

**DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT EDITION - FRIDAY 5<sup>th</sup> JULY 2002  
TO ANNE BRAITHWAITE AT THE MILL, TEL. No: 831282; [e-  
mail: [Mill@auwoxon32.freereserve.co.uk](mailto:Mill@auwoxon32.freereserve.co.uk)].**

**The Easter Nonsense!**

The men don't come out of the Easter story too well! They deserted Jesus on the cross, leaving the women to keep vigil. And they dismissed the Resurrection as nonsense. "The story appeared to them to be nonsense, and they would not believe (the women)". Luke 24: 11.

We can see why. Jesus was turning things upside down again. He seems to have spent a lifetime doing this and it continued with his death. Death, followed by life? It seemed nonsense. But it was real, and it became the hope of the world. Some adults think Christianity is for children. Some men think Christianity is for women. And Jesus certainly went out of his way to make a fuss of the children and to affirm and encourage the women. But the men were there too. Despite the desertion and denials and dismissals the men eventually got the message. They began by thinking the Resurrection was nonsense, but that nonsense became the most wonderful news they had ever heard, and they spent the rest of their lives spreading the news of that nonsense wherever they went. Will you join them in spreading the nonsense of the Resurrection among your family and friends?

**Note for your Diary - CHURCH FÊTE on The Green,  
Saturday, 13<sup>th</sup> July at 2 p.m.**

**SERVICES AT HOLY TRINITY CHURCH,  
ASCOTT-UNDER-WYCHWOOD**

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

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

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

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

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**SPRING FAIR AT THE TIDDY HALL**

There will be a Spring Fair in the Tiddy Hall on Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> May from 10.30 to 12.30 to raise money for repairs to the Church Bells.

Lots of Stalls - Plants, Produce, Cakes, Bottles, Tombola, Flowers, Games Table, Raffle

Entrance £1 on the door which will allow you free coffee and biscuits.

Do make a note and come along.

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Many thanks to Eleanor and Alan Edwards for hosting a Coffee Morning at The Grange on 9<sup>th</sup> March which raised £170 in aid of the Congo Volcano Appeal.

The following letter was received from David Jones, the Senior Fundraiser of the Oxfordshire Branch of the British Red Cross - "Please pass on my thanks to all concerned with the recent coffee morning. The sum raised of £170 is a tremendous effort and will be used wisely to alleviate the suffering of those caught up in the terrible events of the Congo volcano.

The interests and concern shown by the residents of Ascott-under-Wychwood for the residents of an area far away in a different country are an example to us all - once again thank you".

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**CHANGE OF PARISH CLERK**

Hopefully you will have seen from the Notice displayed on the Village Notice Boards that we had a change of personnel to the role of Parish Clerk at the end of March.

Wendy Pearse, for personal reasons, said that she would like to give up the post but fortunately Margaret Ismail has agreed to take on the position. I would like to take this opportunity to welcome Margaret and to wish her success in the job.

I would also like to give my personal thanks to Wendy for all the hard work she has put in as Clerk. I know that she has made my position as Chairman so much easier. She has been a dedicated efficient and conscientious employee and although I understood her reasons for wanting to stand down it was with great sadness and reluctance that I accepted her resignation.

However, I have persuaded her to stand for the Parish Council and if she gets elected I know she will be a great asset. Her understanding of Council work, knowledge of the village and its people will be of tremendous benefit. I hope also that she will continue to enthral us with her writings in the Grapevine on local history.

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### ASCOTT-UNDER-WYCHWOOD PARISH COUNCIL

I would like to start my first report as your new Parish Clerk with a big thank you to Wendy Pearse for all her help and advice over the past couple of weeks during the change over. I am certainly going to need it. Wendy has worked very efficiently and unstintingly for the Parish over the past three years and we all send her our very best wishes for the future.

We are pleased to report that our request for speed signs has been successful and 30 mph roundels and a red road surface will be painted on the three approach roads into the village.

A new signpost at the level crossing is to be erected with the village name in a circle at the top and Tiddy Hall incorporated on the Shipton arm of the sign.

