
The Ascott Grapevine



Issue 41

January 2004

Thank you Anne!

Having now co-produced our first issue of The Grapevine we realise how much work is involved and would like to recognise the sterling efforts of Anne Braithwaite during her 10 year tenureship of the newsletter and also thank her for her advice and guidance to the new team. Thanks Anne – you did a great job, kept us all informed and we hope to continue your good work.

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

Call 01993 832163 or email:

ascottgrapevine@tial.pipex.com

Stuart Fox, Kingsley,

Wendy Pearse,

Karen Purvis

Services at Holy Trinity Church

1 February 2004 – 4th Sunday of Epiphany

1100 Morning Prayer/Service

1600 Family Service (All Ages)

8 February 2004 – 3rd Sunday before Lent

0800 Holy Communion

15 February 2004 – 2nd Sunday before Lent

1100 Holy Communion

22 February 2004 – Sunday next before Lent

1100 Holy Communion

29 February 2004 – 1st Sunday of Lent

1030 Benefice Service / Holy Communion

7 March 2004 – 2nd Sunday of Lent

1100 Morning Prayer/Service

1600 Family Service (All Ages)

14 March 2004 – 3rd Sunday of Lent

0800 Holy Communion

21 March 2004 – 4th Sunday of Lent / Mothering Sunday

1100 Holy Communion

28 March 2004 – 5th Sunday of Lent

1100 Holy Communion

4 April 2004 – Palm Sunday

1030 Benefice Service at Spelsbury

11 April 2004 – Easter Day

0800 Holy Communion

1100 Holy Communion

Valerie Barnes

On Christmas Eve the church was absolutely packed for the funeral of Valerie Barnes. I grew up with Valerie, we were born in Ascott and never left the village. She met Donald when she was 13, they got married in 1964 and would have celebrated their Ruby Wedding in March.

Val loved sport which was lucky as she married into a very sporting family. Every Saturday, Val would watch Don play football in

winter and cricket in summer. Then, more recently, she'd watch her elder son Barry play football, then her younger son Adrian.

About 10 years ago she joined The Coldstone Angling Club and went fishing with Don. They spent many a happy hour over at the lake. Don was a devoted husband and I know he'll miss her as we all will, but he'll get great comfort from his 3 children and 4 lovely grandchildren.

Carol Hawtin

Letter from Mark Abrey

During my time as a curate at St. Mary's, West Derby in Liverpool, the Church formed a link with a rural project in Uganda. There are many such links but this one from the outset was different. It was not based upon sponsorship – the affluent western church financially supporting a community project in the developing world – but upon mutual education and a commitment to learn from each other.

That was 10 years ago and the link is as lively and vibrant as ever and has meant a tremendous amount to both parties. It has involved yearly visits by ordinary people to experience each other's cultures. There is a monthly exchange of news and concerns in the pages of St. Mary's and the Project's newsletters. The primary school attached to St. Mary's has a link with the Communities school in Uganda and children have become great pen-pals – as have members of the Mother's Union and the Youth Group with their counterparts abroad. Friendships have been born and awareness raised.

One of the people to visit St. Mary's in my time was a young man – Steven Twesigye – who is a project worker with farmers in Uganda. When he came to return to home after a few weeks with us he remarked "I've noticed that in your country you have lots of clocks and watches – but no time." A powerful remark and something of an indictment of our way of life.

Time is something that most of us would say that we haven't got enough of. But look at the results when we put it to good use! The opening of the Village Shop is a perfect example of this. I know for a fact that it has taken hours and hours and an awful lot of energy and hard work to get it open. Its opening feels like a real boost for the Village and I want to congratulate everyone who has been involved in making this happen – from the committee to those who attended coffee mornings and fundraising events: well done!

I write this on New Year's Eve – a time when traditionally we look back over how we have spent our time during the past year

and start planning what we are going to do with our time in the new.

2003 has been an incredibly frustrating one for me because of ill-health and I cannot believe that it is nearly a year since I spent time in the Village and took a service in Holy Trinity. However, I'm pleased to say that there has been a marked improvement in my health and I am able to do more now than I was a few months ago. I am very hopeful of returning to work part-time sometime during February or March. My return will be gradual and carefully monitored but I am really looking forward to spending a lot more time in Ascott once again!

Perhaps this New Year we can all think of ways of spending some of the time that we have in continuing to build up our common life.

With my very best wishes and prayers for the year ahead.

*Mark Abrey
Rector of the
Chase Benefice
and Priest-in-Charge of
Ascott-under-Wychwood*

From the Curate

It doesn't seem possible that 2003 has gone and we are launching out into 2004. I must admit that, for me at least, it only seems five minutes since we were celebrating the millennium.

The beginning of a new year is a time for reflection on what has passed, and an opportunity to dream a little about what the future may bring. Looking back on the life of Ascott-under-Wychwood in 2003 our view is dominated by the opening of the Village Shop. This has been a tremendous undertaking, and one which will have changed our community for good. The future of the shop now rests with all of us. The opening ceremony was not the end of the project which drew so many people together, but just the beginning of its next phase. This coming year will see the fruits of all the hard work, and may reveal new ideas which will need the sort of determination and effort that planning the shop required.

