
The Ascott Grapevine



Issue 46

April 2005

Grapevine Appeal

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

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

If there is an aspect of village life not already covered in the Grapevine please contact a member of the production team to discuss your ideas. Articles for the July issue of The Grapevine should be submitted by July 3rd.

Call 01993 832163 or email:
ascotgrapevine@dailypipex.com

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

Services at Holy Trinity Church

1st Sunday
of the month
11.00am FC

4th Sunday
of the month
11.00am HC C

2nd Sunday
of the month
8.00am HC P

3rd Sunday
of the month
11.00am HC C

What's what

EP = Evening Prayer/
Service

FC = Family Communion

HC = Holy Communion

MP = Morning Prayer/
Service

QP = Time of Quiet
Prayer

BS = Benefice Service

Bapt = Holy Baptism

C = Contemporary Lan-
guage

P = Book of Common
Prayer

Content & Editorial Policy

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

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

Births

On 14th September 2004 to Fiona and Sean Foy, a son, Charlie James.

On 24th February 2005 to Crista and David Sanderson, a son, James Alexander.

Deaths

January 2005, Iris Rosamund Salmons, aged 87 years.

On 15th January 2005, Malcolm Morris, aged 56 years.

On 18th January 2005, Roy Leslie Pratley, aged 69 years.

On 8th February 2005, Iris Lavinia Hanks, aged 84 years.

On 8th March 2005, Evelyn Storey, aged 96 years.

In Sympathy

Our thoughts are with Pete & Judy Moss whose only son was tragically killed in a car crash on 9 April just outside Shipton-under-Wychwood.

Darren was born and brought up in Ascott and lived in Shipton. He leaves a wife and two young boys aged 6 & 1.

Roy Leslie Pratley 1936-2005

Roy Pratley was born on the 16th January 1936 in Willesden, London to Albert and Ivy Pratley. Albert came from Leafield so in 1940 when London was being bombed, the family came to live in Ascott-under-Wychwood. Roy went to Ascott C of E School followed by Shipton School which he left when he was 15 years old and joined his father as a plasterer. At 18 he did his National Service in the army at

Aldershot. He returned to work with his father. Later he joined Bill Dore the builder in Shipton before becoming self-employed. In 1970 he married Brenda Bennett from Minster Lovell. Roy's greatest passion was sport especially cricket. In his younger days, he played cricket for Ascott and darts for the local team. Ever since childhood he supported Preston football team. Also, he was a keen gar-

dener, growing his own vegetables, Roy had a kidney transplant in 1992 but in the last few years he suffered from ill health. He died on the 18th January 2005 in the Churchill Hospital, Oxford and leaves his wife Brenda and two sons. At his funeral in Holy Trinity Church, £561.60 was collected towards the Renal Unit, Churchill Hospital.

**Brenda Pratley and
Doreen Smith**

John Charles Niebuhr 1944 - 2004

John was born in Woodstock, Oxfordshire and lived his early life in Shipton, Lyneham and Ascott-under-Wychwood with his younger brother and sister. He moved to Chipping Norton in the early seventies though planned to return to live in the Wychwoods. In his youth he developed a passion for motorbikes which stayed with him throughout his life.

On leaving school he worked at the Till yard at Shipton before moving to the co-op bakery. In 1974 he began work as a bus driver on Chipping Norton-Oxford routes and worked for the bus company for thirty years. He was popular with passengers for his ready smile, cheerfulness and his willingness to hang on if they hadn't quite made it to the stop. He was greatly missed by passengers and colleagues when he had to stop work.

John was married to Helen for Twenty-one

years and left three daughters, one from an earlier marriage. Through his m i d d l e daughter Amy, he was introduced nine years ago to horse riding which became his hobby after first riding at the age of 53. Many weekends were spent at horse shows and John liked nothing better than riding out across the countryside. Even during his illness he was keen to saddle up and enjoy the freedom of galloping across an open field.

John was a kind, gentle and quiet man who was devoted to his family. He had many friends still living in the Wychwoods and was recognised for his cheerful, smiling face by many local people. He faced his illness with typical calm, courage and determination. He defied the original prog-



nosis and kept going (and riding) for many months longer than expected. However he eventually succumbed on 29th November 2004, peacefully at home with his family as he had wished.

We miss John desperately and there is a big hole in our lives. The affection and esteem that many friends and associates felt for him has been apparent in the many genuine expressions of sadness at his loss that family have received. We would like to acknowledge these and express thanks for the many cards, good

wishes and for the charitable donations received.

John's final wish was to be laid to rest in Ascott-under-

Wychwood churchyard where his mother Kathleen, and his father Willie are. His funeral was a personal tribute and celebration of his

life and our thanks for knowing and loving him.

Annalise Niebuhr

Malcolm Morris 1948-2005

Malcolm was born in Oxford on the 16th September 1948, the son of Leonard and Anne Morris. They also had two other children, Brian and Evelyn. The family moved to Dorchester-on-Thames when Malcolm was very young and he attended Dorchester Primary School.

When Malcolm was 12 years old, his Father was knocked off his bike by a car whilst cycling home from work and died, so the family moved back to Oxford.

Eventually he worked in the car factory in Cowley, then known as the Pressed Steel Factory.

He married Iris and had a son Vincent but the marriage ended in divorce. Malcolm loved music so with a friend, they started their own mobile disco which was very successful. They played at clubs, weddings, colleges and parties. I met Malcolm at a dance in 1987 at Morris' Club in Cowley and we have stayed together for 17 years. His other

interest was motor racing. We went to several races at Silverstone and loved watching it on the television. We travelled quite a lot. Our favourite holiday was to Disney World in Florida. It had been a dream of ours to go there. Malcolm became ill and was diagnosed with diabetes as well as other complaints. He passed away peacefully on the 15th January 2005 in the Horton Hospital, Banbury. My thanks to all the staff who looked after him.

Jackie Pegrum

Iris Lavinia Hanks 1920-2005

Iris was born on the 29th October 1920 in Shipton-under-Wychwood, the daughter of Nelson and Lavinia Golder. She moved to Ascott-under-Wychwood as a young girl. Iris worked in

Charlbury Glove Factory until the war and thought nothing of the journey by bike everyday. During the war, through her love of dancing, she met and married David Hanks and they had six chil-

dren. Her war effort was working at Pressed Steel making tanks. She had a great passion for sport and could tell you anything about it. Also, she was active in the village helping with the cricket and football teams. As

her children grew up they took up most of her time, but she always had a word for friends

and neighbours. Her family will remember her for always being fair but strict and they will

remember her with great affection.

Sheila Cole (daughter)

Iris Salmons 1916 - 2005

Iris and Bill, her husband who died in 1997, moved to Ascott many years ago. I first met Iris when we became neighbours in 1994 and she was amongst the first to greet us as we moved in, offering help if we needed it. We soon became friends.

Iris had a great love of the countryside and her animals. She kept a pony called Copper, chickens and Thistle, a cairn terrier. In the past she and Bill had kept and bred beagles and had a number of successes in the show-ring. Her main passion was horse rac-

ing, particularly "over-the-sticks" and the Cheltenham Gold Cup was her favourite meeting.

Iris's profession was as a fashion designer, specialising in knitwear, which was being manufactured for Marks and Spencer. She readily told stories of trips to Paris, seeking inspiration for new designs.

Sadly, when Bill died in 1997 Iris found it difficult to cope on her own and after spending some time in hospital moved into a care home. She missed her home and animals in Ascott and longed to re-

turn, but her failing health meant that this was not to be.

I will remember Iris with much affection as a friend and neighbour and for the many stories she told of her past. Also, I will remember her dressed in waterproofs and wellingtons feeding the pony, in all weathers. I will also remember the smartly groomed and immaculately dressed lady who walked into the village each week to collect her pension. Truly a lady of contrasts!

Stuart Fox

From the Rector

It seems to me that people love happy endings, although they don't like to hang around for them. There are those who thoroughly enjoy the *Hallelujah Chorus* from Handel's *Messiah*, but who wouldn't dream of sitting through the whole work waiting

to hear it. Others may love to listen to the cannons and fireworks in the final part of Tchaikovsky's *1812 Overture*, yet have never listened to a complete performance. Is it hardly surprising then that far more people come to church on Easter Day

than on Good Friday? Of course people love happy endings, and Easter is without a doubt the happiest of endings.

The trouble is that focussing all one's attention on the happy ending is like skipping the steak and potatoes and

From the Rector continued...

eating only the trifle or ice cream. It's like reading the last page of a detective novel or watching only the last ten minutes of a great film. Yes, there may be that good feeling and perhaps a bit of a 'buzz', but it doesn't last very long and soon gives way to an emptiness since there is nothing to keep it going. It's easy to imagine that we have received the best life has to offer by avoiding the worst, but the fact remains that there can be no 'best' unless there is also a 'worst'.