Mr. Holmes of Cassington Builders has agreed to repair the damage to the edge of The Green caused by lorries during the building work at the school.

The design of the new Memorial Gates for the church has now been agreed and F.C. Harriss and Sons of Burford have been asked to proceed as soon as possible.

**Margaret Ismail, Parish Clerk**

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### WYCHWOODS LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

2002 has seen three very different talks. In January David Wilson, Manager at Bruern for many years, described his life in agriculture and the vast changes that had occurred during that time. Alan Watkins, speaking in February, brought slides of post cards of Packer and Simms, illustrating events in this area in the early years of the twentieth century. These ranged from the felling of the tallest trees in England in Heythrop Park, one of which blocked the entrance into New Street, Chipping Norton, en route for the railway station, to the ten year old daughter, dressed in frilly dress and ankle socks climbing Bliss Mill Chimney with her father, a steeplejack. Then in March, Martin Way spoke about the life on canals from their beginnings to modern times and brought beautiful models and artefacts to illustrate his talk.

Following the 21<sup>st</sup> Anniversary Celebration of the Society in April, speakers as follows:-

Thursday, 16<sup>th</sup> March Gill Hey Saxon Settlement at Yarnton -  
Milton 7.30 p.m. The Missing Link?

Thursday, 20<sup>th</sup> June David Eddershaw A Country Brewery -  
Shipton 7.30 p.m. Hook Norton 1849-1999

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

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- 4 -

### REV. SAMUEL YORK - A VOICE FROM ASCOTT'S PAST 1878

Rev. Samuel York conducted his first service at Ascott Church on Sunday, 21<sup>st</sup> May 1876. Previously he had been vicar at Fringford and in 1883 he was to move on to Fyfield where he remained the incumbent until 1904. Born in Middlesex, he was 41 years old when he came to Ascott with his wife Frances, and in 1881, the Census records that they lived in the vicarage with 29 year old Ellen Coggins, the cook, and Harriet Larch, aged 27, the housemaid.

Reading through the various accounts, Rev. York appears to be the archetypal Victorian vicar, with ardent enthusiasm not only for the values and achievements of Queen Victoria's golden age and the rewards and blessings of being British backed up by its magnificent Empire, but also with a strong concern for the needy poor of this country and the unhappy lot of the backward nations overseas.

The first surviving extracts from the Leaffield and Ascott-under-Wychwood Parish Magazine date to 1878, so Rev. York had already spent two years living amongst his Ascott parishioners by the time these particular magazines were produced. His co-author, Rev. Lee of Leaffield, seems to have resided in that village for at least the last quarter of the nineteenth century. However only these Ascott extracts are known to have survived.

So the story begins in 1878. On 4<sup>th</sup> April the report was received from Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools. Happily there had been a considerable improvement on the year before. There was much better discipline and the children had good elementary knowledge. This resulted in a School Grant which exceeded the previous year by £23. Appropriately, Mr. Groves the builder from Milton, came two days later to take measurements for the building of an Infants School Room. It seems that the accommodation was much needed and indeed asked for by the Government. It was proposed to build out from the north side of the existing school room, a room 20 ft. by 16 ft. and the work was estimated to cost about £200. The next obstacle however was to obtain the money. This would hopefully come by donations from various bodies and individuals.

On 23<sup>rd</sup> April the Annual Easter Vestry Meeting took place when Mr. Lardner of Manor Farm and Mr. Hambridge of Crown Farm were re-elected Church Wardens. The church accounts were very encouraging. In the past year the last payment had been made for the £250 borrowed by the parish in 1856 from the Board of Public Works for the restoration of the church and Rev. York was hopeful that the Weekly Offertory would continue to meet all necessary church expenses if as well supported in the next twelve months as in the last.