The first big festival in the Church's calendar in January is the feast of the Epiphany, when we celebrate the coming of the Magi (or the three kings if

you prefer) to the infant Jesus. The Magi can offer us all an example of how we should respond to God in our daily lives. First they kept watch and studied the signs, waiting to discern the sign from God that a new king had been born. Sec-



ond, they undertook a long and arduous journey - not at all easy in the first century middle-east. Third, they presented gifts to the

child, mindful that all that they had come from God, and it was right to give something back. And fourth, and perhaps most importantly, they listened to God when they were told to return home by another way; they didn't stay fixed to their original plan, and were prepared to change.

If you are seeking to do new things this year, or if you are struggling with a resolution that is difficult to keep, remember the kings. Watch for the signs of God's love in your life; undertake your journey and keep going, even when it gets tough; be generous with all that you have; and above all, keep listening to God.

May 2004 be a truly blessed year for you all.

Nigel Hawkes

Advertise Here ...

Do you run a business serving the village or offer a service such as babysitting, gardening, ironing or dog walking?

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

ascottgrapevine@dial.pipex.com

or phone:

832163 for details.

Shop Update

Well, as you can imagine the past six weeks have been quite eventful in the life of the new village shop. From the grand opening on a very wet Saturday in late November through to Christmas and New Year, the shop has become a 'fixture' in the daily lives of many of us.

The story so far

Last February, the village gave the go ahead to the new village shop in Cook Row. From that date to the opening, £130,000 was raised from a variety of sources. This included local

fundraising, loans and grants. The result - well judge for yourselves!

At the planning stage, it was the intent of the management committee to create a shop with a difference that would cater for all parts of the village. We said we would be

- Welcoming and friendly
- Innovative
- Honest i.e. give value for money
- Efficient and well run
- Sustainable

From the initial research, you (the village) said the most important shopping items to put into your daily shopping basket were milk, bread and newspapers. As a result, we have installed a bread oven for daily fresh bread, we have an arrangement with the newsagent in Shipton for the delivery of papers and we have a full dairy section. In addition, we have regular orders of fruit and veg and we even have a tie-up with Oxford Wines.

And then there is a whole variety of products to meet daily needs from fire lighters to batteries to toilet rolls which means more often than not you can just pop in and get what you want (well almost ...).

So, what about 2004 ...?

We are planning to install more freezers and chillers (we want to stock good quality meat from Callows Farm) as well as ice cream. We have been asked about a video library and will consider that. However, in order that we continue to provide for your needs, we would like you to complete the enclosed questionnaire and drop it off at the shop. And if you leave your name

Even the weather couldn't keep people away!





and telephone number we will put you into the draw for a **bottle of champagne**. It's our way of saying thank you.

So far we are on track for hitting our break-even target although it will need, on average, 200 villagers to spend a tenner a week in

the shop. That's quite a challenge. That's why we want to hear from you about how we can continue to improve our service and product range.

Thank you for your support.

*John Cull - Chair,
Management Committee*

Who remembers the text below and on what it could be found?

Cooks Old
Established Stores

*Dairy And Farm
Produce & Provisions*

CORNER HOUSE ,ASCOTT-UNDER-WYCHWOOD
PHONE: SHIPTON-UNDER-WYCHWOOD, 830412

Why Cook Row?

In the comparatively short time since Harry Cook's death in 1998, a fair number of people have joined the village community of Ascott. To a good number of the longer term residents it will seem strange to pose the above question. However, the completion of the new development along High Street known as Cook Row seems the appropriate time to explain, for those who do not know, the background to its name.

Ben Cook and his wife Elizabeth, both born in Asthall Leigh, had settled in Ascott by 1891. They were living in what was to become a long term family home at 33 High Street with their daughters Ellen (aged 7), Sarah (aged 2) and son, John Charles (aged 4). By 1901 another daughter, Agnes, and son, William Henry, had been born. In 1909, John Charles, by then a keeper in Cornbury Park, married Sarah Watts. Unfortunately Sarah died within a very short time leaving John Charles a young widower. However in 1911 John Charles married another Ascott girl Ada Matilda Shirley. One of a family of ten, Ada was adamant that she would not live up in the isolation of

the forest and by the time of their wedding in October, John Charles (Charlie) had taken over from his father as a coal merchant delivering coal by donkey cart from Ascott Station all around the immediate area. Charlie's Coal Merchant Account Book from 1913-1916 survives listing his deliveries to Fulbrook School, Chestnut Close (now Wychwood Manor), Leafield, Fordwells, Chilson, Asthall Leigh and Swinbrook. Strangely only ten clients are mentioned in Ascott. Whether other coal merchants existed or whether the majority of villagers relied on wood for fuel are two possible explanations. It is interesting to see that Charlie's book illustrates the considerable increase in the price of coal in the first years of the Great War. Coal rose from 21/- per ton to 28/- and coke from 21/- to 30/-. It is also clear that when conscription became compulsory in January 1916 Charlie was called up and he served through the remainder of the War together with his brother William Henry.

To return to Charlie's marriage to Ada Shirley. The young couple took over the cottage in Church Close where David Cook's

family now lives but in 1912 Ada returned to her mother's home at 24 Shipton Road for the birth of her first child Emma, named for her grandmother. Emma senior was the village midwife and her *Midwife's Book* also survives. In it are recorded the births of Ada and Charlie's three children, Emma on 1st March 1912, Chris on 27th March 1913 and Harry on 14th May 1914. So when Charlie went off to War in 1916 his thoughts must often have been with his wife Ada and their three young children. Fewer children were born in Ascott through the War and young Harry aged three was so bereft of playmates that he was finally allowed to join the others in the schoolroom. Time passed and as Chris and Harry grew older not only were they members of the church choir but they could very often be seen with the donkey cart, delivering coal and blocks collected from Groves at Milton, to various people around the village. By 1937 Charlie and Ada were also selling groceries from Church View and when the Coronation of George VI took place the village celebrations included sugar, sweets, lemons, lem-

onade and cheese purchased from J.C.Cook.