When the women went to the tomb in the darkness and fear of that first Easter morning, they had already experienced the worst. Jesus – a son to one of them and a dear friend to the others – was dead. Moreover, the death that he had suffered had been tortuous and horrific. Once death had come mercifully to him, they had seen his lifeless body taken down from the cross and wrapped

quickly in strips of cloth, which quickly became stained with his blood. They had watched as his body was placed hastily in a nearby tomb, and they had wept the bitter tears of grief as the grave had been closed. During the intervening time they would have suffered in the depths of despair as they awaited the time when they could return to the tomb and complete the job of anointing his body, thus consigning him to death forever.

At the end of the Battle of Waterloo, news of the result had to be brought across the English Channel by boat and then signalled overland by semaphore to London. High atop Winchester Cathedral the signal began to arrive – letter by letter – W-E-L-L-I-N-G-T-O-N D-E-F-E-A-T-E-D. Then a dense fog blew across the city, as gloom and despair began to spread. Only when the fog lifted did the whole message be-

come clear: W-E-L-L-I-N-G-T-O-N D-E-F-E-A-T-E-D T-H-E E-N-E-M-Y.

On Good Friday a fog of despair settled on the disciples, such that they could only perceive a part of the message: GOD DEFEATED. However, on Easter Day the whole message became clear: GOD DEFEATED THE ENEMY. This news brought such joy to them because they had experienced such dreadful despair only days earlier. The power of Jesus' resurrection is especially clear to those who have reflected upon his suffering on Good Friday. And the power of Jesus' victory can be seen in that, even after two thousand years, Christians continue to experience its life-changing and life-giving effects.

Easter is therefore the most happy of endings that turns out not to be an ending at all, but rather a new beginning.

With my very best wishes.

Mark Abrey

community n. neighbourhood; area; kinship

“Ascott Village Shop Needs You” - the words glared out in big black bold print from the nursery yellow paper stapled to the notice board: A pun; a variation on Kitchener’s First World War populist cry “Your Country needs You”; a call to arms; a plea for action; or for me, my gold-embossed invitation to this alluring Cotswold village.

Weeks later as I was carting my two year old son off to nursery, prior to my three hour voluntary stint in the shop, he asked that inevitable question that all little people are destined to ask: “Why Mummy? Why does the village shop need you?” “Because Thomas...,” I began and then stopped. The answer was not as straightforward as one may initially presume. Thomas had a point. Why was I about to give up three hours of my precious

child free time to work unpaid and possibly alone when indeed I could be at home catching up on the ironing or earning some real money?

Moving from London three months earlier there had been certain non-negotiable criteria on my property wish list: three bedrooms, an eat-in kitchen, a garden for Thomas to run in, and a shop within walking distance. (I am a forgetful mother at the best of times and if Thomas was to get his recommended daily intake of food then I needed to be able to buy supplies locally!) Estate agents details would land through the door and promptly be binned: Nearest shop two miles away- a beautiful stroll across the fields!

So when by chance, we ended up in Ascott in January, I was like a pig wallowing in the proverbial mud. Not only did Ascott boast its own



shop, and a well stocked one at that (even prepared to provide my visiting mother-in-law with pains au chocolat!) but a shop that was sustained by its community. Community is very important to me. Maybe because it appeals to my latent Marxist views that Utopia may one day exist. Maybe because when you come from London you are unlikely to know the people in the upstairs flat let alone at the other end of the street. But most probably because, community gives this single widowed mother a sense of belonging and place in the topsy turvey life she finds herself inhabiting.

I maybe a romantic; I may even be a complete urbanite but I love our village shop. My weekly stint (free of charge) gives me an opportunity to momentarily mislay everyday worries and concerns. I have met

people, passed the time of day, smiled and gradually become embedded in a community.

"Why Mummy? Why does the village shop need you?"

"Because Thomas," I replied, "We need it."

Emma Jackson

Village Gardens Project

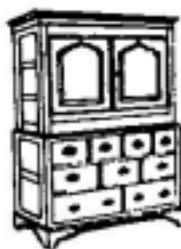
The village Gardens Festival weekend will take place on 18 and 19 June in aid of the village charity/shop. A good number of people have already come forward to open their gardens or run activities such as cream teas, cake stall, plant sale, garden bric-a-brac stall - so the event is building into a great village weekend. We're aiming to equal if not better the fund raising success of 2003 when more than £2000 was collected and put towards the establishment of the village shop.

Anyone who is not already involved in the festival and would like to open their garden or run/take part in another activity or has a good idea for raising money please contact Yvette Keauffling, Sunset

House (old Churchill Arms), London Lane, tel 832144 or email keauffling@AOL.com Any ideas would be appreciated and it would be good to have activities such as a garden treasure hunt which would be particularly attractive to children. Everyone who was in the village for the 2003 weekend will know, but newcomers won't,

what a very enjoyable weekend it was for villagers, and visitors really appreciated what they saw. All the hard work and effort made by those involved was well worthwhile. It was good to show off the village, people's talents and community spirit. Let's make it another great weekend in 2005.

Yvette Keauffling



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Ascott-under-Wychwood Parish Council

It is good to see that West Oxfordshire District Council has replaced the damaged street signs on Church View, High Street and Mill Lane. The shed on the pound was in a dangerous state of repair and has now been demolished and the old, very dilapidated notice board opposite The Swan has been replaced by a new one. We are happy to say that two new initiatives are taking place that will be good for the environment. Permission has been given by Cornbury Estates to plant a Hazel

Coppice on the allotment field and it is hoped to make space in the churchyard for a wildlife area through the Living Churchyard Scheme.

We have been informed by Thames Valley Police that there is to be a re-structuring of the service known as 'Challenge & Change' which is intended to provide a more consistent neighbourhood service and improve performance. The changes will involve new training and a change of role for many staff within the service. We hope that

Chief Inspector Dennis Everden, the new Local Police Area Commander for West Oxfordshire will attend a Parish Council meeting in the near future to explain how the changes will affect us directly.

*Margaret Ismail
Parish Clerk
(832829)*

Parish Council:

Nigel Braithwaite, Chairman 831282
Elaine Byles 831427
Stuart Fox 832004
Mike Pearce 830058
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May Garlands

In 1880 Rev. Samuel York then Vicar of Ascott noted in the Leafield and Ascott under Wychwood Parish Magazine 'May 1st. A very bright May-day for the school children and their May Garland Procession. They, numbering 106 had their tea-treat in the vicarage garden on the Tuesday in Whitsun week.'

Eric Moss in his biography 'Walk Humble My Son' describes the importance in Ascott of the Maypole and Maypole Dancing to mark the 1st May, a tradition which with some interruptions continued in use in Ascott Village School until the school's closure. But Eric also describes how in his youth in the 1920's they made a May Garland each May Day. This he describes as 'great masses of cowslips tied around a stick looking like a huge candy-floss of flowers.'

Between the Wars Dorothy Harrison also remembers as a joint ef-

fort with her friends, making big bunches of cowslips, water bubbles (kingcups), bluebells etc., which were usually tied to the top of a stout stick and paraded around her local houses to the chanting of the following verse.

*Maypole, Maypole, Trot
Trot Trot.*

*See what a maypole I have
got.*

*Garlands high. Garlands
low.*

*Give us a penny and away
we'll go.*

Each recital hopefully collected a penny which she thinks was probably spent on sweets. More small groups of children repeated this performance in other parts of the village. Dorothy also recalls that May Day was an important celebration at the school with dancing around the Maypole on the Green and a half day's holiday. After

the 2nd War the dancing tradition continued but by then a hole had been excavated in the school playground to hold the Maypole, this hole being firmly wedged in afterwards with a piece of wood.

So the May Pole tradition survived in the village but sometime before the 2nd World War the much more ancient custom of the making of the May Garland and it's procession around the village, disappeared.

However back in the 19th century the making of the May Garland had been a great event for the schoolchildren on the one day devoted solely to celebrating the



beginning of the new season of growth and fertility – it's origins probably dating back to pagan times. In 'Lark Rise to Candleford' Flora Thompson gives a long description of the schoolchildren's May Day celebrations in the village of Lark Rise. Their Garland was formed on a framework of hoops making a bell shaped structure which was liberally covered with spring flowers, primroses, violets, cowslips, wallflowers, flowering currant, in fact every species of flower that could be obtained. A girl was nominated as May Queen and she

wore a crown of spring flowers. The girls wherever possible wore white dresses and the boys their best clothes, both outfits decorated with brightly coloured ribbons. Also a special doll which was kept in the school cupboard was placed on a ledge in the centre of the hoop perhaps as an image of Our Lady or an even more obscure reference to a pagan goddess. Sticks were then inserted into the Garland to enable the schoolchildren to carry the Garland around the village in procession. The villagers could then pay for the privilege of seeing the

Garland created by their children's handiwork. The money collected went to the preparation of a tea treat of cake, bread and jam for the children with the surplus money being divided amongst them.