In a tradition which extended back through many centuries the following notice had recently been fixed to the church door:-

Manor of Ascott D'oiley, in the County of Oxford. Notice is hereby given that the general Court Leet and Court Baron of the Right Honourable Francis George, Lord Churchill of Wychwood, Lord of the said Manor, will be held on Tuesday, the 23<sup>rd</sup> day of April, at the house of John Morris, known by the sign

- 5 -

of the "Churchill Arms": and you are to warn 12 able and honest men of and within the liberty of the said Court to serve upon the Jury of our Sovereign Lady the Queen and you are yourself to be then and there present. Fail at your peril. Given under my hand and seal,

A.C. Rawlings, Steward

To: Mr. Richard Cooper  
"Bailiff of the said Court".

The jury was duly sworn in and the Court held. Not much more than a formality following Enclosure in 1838, but in earlier centuries the Court had been the root of the organisation of the agricultural system of the Manor when land was held in common and agreement amongst the villagers regarding crops and livestock was very necessary to ensure a viable income for all. After the holding of the Court, the accounts of the Parish Charity were examined and audited and the Court Leet dinner was held at the "Churchill Arms".

On 27<sup>th</sup> April a new school master, Mr. H. Nutley, took charge of the school.

The Rev. C.E. York, a close relative of the Rev. Samuel was apparently well known to the villagers and in 1878 was chaplain aboard the H.M.S. Temeraire anchored in the Sea of Marmora, so Rev. Samuel thought that his parishioners would be interested in some extracts from Rev. C.E.'s letters. The following was printed in the June magazine.

#### LETTER FROM THE FLEET, NEAR CONSTANTINOPLE

"On Monday night a violent storm broke upon us without any warning. Sleeping sailors were aroused to strike the top gallant masts, yards, etc. Then came suddenly, the sound of something falling heavily on the deck above me. A sailor had fallen from the highest part of the main mast and been killed instantaneously. We had been talking together only a few hours before, and I could scarcely believe that he was lying dead before me. The Armenians kindly gave us leave to make use of their Cemetery at Ismid, a very pretty spot. A large number of the crew followed and the ship's band playing the Dead March. When I read the service, there was a strange crowd around, composed of Turks, Greeks, Jews and others. After the service, a Procession approached, 3 Priests and 15 Choristers bearing a large cross and 2 candles. They sang a funeral chant and recited prayers. They belonged to the Armenian Christian Church and wished to show their respect for the English. Numbers of poor refugees have flocked to Ismid to escape from the Russians. They are in a miserable condition, some of the children look more like little sick monkeys than human beings. We collected some scraps and biscuit from the ship and took them to the sheds and outbuildings. In one place, a man near his end stricken with fever, a little boy, a mere cage of bones, perfectly helpless. Nearly all the women and children were very wasted, the men evidently leave them to starve. Probably we shall soon be leaving Ismid. The Governor has told me that in two months' time it is excessively hot here, and the place is full of fever. It is dreadful to think of what will become of the poor homeless refugees. We were joined on

Friday by the "Devastation" [one of the officers of this iron clad turret ship is the son of Rev. W. Carter of Sarsden]. Yesterday several Russian officers came in boats to visit us but Admiral Hornby gave strict orders that they were nowhere to be admitted, so they had to go back again without a look at our big guns. It is quite right to be careful, the Russians leave no stone unturned to gain their object.

C.E.Y."

13<sup>th</sup> June say 24 passengers join the excursion train to Oxford en route for the Bath and West Agricultural Show and two days later the Juniors of Ascott and Shipton competed in a cricket match at which unfortunately, the latter were the victors.

On 23<sup>rd</sup> June Rev. York reports:-

"A most terrible thunder storm broke over south London in the afternoon, and lasted for more than three hours, with torrents of rain and hail. Nigh to the Church, in which I preached in the evening, at Clapham, a house was struck by the lightning, set on fire, and with some difficulty the flames were quenched; in an adjoining public house there were several people drinking, and nearly all of them were struck partially blind".

As the end of the previous year, a petition signed by the principal rate payer of Ascott had been sent to the Post Master General asking if letters could be delivered earlier and collected later from the village. On 9<sup>th</sup> September a reply was received. It said that their petition had not been found practicable but the Post would be advanced by half an hour.

