men's population grew and ultimately land for cultivation
Was wrested from the woodland depths
Until only the heartland was left.
A small remnant to proclaim what once had been.
But still some lofty plantations crown the skyline,
Betimes clearances take place but new growth issues forth
And the ancient coppices resurge into growth.
Little disturbs the secret sanctuary except for nature,
Its plants, insects, birds and woodland creatures
Live out their lifespan in its solitude.
Yet at times man's hand still invades her privacy
Diverts her streams and reaches deep into the Forest's heart
To garner riches of her earth and stone.
But the descendants of the ancient hunters and gatherers
Still throng the limits of the woodland.
The villagers still look up to the horizon
And are proud to live 'under Wychwood'.
Through millennia, her magic has not dimmed.

Wendy Pearse



Know your Neighbour

Juliet Heslewood

When she was little my mother told people that at her birth she'd been placed in a theatre props basket. This was to encourage awareness of her thespian heritage which was said to go back to a group of Georgian strolling players. My birth, less romantically, was at St. James' hospital in Leeds, the city where my father's long career in brewing began.

Memory can play deceptive tricks, organising gleams of sunlight or shades of storm into the views we have of our past lives. I think I spent much of my childhood outside dreaming. We lived in the country and my hero was Huckleberry Finn. The beck at the bottom of our garden I pretended was the Mississippi. During the Christmas holidays my sisters and I visited London to stay with our grandparents, both of whom were actors. We saw every pantomime that ran and these were fabulous, extravagant shows. On one occasion when I was not yet ten years old my grandfather took me to the Tate Gallery where an attendant asked for his autograph.

"You've got the wrong man," he said in reply. "I'm a roadsweeper."

So embarrassed was I, I stared hard at the painting nearest to me on the wall. This was Joseph Wright's 'An Experiment with An Air Pump' and my eyes took in the image of a frightened little girl who seemed as confused as myself. It must have been the first time I ever studied a work of art.

My childhood ended when I went to boarding school to suffer at the hands of wayward domestic staff. They did little to alleviate my desperate homesickness. For consolation, my sister Carolyn and I locked ourselves in the junior lavatories after church on Sunday mornings. Here we practised the harmonies of all our favourite songs from the musicals. It was on the cards that I should be the family singer and my mother wrote to Julie Andrews' voice coach about me, having read an article on him in the Radio Times. I was accepted as his pupil and over two years he extended my range from contralto to soprano. Whenever he set me to sing my scales, I liked to watch as he secretly shaped his eyebrows with a pencil from his jacket's inner pocket.

In order to earn a living whilst following a precarious profession I had spent a wretched year at the Yorkshire Ladies Secretarial College. Here we learned touch-typing to the sound of Elvis singing 'Love me Tender'. We were not allowed to wear jewellery (in case it fell into our typewriters) and spent several hours a week learning how to please our future bosses ('always keep a record of his family birthdays'). At times I was compelled to play truant. My father dropped me at Leeds bus station on his way to work, but instead of acting a Yorkshire Lady for interminable hours I'd take buses to Keighley then to Haworth where I spent the day traipsing across the Brontës' moors. I had no intention of being a secretary, ever...

Auditions terrified me. I went up for the part of Dorothy in 'The Wizard of Oz' at

the Adelphi Theatre in the Strand. I was one of over three hundred girls to sing 'Somewhere Over the Rainbow' only to be banished from the boards after a few bars. My shyness was professionally disastrous and I gained confidence only while singing in the bath rather than on stage.

Fortunate inspiration dawned on me in Bali. I paced up and down Kuta Beach which, at the time, was almost unknown to tourism with not a single hotel in sight. I decided to return home from my travels and go to university to study the History of Art. At Birkbeck College the tuition took place in the evenings to allow adults to study for degrees. Over the following four years I was profoundly enriched by all I learned there. During the day I acted the part of...medical secretary.

One of my tutors, encouraging me to write, read the Christmas stories I'd written for a nephew. With the child's secret permission (and without my knowledge) he 'borrowed' them until at last, in the silent college library where I revised for my finals, he loudly announced I had a literary agent.

My first book, a collection of world folktales, was commissioned by OUP. They wanted the completed manuscript in three months. I researched each story fully and took my notes and my manual typewriter to a clumsy old farmhouse in France. One winter's evening, to keep warm, I paid a visit to the farmer nearby. His mother opened their heavy oak door. The bent and aged crone was dressed entirely in black. She scowled at me. She turned and her clogged feet shuffled towards a heavy cauldron that hung above the flames in their wide fireplace. Still not speaking, she stirred it with a large, copper ladle.

"I have arrived...." I thought.

The tiny French hamlet, with a permanent population of ten, was to be my home for the next thirty years. I bought a hilltop plot of land that looked out on luxuriant chestnut slopes and apricot vales. My friends, a band of French *bohèmes*, said they'd build me a house made of wood. But how to earn the money? There was only one way...

As a medical temp in Harley Street I worked long hours and was highly paid. Each week I sent my earnings over to France. My favourite of the many doctors I worked for was Sir Richard Bayliss, the Queen's physician. He asked me to sign a paper swearing never to reveal what I discovered in the files of the entire Royal Family. Sometimes he suggested we left a gap in his patient list so as to chat over the photos of my continuous building work in France.

Once the phone rang and an exasperated French voice declared '*Juliette - 'ya un problème...*' Apparently the tractor delivering materials up to my house had knocked down the fence of my neighbour's land. The angry man was threatening a lawsuit. On the other side of my desk was Edward Heath who was about to hand me a urine sample. '*C'est pas un bon moment*' I muttered down the phone line.

When I was unwell, Sir Richard insisted I went under his care, free of charge. What a reassurance it was to lie supine on that couch, surrounded by the signed photos of his royal patients. The examination proved comically revealing (he loved the theatre and had the voice of a *matinée* idol).

"Toots, old girl," he addressed me in his familiar way. "You have no knee jerk."

I wasn't sure what this signified.

"What's more," he said pausing, slowly taking the stethoscope from his ears then staring at me quizzically. "Either you're dead or I'm deaf."

My chronically under-active thyroid had not impeded the progress of my house, some of which I had built with my own hands. At last this was finished, thanks to the helpful encouragement of family and friends. I was now liberated to write further books, including several on art, and I gained an MA in English Literature at Toulouse University with a thesis on the landscape of the Brontës. My main source of income also happily changed in time. To survive I had taught English to a wide range of people from six year olds to directors of the *Bonne Maman* jam factory. I lived near the Lot-Corrèze border, an area renowned for its wealth of Romanesque monuments. Discovering these, I devised art study tours and eventually led groups both here and in five other regions of France from Brittany to the Côte d'Azur.

I often returned to Oxfordshire to visit my parents in Filkins or my sisters and their families. My brother-in-law, Freddie Jones, frequently came to Ascott to do readings for the St. George's Day celebrations at our church. It was at his home in Charlbury that I met my future husband, Donald Craig, who had been a Senior Lecturer in Medicine at St. Thomas' and Guys. The question arose - once married what should I do with my house?

Life in the remote hamlet had changed for the worse. English had become its dominant language, with incorrect French being practised by an influx of party-going ex-pats. The peasants with their bell-collared cattle and herds of nervous goats were all gone. It was time to leave. Yet I had gained much from my love of solitude and a watchful eye upon nature.

These remain. When my husband sadly died a few years ago I moved from Charlbury to Ascott. Here I am able to lecture on art locally as well as at the Ashmolean and I have returned to lead art tours in France. I continue to compose words, often when I'm outside. Usually I'm accompanied by my mother's wedding gift to us, Homer, our Border Terrier. Now he's really worth knowing...