In Spelsbury a church service was also part of the proceedings with "May Carols" forming part of the childrens' repertoire during the procession.

However today, despite it's previous widespread tradition the ancient custom of the May Garland is relatively unknown.

Wendy Pearse



Transport Information

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

Ring a Ride Scheme

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

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

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

Who was Tiddy?

In the present Tiddy Hall is a photograph of the founder of the original Tiddy Hall, a building which used to stand in the south east corner of today's car park. The plot of land was purchased by REGINALD JOHN ELLIOTT TIDDY who in 1912 had the first all

wooden building erected as a reading room and with its sprung wooden floor a purposely built arena for morris and folk dancing. Reggie Tiddy was an Oxford Don and lived in Priory Cottage at the top of Priory Lane with his father and brother.

The following article written by Nicholas Salaman describes more details of Tiddy's life and demonstrates that Tiddy's memory after his death in the Great War has not only been kept alive here in Ascott but also in the realms of Trinity College, Oxford.

The year 2005 marks the 450th anniversary of the founding of the *College of the Most Holy and Undivided Trinity* in the University of Oxford. The founder, Sir Thomas Pope and his wife the Lady Elizabeth, were childless and regarded the College and its students as their 'children'.

Sir Thomas was Comptroller to Queen Mary, a sort of Cardinal Wolsey to the Queen, and bought the land and buildings of an earlier college, Durham Hall, a monastic foundation, whose closure had been ordered by Mary's father, Henry VIII. She was married in 1553 to King Philip of Spain, and the royal arms of Spain are displayed on the great fireplace of the College Hall...

There will be many celebrations to mark this 450th anniversary and not least among them will be a revue or Cavalcade marking some of the great events and celebrating some of the famous sons and daughters of the College. This is the gist of what I propose to say on this occasion, as I introduce an element of Morris...

No survey of Trinity would be complete without a mention of R.J.E. Tiddy, Fellow in English at Trinity from 1906-1916.

Tiddy came to Trinity in 1906 and taught English. He was apparently an extraordinarily nice man with 'a sparkling gift of friendship'. He divided his time between Trinity and his cottage in Ascott under

Wychwood where he showed a keen interest in local dialects and traditions, wrote the definitive work on The Mummers' Play, and helped rescue the Morris Dance from oblivion. He was a close friend of Cecil Sharpe of folk music fame, also of another illustrious Trinity undergraduate, the composer George Butterworth.

Tiddy produced and took part in the first Morris Dance to be performed in Oxford in recent history, held here in Trinity gardens, before what was described as 'the raised eyebrows' of the university. The Oxford Journal was enthusiastic, praising:

'The long golden boots... the harmoniously shaded ribbons..

the black hats.. .the little bells.. .and the way those dancers leapt into the air and played leap-frog, some of them of sober years and solid proportions, was wonderful to see.

When the Great War broke out, Tiddy, a pacifist by inclination, felt that he could not stand by and let others do the work, so although shortsighted and asthmatic, he

joined up and his group of young dancers from the villages around Oxford, principally Ascott, followed him into the Ox and Bucks, led by his chief dancer Ralph Honeybone, who became Tiddy's batman.

They danced on Salisbury Plain among the bivouacs. They danced in France when they arrived. They danced behind the front line. And then they moved up to the front itself. In due course, almost inevitably, the President received the sad letter from

Ralph Honeybone: '*I regret to inform you of the death of Mr Tiddy who was struck by a shell in the trench last night...*' There was a final scene in a Morris Musical I planned where Tiddy and his heroes danced in h e a v e n . . . Meanwhile, in memory of a brave man and the only fellow of Trinity to die in that war, (one of whose epitaphs was penned by my grandfather, Fellow in Classics at Trinity, then a young man), I give you a team specially press-ganged from Trinity and the Uni-

versity for this enterprise. To echo the words of the Oxford Journal: '*Surely never before in real life and never before on the stage were there ever such glorified Morris dancers...*'

Ladies and gentlemen, we have seen the Morris Oxford. Now let us enjoy the Oxford, no, the *Trinity* Morris...

Nicholas Salaman



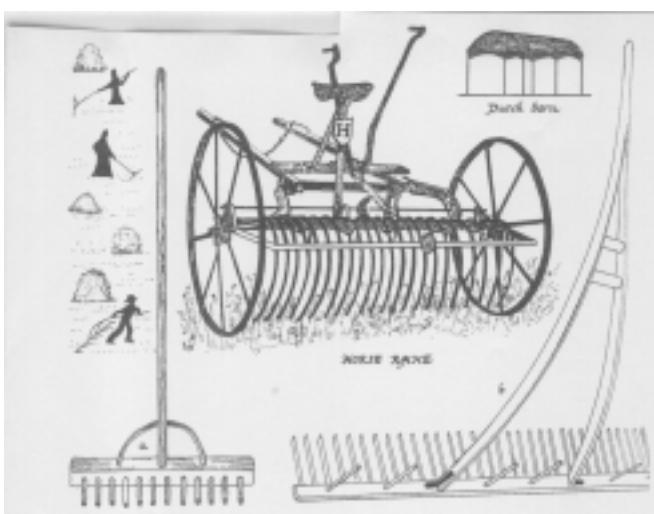
History of Haymaking

Ever since man began to farm with crops and livestock thousands of years ago the communities would have been vitally concerned each year about the quantity and quality of their hay production. This was the feed that they relied upon to sustain their livestock through each winter. The survival of sufficient breeding stock and working oxen teams would have been imperative but the number of other animals retained would depend upon the amount of feed available and the rest would have been slaughtered for food, the excess being preserved for future use.

It is not easy now to visualise a team of twelve men with scythes mowing in a line across a grass field but this is a fact recorded locally as recently as the eighteen eighties. Once mown the cut grass would have lain in thick swathes which would then have been spread over the ground to dry and in the following days would have been hand raked into rows, then tedded (shaken) and turned at times ruled by the weather until it was dry enough to be made up into haycocks. One cock would have been as much as a man could pick up cleanly in one lift with a pitchfork so they needed

to be constructed carefully to enable the hay to hold together well, This system was used over many centuries and with all this labour intensive work available it was a good chance for extra helpers from the village to make a few shillings.

The hay was carried in a similar method to the corn harvest with a horse drawn wagon pulled between the rows of cocks, a man each side pitching the hay up to a man building the load. "Keep plenty under thee fit (feet)", was the advice given to a novice loader because if the middle of the load was not kept firm enough he would be waist deep in loose hay and struggling to lift his feet high enough. The loads were taken to the rickyard and built into ricks which were constructed in a similar way to corn ricks with the builder working backwards in a clockwise direction adding one laying at a time. The middle was kept highest and the hay needed placing carefully to keep the sides upright because a forkful of loose hay does not have a definite shape





and structure like a sheaf of corn and is much less solid. After the end of the day's work, the rick would have settled by 20 - 25 percent by the next morning and this settling process would continue well after the rick was completed. If the hay was unloaded directly from the wagon to the rick, it was necessary for a third man to pass the hay across the rick when the builder was on the opposite side. Extra bits of leaf and short stalks would accumulate and make that part of the rick nearest the load more solid, sometimes resulting in the rick settling away and needing wooden props against the other side.

The best hay is made from grass mown early in the season when it is young

and leafy before it becomes coarse and goes to seed. People who make hay need endless patience and a placid temperament because at this time rain is the hazard. Every spell of rain reduces the quality and it sometimes happens that partly made hay which is not quite dry enough to gather in has a nice blue-green colour with a delicious sweet perfume. Then it rains - and it rains - and it rains! The colour turns from green to yellow, then to brown and sometimes eventually goes black, rotten and stinking. The problem then is how to get rid of it. Hay that is stacked before it is sufficiently dry will become hot and possibly set itself on fire. This applies to bales as well as loose hay. Many

a rick has had to be cut open through the middle to dry it out. It is also possible to overmake hay and dry out some of the nutrients. An old saying was "A farmer who never has a hot rick never makes any good hay."

In the eighteen eighties mechanisation changed the whole system of haymaking. Mechanical grass mowers drawn by a team of two horses were available as were horse drawn hay turners and tedders and a horse rake for collecting the scattered bits which had been littered over the ground. Horse drawn sweeps were used, these were wooden framed implements with a row of long wooden tynes which ran points first over the ground beneath the hay to

sweep the crop to a chosen point in the field where it could be built into a rick. In later decades

sweeps were fitted to the front of tractors and as late as the nineteen fifties they were used on some farms to push the hay to a stationary baler. These bales weighed about 50 kgs and they were easier to transport and stack than loose hay.