The next day the Choir went on an excursion to Oxford. "10<sup>th</sup> September. The first attractive spectacle was the great bell at Christ Church, "the mighty Tom" weighing 17,000 lbs. Mounting up 150 steps they came in sight of the monster, and the boys, crawling under, easily stood upright within the bell. After a row on the river, many of the Colleges were visited, the Botanical Gardens, and the Museum. A peep at St. Giles Fair, and a wild beast show [with the temporary loss of two of the boys in the crowd] concluded a very happy seven hours in Oxford."

16<sup>th</sup> September saw the re-opening of the school after five weeks holiday, the scholars numbering 96. The Diocesan Society had granted £25 towards the building of the Infants School Room but unfortunately neither Lord Churchill nor the Crown Authorities had given a final determination of their amount of help, so work could not yet be commenced.

In the last week of September, Sir Morgan Crofton [of whom more later] came into residence at Ascott House [The Grange], the Gleaners' Harvest Tea was held and the offertory from the Harvest Thanksgiving was taken to Burford Hospital.

Ascott it seems was not backward in the search for knowledge since the Reading Room and Lending Library in the old school was proposed to begin as usual in November. And the Night School was to commence again in the new school room on 4<sup>th</sup> November at 6.30 p.m.

With October came a subscription of £5 towards the Infants School Room, the concluding cricket match of the season followed by another dinner at the “Churchill Arms”, and the meeting of the Benefit Club.

During the autumn of 1878, Rev. York visited the Rollright Stones, scene of one of his stories printed in the last Grapevine. He decided that undoubtedly the stones were the remains of a Druidic Temple raised more than two thousand years ago, and the Five Knights were a cromlech, a place of burial. He also counted the stones, arguing as they do today, that the same number cannot be counted twice. He recounted the storey of Squire Blower who tried to move the King Stone down into the court yard of his manor house in Little Rollright. It took twenty four horses to drag the stone down the hill and after three nights of shrieks, groans and other mysterious noises, Squire Blower had to acknowledge defeat. Only two horses were required to drag the stone back to its rightful place. This happened shortly before the Civil War when Squire Blower paid the cost. Cromwell’s troopers sacked the manor and burnt the homestead. Squire Blower endeavouring to escape, fell into a well and was drowned. His tomb and effigy are in the church and an inscription on the tower states that he was the builder.

Several baptisms are listed throughout the year including that of Henry, son of John and Emma Chaundy, and Edith, daughter of Matthew and Mary Ann Edginton. Two marriages are listed. One of Ascott’s first Parish Councillors, Robert Smith, married Fanny Honeybone in October but this unfortunately had a very said sequel. The only surviving mention of a burial was that of William John Cox, aged 9 months, to which Rev. York added what was perhaps in those days of high infant mortality, a typical Victorian epitaph.

“When the Archangel’s trumpet sounds,  
And souls to bodies join,

What crowds will wish their stay on earth  
Had been as short as mine”.

Finally for 1878 Rev. York reminded his parishioners that on 2<sup>nd</sup> December the last money was to be paid into the Clothing and Coal Clubs before the Tickets could be handed out. So it seems that at least some of Ascott’s inhabitants were preparing to celebrate the festive season with a few new clothes and a cheerful hearth.

**Wendy Pearse**  
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**ASCOTT-UNDER-WYCHWOOD SPORTS CLUB**

**Fund raising events for the Sports Pavilion:-**

Folk Night - Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> March - A very successful evening that raised £515. A huge ‘thank you’ to Lyn Collins who organised the event.  
Dance/Disco held on Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> April - Many thanks to Keith and the Rock Band ‘Escape’ and Gary Doggett and Whitelight Disco who gave their services free of charge to help raise funds for the Sport Pavilion. Thank you to all the

people who came and supported the event - we are pleased to report we raised £327.

**Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> June**  
**Coffee Morning, Bring and Buy, Open Gardens**  
**10.00 a.m. – 12 noon**  
**@ Lyn and Tony Collins, Hazel Cottage, Shipton Road, Ascott**  
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**RAIL SERVICES - PUBLIC MEETING**

A public meeting, chaired by Witney MP David Cameron, to discuss our rail service was held at Stonesfield Village Hall on 18 February. The General Manager Thames Trains, Mr Terry Worrall, and two members of his staff attended the meeting, which included about 60 members of the public. Mr Worrall spoke for 20 minutes and then answered questions from the floor on a range of issues concerning the reliability, frequency and standard of the London - Worcester service. A press release was issued following the meeting.

The change in time for the evening weekday stopping service at Ascott, Finstock and Combe has raised the question of whether Thames Trains intends cancelling the stopping service at one or more of these stations. Mr Worrall was pressed on this and went on record, saying there have been no discussions about cancelling the service and there are no plans to do so though there are considerable problems associated with the short platforms at these stations<sup>1</sup>.

Mr Worrall undertook to respond to the issues raised through Mr Cameron, who agreed to pass on the information to interested groups. The following is Mr Worrall's response to the main issues, made in a letter dated 27 February:

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Response</b>
1. Passenger information about train delays and cancellations is poor	1. The technical problems associated with computer software and hardware compatibility are considerable. Work is in hand to improve the passenger information system
2. Why can't door opening be made selective to allow the three carriage trains stop at the short platforms?	2. The cost of retrospective modification of the carriages would be prohibitive since, in order to maintain flexibility, the whole fleet of 62 trains would have to be modified. New trains ordered will almost certainly have selective door opening.
3. Will Thames Trains co-ordinate a 'through ticket' to Finstock and Ascott with the Charlbury taxibus service?	3. Further investigation of a possible arrangement is needed. Details will be communicated separately
4. What are the Health and Safety regulations, which set out the standards for extending platforms and what is the true	4. 'Railway Safety Principles and Guidance (HS (G) 153/1) dated 1996', and 'Railway Safety Principles and Guidance Part 2

cost of doing the work needed; various figures have been quoted up to a staggering £650,000?	Section B (HS (G) 153/3). Mr. Cameron has asked the Strategic Rail Authority to confirm the cost of the work.
5. Why can't vertical screens be erected at one end of each of the platforms as a cheap alternative to extending them?	5. Structures adjacent to platforms have to meet minimum clearance standards specified in another Health and Safety document. It is unlikely that a screen could be erected in such a way as to effectively prevent exit from trains
6. Why is there such a delay in filling in the hole at Charlbury to extend the car park?	6. The County Council has quoted £400,000 as the cost of doing the work and the Thames Trains' budget for such projects will not cover it. Mr. Cameron is following this up with the C.C.

<sup>1</sup> The length of the platform dictates that only two carriage Turbo Express trains can stop at these stations on safety grounds, because all doors on one side of the train are activated when it comes to a halt.

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#### ASCOTT CRICKET CLUB - Fixtures 2002

28 April	Village KO (1)	Away
5 May		
12 May	Charlbury 2nds	Away
12 May	Village KO (2)	
19 May	Milton	Home
1 Sept	Stonesfield	Home
26 May	Peter Gross X1	Home
2 June	Chadlington	Home
9 June	Appleton	Away
16 June	Risinghurst	Away
23 June		
30 June	OCFE	Home
7 July	Milton	Away
14 July	Stonesfield	Away
21 July	Shipton	Home
28 July	Leafield	Home
4 Aug	Appleton	Home
11 Aug	Risinghurst	Home
18 Aug	Chadlington	Away
25 Aug	Oxford University	Home

- 10 -

1 Sept	Stonesfield	Home
8 Sept	Shipton	Away
15 Sept	Charlbury	Home

#### Interested in playing – please contact John Cull - Club Secretary

01993 831621

E-mail: johncull@wowmatters.com

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#### **TIDDY HALL**

The Anniversary Dance on Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> January with the band 'Felix' was an enjoyable evening and although not primarily a fund raising event made a £242 profit.