For the first part of the 20c Busbys had lived at Corner House running the shop and associated farm. But around the beginning of the Second World War, Charlie and Ada exchanged both home and business with the Busbys and so the Cook family took up residence at Corner House. Meantime Emmie had left home to go into service, Chris had become a butcher and Harry on leaving school aged 14 had worked initially as an egg packer in Heritage Lane followed by various jobs in Hungerford, Stafford, Kidlington and Cornbury Park. A short spell at Cirencester Park followed until he was called up on 14th November 1940 to serve in the Gloucestershire Regiment. He met



Harry Cook - 1941

Harry Cook at his Golden Wedding in 1991



Dorothy his wife to be whilst training in Street, Somerset and they married in February 1942. After the War, Harry worked on various estates until finally returning to Corner House Farm, Ascott, in 1953. At that time the Corner House Shop was run by Ada and Emmie who like Harry had also returned to Ascott, to help her mother in the shop. To the village children the shop was always known as Mrs Cook's Shop and when the Cook family acquired a television shortly before the Coronation in 1953, the children were all invited to come and watch the event on this new phenomenon. Emmie married Fred Acton in 1954 and moved to London Lane (The Cedars) with Charlie, Ada and Chris. Harry and Dorothy lived on at Corner House Farm where they brought

up their daughter Mary and son David. In the 1960's Chris took over the running of the shop. Harry continued working the farm

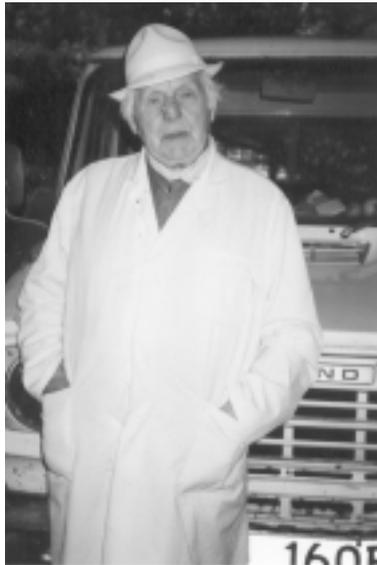
and in 1977 together with Dorothy and Mary also took over the shop. As time passed Mary's son Shane became his grandfather's helpmate and on leaving school joined him on the farm.

Harry became probably the best known figure in the village. For 45 years he

delivered the village milk, his day invariably beginning at 4.30 a.m. He cut the grass in the playing field and along the village verges. And in 1968 he was elected to the Parish Council. In 1973 he became the Chairman of the Parish Council and continued in that role until his death in 1998. Always ready for a chat, a wave or friendly smile the village lost a friend when Harry passed on. To long term villagers the mention of Corner House Farm will always conjure up images of Harry and his immediate family and their dedication to Ascott.

Certainly there could be no more appropriate name than Cook Row.

- Wendy Pearse



Ascott-under-Wychwood Parish Council

The Parish Councillors would like to wish all villagers a very happy 2004 and assure them that they are here to help with any village matters if required.

Very grateful thanks to Anne Braithwaite for all the hard work and persistence she has single-handedly put in over the past 10 years to keep the Grapevine going and we hope she can now enjoy some well earned spare time and good luck to the new team taking over.

Dawls Close now has a smart new street sign with the West Oxfordshire District Council logo after the old one had fallen down. A new arm has been ordered for the signpost near the railway line with directions to Shipton. The hedge opposite the Green has now been cut back by Cornbury

Park making it easier to walk on the pavement. We have also requested that West Oxfordshire District Council tidy up the edges all along London Lane to make the pavement wider. We are pleased to report that since the information was published about Anti Social Behaviour Orders in the July Grapevine there has been a drop in the level of vandalism in the village but there is still a small minority who persist in trying to spoil the village. Just a reminder that you can get an incident diary from me at anytime if you would like to report any incidents of graffiti, loutish behaviour, swearing, vandalism etc. All incidents are reported to the police and patrols have been increased. Complaints have been received about parking around the

village particularly on High Street where cars are parked half on the pavement. This does of course make the road wider for cars to get by but it also makes the pavement very narrow and difficult for pedestrians, especially mums with small children and pushchairs. Church Close is also very congested with cars and there is concern that if the emergency services were required at the houses or the church, access would be impossible at times. So PLEASE could drivers be a little more considerate. Lastly congratulations to everyone involved in the shop, it is a terrific achievement.

*Margaret Ismail
Parish Clerk
Crown Barn, The Green
Tel: 832829*

Neighbourhood Watch (NW)

The NW sign in London Lane survived five years before it was stolen. Its replacement lasted only a few weeks before it was relocated and, at £10.00 a time, it is an expensive way of providing a minute's amusement for selfish delinquents.

Fortunately, the purpose of the NW is more than merely to advertise its

existence: it is all about getting together with neighbours to take action that can cut local crime. It provides a network of households, local coordinators, the District Council Community Safety Officer and the Police. Connected by telephone and the net, the Police pass warnings of criminal activity in the area via the local coordinators

and encourage feedback from households and the passing of any information about suspicious activity.

If you are not on the NW list of members and would like to be, contact the Watch Office number (01993 893811) for the details of your local coordinator who will tell you more about the scheme.