During my time at Coldstone Farm in Ascott village before we moved to Honeydale Farm upon the hill in 1952 we used another machine called a hayloader. This was towed behind a wagon and lifted the hay from the ground to the top of the load on the wagon by means of eight long rakes worked on two cranks, so that while some were pushing up the hay the others were going down ready to lift up the next part of the row. The system was driven by chains from the wheels on the hayloader which ran along the ground. The wagon was pulled by a tractor over a row of hay which the hayloader pitched up onto the load. It was a busy

job if only one man was building the load on the wagon.

"See if you can drive it Jim", I was asked on a never to be forgotten day when I was seven years old. So that was my out of school job, driving the tractor pulling the wagon and hayloader. This meant dad could stay on the wagon and build the load instead of attempting the whole task singlehanded.

The next major advance was the pick-up baler which is drawn by a tractor along a row picking up the crop and tying it into bales of about 25kgs. These balers were in widespread use in the nineteen fifties and at first the collection and stacking of the bales was mainly done by man power, but various systems developed for making the job quicker and easier culminating in the "flat eight" system with a mechanical sledge behind the baler leaving bales in squares of eight which are picked up and stacked au-

tomatically by a tractor mounted grab and not necessarily touched by hand. By the nineteen sixties silage making was becoming more common on some farms. The grass could then be gathered up in much less time after mowing so the crop could be cut younger and the silage was of more consistent and higher feed value than hay. With the coming of the forage harvester which could chop and blow the crop into a trailer, silage was tightly stacked and sealed into clamps and became more prevalent than hay. Big round bales are also sealed in polythene by automatic wrapping machines.

Almost all beef cattle and dairy cows now have silage as their main winter feed but good quality hay is still needed by horses, particularly race horses, and it is pleasing to make some sweet scented good quality hay.

Jim Pearse



Change a-foot in the Countryside

The Wychwood Project

The New Year brought with it some of the most significant changes for many years in the way the countryside is managed. At the heart of this change is a break in the link between the direct financial subsidies for farming, paid under the European Common Agricultural Policy and agricultural production. One result of this change is that farmers will have greater freedom to respond to the demands of the market.

Another important change is that, for the first time, subsidy payments are linked explicitly to the landowner keeping the land in good agricultural and environmental condition.

A proportion of the money given to UK agriculture through the Common Agricultural Policy will be held-back and redirected towards environmental and rural development schemes. This year 5% of all funds will be re-directed in this way, rising to

10% in 2006. The British Government will top-up this European money from Britain's own reserves to increase the total amount available for countryside conservation.

A large part of the money raised in this way will be used to support a new scheme known as Environmental Stewardship. There are two levels to this scheme - Entry Level and Higher Level Stewardship. Entry Level pays a flat rate of £30 a hectare, or £60 a hectare on Organic farms. All eligible landowners can claim this money if they agree to meet certain minimum standards of environmental management. Higher Level Stewardship is more demanding and is designed to provide additional funds for high priority situations and areas.

So what do these changes mean for the countryside around the Wychwoods? The impact of the break between subsidies and pro-

duction is hardest to predict. We may see a wider range of crops being grown where individual farmers see a market opportunity. This could bring new colours and textures into the fields. In a few cases, where the soil is less suited to growing cereals, the landowner may switch to grassland grazed with sheep. Some landowners may wish to not grow any crops or raise any livestock at all. This too is acceptable under the new system provided that the ground is kept free of weeds such as thistles, docks and scrub growth. DEFRA'S target in Wychwood is to maintain and increase woodland.

Other noticeable changes are likely to include an increase in the number of field corners taken out of production and uncultivated strips appearing around the edges of fields. These areas provide a valuable habitat for wild birds and insects. They can

also help prevent damage to hedgerows by pesticides and from fertilizer washing into ditches and streams. Numbers of typical Cotswold birds such as the corn bunting, lapwing, tree sparrow and sky lark will hopefully increase, whilst traditional flowers such as poppy and cornflower may become more evident. Hedges may be allowed to grow taller and be cut less often.

With the benefit of Higher Level Stewardship the chance to maintain, restore and enjoy our most valuable landscape features is even greater. Particular opportunities around the Ascott area include the restoration and maintenance of dry stone walls and other important or historic boundaries, the creation of new ponds, the enhancement and linking of woodlands and, the creation of new

permissive access paths particularly where these provide links to the Wychwood Way.

For more information on these schemes visit the DEFRA website www.defra.gov.uk or call the Wychwood Project 01993 814143.

*Nick Motram
The Wychwood
Project*

The Gardening Year

We're well into spring now and able to look forward to those warm days of summer just around the corner. The garden is very busy with new growth occurring at extraordinary speed-it never ceases to amaze me how much a plant seems to grow between my going in of an evening and going out again the next morning.

We can start thinking about summer bedding and summer hanging baskets in the next few weeks as the frosts come to an end. Hanging baskets are great fun as they

can provide such an impact filled with the likes of trailing Lobelia, Pelargoniums, Ivy and Nasturtiums or why not try an edible hanging basket for a change with trailing tomatoes or chillies with some parsley to provide a really intense green for the fruit to look fabulous against.

Whilst on the subject of annuals, at the end of last year I met a gentleman who told me of a cure for ground elder! I know, I couldn't believe it either. It involves planting French Mar-

golds where the ground elder problem exists, you won't see any difference in the first year but the following year no ground elder. Unfortunately I'm not going to be able to test this out here but the gentleman in question swears by it - you never know it might just work.

Early May is always a time I associate with tulips but with all the lovely warm weather we had in early spring my tulips are all but over. However, there are many other plants just coming into their prime such

as early clematis, Ceanothis, Dicentra and early roses – although I've seen some very confused roses still trying to flower during the winter.

I have plans to re-arrange my garden, although fairly small, to

incorporate a vegetable bed, sadly I'll be too late to plant parsnips but will be able to grow salad crops, beans, courgettes, carrots and potatoes. This does involve removing an area of lawn and moving a brick path but luckily I don't have

heavy clay soil so this should aid the operation. When the job gets tiring and I don't feel like I'm getting anywhere I shall just think of those lovely vegetables straight from the garden to the pot!

Ann Mitchell

Cook's Corner: Ascott's Favourite Recipes

Asparagus, Basil and Fromage Frais Tart

Ingredients

Shortcrust pastry
500g asparagus
4 Spring onions
2 packets fresh Basil leaves (chopped)
50g Pine nuts (toasted)
500g Fromage Frais
142ml double cream
2 large eggs
75g freshly grated Parmesan

To make:

1. Preheat oven to 190C or gas mark 4. Roll out the pastry (or use pre-rolled) and place in a flan tin. Line pastry with foil and fill with

baking beans and bake blind for 10 minutes.

2. Remove foil and beans and bake pastry for 5 more minutes or until lightly browned.

3. Steam asparagus until tender and cut in 5cm pieces. Finely chop the spring onions and mix with 25g of the grated parmesan and use this mix to cover the base of the pastry case.

4. Add the asparagus pieces, most of the

chopped basil and half the toasted pine nuts to the pastry case.

5. In a bowl, beat together the fromage frais, double cream and 2 eggs. Season with salt and pepper, add 40g grated Parmesan and the remaining chopped basil, mix and pour over the pastry filling.

6. Scatter the remaining pine nuts on top and dust with 10g grated Parmesan.

7. Cook for 40-50 minutes, until the filling is golden and lightly firm. Serve warm. Goes nicely with tomato and basil salad.

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

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

Nature Notes

The progression of the new season is now well under way. Celandines have flowered and faded, birds are nesting, bumblebees are busy collecting nectar for their newly established homes and the brimstone butterfly is putting in an appearance on warm dry days. As I watch the blackthorn come into flower I listen carefully to the weather forecast as this event is supposed to herald the start of a sudden cold spell called "the blackthorn winter."

All the trees are bursting into leaf, starting with the willow and chestnut and ending with the ash and oak, their clean, bright green leaves adding to the spring sunshine.



We in Ascott are fortunate, sited as we are on the edge of the Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and in the heart of the Wychwood to be able to enjoy a wooded landscape containing many ancient trees. There is now much interest in locating and recording these ancient and veteran trees as these are recognised as part of our heritage, just as much as ancient buildings and so deserve as much protection and care.

All trees pass through a similar life cycle, starting with the sapling that grows into a mature tree. There then follows a period of maturity, until with great age the tree becomes a veteran. How old is a veteran? It depends on the species. Oaks may date back to Medieval times and some yews may pre-date the coming of Christianity, whereas a birch would be very old if it had survived for 100 years and a beech 200 years. There are some

typical characteristics of veteran trees, these include: a large girth for the species concerned, major cavities in the trunk, decay holes, bark loss, large quantities of dead wood in the canopy, bracket fungi and a covering of epiphytic plants such as moss and lichens.