Forthcoming Events:-

**Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> May Abe Singers** - 7.15 p.m. to 7.45 p.m. start

This evening is no normal concert! As those who have attended past performances will appreciate the Abe Singers always give more than expected - and this year is no exception! Tickets: £6

To book a table please contact Roger Shepherd/Ros Harbour 830227

We are looking for Bed and Breakfast accommodation in the village or nearby for the choir - if you can help please contact Roger or Ros as soon as possible.

**Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> November Folk Night with The Yetties**

**Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> November Craft Fair**

Booking Clerk: Rosemary Dawbarn - Tel. 831632

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#### NATURE'S YEAR

What happened to winter? No heavy and lasting snow, no ground-breaking frosts just a damp autumn drifting into an early spring. Is this the effect of global warming or part of the normal weather cycle? Celandines and violets were in flower before the end of February and we picked rhubarb in the second week in March. Oddly that earliest flowering of shrubs, the blackthorn, stuck to its normal timetable and made its appearance towards the end of March. For those interested in facts and figures the average temperature in Ascott during January & February this year was 8.5C compared with 6.5C in 1999.

Many of our early flowering plants are associated with woodlands. An early start is essential if they are to grow and set seed, before the woodland canopy becomes too dense to allow photosynthesis. To achieve rapid growth in spring they store food, below ground, in bulbs, rhizomes (fleshy roots) or corms (swollen stems). Sadly Ascott has very little woodland and so we miss the displays of primroses, wood anemones and wild garlic that can be found elsewhere in the Evenlode valley. Visit Dean at the end of March and you will find a small patch of woodland, by the road, which is carpeted with white anemones; they even spill out onto the nearby verge!

- 11 -

Another nearby woodland is home to a rather strange spring flowering plant, the toothwort. It is a parasite, attaching itself to the roots of hazel. It consists solely of a fleshy underground rootstock and a flower- stem that protrudes six inches above the leaf litter of the woodland floor. There are no leaves and no chlorophyll to colour the plant green. Once it was suggested that the plant also trapped and digested small insects but this has now been disproved.

Our own woodland, by Five-Shilling Corner boasts a large patch of Dog Violets and some Bluebells. The violets are an unusual aberration, being almost pure white with violet veining on the petals. Not especially rare but an interesting find! Incidentally this small patch of woodland forms the edge of a disused quarry which later became the parish tip. Old bottles, kitchen utensils and broken glass abound so beware!

The spring flowers provide nectar for our early butterflies; the Brimstone, Comma and Peacock. The Brimstone is usually the first to be seen, as soon as the sun shines and the temperature rises. It hibernates as an adult, often hiding among patches of ivy, and will fly whenever conditions are suitable. Watch out for the males with their bright yellow colouring and the females that are of a paler greenish-yellow hue. For a butterfly it is unusually long-lived, some adults surviving for up to ten months.

After a few days of warm weather, such as the week before Easter, the Comma and the Peacock emerge from their winter sleep. The peacock tends to hibernate in outbuildings whilst the Comma prefers woodland or hedgerow. Also on the wing are bumblebee queens searching for suitable sites to establish their nests. These may be under stones, in light sandy soil or a disused mousehole. The queen will lay up to a dozen eggs on a plate of "bee-bread" a mixture of nectar and pollen which she will protect by building a cell of wax. She will also make a wax honey pot to keep her offspring going in bad weather. Within a fortnight the eggs will have hatched, the larvae grown and pupated ready to emerge as workers. During all of this time the queen will have been watching and protecting her brood. Bumblebees are becoming increasingly uncommon so if you find a nest leave it undisturbed; they do no harm and provide a valuable service, pollinating our crops.

Recently I was very fortunate to be able to view a Green Woodpecker at close quarters. Normally these birds are very shy, flying away, at the slightest disturbance, with their deep undulating flight. However this bird was feeding in a local meadow, searching for insects in the turf (they are very fond of ants) and was totally oblivious to my presence. I never realised just how bright the red feathers on this bird's head are!