Nick Leadbetter

Friends of Wychwood Tree Planting in Ascott



Thanks to the generosity of a local landowner we have been able to plant 350 native trees and shrubs by Five Shilling Corner, a former quarry on high ground above the village. The trees will grow to fill a gap between an existing area of woodland and an old hedgerow, which marks the boundary with Chilson Parish.

The planting weekend started badly. On Friday afternoon a westerly gale started to blow along the Evenlode Valley, bringing horizontal rain just as we started to put up the stakes marking out the planting area. Two hours later a pair of very wet, cold and muddy helpers, made their way back to Ascott wondering who would turn-out to help on Saturday and Sun-

day if the weather didn't improve.

However, the Gods must have taken pity on us and Saturday dawned cold and bright, with the promise of more dry and sunny weather on Sunday. Twenty volunteers arrived including several from Ascott, all armed with spades and some bringing picnic lunches. The planting was completed by lunchtime on Sunday, after much hard

work, including removing the large stones that seemed to be lurking just beneath the surface wherever you wanted to dig your planting hole.

As they mature the trees and shrubs in the copse will enhance the landscape and encourage wildlife.

The Friends of Wychwood support the Wychwood Project, whose aim is to raise awareness of the history and heritage of The Royal Hunting Forest of Wychwood, encouraging local people to take part in and benefit from the restoration, conservation and enhancement of the rich mosaic of landscapes and habitats within the Forest Boundaries.

If you would like to know more about the work of the Friends contact Stuart Fox on 01993 832004 or email stuart@wychwood.me.uk



Wychwoods Local History Society

On Thursday, 15th January 2004 Alan Watkins will be bringing more slides taken from his huge collection of postcards to illustrate a talk entitled Chipping Norton to Chipping Norton Junction telling the story of the railway that used to run from Kingham to Chipping Norton. The meeting will be held in Milton Village Hall at 7.30.p.m.

On Thursday 19th February 2004 in Shipton Village Hall at 7.30.p.m. Sir Frederic Bolton from Pudlicote will talk about the History of Pudlicote from 1154 -2004.

Then in March on Thursday 18th at Milton Village Hall at 7.30.p.m. Howard Gatling will give a talk entitled English Church Vaulting.

Old and new members are welcome. Subscriptions are £5 for an individual

and £8 for a couple which includes a copy of Wychwoods History when published. Visitors welcome at any meeting at £2 per head. Further details from Wendy Pearse on 831023.

TREE SURGEON
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Cook's Corner: Ascott's Favourite Recipes

Joan Pratley's Yorkshire Ginger Cake

Ingredients:

1 lb. Flour, $\frac{1}{4}$ lb. Sugar, $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. Cinnamon, 2 Eggs, $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. Butter, $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. Ginger, $\frac{1}{4}$ oz. Bicarbonate of Soda, $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. Treacle, 1 teacupful Mild (or more), a pinch of cayenne, and a pinch of salt, a little preserved or crystallised ginger (optional).

Baking Tin: 12"x 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ "x 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ " deep

1. Put the flour into a basin with the sugar, spices and salt.
2. Rub in the butter.
3. Add the eggs lightly beaten, and crystallised or preserved ginger if used.
4. Warm the milk and treacle, add the soda to the milk, and put both milk and treacle into the mixture.
5. Beat very well; enough milk should be added to make the mixture into a batter.
6. Put into a buttered and papered tin and bake very slowly (in a low oven) for about 1 hour. Leave to cool in tin.

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

Jottings from the Potting Shed

I am writing this with Christmas just round the corner and although it is a time for all the usual things at this time of year, it is also a time when I sit down and list the seeds I need to order for the forthcoming season. I still order most of my seeds by post, direct from the seed merchant; a habit I can't seem to get out of, despite all of the garden centres displaying racks of colourful seed packets as early as September. I know that modern-day methods of harvesting seeds and packaging them in

hermetically sealed envelopes means a much longer shelf life, if unopened and the ability for them to be on sale throughout the year, but I still enjoy browsing through several seed catalogues before making my list and sending off an order. No doubt it goes back to remembering my Father doing the same thing forty, or so, years ago. Mind you, seed merchants were fewer, names like Dobies and Carters spring to mind and they were all delivered in plain envelopes, with none of the

mouth-watering photographs of flowers and vegetables that you get today.

I also remember my Father buying seed potatoes, peas and broad beans from Crafts shop in Chippy. For those who don't remember, Crafts was opposite the Town Hall, where an estate agent is now. You also used to be able to buy fertiliser by the pound. It was a lovely shop.

I always aim to try a new or different variety of vegetable each year. Sometimes they work, sometimes they don't. Not all varieties are suited to certain soils or aspects. Not all live up to the seedsman's hype but from time to time you find one that grows well and tastes good. These are the ones that you tend to include in each year's order.

Take potatoes, for instance; two modern varieties that I have found to be successful are Victoria, a second early, and Maxine, a red main crop. Both crop well, taste excellent and store over a long period. I still rely on many old and well-tried varieties, of course, but trying the odd new one, each season, adds a little spice to the gardening year.