Ascott under Wychwood PC **News**

Christmas Carols

With so many spring flowers peeping through already, it is hard to think back to Christmas Eve. But just 2 months ago, despite howling gales and pouring rain, our tree on the Green just about survived December and we did hold a most successful Carols round the Tree – albeit in Tiddy Hall! It was wonderful to see so many families and our thanks must go to Elaine Byles and Mark Pidgeon with their friends in the brass band, all of whom made the evening very special. We were extremely pleased that Ascott-u-W raised £375 for the Wychwood Day Centre.

Budgeting

We completed our financial planning for 2016-17 and voted unanimously to keep the precept as it stands currently. We expect to be drawn into negotiations with Oxfordshire County Council about services which they will no longer fund, but hope that our reserve funds will help us to support what is most important to the community. We must take this opportunity to thank Stuart Fox for his careful vigilance and tremendous patience as the Parish Council's honorary Financial Officer.

Oxfordshire CC Cuts

OCC is beginning to encourage Parish Councils to work together in supporting services. The scheme is called 'Oxford-

shire Together' and a preliminary meeting for our area was called by County Councillor Rodney Rose in December. The central theme that evening was road, pavement and verge maintenance. It is clear that much more legal groundwork needs to be done before work on drainage, tarmac roads and pavements can be handed over to Parish Councils. In the meantime, OCC do still plan to cut this budget and we must all continue to report problems on 'Fix My Street' on their website. OCC are not legally bound to carry out verge maintenance except around major junctions and will expect residents and Parish Councils to take on this work.

Buses

Peter Rance attended a series of preliminary meetings with our bus companies to try and retain leaner and, hopefully, more useful services through Ascott-under Wychwood. Central Government has reduced its refund to the bus companies for bus pass use and so their income is reduced. This can make a big difference on routes and at times when most passengers use bus passes.

Villager Buses hope to make no changes until 2017. Pulhams will run the 33 to Burford until May at the earliest. The off-peak buses are more at risk after that date. Pulhams may consider connecting Ascott to the route of the X8 which goes to Kingham Station and on to Chipping Norton.

There is a general willingness to meet again and find acceptable solutions.

Trains

The pre-Christmas shoppers' trains calling additionally at Ascott were a success with good extra loadings. 31 villagers used the 5 December trains, with fewer on the other Saturdays. We will maintain pressure to repeat the trains next Christmas.

Despite our 1 train each way Monday-Friday, Ascott-under-Wychwood showed the highest annual increase in usage on the Cotswold Line – up by 41% from 2856 to 4026! However, despite those statistics and continuing pressure from Peter Rance and the Cotswold Line Promotion Group, GWR do not plan to increase the number of trains stopping at Ascott any time soon. Kingham continues to be the option to find a car parking space outside rush hour although it is already regularly 80% full.

The Pound

We are starting a project to re-build the final derelict wall around the Pound and to replace the Ascott Barrow sign. Sandy Timms is leading this and we shall be working with support and funding from the Cotswold Wardens and the Wychwood Project.

Winter Resilience

Laurence Mellor, now retired as Parish Councillor, still leads on snow clearing as he has the 'knowledge'. We are very grateful for his continuing support to the Parish Council. He held a refresher course for volunteers in the use of pavement snow clearing equipment. Thanks must also go to Alan Chubb who has agreed to deputise for Laurence when ab-

sent from the village. Please contact Laurence or any Parish Councillor if you can volunteer for using a pavement snow plough and gritter. (a bit like a powerful lawn mower)

Playing Field Drainage Project

Laurence took the lead on this 2 years ago and is still going! In December we heard that the contractors' quotes had come in higher than the original grant offer – this was not unexpected given the important extra work specified by their consultant. Sport England have indicated that they will increase their grant offer if we can find some contributions from the community and other grants. Laurence and I are currently working hard on that and would greatly appreciate any helpful suggestions or actual contributions. The phrase 'so close and yet so far' is very appropriate to the current situation.

Allotments

There are still 2 plots available to rent. Mark Tribe and Shane Barnes will be working to keep derelict plots clear of weeds throughout the season and to tidy up the common areas.

Village Litter Pick

A great band of eager residents turned out for our annual litter pick. Most work on the appointed Saturday but some also cleared litter on other days convenient to them. Thank you to everyone! Collectors are particularly annoyed by the number of Special Brew and Arctic Ice



cans being thrown onto the verges. This is not the first year that over 100 cans were collected and we have reports of others being collected throughout the year. It is illegal littering and, possibly, driving while drinking alcohol and we must ask the culprit/s to stop. We would

welcome any information as to their identities.

And finally The team would not be complete without our very patient and hardworking clerk, Angela Barnes. We are all very grateful to her for keeping our lively business in such good order and contributing to the good humour of the meet-

Joint Councillors' Surgeries

27th February, 30th April and 25th June, thereafter on the last Saturday every other month, all at 11.30-12.30 in the Swan Pub, A-u-W

Parish Council:

Philippa Carter (Chairman)	830344
Peter Rance	831113
Sandy Timms	831870
Mark Tribe	359769
Angela Barnes (Parish Clerk)	01608 641045



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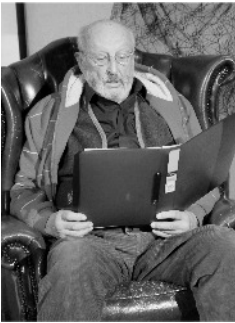
Village Pantomime 2015

Snowy

Last year's panto was well received by the villagers and the organizers, script writer and the cast are hugely grateful to the villagers who have backed the panto by continuing to fill Tiddy Hall year after year. They very generously donated £445, which has been split in half between Pancreatic Cancer Research Fund and the Grapevine magazine. The cast particularly enjoy performing as they are encouraged by the fantastic response from everyone. Big congratulations to the children of all ages who add an extra dimension to the casting of the show.

A big thank you to Karen and Harry Kappen for providing the food and drink that was enjoyed by everyone and that includes the cast.

Keith Ravenhill





Sunday Tea Dance

Meeting monthly from **2.30pm-5pm**
at **Tiddy Hall**, Ascott-Under-Wychwood
OX7 6AG

Why not pop along and join us?

*For an afternoon of Dance, tea,
homemade cake and good company.*

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Upcoming 2016 Dates

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7th February

13th March

3rd April

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please contact either:
Jess on 07827 235 457
or
Stephen on 07827 235 450



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WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Light a beacon for the Queen's 90th birthday!

An official guide is now available providing information about plans to light beacons across the country on 21 April when Her Majesty The Queen celebrates her 90th birthday.

West Oxfordshire District Council is encouraging local community groups to get involved in this initiative.

Sir Barry Norton, Leader of the Council, said, "Britain has a long history of lighting beacons to mark important national occasions and I am sure that par-



ishes and community groups across West Oxfordshire will want to show their support for our Queen on the 21 April."

Instructions about joining the national event are in the official guide.

Registration is open now and closes on Friday 18 April. For more information please go to www.brunopeek.co.uk

West Oxfordshire District Council is also asking communities and groups to let them know if they are taking part as the Council will be publicising where the beacons will be lit on its website – www.westoxon.gov.uk. This can be done by emailing communications@westoxon.gov.uk or by calling 01993 861000.



Recycling advisors take to the streets

Two recycling advisors from West Oxfordshire District Council are taking to the streets to raise awareness of recycling by letting residents know what items can be picked up through the weekly household collection service.

Both Liam Morley and Tess Evans are carrying out a district-wide door-to-door campaign visiting as many households as they can over a three-month period up to March.

As well as explaining what can be recycled, they are making sure householders have all the containers they need and encouraging more of them to use the food waste collection service.



Tess Evans said, “We have spoken to lots of people and had such a good response with many wanting to find out more about recycling and what happens to their waste. We have also handed out hundreds of information leaflets and given away caddy liners to help people get started with food waste collections.”