Anyone travelling through the Wychwoods may have noticed some new tree planting. The Friends of Wychwood have planted 350 trees and shrubs at ten different sites, mainly around Shipton and Milton.

This is part of The Wychwood Project's routes and gateways initiative. If there are any landowners in Ascott who are willing to allow small scale tree planting

along field edges or corners, or if anyone can suggest suitable sites please call Charles Keighley on 01993 814143.

These spring notes wouldn't be complete without some mention of the Ascott toad patrol. Sadly, this year's numbers show an accelerating decline. By March 24<sup>th</sup> only 46 toads had been moved into the pond and 22 helped on their return journey. Frogs were completely absent. Recent news reports have suggested that a virus infection is sweeping through the English Frog population and this may be having an effect here.

**Stuart Fox**

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### ASCOTT-UNDER-WYCHWOOD W.I.

Monday 21st January was a sad day for us. After 70 years, the W.I. in Ascott has decided that we can go on no longer. Numbers have been falling for some years and although we have tried to recruit new members, we have not succeeded. People lead such busy lives nowadays that there is not the same need for the W.I. as there used to be. So on Monday, Barbara Gray (a W.I. Adviser) came to suspend us for three years. This means that although the W.I. is no longer active in the village, if anyone decides to reform they have three years in which to do so. Until such time, Oxfordshire Federation holds all our records, funds, etc.

Mr Tom Smith was our Guest Speaker. We were looking rather mournful after our depressing decision but he cheered us all up with his wonderful talk on "Country Matters". He took us into another world with reminiscences of his early working life and of people who had influenced his life reading some of his own poems to illustrate the facts further. We all felt very much better by the end of his narrative.

On 18th February, six of us met at June Holmes' house for an Evening of Memories. We watched a video of our 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary party in the old Tiddy Hall and enjoyed browsing through our three scrap books, which go back to 1965, putting names to faces and marvelling at the variety of activities that we have got up to over the years. It brought back many memories of lots of people that we hadn't thought about for a very long time.

Our final meeting was held on Monday 18<sup>th</sup> March at the home of Annie Gripper. She gave us an enthralling talk about the history of Manor Farm going right back to 1066 when the D'Oyleys came over with William the Conqueror and settled in Ascott. We heard about the razing of the Castle in the 12<sup>th</sup> century and how Manor Farm was originally two houses, which were later joined together. Annie then told us how absorbed she became as she checked up on the history of the house and discovered that the Blenheim Estate originally owned it. Also of the various discoveries she and John made as they restored the house. We were then given a tour of the house, including the haunted room, which

ended in the kitchen where we enjoyed tea, coffee and some refreshments. It was a fascinating evening and a fitting way to end our programme.

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**LEAFIELD SCHOOL NEWS**

Leaffield School held its Easter Service on Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> March at Leaffield Church. Those who attended the service, including parents, grandparents and younger brothers and sisters were rewarded with a variety of music and creative writing specially prepared by the pupils to mark this special time. A highlight was the singing of songs from the musical ‘Jesus Christ Superstar’.

Rev. Jane Knowles conducted a special assembly and prayers at the School on April 9<sup>th</sup> to mark the death of The Queen Mother. The children also watched part of the funeral on television at the school.

Rehearsals for the School Drama Club’s production of the musical ‘Oliver’ are well under way. The previous musical events put on by the school have been a roaring success and each performance sees the musical and theatrical abilities of the children expanding. ‘Oliver’ will be performed some time during July, and we will let you know the performance dates as soon as they are available. Currently, the Drama Club are celebrating Shakespeare’s birthday (April 23<sup>rd</sup>) and will be performing extracts from his plays and readings from his poems around Leaffield village.

Music seems to be a strong theme this term. Two of our violinists played in ‘The Wychwood Strings’, a string ensemble made up of pupils from Leaffield and Wychwood Schools run by music teacher Felicity Cormack. The ensemble played music from ‘Peer Gynt’ as their entry in part of The Chipping Norton Music Festival and deservedly won a Highly Commended certificate.