In the case of an oak if a tree has a diameter of more than 2.0m (girth 6.25m) at breast height it is truly ancient.

Why are they important? First they provide a rich habitat for all manner of wildlife, from insects and fungi feeding from the rotting heartwood to woodpeckers searching for food and nest sites.

Second, they tell us something of the his-

tory of land use in the area. Trees were often planted as markers on the edges of estates or settlements. They may also indicate areas of woodland and fields that have now disappeared and be a direct link back to the “wildwood” that covered much of Britain after the last ice age. Also, they may be an important gene pool, with some old trees showing disease resistance or suitability for pollarding, coppicing and timber production. Finally, they have a visual impact on the landscape.



Ancient trees tend to fall into three or four categories. The most obvious is the “Maiden” tree, with a trunk extending to the upper

crown with no particular signs of being “managed.” These trees may have originated in woodland, forest pasture or parkland. The second group are the trees, like hazel and ash that have been coppiced on a regular basis. An ash stool that is 2m in diameter is probably over 500 years old! The third category is pollards. Usually associated with willows some other trees such as beech and oak were often cut back. The products from pollarding might have been used for animal fodder, wood for fuel and charcoal production and even bark for the tanning industry. Finally some old trees that have fallen over or collapsed root and regrow away from the original base. This is called a “phoenix regeneration”. Many ancient churchyard yews follow this pattern of growth and it is often difficult to ascertain where the original tree actually started to grow. Man’s intervention by prun-

ing, pollarding and coppicing does seem to rejuvenate trees.



Next time you are walking through woodland, like Foxholes Nature Reserve at Bruern, or more open parkland, such as Blenheim, look out for the gnarled old trees and consider that some of the oaks may have been growing at the time of Elizabeth I. There is an old saying, which says of the oak “three centuries he grows and three he stays supreme in state and in three more he decays.” Likewise if you are visiting an old church that has a massive yew growing nearby, remember that the yew may predate the church!

Stuart Fox

On Becoming a Mentor

Having been involved in the village shop project as a volunteer and member of the local community, I was recently asked by the Ascott Grapevine about my other voluntary activities with The Prince's Trust. Obviously, this has come at a timely point as 2005 is the official year of the volunteer. It will probably not come as a surprise (considering all the voluntary work that is done in the village) that each year over 26 million are engaged in some form of volunteering and of that figure there are a staggering 11 million involved in formal schemes such as The Prince's Trust, Charity Shops, Poppy Appeal etc etc. In a civilised society such as ours, the more people that choose to volunteer, the greater the benefit to those who need support. And it is not difficult to cost those benefits, a whopping 40 BILLION contribution to the economy. No wonder Gordon Brown

is keen to see this nation of volunteers grow.

So, where did it all start? Eight years ago when I moved into Ascott, it coincided with a desire to start 'giving something back'. I decided that I would give ten percent of my paid work to the sort of charity I wanted to get involved with. Having been a parent of two boys who had struggled during their school years and later during their early working years with dyslexia, I was only too aware of the potential hazards and challenges they would both face in their 'growing' years. That was my initial reason for choosing The Trust and I have been blessed in those eight years with four wonderful young people who I have had the privilege to mentor.

My first client was Sue who battled away throughout her short life (Sue contracted meningitis at the age of two which left her with a severe hearing disabil-

ity). You see, Sue died just before the age of 30 having battled with the most intense headaches one can imagine. Sue was indeed a 'toughie' the nickname she preferred at school to 'deafie'. Because of her disability Sue became an easy target for the play ground bullies until one day she confronted the ring leader (I think she pinned the perpetrator against a wall) and then she did get respect. However, what pleased Sue most was to win a place at Leicester University and gain an arts degree specialising in fashion and design. That's when Sue came to The Trust where we helped her with a computerised knitting machine and a mentor - me! Although, I didn't know too much about women's fashion, I made it my business to learn quickly. This meant arranging our monthly meetings at Sue's house/workshop and joining her at some of the craft fayres where she

would sell her work. Sue's unique work was to take raw, untreated wool, dye it with onion skins, berries and herbs to give it colour and then to create her designs in a series of 'one offs'. Great idea, but Sue had to supplement the more labour intensive with mass volume. So, she would make hand made paper and cards to keep the cash turning over.

After the shock of Sue's death, I mentored a young man from one of the neighbouring villages who wanted to become a professional illustrator. He had won a commission from a greetings card company and thought running his own business was the next logical step. However, it soon became apparent that building a business takes more than one lucky break. Cash started to run out during year one and Rob decided to work the night shift at a local hotel to supplement his (lack) of funds. That

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didn't turn out but it did help Rob to really question his future. It was at that point we looked at various options and Rob decided to move from his home in Oxfordshire and depart for pastures new to set up his business and move in with his girl friend. He has since got a part time job he enjoys, is steadily building his business and has paid back his loan to The Trust. We still keep in contact four years on

and although my formal mentoring arrangements has finished, Rob still sends me his business plan and each year we have a couple of telephone mentoring sessions. And so on to my current clients Jay and Jade but first, a background to The Trust.

The Prince's Trust was set up in 1983 in the aftermath of street riots in Toxteth, Liverpool which had attracted national attention two years earlier. HRH The

Prince of Wales, asked the young people involved, “why this anger” and the response was “we have no work, we have no hope”. Since that date 60,000 young people between the ages of 18 and 30 have been helped to set up their own businesses.

As The Prince states in his introduction to volunteers joining The Trust:

“If we were merely to help those who could virtually guarantee success, there would be little point in our work. These people could go elsewhere for their support.

It is my intention that we should take a risk and help those who have the courage to take risks themselves. They are likely to be the sort of people we will hear about in the future”.

How does it work?

Young people who meet the age criteria, are unemployed and have a potential ‘workable’ business idea are provided with a start up loan at below commercial rates and are matched with a business mentor. They are then supported for a

period of three years, meeting their mentor on a monthly basis and when the loan is repaid funds are recycled for the benefit of future businesses, thus improving the impact of funds raised. As a result, around 80% achieve economic independence after one year; however this drops to around 55-60% of businesses still trading into their third year – but ahead of what the banks achieve without the support of a mentor. So, you can see mentoring does make a difference!

So, to sum up. Becoming a mentor has opened many opportunities; I will be addressing two hundred guests on the benefits of mentoring in Amman, Jordon in early May at the request of the British Ambassador and hope to complete my Masters in Coaching and Mentoring at Oxford Brookes later this year. Little did I think that eight years ago a 10% contribution to The Prince’s Trust would have given me

back so much. As a good friend said, “the more you give the more you receive”. I know now what that means. I hope you enjoy the following story of Jay and Jade of Street Dreams.

PS Did you know there are three other Prince’s Trust mentors in Ascott, past and present? As this is the official year of the volunteer, how about hearing from some of you other volunteers for future features. Replies to the Editor.

John Cull

Case Study – Street Dreams

**Buckinghamshire,
United Kingdom -
Youngsters get a
chance to speak out**

Co-founders Jade Erguvanli and Jay Blades of Street Dreams have a mission and that is to become a microphone for young people and bring fresh ideas to stale problems. Street Dreams are a dynamic organisation committed to realising and reduc-

ing issues raised in today's streets of Britain.

By generating projects that tackle problems that arise from issues on 'the street', they aim to guide young people in taking more responsibility for a more promising future in a world that is getting increasingly difficult to survive in!

How do Street Dreams work? Street Dreams pull together groups of people who do not understand each other fully. The very nature of the way in which Jay and Jade operate makes it possible for them to gain the trust required to iron out misunderstandings between diverse groups.

Other models of linking police and young people have been tried around the country, but lack of trust characterises many relationships.

Some of Street Dreams projects

1. Thames Valley Police: Youth Awareness Project - 2002

A project to develop positive relationships



Jade Erguvanli and Jay Blades of Street Dreams

between Oxford Police and the Youth of Oxford. The aim was to close the communication gap between young people and the police service and provide a strong channel for communication. A total of 800 young people were interviewed by Street Dreams and a further 160 attended workshops where they were able to put their views forward to the police.

2. Thames Valley Police: Banbury-3-Gether - 2003

A project to understand the 'major' and 'minor' issues that has a segregational effect on young people in Banbury. This project

involved Asian youth, Black youth and White youth and demonstrated what can be achieved when different parties work together for the common good.

3. Oxford Fire Service: Oxford Community World Cup - 2004

A project to bring together different ethnic groups in the Oxford area unified by one goal ... football. Sixty four different nations competed in a five a side competition for the first Oxford soccer world cup over a summer weekend in June. This initiative, bringing different groups together, was so successful a repeat event is planned for 2005.