Since they started the two advisors have visited 500 properties, given out over 50 food waste caddies and held six community events.

Pictured left to right are Liam Morley and Tess Evans.

Cllr David Harvey, Cabinet Member for Environment said, “We are doing all we can to help people recycle more and it’s great to see that our free weekly food waste collections are growing in popularity - an additional 20 tonnes of food was recycled this December compared to last. However, we believe there is more room for improvement as many items are still being thrown in the rubbish bin when they could be put to a much better use instead. A detailed A-Z of what you can and cannot recycle in West Oxfordshire is available on our website.”

They next recycling event is at the Council’s Town Centre Shop in Witney on Wednesday 20 January.

Anyone requiring additional free recycling containers - food caddies, recycling boxes or gardens waste bins – should contact the Council on 01993 86100 or on-line at www.westoxon.gov.uk/bins.



WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Join the drive and register to vote today

Anyone in West Oxfordshire not registered to vote is being urged to sign up in time for key elections this year.

Next week the National Voter Registration Drive (NVRD) will be encouraging people to register to vote ahead of West Oxfordshire District Council elections, parish and town council elections and Police and Crime Commissioner elections on Thursday 5 May.

Keith Butler, electoral registration officer for West Oxfordshire District Council, said: "Anyone not yet registered to vote should do so as soon as possible so they can have their say on issues that affect their day-to-day lives.

"I would also remind residents that if they have moved house, they need to register at that address. It is also worth noting that once registered, people will be eligible to vote in the European Union Referendum which will take place before the end of next year."

The NVRD runs between Monday 1 and Friday 7 February with people encouraged to apply to register online at www.gov.uk/register-to-vote

The deadline for applying to register to vote in the elections is Monday 18 April 2016.

Ben Brook, head of performance and English regional teams at the electoral commission, added:

"The National Voter Registration Drive exists because it's important that anyone who's eligible, but has not yet registered to vote, does so.

"Young people, students and people who move frequently are much less likely to be registered to vote so #NVRD is as important as ever."

People who do not have internet access should contact West Oxfordshire District Council electoral services for an application form on 01993 861410.

Three Piece Sweet in concert

What is that dance called when you stand upright, hands on hips and then move first the left shoulder forward and down to the right, and then the right shoulder to the left..? I can't remember but whatever it's called a number of us ended up dancing that same dance one recent Friday night in The Swan Inn to the beat of 'Three Piece Sweet'

'Three Piece Sweet' being Mark Pidgeon on rhythm guitar and vocals, John Bujega on lead guitar and Charles Marshall on bass guitar. You will have seen the advert for the group in the "Wanted" section of Police 5 but there they were in the Pub on the 5th December having been let out for one night, and dressed in all their 70's refinery; along with many of the audience who had made an excellent effort to reflect their heroes outfits and dress up for the occasion.

The band were magnificent and they played all the 1960's 70's favourites - the Monkees ,Chuck Berry, Cockney Rebel The Stones, Status Quo, Slade and the rest. They beat out all those marvellous old favourites -tunes we all knew and loved -and the audience duly responded dancing their way through two sessions. Sadly I noticed, two people - who should have known better - aka the author and one NC - singing along (in tune for a change) arms up in the air and pointing to the sky!

We all had an enormous amount of fun and not only that the proceeds went to a very worthwhile charity.....Well done Boys.

The name of that dance.. still don't know !!!

Simon Gidman

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Carols on the Green

There was a fantastic turn-out for the Carols on the Green, however, the weather decided to blow heavily and rain. For safety of the carollers and the band it was decided to go to Tiddy Hall. Singing was loud and everyone was enjoying themselves, and the band was very good and added good music for all to follow.

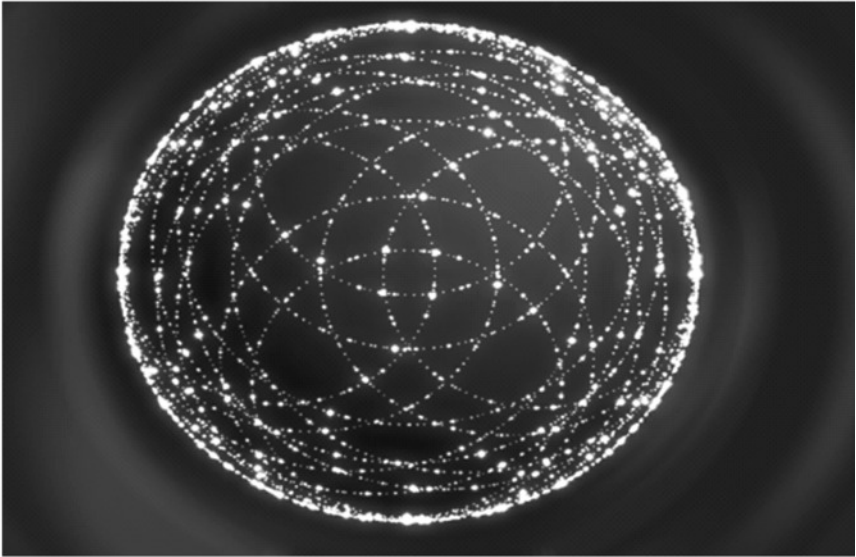
Thanks must be given to the Parish Council for arranging the evening and providing food and drink for all to enjoy.



The Ascott Grapevine



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HARRY HONEYBONE

A BOY GROWING UP IN ASCOTT IN THE LATE 1880s Part 5

Harry continues his history in his own words and punctuation.)

“I have assisted Uncle Knight at Enstone both in his garden and also with his dry walling; we used to cover the top chiefly with mud scraped off the limestone roads. Also I have assisted Uncle John Permin with his sheep; it did not matter, I was doing anything and going everywhere to help. When I was 9 years of age I had a job engaged by a farmer named Hyatt just across the road from where I lived. *(Harry was living in the present Appletree Cottage and Hyatts lived in the farm attached to Ascott Earl House.)* My duties were to take about thirty or forty pigs to feed off the stubble after the corn had been led. I had to go out early in the morning to see that no harm came to them; there were all sorts and sizes from tiny ones to some as big as donkeys. One night I must have left one but did not know I had. I had to take them more than a mile to some of the fields. Can you imagine driving stupid pigs all that way at 9 years of age and seeing them safely home at night. On reaching home at the end of the day I had to go and fetch the cows up for milking purposes, then to feed the pigs in addition. This one I left had got somewhere among some stacks of corn. It was there next morning but the gaffer got to know about it. One day, being close to the railway, the pigs had a habit of getting anywhere even if it was only big enough for a cat to get through. This day I heard a woman shouting for all she was worth. It was a woman who lived at the level crossing; their duties were to

open the gates for people to pass through. She beckoned me to look and lo and behold there were three or four pigs running about on the railway line and the 3.30.p.m. express was due any minute. So we had to hustle quickly to get the blighters off the line. We had scarcely got clear when the express passed that way at 60 miles per hour, another close escape.

The next summer I was engaged by a farmer named Alder who came from the farm on which Gomm previously lived. *(Coldstone Farm.)* I was amongst the horses this time, leading them about the fields and to the stack-yard, I was highly commended for being so dutiful and attentive to my duties. There is just one remark I must mention here in passing, the name of Gomm recalled it to my mind. This Mr Gomm's father was a very old man approaching 90 years of age. They asked me and someone else to take the old gentleman to Shipton for a shave, which was a long way for one so old. I was a bit nervy at the idea, I was only a nipper. But however all went well until on the return journey about a quarter of a mile from home he must have turned dizzy. I had to hold him, **poor chap**, he started to run round and round dragging me after him until he fell on the grass verge as it happened. Poor chap, there he lay. I was in a sweat, then I thought a bit and despatched my companion, whoever it was, to fetch his son or somebody quickly. I remained with the old man. They got him home but he was dead soon afterwards, this was his last journey. Af-

ter this (I might say this, I got no more than 1/6d for pig minding and 2/- or 2/6d for looking after the horses in the harvest field , but this was better than nothing; this sum was weekly} the following April previous to my 11th birthday having passed into the 6th Standard, I had to leave school as a full blown workman.