The Football Club after school on a Thursday afternoon continues to flourish and you can see the children out playing on the village green in almost all weather! The Netball Team played their first away match of the season on 9<sup>th</sup> April against Brize Norton and drew 4 all in what turned out to be a very exciting match.

The Summer Term is now underway and the children are preparing for their SAT’s tests which will run in May. We wish them all success.

*Leaffield School continues to serve the Ascott community. Should you require further information on Leaffield C of E School, please contact our school secretary Mrs Brown on 878273.*

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Soon after the new Tiddy Hall was opened, we heard there was to be some Ballroom Dancing Classes starting in September. We decided to give it a go. Joy, our teacher from Brize Norton, came every week and we thoroughly enjoyed our lessons.

After a few months, several people dropped out. Joy asked the remaining ones to join her Dancing Club at Brize. We went not knowing what to expect. That

- 14 -

particular night she had some demonstration competition dancers there from Southampton for us to watch. Then we realised we didn’t know the first thing about dancing. We kept going to the lessons, but didn’t intend doing medals but some how we just got drawn into it with every one else.

In 1996 we gained our Bronze and Silver which involved three dances; we did the waltz, quick step and fox trot. In 2001 our Gold and now we have just past our Gold Bar 1 - the last two involved four dances; we did waltz, quick step, fox trot

and tango. All exams were highly commended. Each time we say never again! It takes practice at Brize on Sunday mornings, Monday night at the Tiddy Hall, private lessons Wednesdays and dancing Thursday night at Brize every week since Christmas.

. No doubt come September some one will say have you worked a pattern out for the next exam. We’ll see! Whatever we have achieved it is all down to Joy’s teaching, her patience and more patience. She makes it fun and very enjoyable. We’ve made lots of good friends through it, which has led to many outings and holidays. We enjoy every minute of it.

**Jill Greenaway**

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**Do you need a BABYSITTER?  
If so, ring Leisha Braithwaite on 01993 831282**

**COULD YOU BE A CITIZEN ADVOCATE.....?**

West Oxfordshire Citizen Advocacy seeks to recruit volunteer citizen advocates. A Citizen advocate is someone who acts independently to represent the views and wishes of another person who, for one reason or another, is unable to speak effectively for themselves. If you would like to volunteer to become a citizen advocate with this registered charity then please write to us at 33a High Street, Witney OX28 6HP; ‘phone us on 01993 704826 or e-mail us on [info@CITAD33a.freemove.co.uk](mailto:info@CITAD33a.freemove.co.uk). For more info check us out at our website [www.CITAD33a.freemove.co.uk](http://www.CITAD33a.freemove.co.uk) and contact us. Thank you for considering this appeal.

**SOCIETY OF FRIENDS (QUAKERS)**  
**Burford** - Friends Meeting House, Pytts Lane (off Witney Street)  
Sundays 11.00 a.m.  
For further information, contact Nigel Braithwaite on 01993 831282  
**Charlbury** - Friends Meeting House, Market Street - Sundays 10.30 a.m.  
For further information, contact Andrew or Patricia Pymmer on 01993 882848

- 15 -

**ROMAN CATHOLIC MASSES**

**Burford** - Church of SS. John Fisher and Thomas Moore  
Sundays at 9.15 a.m. & 11.00 a.m.; Holy Days 10.00 a.m. & 7.00p.m.  
**Chipping Norton** -Holy Trinity Church  
Sundays at 10.30 a.m.; Holy Days 9.00 a.m. & 7.00 p.m.  
**Charlbury** - St. Teresa's  
Sundays at 11.00 a.m.; Holy Days 9.30 a.m. & 7.30 p.m.

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Please contact: Anne and Nigel Braithwaite [01993 831282]

***Dates for your Diary:-***

***Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> May Spring Fair in Tiddy Hall***  
***Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> May Abe Singers in Tiddy Hall***  
***Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> June Coffee Morning & Open Gardens, Hazel  
Cottage, Shipton Road***  
***Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> July Church Fête on The Green***

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