Bluebells Florist *Sheep Street, Charlbury*

01608 811414

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- ✦ Wedding Day flowers, including pedestals and table decorations
- ✦ Funeral tributes
- ✦ Corporate Events

SPECIALISING IN COUNTRY
STYLE FLOWERS

Looking out of the window at this time of year can be a dreary experience, but it is surprising how many winter-flowering plants there are. In the shrub line you have the Viburnum family. *V. Fragrans* is normally in flower from early autumn and continues well into spring, only being setback if we have a prolonged period of frost. A big bonus is its sweet scent. In fact most winter flowering shrubs are highly scented, they need to be to attract the few pollinating insects that are around!

Other shrubs in flower include Mahonia Japonica, an evergreen with lovely yellow lily-of-the-valley scented flowers and Winter Jasmine, again yellow, but sadly not scented, unlike its white summer namesake. Have you noticed how fantastically the Winter Jasmine has flowered this year, I don't think I can ever remember it doing so well, no doubt as a result of the hot summer we had.

Two other excellent winter shrubs, both deciduous, are the Winter Honey-suckle and the Winter Sweet. I had a very large specimen of Winter Honysuckle which had to be moved because of a building extension and in so



doing it split into two, so I put each half in a different part of the garden and both have thrived. As you can see it is a very tough plant. Cut a sprig and bring it indoors and it will scent a room. Likewise, Winter Sweet, or Chimonanthus to give it its botanic name, I think is even more sweetly scented, but tends to take several years before flowering. However, it's well worth waiting for.

If you enjoy reading gardening books then one of the best on winter colour is "Colour in the Winter Garden" by Graham Stuart Thomas, who sadly died last year. It's easy reading with many beautiful illustrations by the author. The book is out of print, but well worth tracking-down via second-hand booksellers.

I noticed that the Snowdrops are just pushing up

through the soil and it won't be long before they are in flower, indeed by the time that you read this they will be. They will be followed by the Winter Aconites, which are one of my favourite bulbs, or tubers to be strictly accurate. To see a large area on Aconites in flower on a winter's day can be stunning. Both of these plants are best divided "in the green" as they say. If you lift them just as the flowers are fading and split and re-plant them, they quickly re-establish and spread. Bulbs bought in packets in September never seem to flourish.

Before we know where we are the Daffodils will be in flower, closely followed by Tulips and then the early herbaceous plants and then the Roses, but that will be for the next edition!

- *CURLY KALE*

Nature Notes

Perhaps they should change the words of that seasonal song “I’m dreaming of a white Christmas” to “I’m dreading a wet Christmas.” Whilst trudging though the mud, in the drizzle, on my way home from Pudlicote, having tried, unsuccessfully, to walk off my Christmas lunch, nature seemed less attractive than an armchair by the fireside.

However, even on such a dull damp day there were things to see. In nearby fields a flock of fieldfares and redwings were foraging, probably for earthworms or other insects, having migrated from Scandinavia in September. When the ground freezes they will turn their attention to the hedgerows, stripping the last of the berries from the hawthorn.

Walking by a hedgerow I was startled by a cock pheasant bursting from the undergrowth with the characteristic whirr of wings and distinctive alarm call. These birds are not natives but have been living and breeding in England since before the Norman Conquest; they are first mentioned in 1059. The first introductions came from

an area extending east of the Black Sea across Southern Asia. Later introductions, about two hundred



years ago, were of a Chinese species and the two have interbred. The Chinese introduction has left its mark, notably in the white neck ring, which shows on the cock birds and which is absent in the Asian species.

Although coming from warmer and drier regions the pheasant has become acclimatised to our damper climate and breeds here quite successfully, although one wonders how long it would survive a series of hard winters if its numbers were not replenished each year by stock bred for shoots. When the pheasant breeds in the wild it is in a shallow hollow in the ground, concealed by branches of a shrub or bramble or amongst dense grass or even in the centre of a patch of nettles. Ten or

more eggs, with a colour varying from a uniform olive-brown to greyish-blue, will be laid on a bed of leaves or dried grasses. Rearing of the young is normally left to the female as pheasants tend to be polygamous and the cock bird will be busy looking after the remainder of his “harem,” attacking other cocks, using the spurs on the back of his legs as offensive weapons, if his attempts to frighten off rivals by aggressive display fails.

The hen will only start to incubate after all her eggs have been laid. The chicks will hatch in twenty-five days. Soon after hatching the chicks will start to look for their own food guided by the female. They are omnivorous and will eat grain, leaves, berries, nuts and earthworms.

As I passed Mr Gripper’s pond three moorhens splashed across the surface in frantic haste to avoid me, half flying and half running over the surface. These birds inhabit almost every kind of freshwater habitat, from small ponds to large lakes and small streams to wide rivers. A pond newly dug by our neighbours was soon colonised by a pair

who nested and raised a brood. I now have the pleasure of having one of them visit my garden to feast on the fallen apples, which I leave each year for the black-birds. Moorhens are very shy birds and prefer to hide amongst the reeds, rather than remain in open water. Their nests too are normally concealed in dense vegetation. Moorhen chicks can swim from their first day after hatching, but still need to be fed by their parents. If the parents have a second brood the chicks from the first will help their parents in raising the new brood; this is very unusual behaviour amongst birds. Apart from this co-operation moorhens are very territorial; two pairs cannot share the same patch of water.

By now the sky was darkening, more rain threatened and my armchair beckoned.

A Happy New Year to you all.

- *Stuart Fox*

The Sebakwe Black Rhino Trust
presents a

MAY DAY SPECIAL
Charity Dinner & Show
with
PAM AYRES

Saturday 1st May 2004
at

Witney Lakes Resort, Witney, Oxfordshire

All the proceeds from the Evening will go to help the Black Rhino Conservancy in Zimbabwe, and also to help local school children.