I was engaged by Mr Hambidge, I believe he was a member of the Chipping Norton Poor Law Union which had something to do with so generously distributing the meagre supply to the poor people of 2/6d and sometimes in exceptional circumstances 3/6d per week, and one or two loaves of bread per family, this was life. Anyway I went to work, 2/6d per week was the pay to commence with. I had to drive four horses in single file ploughing and other various jobs in connection with farming. I must have been an exception at my work because the head horseman claimed me as his boy and he would have no other but me although there were two and sometimes three others besides me. It was the largest farm in the village, round about 400 acres in extent. There were 12 or 13 horses making up three and sometimes four teams all in single file. Just previous to me commencing work, the same farmer used to work three or four oxen teams, four or five of them in single file. They looked ancient but of course they were cheap labour, not costing so much to keep as horses. One of the horsemen told me that whilst he was guiding the plough behind the oxen, it was nothing fresh when the last ox next to the plough, having a cough, for it to shoot out at the back end and smother him completely over. 'Oh what a mess.' In addition to horses, of which there were one or two hunters and carriage horses, besides the Shire

horses; there were seven or eight milk beasts and twenty or thirty steers and heifers besides young bloods following up, four or five hundred sheep. There were also a number of pigs and hundreds of poultry, including fowls, turkeys, ducks, geese, guinea fowl, dogs and several bee hives. All these necessitated a 1st, 2nd and 3rd horseman, a shepherd and assistant in the winter time when the sheep were in the turnip field, a cowman, whose duties were to milk, feed the pigs and cattle, sometimes the poultry and to look after the hunters and carriage horse. It was a well-stocked farm, modern buildings built after I had been there for a while, with water laid on from various springs, to all the fold yards. There was also a pond or a moat as it was called, where the ducks and geese used to revel in. There were two big orchards close to the stables. (*The present Crown Farm*)

Oh, the monotony of this farm work is indescribable, in the fields away from the rest of the community, lonely, sometimes scarcely seeing a soul all day, to and fro across the heavy plough-fields. Day in, day out. After reaching home the usual domestic chores to perform. Feeding, cleaning both horses and stables until 7 p.m. from 5a.m. This went on for a time, my wages being increased to 3/6d per week when I became a 3rd horseman. I did once get highly commended for rolling 72 acres in one week, 12 acres a day with a pair of horses, 10 acres a day was considered a good day's work. Perhaps I was making the pace for someone else but old Hambidge did not say, ' I will give you an extra shilling for what you have done.' But I can remember the 2nd horseman getting wet through one day, he went home to change or to dry his clothes because there were not many people who

had a change of clothing; he was a little longer than the gaffer thought he ought to be. I believe his wages were only 9/- per week, so the farmer said, 'I will drop his wages 1/- per week then he will perhaps be able to buy a top coat'. We had to stick it in all kinds of weather, but I blame the men for this a good deal; had they stuck out they could have made things better. We used to get wet through and then go home. One day it rained and snowed all day and we stuck it. I had to do because the men did, water was running down my legs and into my boots. When I got home Grandmother was out at the mill, there was no fire. There I was, I had to make a fire, then I was walking around the bedroom in my birthday suit looking for a dry shirt and stockings to put on. I had to dry my clothes as best I could, then get back to do my work. This is only one of many instances.

It was not quite so bad in the summer time as in the dreary winter. The only method of telling the time, because we could not afford a watch, it was out of the question although some of the older ones had some of those old verge watches that had been handed down from their forefathers, was either to watch for the various trains, we knew at what time they ran, or we had to rear up a stick to be used as a sundial. Of course in the summer time there was a greater variety of work which took off the monotony of ploughing day after day.

The wages were only meagre. The head horseman was the highest paid about 14/- per week, work time 4 a.m. to sometimes 8 p.m. Some farmers only paid 11/- or 12/- for the same work. The second horseman was paid around 9/- or 10/-, the

most I got was 3/6d. When I asked for a rise I was, he said 'a hobble de hoy' neither capable of doing a man's work and at the same time too big for what I was doing. I only asked him for 4/6d per week. The shepherd's wages were about 12/- or 13/-, whilst the cowman's were more than 12/- although he sometimes received a few tips with dealing with the hunter. The ordinary farm labourer's wages were 10/- per week. Men with large families had to exist on the meagre weekly wage. Oxfordshire was noted for being the poorest paid workmen of the country in England. Of course there was a little extra for a few weeks in the summertime. There was always a chance of getting plenty of eggs; they had so many fowls which used to lay everywhere, they never knew how many eggs they ought to have had. They would go round about twice a day with a basket collecting them up; many have been the time when a hen has appeared from somewhere with 14 or 16 chickens they never knew about, she had lain in some secluded spot unnoticed. I have seen the horses, the first one in the stable in particular, walk from one end of the manger to the other picking up eggs, they knew how to eat eggs as well as I did. I have sucked dozens and sometimes taken them home.

Then there was the milk, when the cowman was milking he had more than a bucketful, as he filled one bucket, he would bring it into a portion of the stable where there were no horses kept but where the chaff and other things were kept. As soon as his back was turned, we would get a wheat straw and have our fill, had we got it otherwise than by a straw then we would have disturbed the froth.

Then he would have known that Someone had been at it; he was one of those fellows you could never trust. Apples and

other fruit were plentiful for the pinching and I did my share of this and it was not the poor sorts either. I knew where all the best apples were in nearly every orchard. The nearest policeman was at Shipton but Ascott was under his supervision. Those who worked on the railway, but there were only a few, had wages round about 12/- to 15/- per week. But as bad as things were they were better than those in the hungry forties, when wages were about 7/- per week and flour 5/- per stone. This was living under protection. It was impossible at that time to purchase wheat flour, what they had to resort to was rye and barley flour mixed. I have heard the old folks talk about mixing this stuff up together, then when before they could get it into the oven, it was running all over the place, they had to be quick in shutting the oven door or it would have run all out again. When it was taken out as bread nearly black or very dark colour, it was so sad and heavy it was scarcely edible; it's a wonder they did not die of indigestion. I have seen home made bread while I was down there, it was very amateurish, rings of heavy indigestible matter in it; of course they were not accustomed to make their own bread.

On account of the meagre wages the chief articles of diet were bread, butter, lard on bread (home rendered chiefly), bacon, potatoes and vegetables, sometimes cheese and eggs (eggs were rather plentiful). If fresh meat was obtainable, as a rule it was put into the pot with the rest of the food and boiled all up together. Those who had an oven of course would roast fresh meat but chiefly everything was cooked together in the large cauldron over the fire. Sometimes I have seen attempts to make Yorkshire Puddings, a pudding tin nearly filled with batter, from two to three inches thick,

then a metal stand with three legs was put in the tin and the meat to roast was placed on this stand and the lot placed in the oven, all the gravy as the meat cooked falling into the pudding below. This was rather nice and savoury, the pudding was eaten cold, that what was left over from the Sunday dinner. Attempts were made to make plum pudding but it was mostly sad. What was left over from dinner was cut with a knife and eaten cold. But the dinner was bacon and potatoes. 'Home to dinner, home to dinner. There's the bell, there's the bell. Bacon and potatoes, bacon and potatoes. Ding dong bell, ding dong bell.' This is what we said just before the school closed for dinner time. As regards clothes, very few people possessed two suits. If they did, one changing suit had to last a life time, it was worn almost thread-bare.