Street Dreams and The Prince's Trust

Jay and Jade had already started their first project when they approached John Cull (a mentor for the Prince's Trust) for advice and support around business matters i.e. book-keeping, tax, marketing, meeting skills and relationship building skills (between each other!!). John worked with Street Dreams to create a business plan and then guided them through the procedures for funding. As a result, in 2003, Street Dreams were awarded £5000.00 to help fund office and IT equipment.

The business set a sales target in year one of £60,000 and this figure was exceeded by £5,000 and in year two grew by a further ten percent. In addition, extra funding was obtained by the Sainsbury Foundation which has eased cash flow and enabled Jay and Jade to develop their marketing capability. Critical to success is to get the Street Dreams story out

into the public domain. Such is their confidence for the future, Jay and Jade have recently bought their first house together and are busy rewiring and installing plumbing themselves. "We're planning to combine a business base from within our own home, which is far better than running Street Dreams from a student bed-sit", says Jay.

What of the future? Now the business is about to start year three of Prince's Trust funding, John and Street Dreams continue to meet around once a month. However, this might be more or less depending on the challenges Street Dreams are facing at the time. The interesting feature of the meetings is that Jay and Jade insist that there is no formal agenda.

However, there is a process where John emails in advance 'traffic lights': green for those things that are working well; amber for those issues that are OK but may become an issue if left unattended and fi-

nally red; those issues that require immediate attention. Jay and Jade are required to complete this ahead of the meeting. Key to the meetings is to listen to whatever the challenges happen to be and to encourage Jay and Jade to come up with their own solutions. John knows only too well that the business needs to belong firmly in the hands of Jay and Jade. John sees his role as a guide and 'friend' ensuring they both face up to the issues they need to confront, have clear goals, celebrate success and be able to do so in a safe and supportive environment.

*John Cull
Mentor: The Prince's
Trust - July 2004*

Pamela Edwards Remembers Ascott School 1953-1959

Your article on Ascott school took me back to my time there, 1953-59.

Two rooms for us children, one being the little room, where Mrs Green took the five to eight year olds. She taught us ABC and times tables and basic addition, after which we had lunch brought to us by Mr Carpenter from Shipton, in large metal containers in his van. Mrs Collett served us lunch, after which the little ones had a nap, then a story that Mrs Green read to us, after which we went home. Mrs Green came from Chilson on her motor bike; she had a white crash helmet and a great-coat, if the weather was snow and ice her husband drove her in the car.

After the cosiness of the little room, the big room loomed. Prepared or not, up you went. If you were lucky in the winter and sat by the

stove, so much the better; if not, you were very cold.

Mrs Walkinshaw oversaw this room, with her golden spaniel dog 'Sarah', of course a favourite with the children. Geography, a little History, and the three Rs were taught, alongside movement and exercise on rush matting. On Fridays Mr Nicholls the vicar came and played the piano for a short service, and we sang hymns: 'Onward Christian Soldiers' I seem to remember was a favourite.

Outside plumbing was a basic wooden bench with a hole in the middle, fragrant in the summer, bracing in winter! If I remember right we had our personal school photos taken with our backs to said walls.

Mr Cook was the travelling dentist; we called him 'Killer Cook' because he hated kids.

It's a wonder our generation have any teeth left!

Our playground was tarmac with a little bit of grass around the other side of the school. We went up the village to the playing field on treat days, weather permitting, to play rounders and relay races.

Being a church school, when we had finished the service at Trinity Church at Easter, etc., the day was over - great! Catholic kids went to Shipton Court to a chapel in the grounds, and at Easter or Christmas to Chipping Norton.

Mostly happy days, but when we got to Burford school, you had to grow up and come into the big world.

Pamela Edwards nee Greenaway

Is Re-cycling Rubbish?

Here's how to make sure the contents of your re-cycling box really do get re-cycled and not thrown into a landfill with the rest of your household rubbish.

Do you stick a few things in your re-cycling box every week and plonk it on the road with your rubbish bin, wondering whether any of it will really be re-cycled anyway? Or do you diligently wash, de-label, separate and squash then sit back with your herbal tea and a smug sense of satisfaction?

More and more of us are becoming aware of the importance of re-cy-

cling and the roadside collection service which trundles around the village every Wednesday morning has been designed to make it as easy as possible for us to recycle our rubbish. But unbeknown to us, much of our hard sorting and separating work is going to waste because we just don't know how to work the system properly.

According to Jaime Bugler, waste promotions officer at West Oxfordshire District Council, it really is ok just to throw all your recyclables into one box. "I do tend to put glass, metal, plastic etc into

separate bags," she says, "but the whole point of curb-side sorting is that the workers do the compartmentalising for you at the side of the road. We designed the system to be as easy as possible for the householders to increase the chance that they'd re-cycle their rubbish."

The re-cycling truck doesn't take rubbish, there isn't a section for "non re-cyclables" so if the operators spot anything they can't use, they're under instruction to just leave it in your box. The rest, they sort into five different compartments

on the truck. This is then taken to the sorting depot in Abingdon, where more operators stand by a conveyor belt, refining the sorting process. Recyclable produce is

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crushed into “bales” and sent off to be re-cycled.

So how can you guarantee your household waste makes it right along the line to be re-cycled and doesn’t end up in the bin? Here are Jaime’s top tips:

- Please re-cycle paper, glass, cans, foil, textiles (at last, a use for those odd socks!), aerosols, plastics, household batteries and cardboard
 - Containers do NOT need to be thoroughly washed, but please do rinse off any food or food products (swill out milk bottles) as contaminated products cannot be re-cycled. Food is the biggest source of contamination.
 - Squash down as much as you can to reduce space (this applies particularly to cardboard and plastic milk bottles) DO NOT PUT paper-looking milk or juice cartons in the re-cycling box.
- Tetrapaks of any kind cannot yet be effectively re-cycled. The paper has to be coated (with wax or foil) to keep food or drink fresh and this impairs its recyclability.
- Only put soft plastic (bottles and food containers) out, as the system cannot accommodate many forms of hard plastic (such as garden chairs).
 - Magazines can be recycled with newspapers but the system cannot accept books (take these to charity shops) or Yellow Pages (because of the yellow dye).
- If you haven’t got a box, or you’d like more boxes (up to four per household) call 01608 861020 and a box will be delivered to you free of charge within five days
- If you’d like a lid, just pop along to the council shop in Witney (opposite the Halifax) and pick one up (lids can’t be delivered).

Louise Atkinson

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Wychwoods Local History Society

Two more meetings are scheduled for this season's series of talks. The first on Thursday, 19th May 2005 will be held at Milton Village Hall at 7.30p.m.. The speaker Gillian Bardsley will give a talk on 'Lord Nuffield and Lord Austin-The Contrasting Personalities of Two Motor Industry Pioneers'. The second on Thursday, 16th June at Shipton

Village Hall at 7.30.p.m.is 'The Gunpowder Plot in the Midlands' and the speaker is Mairi MacDonald.

The Society's latest Journal number 20 will shortly be available. Information about this Journal or indeed about any of the past Journals or the Second Wychwood Album which contains some photographs of Ascott,

or information about the Society can be obtained from Wendy Pearse, 831023. Old and new members are welcome. Subscriptions are £5 for an individual and £8 for a couple which includes a copy of the Journal, Wychwoods History, when published. Visitors welcome at any meeting at £2 per head.

Wendy Pearse.

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Stars, clocks and calendars (part 1)

The night sky is probably less familiar to us than it was to our ancestors, whose daily routine was regulated by the sun and who would have seen the well-known pattern of constellations on a clear night, unhindered by external house and street lighting

We take for granted the planning of our lives by time tables, diaries and calendars. We carry with us the time of day. But have we ever stopped to think how our ancestors managed without their personal time pieces and calendars to tell them how many shopping days there were to Christmas? Until the Industrial Revolution most people worked on the land and it was quite appropriate for their lives to be determined by the hours of daylight. However thousands of years ago when mankind was beginning to form settled farming communities and written records

had hardly begun, it was important to define the passage of the seasons in order to plan ahead for the next sowing and harvest. Those living in temperate climates were aware that the days were shorter and the sun rose to a lesser height at midday in the cold season, and vice versa in the hot season; but the duration of what we call a year would have been difficult for them to determine, as it would involve counting about 360 days without means of writing.

The moon is a very obvious heavenly body even for a casual observer and our prehistoric farmer would have been aware that it rose about one hour later each day, varying its phases with a cycle of about 29 days from one new moon to the next. This might have provided him with a straightforward way to measure the year, as between 12 & 13 moon cycles would complete the yearly cycle corresponding, say, to the annual harvest.