6.30pm	Drinks Reception with Canapés
7.30pm	Pam Ayres entertains
9.00pm	Dinner – Raffle – Auction

The Sebakwe Black Rhino Trust was formed in 1989 to help establish and secure a black rhino conservancy in the Midlands regions of Zimbabwe in southern Africa, where a breeding group of rhino could be established under free and natural conditions but fully protected from poachers.

All proceeds will provide extra nourishment to the local school children; help with books and equipment for local schools; medical supplies for the Clinic; pay towards the building of a new Education Centre, as well as protecting the 60 black rhino in the Midlands Conservancy.

Tickets are £40 each and can be obtained from:
Annie Gripper, Manor Farm, Ascott-u-Wychwood, OXON OX7 6AL.

Tel: 01993 830 278

Fax: 01993 830 395

E-mail: johngrippervet@compuserve.com

www.blackrhino.org

www.pamayres.com

Paper Mâché: Medium for Comedy

‘Oh yes, that’s something we did at school, and doesn’t it involve getting covered in wet newspaper?’ is the usual comment when I say I make paper sculpture. I don’t use newspaper, but I do get sticky. The initial process is to make a wire armature, the sculptured form; and then to build up the paper in layers to the final shape. Painted and varnished, the finished

piece has a character of its own, and hopefully a humorous one. Paper is the perfect medium through which to make a joke, a comment on society, or a caricature. Once made, the model has to be dressed: earrings perhaps, curly hair, whiskers, a top hat; a small detail that will be seen by the keen observer, for example a mouse in a deckchair reading the Fi-

nancial Times in miniature, while the cat he’s minding is sipping cream through a straw. A reversal of the ordinary is another subject I often choose, for example a hare and hound chasing a huntsman. Life is too serious, and I am aiming for a little light relief.

-Eleanor Edwards

A Good Read

We all enjoy indulging ourselves with a spot of nostalgia, often forgetting that the idyllic traffic-free past of country cottages and honest toil on the land was also a time of grinding poverty and empty larders. However, set against that was a sense of belonging to and being part of a community something that is often missing in today’s more mobile society.

A recently published book “Walk humble, My Son” written by Eric R. Moss provides an insight into village life in Ascott as Eric was growing up and covers the period from 1918 to 1939.

Eric lived in one of the cottages by the gates into the Churchyard, a view that has changed little in the

intervening years. Most of the places he describes can still be seen, although some, like the Churchill Arms Inn have undergone a change of use and others like the old wooden Tiddy Hall have been much improved.

Other interesting facts emerge: the cricket pitch used to be in the first field on the right over the level crossing, electricity didn’t

come to Ascott until 1933, our railway station once boasted two platforms, each with a waiting room, and employed a station master and a full-time porter!

This book is published by The Wychwood Press and also includes The Personal Memories of Doris Warner, a former Village Postmistress. It is available from the bookshop in Charlbury at a cost of £8.



School News

Leaffield School News

Best Value Added School in County: You may all have read in the local press that in the Primary School Test Results Leaffield School achieved a value added score – measuring improvement in pupils’ results from the age of 7 to 11 – of 102.9, the best in the county, where the average was 99.9. All credit due to our head, Mrs Ryde, and all the staff who work extremely hard but most of all to the children who are encouraged to, and do, their best at all subjects whether they find it easy or not. As you read this we are pleased to report that Mrs. Ryde returned to work after Christmas having made an excellent recovery and we shall have just had an OFSTED inspection during January which we hope to be able to report on in the next issue. The Governors wish to pass on their thanks to Mrs. Blackman and all the staff for their hard work and extra effort during the whole of last term which helped maintain continuity within the school without detriment to the children and their education.

Last Term’s News: Class 2 and 3 had an enjoy-

able visit to Oxford to see ‘The Twits’ and after half term the Annual Governors Meeting with Parents was enjoyed by all attendees, possibly due to the introduction of nibbles and refreshment, but probably due to the excellent year we were discussing and being able to see the proposed plans for the new classroom and improvements due to start this year. Mrs. Flear held a very informative Early Years Open Day which if you were unable to attend and wish to see what goes on with the youngest members of school please telephone and arrange an appointment.

Christmas activities soon got under way. Boxes were filled for Operation Christmas Child and the children learnt a vast array of songs and dances for their “Christmas Around the World” held in Leaffield Church which was full to bursting with friends and family attending, who I am sure will agree, enjoyed a truly marvellous performance.

Other activities included a visit by Class 4 to the Ashmolean Museum, the Friends’ childrens’ raf-

fle, Christmas Parties and our Christingle Service in Church.

Volunteers Needed: We are looking for volunteers to help on Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings from 9.30. If you are able to spare some time on any of those mornings to help with reading and sounds work, Mrs. Flear and Mrs. Cain would love to hear from you, or in the first instance telephone the school secretary Mrs. Deb Brown, Tel: 878273.

Vicky Greves, Governor.

Ascott Pre-school

The Ascott Pre-school continues to go from strength to strength. Numbers have increased substantially and Pauline and her team have introduced a new session on a Wednesday afternoon as a result of this. The pre-school has made a successful lottery application and as a result, work will begin in February on astro-turfing the back play area. This will mean that the children will now have more opportunity to play outside all year round. Fundraising for new equipment for the play area will begin this term.

Highlights from last term

At the beginning of December, the pre-school had an exciting trip to the new village shop. The children really enjoyed the experience and the juice and biscuits kindly offered by the shop assistants.