Chiefly the men wore the traditional smock frock, a kind of over shirt with fancy needlework down the front, made chiefly of some kind of cotton. Each person as a rule possessed two, one put on clean and white on Sunday and worn all the week, then the next Sunday the other clean one. This with white or brown corduroy trousers, the everyday hob-nailed boots, cleaned and polished, with a round low crowned soft hat (similar to the head gear of most of the parsons of the today) completed the Sunday outfit.

The Baptist Chapel was not very far from the Church. To all appearances it looked like a barn from the outside, perhaps it had been one sometime. There was a partition across one end, which formed a kind of vestry, kitchen and classroom combined. Over this was a small room suitable for another classroom. The pulpit was erected up against the partition. A small harmonium was near the pulpit and

a coal stove in the centre for heating purposes during the winter months, a few old fashioned high-backed forms completed the furniture of the interior. During excessive rains the water came through the covering in front of the pulpit from the immersion well. There were usually some decent congregations, but nearly all the farmers and toadies went to church on Sunday and it was mostly full with scholars. The Superintendent was a man named Hunt, who was the village carrier, going to Chipping Norton twice a week with horse and cart; he also bought and sold faggots. Two persons named Smith and Martin, who worked at the western mill, also used to teach and sometimes preached. Another one named Dorset also used to teach. There was another one by the name of Parfitt who was the dandy, always wore a long silk hat and frock coat, sent by friends from town, he was I believe a stone mason. He was the leading singer, more often than not there was no-one to play the organ so this Parfitt was the one responsible to lead off with the singing. Why there should be this estrangement between old Yorkie (the vicar) and the Baptist Chapel, I cannot imagine. We had the annual treats as well as prizes. The farmer I have mentioned with Mr Muller's Orphanages, who lived in Shipton (he became a local preacher) used to send his farm wagons and horses to fetch us either to Shipton or Milton, sometimes we were taken into the forest for a few hours. There we had refreshments and field games, scrambling for lollies etc. Of course we were only kids and enjoyed it.

After we had lived in the old thatched cottage at the far end of the village for some time, we removed up close to the

church, the church being just across the road. (*Church View*) We could easily see the clock from out of the window and also I was close to my work. These houses were built in a row, about six altogether, more up to date with three storeys, ground floor, bedroom and garret, room for three beds in the garret. There was also a proper fireplace and oven (small). The drinking water we got from a well which served all the houses. The ground floor was a few feet above the level of the road. We had a view of three roads here and being in the centre of the village, not quite so lonely as the other one. The churchyard and church were just across the road, the churchyard being elevated a few feet above the roadway was surrounded by a large chestnut tree on the west and south side, on the north side were three large oak trees and two holly bushes, across the centre was a public footpath. On either side of this lime trees were planted, quite small when we first went there, but before I left, quite large, forming a lime tree avenue. At the far end on the east was a large, either sycamore or lime tree, I could not be sure of which, but anyhow after nightfall it was quite dark crossing this footpath, this path was just opposite our window; end on our houses stood north-south, the footpath running east-west. Attached to the church and to the left of our house was the pound, the place where all lost, stolen or strayed cattle were impounded. A little further across was the grocer's shop (*located in the present Vine House*), the Baptist Chapel and the Swan Inn; the station being about two hundred yards to the north-east; quite central you see."

Wendy Pearse

Ascott-u-Wychwood

Pre School



Ascott Forest School goes from strength to strength with Wychwood Project grant

The Wychwood Project is a registered charity that 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. The area covers 120 square miles and 41 parishes, mostly in West Oxfordshire.



One of the key themes of the Wychwood Project (www.wychwoodproject.org) is

education - to increase awareness, knowledge and understanding of the history and identity of the Wychwood Forest, through both formal education and informal education for all ages.



Having run their Forest School for seven years, Ascott-Under-Wychwood Pre School

(<https://www.ascottpreschool.org.uk/>) are delighted to have received a grant from the Wychwood Project for staff training for this vital activity where children are able to learn in a completely different way in an outdoor environment. With many parents choosing Ascott Pre-School for the Forest School experience, the emphasis is on children's social and emotional development as well as risk taking skills. Role playing is also an important aspect

The Ascott Grapevine

and the children learn how to work together as a team by building dens and



develop their problem solving skills.

Through Ascott's Forest School, the children explore the environment within the Wychwood's, looking at growth and decay, caring for living things (a part of the EYFS curriculum) and will then continue with their learning at the Wychwood School and other local schools.

Over the coming months two of the Ascott Pre-School staff will be attending the Forest School Programme Assistant OCNWMR Level 2 course which is run at Hill End near Oxford (<http://www.hillend-oec.co.uk/cms/hillend/forest-school> training). The staff will receive training which will enable them to support As-

cott's existing qualified Forest School Leader, whilst also providing them with



more in-depth knowledge to the principles and practice of Forest School.



This training will ensure that Ascott Pre-School continues to grow and provide this important curriculum experience to children in a community pre-school.

Fiona Hutt

TIDDY HALL

Piano Lessons

Pauline Carter

BA A Mus LCM CTABRSM MISM



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saving 90% off your lighting electricity bill

Wychwood Library

2015 MARCH/APRIL/MAY 2016

Spring is on its way and we have lots of activities going on at Wychwood Library as well as a library full of beautiful books just waiting to be read. For those of you who use ereaders, MP3 players, tablets and mobiles, visit www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/ebooks to download free eBooks and eAudio items. And now you can “Get the Library App”! Just search for Oxfordshire Libraries and the App is available on the App Store and on Google play.

You are now able to take out and pay for a DVD using the Self Service machine. If the DVD is rated 12 or over, one of our volunteers will need to verify that your age group is suitable but the whole procedure is much simplified. Payment can be made in cash or by credit card.

Some of our younger readers may have heard of “The Phoenix” which is a weekly story comic for children aged 6 – 12 and it is available in the Library. It is full of adventure and humour comic strips, text extracts from books such as Charlie Small and Julius Zebra, puzzles, jokes and a letters page. It is a great alternative to “The Beano and Dandy”.

Calling all our very youngest customers, Wychwood Library is relaunching the Bookstart Bear Club which is a free membership scheme for all babies, toddlers and pre-schoolers to encourage the exciting world of reading. Call in to register and collect your child’s free membership pack. You can also visit www.bookstart.org.uk/bookstartbearclub

to discover more about the magic of sharing stories, books and rhymes with your child. Even brand new babies love books.

One of our monthly activities at Wychwood Library is our Poetry Club. This group meets on the third Thursday of the month at 2.30 – 4pm. A topic is chosen ahead and members read out and share their selected poems. It all works very well and topics chosen have been, for instance, “Beginnings and Endings”, “Night Time”, “Animals” and “Lakeland Poets”. Look out for the poster on the noticeboard with the next topic and come along.

TAI CHI classes have proved so popular that there are now three sessions on a Monday morning starting at 9.30am. The beginners class is at 11.30am. This skill is very beneficial for improving balance, lowering blood pressure and is very easy to learn. Enquire at the Library if you would like to join in. Classes run for six weeks at £6 per session.

Parents. If you are not able to be at home to greet your children aged 11+ after school, suggest they visit Wychwood Library on Monday, Wednesday and Friday afternoons where they will be warm and dry, have space to do their homework and, best of all, we will provide them with a hot chocolate or a cup of tea and biscuits.

We will make a small charge for the refreshments. We can also provide computers and printing facilities and, from the end of March, we will have Wifi available.

The Ascott Grapevine

We look forward to seeing you at Wychwood Library.

From Ruth Gillingham and all our wonderful volunteers.