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A more precise method would be to notice the most northerly point of the summer sunrise, defining what we call the summer solstice (when the Sun stands still). It is thought that a number of prehistoric monuments such as Stonehenge show such an orientation, to determine the start of a new year. They may well have been constructed for this practical purpose as well as serving as a location for religious ritual. It may be added that sun-

rise or sunset at either the summer or the winter solstice could equally be used as an end point for the yearly cycle, though in our climate there is always the risk of cloud obscuring the sun at these times. Also the change in the sunrise position each day is small at the solstice, compared with the equinox, when the day and the night are of equal length.

The passage of time during the day could quite easily be measured using the Sun's move-

ment from east to west by a variation of the sundial, perhaps just by seeing the shadow of a vertical stick in the ground. The sundial we use is more accurate and has a *gnomon* or inclined straight edge in a North-South direction and at an angle to the horizontal, equal to the latitude.

The passage of the hours during the day has also been measured for thousands of years by various mechanical methods such as water clocks or hour glasses

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using sand running through a narrow portion of a glass vessel. Later methods relied on the constancy of the swing of a pendulum to govern the movement of gears that would drive hands on a clock face. With greater refinement the clocks could be made more compact and accurate. However all these needed to be checked against astronomical data to maintain their accuracy.

Our prehistoric farmer would also have noticed the stars each night rising in the east and setting in the west and he might have been aware that some stars in the northern sky never set, but seemed to revolve around what we call the Pole Star, which is (almost) due north.

He might also have noticed that the stars rise slightly earlier (by about 4 minutes) each night, completing a cycle after a year. This would actually be the truest measure of the duration of the year.

In ancient Egypt the whole of the nation was dependent on the annual flooding of the Nile which produced a fertile deposit of silt each year where there would otherwise be desert and it was very important to be able to predict the coming of the flood. It seems that they noticed that when the bright star Sirius could first be seen rising just before dawn, that the flood would be

about to start. This so called "heliacal rising" could be identified by anybody without any special training and similar methods may have been used throughout the ancient world to regulate the farming year.

As a guide to regulating the rest of the year the Egyptians counted 12 lunar months, which was actually about 11 days short of a year. So when Sirius rose late in

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the 12th month they added another 13th month to keep the annual cycle in step. The administrators however needed a more precise method than this and they decreed 12 months of 30 days each, with 5 days added every year . Even this was not exactly right because the year is actually about 365 ¼ days and they did not allow for a leap year, so before long the calendar became seriously out of step.

The Babylonians from before 2000 BC were making quite detailed star maps and

were able to predict lunar eclipses by observing recurring patterns. They used a hexadecimal system based on the number 60 which has come down to us with our division of hours into minutes and then into seconds and of circles into degrees, minutes and seconds . They also noticed the unequal movement of the sun throughout the year against the background of the stars, which must have required many quite precise observations. They realised that the intervals between the solstices and the

equinoxes were unequal with the two quarters before and after the winter solstice being 88 1/8 days and 90 1/8 days respectively and the quarters before and after the summer solstice being 94 ½ days and 92 ½ days respectively. We now know that this is because the Earth's orbit is an ellipse, with the Sun at one focus, and the Earth travels faster when it is nearer to the Sun, as it is during our northern hemisphere winter.*

*Roland Stedeford
Continued in Part 2
(July issue)*

*The dates of the solstices and equinoxes in our calendar may vary by a day from one year to the next.

In 2005 the spring equinox is on 20th March, the summer solstice on 21st June, the autumn equinox on 22nd Sept. and the winter solstice on 21st December.



Ascott Pre-school

The pre-school Easter Bunny hunt was held on Easter Saturday in Ascott. The event was very well supported and children could be seen running around all over the village in their attempt to retrieve the letter clues from the hidden bunnies. It was great to see friends, Dads and grandparents who usually don't come to the pre-school on a regular basis, turn out with the children to make this a truly family event. It gave everyone a chance to get to know Ascott better and discover its charms for themselves. There were hot dogs waiting back at the hall for the weary hunters as well as a cake stall and stalls selling toys and books. It is expected that this has been a very good fundraiser for the pre-school as well as a

very enjoyable event for all who took part.

The Easter Bunny Hunt came at the end of a short but very successful spring term. The visit from Ofsted went extremely well and the pre-school received a glowing report. The inspector made particular reference to the evident happiness of the children on arrival, the varied types of reading matter available, the development of good conversational skills in all the children, the well-organised sessions, the good use of available resources and the open, happy communication that takes place around the interesting topics for discussion.

The three new staff have settled in well to their routines and work and Alison McCormack is now Vice Chair. There are 8 staff members to look after the total of



47 children who now attend the various sessions during the week. A grant for a digital camera has been awarded by the District Liaison Panel. This will be a great help for recording the pre-school activities.

The toddler group at the cricket pavilion on Tuesday mornings (9.30-11.30) has been well attended. The new location has proved very popular and it is expected that numbers will further increase during the spring and summer months, as mothers/carers and toddlers are able to make full use of the outside facilities. It is hoped that an open morning can be arranged for one Tuesday in May so that more people are able to take part in the fun!



Windrush Valley School

Windrush Valley School is continuing the long tradition of providing quality education for children from the Wychwoods. Based in the former Ascott-under-Wychwood primary school, as featured in the ITV programme ‘The Way We Were’, it continues in this fine traditional style of community based education. Today the second generation of last night’s interviewee attends the school and enjoys the benefits that high quality independent education can bring.

This year, uniquely, we have had to undergo three stringent independent evaluations of our provision, in order to demonstrate our competence as a school. Firstly, we had to satisfy strict new registration requirements issued by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), followed by two inspections, initially by the prestigious Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) fol-

lowed by the omnipresent OfSTED. Could we, in the face of these mandatory (bureaucratic) checks, continue to retain the confidence and trust of all our parents whilst at the same time sustaining our core philosophy of ensuring our children remain happy and successful? To us, that the school would succeed in the face of these challenges was not in doubt, what was at issue was how well would we actually do.

Our continued registration with the DfES should not be an issue; after all, an independent school worth its salt should never struggle to meet its legal obligations, despite these being more stringent than for similar schools in the maintained sector. Despite this confidence it was gratifying to receive written confirmation of our compliance in all areas.

Having ‘received’ three monitoring visits per year for four years

from the Oxfordshire LEA Partnership Worker we were confident of the outcome of the OfSTED inspection. Nevertheless it was encouraging to have confirmed, yet again, our outstanding work with children of this age. The inspectors reported that “*Windrush Valley School provides high quality nursery education. . . .*” She provided the highest judgement possible in all sectors of our provision, praising in particular the quality of our teaching, leadership and management and partnership with parents, before concluding that “*The provision is of high quality . . . enabling all children to make very good progress*”.

Our biggest challenge came with the ISI inspection. Here, peer inspectors and HMI collaborated to provide us with what we saw as the definitive judgement of our competence, particularly as we had no advance model or information to guide us. Im-

agine our pleasure therefore when they reported that “*Windrush Valley is a lively, happy community in which boys and girls thrive.*” They noted in particular that “*Pupils’ enthusiastic attitude to learning and their very good behaviour reflect the overall ethos and philosophy of the school which results in them becoming confident learners. The happy family atmosphere and very good pastoral care enables all pupils to thrive academically and personally, including the pupils with special educational needs.*” Little wonder then that they reported that “*By the age of eleven pupils achieve good standards for their capabilities . . . (and) their attitudes to learning and behaviour are exemplary.*” High praise indeed for a non-selective school.

Needless to say, unlike maintained sector schools, failure to meet the demands of any of these independent external inspections would have led to the quick demise of the school. Thankfully, not only have these demands been met, they

have been exceeded. Such that, on the recommendation of the ISI inspectors report, the school is now an officially accredited member of the Independent Schools Association (ISA), placing it, within its category, on par with every other independent school nationally.

Meanwhile, life goes on. Seventeen children attended the recent Chipping Norton music festival, gaining two distinctions, one highly commended, three commended, eight merits and three promising awards. Visits to Banbury Museum, Curiosity, Coventry Transport museum and the cathedral extended class topics. Our teams took part in inter-school competitive events including cross-country, football and netball games. The term ended with an excellent end-of-term concert where pupils of all ages and abilities entertained their parents with songs, instrumentals, recitals, readings and dance. This excellent concert

rounded off yet another outstanding term where happy, confident, successful and exceptionally well-behaved children confirmed their parents’ choice of school was indeed the correct one.

Leafield School

Building and decorating at Leafield School is finally finished and what a school the village now has, everyone should be very proud of this lovely building sitting in the middle of our village green. But more importantly we should all be very proud of the excellent group of dedicated teachers and their assistants and all the other helpers who, guided by our head Mrs. Ryde, tirelessly teach, encourage and inspire our children to do their best every day. Anyone who has not visited the school recently should take the time to do so, you will see just what a gem is here on our doorstep.