The children were treated to a special visit from Jenny Mead who runs a local music and movement group. They shook their maracas with enthusiasm and enjoyed making swishy fish movements -great fun had by all!

The children thoroughly enjoyed their annual Christmas party and a visit by Father Christmas was an extra bonus!

The pre-school performed a very successful carol concert at the end of the term with a record 43 children on stage!

Prepare-for-school sessions still take place on Tuesday and Thursday after

the morning pre-school sessions. These provide invaluable support and encouragement for those children who are about to enter the classroom for the first time.



Toddler Group

Toddler group is open to all on Friday mornings from 9.30 till 11.30. It's a great way to meet new parents and to engage your child in some social interaction and fun. It is also a good introduction to pre-schools, play groups and nurseries. You only pay a nominal fee when you attend and it is a very enjoyable and stimulating environment for young children and their parents.

It plays an important role in the life of the Wychwood villages.

Update from Windrush Valley School

A winning start to the year...

The England rugby squad was not the only sporting successes of last term. Continuing on from our 100% successes in last year's KS1 and 2 SATs and the English Speaking Board, since winning the inter-schools football shield the Under 9 and Under 11 football teams have not yet lost a match...a school record...Well done to all the players.

Congratulations...

...to Oliver Cookson and Henry Priddis from Form

Mums and Toddlers - What's On?

Walkers and Talkers

Tuesdays 2-4pm,
New Beaconsfield Hall
For children aged 1-4.
£1.50 per session.
Call Rachel Hartley 01993 832112

Toddler Singing Group

Thursdays 9.45-10.45,
New Beaconsfield Hall
For children aged 0-5.
£1 per session.
Call Debbie Whitehouse
01993 832688

Ascott Toddler Group

Fridays 9.30-11.30,
Tiddy Hall
Call Pauline Plant 07968 006451

2, for winning entries in the poetry competition organised by Ottaka's Bookshop, Witney. Joshua Ridley for his place in the National Youth Orchestra with his cello. Ashley Elder, Joshua Ridley, Matthew Markwell, Jack Priddis and Geoffrey Chapman who all enjoyed success in The Mathematics Association's Primary Maths Challenge. Ashley and Geoffrey are now through to the final.

Visits

Form 1 visited the Banbury Museum for a look at toys from the past. Form 2 visited Witney War Memorial on Remembrance Day. They participated in the two minutes silence and studied the War Memorial to supplement their History project. Form 2 also visited Chedworth Villa where they had a guided tour of the bath houses, hypocausts, water shrines and mosaics. They handled artefacts and talked to a Roman slave about his life in the kitchens! Years 3 and 4 visited the Fabulous Baking Boys factory in Witney to support their Design Technology project of packaging. This lucky group managed to come away

from the factory with the Fabulous Baking Boys muffins still inside their complementary goody bags of packaging samples!!

Charity fundraising...

At Harvest Festival pupils and parents raised £230 for the homeless children in South America. The Children in Need collections raised £110 and the Football Club Sponsored Penalty Shoot Out raised £308.60. The Toy Sale raised £91.39 for the Blue Cross - the Chilterns House, nominated charity is Hearing Dogs for the Deaf. All donations of used postcards, postage stamps and used toner cartridges are being collected in school.

Christmas highlights...

Nursery, Reception and Form 1 performed A Scarecrow's Christmas while the upper years put on an excellent version of Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. All pupils enjoyed the Christmas Pantomime, Frosty the Snowman, and thanks to the Ascott Playgroup for joining us in the NOISY fun.

Sport

Ascott Utd Football Club

Having been promoted to Division Three of the Witney & District League, Ascott have found this season a lot tougher than the last. We are currently 4th from bottom, but performances of late have been encouraging.

We are now down to only two Ascott residents

playing for the side and would welcome some younger legs, especially as the majority of the team is around 35 !!!

After Christmas we will actively be looking for a new Manager, somebody who may be able to bring some new players. Since reforming in 1990, Ascott

Utd has enjoyed a good deal of success and we would like to continue, if possible.

Should this challenging role be of interest, please contact Allister Moore on 01993 883562

Allister Moore
Secretary of Ascott Utd
FC

Wychwood Football

Wychwood Football Club currently has teams from Under 7's through to 17's. The 7's to 10's play mini soccer at Shipton, the 12's & 14's play at Milton and the 11's & 17's play at Ascott.

I have been 'managing' one of the teams - the 17's for five seasons who have played at Ascott throughout. It has been a roller coaster ride - ranging from will we have enough interest to continue to eighteen committed players that we have now - most come from the Wychwoods and surrounding villages. In fact I had previously run one other side which also played most years at Ascott - two teams in eleven years - must be something to do with playing at Ascott!

It has been especially pleasing that the boys have

been able to make use of the excellent facilities- new Sport England Pavilion and changing rooms, well looked after pitch and finally new goal posts that have recently been erected - makes the football facilities complete. Opposition teams often comment on the facilities and the wonderful view and surrounding area. We all certainly appreciate what we have - especially after using opposition facilities around the Oxford, Banbury, Bicester and Abingdon areas.

Finally we would all like to thank Mary Barnes who is our liaison for keys and looking after the changing rooms - has always been helpful and supportive over many years. Thanks Mary!