Opening Times

Monday	2.00 to 7.00 pm
Tuesday	Closed
Wednesday	9.30 am to 1.00 pm 2.00 to 5.00 pm

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

Closed

2.00 to 7.00 pm

9.30 am to 1.00 pm



WYCHWOOD FUNERAL SERVICES

**The Chapel of Rest
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FUNERAL DIRECTOR**



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LATEST NEWS

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The Ascott Village Charity



Your Village Charity- What does it do, and does it help the poor?

The village charity is still in the position to offer help to any person in the village who is embarking on further education and is in need of books or equipment for the course. They can apply to the charity to assist with the cost. All applications are dealt with in strict confidence.

The village Charity Run or Fun Run made a surplus of £869.20 and £130.80 from our General Funds was added to make up the £1000 that was agreed to be made to the Church for the Lime Tree Appeal. It is planned that the pollarding of the Church lime trees should be completed in February.

Another project that may be within the charity's remit is assisting with the repair to one of the walls surrounding the Pound.

If any villager feels that the Charity could help anyone in the village with financial aid then please contact one of the trustees to discuss the application procedure. The trustees will review all applications to determine if they are within the Charity power to assist.

johncull@wowmatters.com

elaine.byles@bioch.ox.ac.uk

keith.ravenhill@talktalk.net

stuart.john.fox@gmail.com

mark@dawbarn.co.uk

se.timms@btinternet.com

pollymarshall@gmail.com



The Village Shop

Owned by the village, Run by the village, There for the village
In our 12th year of trading, the management committee, volunteers and staff send their greetings to the village community and we thank you for your continued support.

SHOP NEWS – 2015

As we enter our 13th (yes - 13th year of trading!) below are a series of highlights from 2015. We have:

1. Passed the 12 year trading point which means we are now well into our second decade (how many community shops can make that claim to fame!)
2. Built profit on profit; in the last three years the shop has accumulated over £7,000 surplus which will help to pay for equipment replacement and other improvements we deem necessary
3. Received excellent satisfaction ratings from customers and our team of volunteers
4. Improved systems and procedures (thanks to our manager Bridgette) which makes life easier for those working the till position
5. New trade relationships in place with Wykham Farm ensuring we have well priced, fresh meat collected regularly by volunteers
6. Enjoyed a great Christmas trading period including over £1000 of orders (including ten delicious festive birds) which all went out the door to happy customers on December 22nd
7. Increased volunteer coverage to keep cost levels low and provide a vital help to surpass our target for profits
8. Set up the Saturday Club with a 100% team of volunteers to offset previously paid staff
9. Organized a volunteer led rota system; vital to ensure everyone does their fair share and no-one person is taken advantage of
10. Received great support from colleagues for those vital services such as; cleaning, maintenance, IT and in the new year, staff refresher training
11. Maintained stringent monitoring of waste which helps to maintain margins (again vital to our profitability)
12. Delivered regular communication to volunteers & staff via weekly trading and quarterly newsletters
13. Become a vital link with the community as well as a charity collection point for local, national and international charities

Not bad eh! So, what's ahead for 2016?

Gaynor Taylor (and husband Jeffrey) will take over the rota from Jane starting in February. We are indebted to Jane as we

The Ascott Grapevine

were to Mark Dawbarn who did the job before Jane! Thank you both.

We will be looking as ever, to increase our volunteer numbers and this has already started with the recruitment of Anne Askwith. Anne comes to us from Wootton where she was a volunteer in their community shop. A warm welcome Anne!

We will also be introducing staff refresher training for the till position starting in February (thank you Kathy and Rosemary). This is where we have most of our volunteer support and it is vital we make the job as straight forward and as stress-free as possible! Most of our volunteers put in a two-hour shift once a week (some do more!) and it needs to be an enjoyable experience. It needs to be something to look forward to!

This is what shop volunteer Jack has to say ...

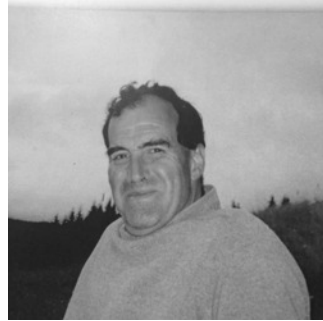
"I enjoy helping out in the shop for several reasons. I initially decided to volunteer as I see the shop as a really valuable asset to the village and I want to support it so that we are able to retain it. We moved to Ascott fairly recently, and it's been a good opportunity to meet people and get involved in the local community. I work from home for most of the week, and I've enjoyed getting out during the day and doing something completely different. I've had a great experience so far; everybody in the team has been very welcoming and friendly. I would encourage anyone else who can spare two hours a week to join us and help support our fantastic shop."

SO, WHAT'S HOLDING YOU BACK – COME AND JOIN US. YOUR COMMUNITY NEEDS YOU!

On a sad note ...

We learned that Peter Swann died sud-

PETER GRAHAM SWANN
1941 – 2016



denly in January at the age of 74. Peter was one of our small team of three who, back in 2002, was asked by the PC to present a feasibility report prior to the formation of our community shop. Peter helped put our bid together by writing a comprehensive business and operational plan. It was a vital job in securing in excess of £60,000 of European Funding. This, together with a mortgage, meant we could purchase, equip and stock the shop and have sufficient working capital to get started. Peter left Ascott a few years ago with his wife Sylvia for rural Wales where he had a smallholding. Thank you Peter, we won't forget you!

Have you made your marmalade yet?



The shop table has been running a promotion during January and by the time you

The Ascott Grapevine

read this we will have moved on to Valentines Day and then promoting eggs and Easter goodies ...

Do pop in and see what's going on. You will be surprised at the wide range we stock and at reasonable prices too!

Thanks again for your custom and we look forward to serving you soon. Let's ALL make 2016 a year to remember!

John Cull

Village Shop Chairman

Ascott Village Shop

They could close down the village shop
Located down the street

The one that's bright and cheerful Where
village people meet

The one that sells the papers And milk
for all our tea

And cigarettes and chocolates And apples
from an English tree And bunches of bananas

And bacon, ham and cheese And coffee
and all frozen goods And tins of mushy peas

'Oh no' said Mrs. Clemson

'You mean the shop down there?' The
one that sells the baby food
And lovely breakfast fare

The one that sells the biscuits And envelopes and glue

The one that sells those croissants And cards and sweets to chew
The one that sells the magazines Please tell me it's not true'.

'Oh yes it is', said Mr. James

'It sells my cider too'.

'Have you heard the awful news? They could close the village shop'. The one we love and fail to use
And pass by in the car

On our way to Tesco's and the Co-op
They're surely not too far!

We should remember it might close We should be doing our bit

As well as getting milk and news We should buy other things from it

So reader hear the warning

Milk and news are not enough.

A basket full from time to time of more exotic stuff

Will help ensure its future so when snow and ice prevail
We still have somewhere here to shop

We should not let it fail.

Anon

WYCHWOOD FOLK CLUB

In association with Wychwood Brewery

(At The Swan or Tiddy Hall, Shipton Rd, Ascott-u-Wychwood)

Showcasing an eclectic mix of

Folk, Roots, Acoustic & Americana Music

March 5 th	15 String Trio	<i>The Swan</i>
£6.00 in advance/£8.00 on the door		
March 19 th	Richard Digance	Tiddy Hall
£10.00 in advance/£12.00 on the door		
April 2 nd	Gigspanner	Tiddy Hall
£13.00 in Advance/£15.00 on Door		
April 16 th	Kelly Oliver	<i>The Swan</i>
£6.00 in advance/£8.00 on the door		
May 7 th	Wizz Jones	Tiddy Hall
£8.00 in advance/£10.00 on the door		
May 21 st	Steve Ashley	<i>The Swan</i>
£10.00 in advance/£12.00 on the door		
June 4 th	Ninebarrow	Tiddy Hall
£10.00 in advance/£12.00 on the door		
Doors 19:30hrs Start 20:00hrs		

If you would like to be added to our mailing list or want any further information then please visit www.wychwoodfolkclub.com,
Phone 01993831427 / 07870563299

Or e-mail: wychwoodfolkclub@gmail.com



Ascott Runners

There is a voluntary Lift Service/Village Taxi to/from Charlbury station for regular commuters. At present there are three names on the list displayed in the village shop. Please add your name to the list if you would like to join the scheme. This scheme should help to reduce running and parking costs for those of you making the regular journey.