We had a superb official open day on a sunny 19th of March. The children enjoyed



Leafield School Official Opening 19th March 2005

being at School on a Saturday and made all of those who were there feel very proud of them and their school. For those of you who were unable to be there you missed some amazing treats. The children performed and entertained us all throughout the event with country dancing, gymnastics, singing and playing musical instruments. Great refreshments were served continuously, the craft room and raffle were very well supported and the finale must have been the world travelled entertainer Rex Boyd, who not only juggled and

danced but diced with death and made everyone laugh. This was followed by the egg catching and throwing competition enjoyed by all who took part with not too many ending up with egg on their faces as the eggs seemed to have very hard shells and bounced far too many times before breaking. Many thanks to all the children, staff and helpers who made it such a successful event.

As to school activities, the group of 30 (years 4, 5 and 6) spent an excellent week at Yenworthy in North Devon at the end of November and gave the

parents a very informative evening exhibition with talks, pictures and video production. A very successful sponsored spell was held which not only inspired the children to learn some difficult spellings but also raised valuable funds towards playground equipment.

A number of children have been having great fun playing tag rugby after school. Some of our children attended a string workshop in Oxford which they thoroughly enjoyed finishing up by playing in a concert under the guidance of some excellent teachers. A group of children

took part in a Cross Country competition at Cokethorpe School, a Tag Rugby Tournament and KS2 children performed 'Owl and the Pussycat' at a Music Festival at Burford School with other partnership primaries and then to parents in school.

We are very grateful to the Friends of Leafield School who

have purchased dining room furniture, storage cupboards, a new school sign, blinds for the hall and a play shed for Foundation. There are always plenty of resources a small school like Leafield needs which are not provided automatically, so fund raising is very important. However, apart from raising funds for

school lots of activities have taken place with donations going to a variety of causes including the recent Tsunami appeal, and comic relief.

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

Vicky Greves

Sport

Wychwood Youth

The Wychwood Football Committee, Manager and Players made the reluctant decision to withdraw the Youth team from the Inter Counties Youth League after they played only four games from November to next scheduled League game on 3rd April. The final decision was made after the fixture for the 13th March was called off because the opposition couldn't raise a team. This left the Wychwood team without a fixture for six weeks and not confident of playing many more games.

The team has been playing for many seasons and had an excellent squad. We are all very disappointed but this decision was made very reluctantly in view of the very few teams left in the League. This particular age group of Under 18's will probably be taken over by the

Oxfordshire Football Association in time for next season who organise League games for all the younger age groups in Youth Football.

The team will be presented with their Annual Awards on Saturday 7th May at the Beaconsfield Hall

Paul Marsh

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I Love to Run!!

Yes, that's right! Call me crazy, mad, insane, I've heard them all before! But, it's true, running has become part of me, it's within me, something I have to do to retain my 'feel good' energy, which without, my life would be very different!

I was 7 years old when my Dad took me along to my local running club 'Witney Road Runners.' Being one of the very first girls to join the club I was so nervous and shy, but soon became very competitive with the boys and I started to love what I was doing. I saw it as fun, social and exciting; but now, 11 years on, it is perhaps more of a serious matter. My goal is to perform to my potential, to race the best and to ultimately win the highest of competition that I realistically can achieve.

Witney Road Runners have been fantastic over the years, really supportive, caring and motivational with some

strong friendship bonds formed. Without a club full of encouragement and friendly support, it's hard for young athletes to find the motivation to do well and go places. To them, I owe my thanks for a club which gave me ambition and confidence, not just in running, but also within myself.

At 13, I was approached by my present coach, who offered me his experience and guidance, to help me progress further as a young athlete. Allen has been amazing, planning tough training sessions, taking me round the country to compete, but most of all, he has been a loyal friend. Like everyone, I experience highs and lows and he has been there to share them with. I have had a cou-



ple of bad seasons which really affected me psychologically, making me never want to run again, but because of Allen, and also my friends and family, I came out a stronger person, realising that the only way one can progress is to learn where you went wrong.

Recently, my cross-country season finished for another year, which has been my best achievement so far. Over the winter, a different training programme made me into a stronger runner and I travelled all over the UK competing in the National Reebok Cross

Country Challenge, finishing within the top 20 on most occasions, 8th in Belfast and 9th in Cardiff, gave me an overall UK rank of 9th. I also became the under 20's Oxfordshire Champion.

Running has become more than just a hobby to me, but the person who has been my rock over the years and especially this long, hard winter is my mum. In times when I ask myself 'what's the point?' my mum makes me realise

that the point, even though painful at times, will one day definitely be rewarded and will send me closer to the goals I want to reach. One of my favourite quotes, which always lifts me up whenever something hasn't gone quite the way I planned, is, 'never dwell in the past, look around you, you're missing the good stuff!'. If after you have read this, (and thanks for taking the time to read it!), you still think how crazy I must be, put

your running shoes on and just run $\frac{1}{2}$ a mile down the road.....this is if you dare.....you might just catch the bug!!

Elysia Ridley

Congratulations & Well done!

to
Nicola Comm
who completed the
London Marathon
in only
3 hours 3 minutes!

Ski Trip

At five o'clock in the morning on the 28th March 2005 a double-decker bus was waiting to take Brian Ridley's ski party to Heathrow airport. The whole bus was bubbling with excitement but I was ready to go back to bed. By half past three in the afternoon we were in our hotel in Murren and getting on with the fitting of ski boots and skis ready for the next day's activities.

On the second day the people who were

having ski lessons were put into groups, with some people who had skied before taking part in a ski off, where they skied down a slope and were put into groups according to their ability. The people who weren't having lessons skied in little groups without an instructor in the morning and then some went with Brian in the afternoon. There was only one injury in the second day, Lydia Harrison who dented a bone in her leg. She was

fine but spent the next morning resting.

On the 1st April Brian took a group of experienced skiers to the nearby resort of Wengen. Despite a few skis and poles going missing due to April Fools Day, they returned having had a great time.

The weather was glorious all week, hot, bright sunshine so we skied in tshirts and factor sixty sun screen. The hot sun made the snow quite slushy in the after-

noons but it didn't stop anybody enjoying their skiing.

At the top of the cable car lift, right on top of the mountain is the Schilthorn revolving restaurant. It was built for the James Bond film "On Her Majesty's Secret Service" and gives a spectacular view of the Jungfrau, Eiger and Monch.

On Sunday there was a slalom race for all the children in ski lessons. They all did very well with Ben Varnam coming first, Helen Dunstall second and Emma

Purvis third. There were ski lessons in the afternoon but some of the children skied with their parents. There was a particularly funny fall when Adie White (one of the most experienced skiers) went backwards into a tree and several people have picture and even video clips of the incident.

Most of us went skiing on Monday until lunchtime when we had to take our skis and boots back to the hire shop and pack up for another year. At one o'clock everyone caught

the train down to Lauterbrunnen and travelled back to the airport. We arrived back in England at around seven o'clock and were back in the Wychwoods for half past nine.

There is one person that we're all thinking about, Bob James had a bad fall and broke two vertebrae in his back, we wish him a speedy recovery. I'm sure everyone wants to thank Brian Ridley for organising the amazing ski trip to Murren.

Lizzie Currie.



Ascott Cricket Club 2005

Another May approaches, another season begins for Ascott CC, this year under new leadership. The AGM saw Brent Barnes voted in as club captain, in his absence I might add. Don't miss Ascott CC's AGM's, you never know what you might get voted in to do!

Ascott have 19 fixtures in place for 2005, 12 of which are at home, the dates for the home fixtures are as follows:

May 8th, 15th, 22nd and 29th.

June 5th, 19th and 26th.

July 10th and 17th.

August 7th, 14th and 28th

We enjoyed a fair bit of support from the village last season for which we are all thankful. It would be nice to see similar numbers this year, even if it's only to have a laugh at our expense!

We are still on the lookout for new players / members for the club

so if you're the slightest bit interested in cricket please feel free to contact me on 01993 831916, membership for the season is £30 for seniors (over 16) and £12.50 for juniors (under 16), some of us will be looking for a reduction in this fee as veterans!!! Match fee on the day is £4 for seniors and £2.50 for juniors.

Clive Jowett

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Billham 01993 842061.

Wednesday Evenings
Badminton. Contact
Chris Morgan 01993
831958.

Thursday Evenings
Yoga. Contact Chris Setters
01608 676236

Saturday Mornings
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Choral Evensong

On Sunday 1st May at 6.00 pm in Ascott-under-Wychwood Church there will be a Choral Evensong for Rogation Sunday [for

the Book of Common Prayer]. The Wheatsheaf Consort from Banbury will be singing the service with music by Bryd and others. If you like

choral music and the Book Of Common Prayer, please do come along.

Wychwood Library Opening Times

Monday: 2pm to 5pm/
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