If you are interested in helping or playing please contact :-

Under 7's

Tim Hooten 01608 659027

Under 8's

Charlie Barrett 01993 830375

Jerry Barker
01993 831491

Under 9's

Mike Lake
01993 830954

Under 10's

Rob Schofield
01451 824256

Under 11's

Mark Stratford
01993 831703

Under 12's

John Dyakowski
01993 831717

Under 14's

David Agnew
01993 832494

Under 17's

Paul Marsh
01993 830506

Paul Marsh

Under 11s Football

As an Ascott dweller it is a pleasure to have been able to bring the Wychwood U-11 football team to play at the Playing Fields off the High Street, and to call it their home ground for this season.

This year the team progressed from mini soccer (played ages 7-10) when they play 7-a-side on reduced sized pitches, to youth soccer which is 11-a-side on full size pitches. It is a big leap for the players, not just coping with the

massive increase in pitch size, but also to play for two thirty minute halves, and to adjust to the full team game.

Wychwood FC have been able to run 8 mini and youth sides this season with ages ranging from U7 to U17, the latter also playing in Ascott. Thus the club contributes to the range of healthy sporting outlets provided for children in the Wychwoods.

The U11's have been moderately successful so

far, scoring plenty of goals, and winning a few games to place them around mid-table in the Witney and District league, at the moment. There are a few more games to go in this year's 18 match season, plus a cup competition.

Thanks go to Mary Barnes for her back up in preparing and cleaning the sports pavillion, and to Ascott Sports Association for permission to use the pitch.

Mark Stratford

Wychwood Football Remaining League Fixtures:-

February 1st
Bullington Home

February 15th
Witney United Away

Group Cup to be Advised by League

Training Game
Chipping Norton Leisure Centre Commences:
Wednesday 7th January 2004.

Ascott-under-Wychwood Badminton Club

Since the summer of 1994 Ascott has had a badminton club.

Over the years new faces have come and gone but a core of regulars remain and meet regularly on Wednesday evenings at Tiddy Hall. There is only one court so it tends to be as much a social affair, whilst waiting for a turn on the court, as a means so keeping fit and having fun.

New members are always welcome. There are a wide range of standards and playing styles but the main aim of the club is to allow everyone to play. Anyone interested in joining us can just come along to the Tiddy Hall at 19.30 on Wednesday evening. If the numbers merit it I am sure we would be able to use the hall for a second evening each week.

Poppy Appeal 2003

A big 'Thank You' to the village for the Poppy Appeal - we raised £516.84.

Mary Barnes

NEW TIDDY HALL
10th ANNIVERSARY
DANCE

SAT 31 JANUARY
8.00 - 12.00 PM

RAGGED
EDGE

BEER & WINE BAR

TICKETS: £8 (under 16's £4)
INCLUDING SUPPER

AVAILABLE from: Tel: 830227 and 830114
and ASCOTT VILLAGE SHOP

Come and join us for a FOLK NIGHT at
Tiddy Hall Ascott-under-Wychwood

Saturday 6th March 2004
7.15pm for 8.00pm start

THE LAST STRAW
AND FRIENDS

PROCEEDS IN AID OF ASCOTT SPORTS CLUB



BEER & WINE BAR

TICKETS £7.00
01993 830114/830227

This poem by Fred Russell may strike a telling note with those of us who have over-indulged during the festive season...

Fat

One feels one shouldn't give a fig
When one is told that one is big

A portly frame cannot be wrong
When ones as broad as one is long

One feels it's in such awful taste
To be told so rudely to ones' face

The fact of the matter is old chap
You're absolutely far too fat

If you'd been a woman, I would say,
You must be in the family way

And if you ever go to sea
Why they'd use you as a marker buoy

The thing is, old boy, you'd never drown
Like a barrel, you'd bob up and down

Of course, you may have heard it said
What you have now is middle-age-spread

In your case though, there is no doubt
It's spread so fast and burst right out

The battle of the bulge I'd say
Is what you're going to have to play

Waging war on over-weight
You've got a problem on your plate

So give up chips and give up pies
Give up drink, take exercise

Take up swimming, take up squash
Or better still to have more fun...

...The last two lines of this poem are not considered suitable for a village magazine.

Fred Russell

Tiddy Hall Events

REGULAR ACTIVITIES

Monday to Thursday Mornings

Pre-School-Contact Pauline Plant 0796 8006451.

Friday Mornings

Mother and Toddler Group- Contact Pauline Plant 0796 8006451.

Tuesday Evenings

Yoga- Contact David Billham 01993 842061.

Wednesday Evenings

Badminton- Contact Chris Morgan 01993 831958.

Thursday Evenings

Yoga- Contact Chris Seers 01608 676236.

Saturday Mornings

Dog Training- Contact Sharon Wilson 01993 831801.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Saturday 31st January 2004
-Tiddy Hall 10th Anniversary.

Contact Ros Shepherd 01993 830227.

Saturday 7th February 2004. Jumble Sale 2-4pm
Fundraising for Pre-School.

Contact Pauline Plant 0796 8006451.

Saturday 6th March 2004.
Folk Night.

Fundraising for Sports Club. Contact Lyn Collins 01993 830114.

Wednesday 10th March 2004. The Friends of Wychwood. Illustrated Talk, *Ancient Trees in the Wychwood Landscape.* 8-10pm, With Refreshments. Contact Stuart Fox 01993 832004.

Friday 12th March 2004. "House of Colour" Evening.

Fundraising for Village Shop. Contact Margaret Ismail 01993 832829.

TO BOOK THE TIDDY HALL CONTACT :
Rosemary Dawbarn 01993 831632

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