Robert Gripper Antique Furniture Restorer

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robgripper@btinternet.com

Bridge by the Mill

As many walkers know, the bridge across the Evenlode near the Mill, was gradually losing the bank on the Mill side due to natural erosion by the river. The bank has now been strengthened and the bridge is now safe for walkers.





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ASCOTT WALKERS



Sunday 6th March walk will be a 9.30 start and then we move to the summer programme at 9.00. on Sunday 3rd April.

We meet on the green the first Sunday of the month and walk locally ending at a pub and optional lunch.

For more details call Paul/Pauline Jackson 01993 83 1967

Investment Club

Investment Club seeks one more member

The newly formed Investors Club meeting at The Swan each month has room for one more member.

Members invest at least £50 per month after £500 joining fee.

Paul Jackson the current chairman says it is a good time to join as the stockmarket is well down.

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TIDDY HALL

The first **Folk Night** of the year, which took place in early January, was a huge success, attracting our biggest audience to date at about 140!! People came from far and wide to see and hear **Phil Beer**, one of the most popular ambassadors of acoustic roots music. Taking to the stage with no support, he played two very well received sets. Congratulations to Mark and Elaine for hosting such a successful evening, definitely putting **The Wychwood Folk Club** on the map!

Upcoming gigs at **Tiddy Hall**:

March 19th – Richard Digance

April 2nd – return of Gigspanner

May 7th – Wizz Jones

June 4th – Ninebarrow

We have a new drama/singing/dancing class taking place at Tiddy Hall on Thursday afternoons. **TLights** are fun filled workshops, aimed at children between 7 – 14 years, who are interested in developing an enthusiasm for theatre, performance & the arts. Students will build confidence through drama, singing and dancing whilst also encouraging communication, cooperation and team work. For a free taster session and further information, please contact Jess on 07814 524069. Classes start at 4.45pm every Thursday.

The **Roseneath School of Music** will be holding their **Annual Summer Concert** on Saturday June 11th. Please contact Mrs Pauline Carter on 774568 for further information and tickets.

There will be another six sessions of **Qigong** starting on Thursday March 24th. Please contact Pam Quirke to book your place – 07780 572283.

Don't forget the **Sunday Tea Dances!**

Usually on the 1st Sunday of the month, unless otherwise stated, £3.50 per person to include tea and homemade cakes! Each session starts at 2.30pm and should finish by 5pm.

A date for your diary – Saturday August 6th – August 10th 2016 marks the day, when 100 years ago, Reginald Tiddy lost his life in Laventie. We are in the planning stages of arranging an evening with a Morris Side from Oxford University, with a connection to Reginald Tiddy, plus poetry, plays and music all commemorating the life of Reginald Tiddy. More details nearer the time.

Ingrid Ridley

Special Events:

Saturday March 19th

Saturday April 2nd

Thursday May 5th

Saturday May 7th

Saturday June 4th

Saturday June 11th

Folk Night with Richard Digance

Folk Night with Gigspanner

Tiddy Hall as Polling Station

Folk Night with Wizz Jones

Folk Night with Ninebarrow

Roseneath School of Music Summer Concert

Regular Activities:

Monday – Friday Mornings

Contact: Mrs Pauline Plant 07968006451

Pre-school

Monday Afternoons 3.30pm – 6pm

Contact: Pauline Carter 01993 774568

Piano Lessons

Wednesday Night 6pm – 6.45pm

Contact: Simon Gidman 01993 831479

Circuits

Thursday Afternoons 4.45pm – 6.45pm

Contact: Jenna McKee 07983 378883

Drama Workshop

Thursday Night 7.30pm – 8.30pm

Contact: Pam Quirke 07780 572283

Quigong

Friday Afternoons 3.30pm – 6pm

Contact: Pauline Carter 01993 774568

Piano Lessons

1st Sunday of each Month – 2.30pm – 5pm

Contact: Jess 07827 235457

Sunday Tea Dance

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Gardening in Ascott



I'm sitting at my desk on a rather dreary cold late January Sunday afternoon pondering on the mildest winter I can remember. Until the recent cold mornings, I've had pelargoniums which I had lazily left in the pots over winter, still looking remarkably good although not actually flowering, but now they are frosted and limp. The summer flowering Jasmine officinale which covers the small wooden arbour just outside the back door has only just recently started to drop its leaves, and was still in flower in December. Normally by this time of the year, its twisty brown stems have long since been denuded of their foliage. There is a fine example of a *Rosa banksiae lutea* which adorns the outbuilding of a neighbour's property, normally flowering early but not until late April or early May, but now bursting into bud at the end of January! It will be interesting to see what effect this mild winter has upon the garden this year. Will insects, birds and small mammals be abundant? If all the spring-flowering plants are so early, will there be a flowering gap later this spring, or will the later flowers also arrive ahead of their usual time?

This unusually kind winter must be in part due to a change in climate, but there have always been unusually harsh or mild winters over the years. Gilbert White, that famous naturalist and clergy-

man, writing in the 18th century noted on 22nd January 1779 said,

"Bees come out and gather on the snow-drops. Many gnats in the air."

And Mr White was writing at a time when the Thames in London froze over and Frost Fairs were held on it!

Plans for 2016

I've decided on some changes to the way I garden in Ascott. This decision has been reached in part due to the maturity of the garden. Trees and shrubs have grown so well that my rather ill sited vegetable garden has become overshadowed, and that makes the successful growing of most crops somewhat of a lottery. Successful growing becomes more than usually dependant on the amount of rain and sunshine, but mostly on my ability to keep on top of the copious watering required. The large trees that surround that area draw much moisture from the ground, and no matter how much I water, I am fighting a losing battle with the trees. So I've decided to grow only those vegetables which seem to have thrived despite these rather inhospitable conditions. Lettuces and surprisingly, most herbs, seem to do very well in this environment so I will concentrate my efforts in these areas and hope to grow the very best examples of these crops that I can. I will leave the more sun-loving courgettes and tomatoes, and deep-rooted carrots and parsnips to others.

I've also decided not to grow so many new plants from seed, by division, and from cuttings this year. Although it's

been great fun to produce lots of new plants in this way, it has become in my rather limited garden space somewhat intrusive to the enjoyment of our garden. Also, the constant watering and general work of potting-on and seed sowing has rather taken over from some of the more detailed maintenance work I would have normally done throughout the garden in the summer. Of course this has had a rather detrimental effect on the overall beauty and visual impact of the garden, so I hope that with more time to devote to the garden it will look better than ever, and even if it doesn't I will still certainly have more time to stand and stare and take in the beauty of plants.

With more time to devote to the details in the garden, one of my plans is to make some brightly coloured wooden obelisks to grow sweet peas up. I had considered buying some rather splendid examples of these obelisks from a local garden centre, but being somewhat daunted by the price of buying just two of these objects, I decided there must be a cheaper option. When looking around the splendid nursery attached to Batsford Arboretum, I noted that they had some 6 ft. tree stakes. They are approximately 1" x 1" timber and seem to have been well treated with preservative. So, six stakes later and a pot of bright purple paint and I'm producing a tripod to place either side of a long border. The top of these tripods will be lashed together with some rather thick jute twine by drilling a hole at the top of each stake, to thread this through. The stakes, twine and paint cost approximately £27 - very much cheaper than the rather more complex example in the shops, but when covered with the sweet peas I

hope my home made versions will still be eye-catching. I shall be growing my usual highly scented dark purple mix of sweet peas but this year and I have also invested in some new seed of brighter colours. More bright pinks and pillar box red ones, so I'm hoping that these, set against the purple tripods, will make quite a statement at the end of the borders.

Spring seed sowing

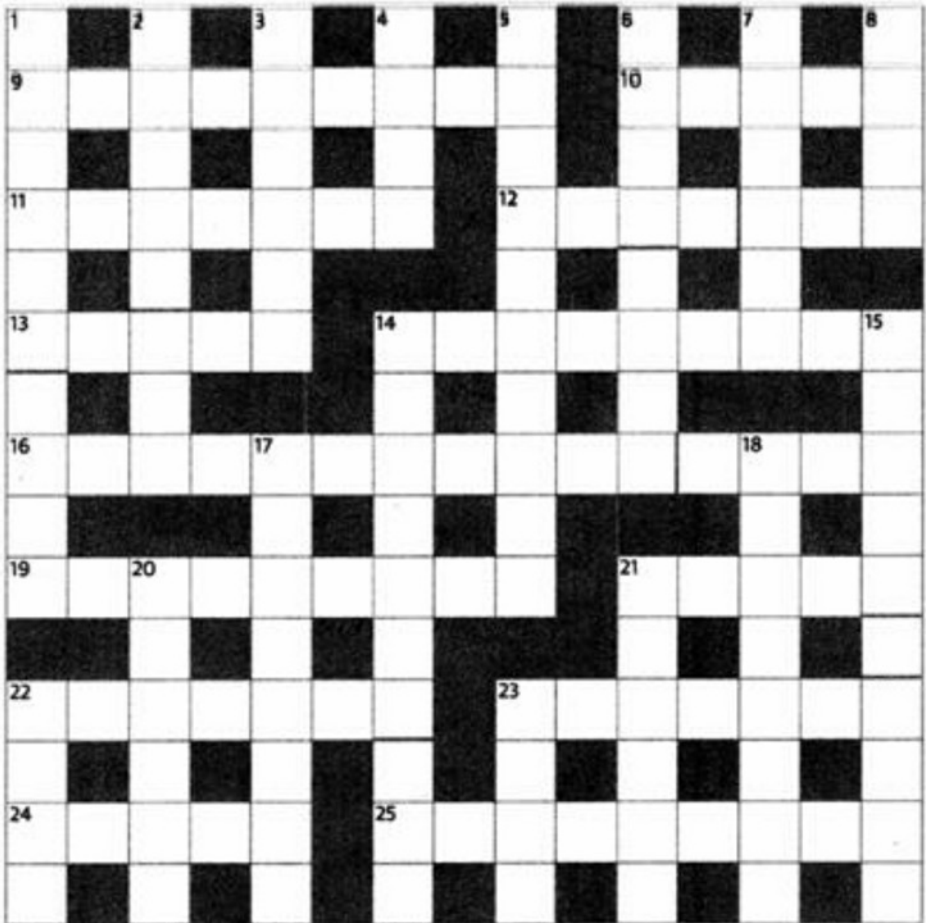
With many of us turning our thoughts to sowing seeds, it seems an appropriate time to share some interesting facts from James Wong's article in a recent Observer garden section. I was fascinated by his suggested use of soluble aspirin and cinnamon to aid both germination and to improve subsequent growth of both seedlings and cuttings.

Apparently the salicylic acid in the aspirin has been shown to improve the plant defence systems by helping them staying off infections and by boosting the growth of roots in a similar way to hormone rooting powder. Cinnamon powder acts in a different way, and can work very well for avoiding damping-off, that common fungal infection that kills many young seedlings, and also prevents new cuttings from rotting in cooler conditions and low light levels.

The recipe for this super concoction is: 1 teaspoon of cinnamon popped into a litre of lukewarm water, then add 150 mg of soluble aspirin and give it a good stir. Let it cool to room temperature and you're ready to use it to either soak your seeds or cuttings for an hour or so prior to sowing, or inserting cuttings into compost.

Madeline Galistan

Crossword



Across

- 9 Blaming a number before making sure (9)
- 10 A valediction is something cast in gold (5)
- 11 Taking another course in sewing (7)
- 12 A roué not waiting for his cut? (4,3)
- 13 It's played when one is out of form (5)
- 14 Untruthful hedonists booted out (9)
- 16 Where to obtain counter-intelligence? (11,4)
- 19 Turn out when a sprinter is replaced (9)
- 21 Sweets for kids (5)
- 22 Finance record reveals arrears (7)
- 23 Mascara make-up used by Latin American entertainers (7)
- 24 Stop being stuffy (5)
- 25 Is done in a different way in the Far East (9)

Down

- 1 Alcoholic haze? (6,4)
- 2 Rob has to leave work (5,3)
- 3 Sunseekers take off for this state (6)
- 4 It may be used to lift a football side (4)
- 5 Crashing gears gives feeling full of hostility (10)
- 6 Face up? If might mean the opposite! (4,4)
- 7 Colin goes out East to see her (6)
- 8 Expert in Polish
- 14 Means to secure artistic work? (7,3)
- 15 Straddles and makes a capture at sea in skirmish (5,1,4)
- 17 Cracked clues once more, being determined (8)
- 18 Piut ban on spirits and remove without alternative (8)
- 20 It is weighed by craftsmen (6)
- 21 Sacking and burning (6)
- 22 Support a play or a player (4)
- 23 Put under pressure to serve up the cheese (4)

Solution to Crossword in Edition 88

P	O	M	A	D	E		D	I	A	T	O	N	I	C
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R	A	M	B	L	E		S	T	R	A	I	T	E	N
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	C	H	E	M	I	C	A	L	T	O	I	L	E	T
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I				E		S		G		M				C
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E		F		E		D				O		O		A
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Events Calendar - 2016

Date	Event		
February 27 th	11.30 am	JCS	The Swan
March 5 th	8.00 pm	15 String Trio	The Swan
March 6 th	9.30 am	Ascott Walkers	The Green
March 13 th	2.30 - 5 pm	Sunday Tea Dance	Tiddy Hall
March 19 th	8.00 pm	Richard Digance	Tiddy Hall-
March 24 th	7.30 - 8.30 pm	Qigong	Tiddy Hall
March 31 st	7.30 - 8.30 pm	Qigong	Tiddy Hall
April 2 nd	8.00 pm	Peter Knight's Gigspanner	Tiddy Hall
April 3 rd	9.30 am	Ascott Walkers	The Green
April 3 rd	2.30 - 5 pm	Sunday Tea Dance	Tiddy Hall
April 7 th	7.30 - 8.30 pm	Qigong	Tiddy Hall
April 14 th	7.30 - 8.30 pm	Qigong	Tiddy Hall
April 16 th	8.00 pm	Kelly Oliver	The Swan
April 21 st	7.30 - 8.30 pm	Qigong	Tiddy Hall
April 28 th	7.30 - 8.30 pm	Qigong	Tiddy Hall
April 30 th	11.30 am	JCS	The Swan
May 7 th	8.00 pm	Wizz Jones	Tiddy Hall
May 21 st	8.00 pm	Steve Ashley	The Swan
June 4 th	8.00 pm	Ninebarrow	Tiddy Hall
June 11 th		Rosneath Summer Concert	Tiddy Hall
June 12 th	Queen's Birthday	Village Afternoon Tea - Details Later	
June 25 th	11.30 am	JCS	The Swan
August 6 th		Reginald Tiddy Evening	Tiddy Hall
August 20 th	8.00 pm	Jez Lowe	Tiddy Hall
JCS	Joint Councillor's Surgery		