
The Ascott Grapevine



Grapevine Appeal

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

Although 'The Grapevine' does receive support from the Parish Council and the PCC, it only raises a limited amount of revenue from advertising. 'The Ascott Grapevine' survives mainly on donations. If you would like to help The 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 team to discuss your ideas.

Articles for the Summer issue of The Grapevine should be submitted by 5th July 2010.

Call 01993 831023 or email:
wendypearse@btinternet.com

*Stuart Fox, Elaine Byles,
Wendy Pearse, Maggie Lyon.*

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.

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

Advertising Rates

£16.00 for a full page
£11.00 for a half page
£6.00 for a quarter page

BOOK and PAY in advance for FOUR issues and you only have to PAY for THREE

A MESSAGE FROM THE RECTOR

Dear Friends

As we celebrated yet another Easter I wonder just how important it is to you? Compared to Christmas it is a very gentle season, no hectic shopping and endless wrapping of presents and writing of cards, few of which are ever acknowledged!

None of the pressures like finding a Christmas tree and the annual climb into the attic for those dusty decorations plus all the other traditions of which we partake.

No, Easter is a very gentle unassuming festival, for many it comes and goes almost without being noticed. For the majority it will mean just the traditional Easter eggs and the bonus of two days Bank holiday. But for Christians it is probably the most important festival in the Church calendar. The services we hold take us through the last few days of Jesus' life over 2000 years ago, three days which changed the world.

I write this on Easter Eve at the end of what has been a busy but moving Holy Week. On Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday a small number of people met for the reflective service of Compline. On Maundy Thursday we gath-

ered in Spelsbury Memorial Hall for a Supper during which we remembered the last supper Jesus had with his friends before Judas slipped out into the darkness and for just 30 pieces of silver betrayed the Son of God. Then on Good Friday we welcomed 42 children and 29 parents for our first ever

'Messy Church' – a time when families learnt together about the events of that first Easter through craft, illustration, storytelling ending with a feast of

cakes and goodies! Later in the day smaller numbers met for the more traditional Good Friday service when we remembered the pain, humiliation and suffering our Lord Jesus Christ went through before being crucified on a cross at Calvary. That night we gathered at Spelsbury for the Easter Vigil – a service of readings and prayers as we prepare to greet the risen Christ.

On Easter Sunday – our church burst forth with flowers, music, and worship celebrating the resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead. New life, new hope. Now more than ever, people need a purpose a real hope for the future. Each one of us, whether rich, poor, black or white will each have to die one day and it is a



Holy Trinity Church - Spelsbury - Oxfordshire

natural question to ask ‘what happens when we die’? The unbeliever will answer this by saying, ‘I knew nothing before I was born, and I will know nothing after I die’; they have a great surprise awaiting them after ‘take off’.

Army Chaplains will tell you that you very rarely come across an atheist on the battle field. In the same way I have rarely met a dying person whose thoughts did not reach out to God and to questions like ‘Is there really another life’? When health, wealth and life begin to ebb away, thoughts of a loving Heavenly Father are consoling and comforting. But we don’t have to wait until the last chapter of our own story before we renew, and refresh our relationship with God.

And you don’t have to wait until next Holy Week and Easter to do this! We celebrate Easter every Sunday. So why not join us? It would be really lovely to see you.

With every blessing.

**Mark Abrey
The Rector**

The Revd Mary Crameri

Many will have already heard that Mary recently announced that she plans to retire from ministry and will therefore be leaving the Benefice. Mary has been with us now for five years and in that time she has done a tremendous amount of work in all of the villages of our Benefice. She has brought many gifts to the Benefice and she will be greatly missed.

Her final service will be at 10 am in Chadlington Church on Sunday 9 May.

I hope that as many people as possible will be able to come to her final service to show our appreciation for all that she has done. We wish Mary and her husband Peter a long and happy retirement.

DEATHS

On the 7th January 2010, Sonia (Sonie) Mary Edginton, formerly of High Street, aged 89 years.

On the 31st January 2010, Jim Beveridge, aged 84 years.

Jim Beveridge 1925 – 2010

The following tributes have been written by two of Jim's granddaughters. His granddaughter Josie who has emigrated to New Zealand has sent this:

When I heard the news that my very special Grandpa had died, it brought a difficult reminder of just how far we are from friends and family. Although he was becoming very frail, his mind was agile and he remained a person of great knowledge. He was a man I deeply respected and admired and I very much enjoyed his company throughout so many stages of my life.

I used to stay with him as a little girl when I was old enough to go on my own. It was so exciting, that first little bit of independence and all those swimming trips to The Oasis in Swindon. He put me through my paces with a French Bootcamp when I was taking my GCSE's, but his dedication to the job and his relentless encouragement saw me scoop that all important A grade. He took me off to Switzerland when I was 19 to visit our relatives and shared stories of his life in Basel where he met and fell in love with my grandmother. In later years he used to meet me in London when he was at conferences and we'd put the world to rights over a gin and tonic at Paddington station before he headed off home to the Cotswolds. He found the death of my mum tremendously difficult, as we



all did and still do. He continued his examining work right up to his last week and embarked on regular trips to France with my aunt and her lovely husband, giving him valuable time with his smashing youngest granddaughter Rosie. More recently, I took great delight in introducing him to my wonderful husband and our two girls when he would play with the girls and take pleasure in sharing our lives, as he did with my sister and her super family.

He was so supportive of our move to New Zealand. Having had a life-long love affair with France and Germany, he knew what a beautiful and exciting world there was out there. I am pleased that he saw some of our new life through this blog but so very, very sad I will never hear his soft Scottish accent again and his cheerful goodbyes. And of course, what I also miss is being able to offer comfort to my family and be comforted in return.

Josie

His granddaughter Emma sent this:

Memories of Faffa Jim

“Deux baguettes s’il vous plaît madame”, was probably the first thing Grandpa taught me to say, about 30 years ago on our mammoth family holiday to France. He was in his element. I remember the cow bells ringing outside the gîte where we stayed and being introduced to this exotic green mint drink, chocolate spread and La vache qui rit! It was a great holiday!

Then there were the trips to Ascott. The 50 mile trip along the M40 from Marlow was the longest journey of two young girls’ lives. How many trains would we see from the big window in the living room? How big would the Christmas tree be this year, how many tree chocolates could we swipe without being spotted and what interesting presents would Grandpa have brought us from his latest travels in France, Germany and Switzerland? We particularly loved the families of chocolate ladybirds.

I remember many walks with Kate the dog to the treacherous roundabout at the playing fields and many a fantastic meal at Chestayne House that Grandpa and Beth would have knocked up in the big green kitchen with a view of Pam Ayres’ garden. We would then all play games in the living room and Josie and I would perch on the little green footstools in front of the roaring fire.

I thank Faffa for putting me through my paces before every French exam. During the Easter holidays in 1992, I had a rigorous week of test papers and mock oral exams in between plenty of cups of tea, biscuits and then a well earned reward at The Lamb in Shipton. The previous summer he had taken me to Switzerland to meet the family... the scariest holiday I have ever had. There were lots of people shouting in Schwyzertütsch . I would be blissfully unaware and Faffa would sit there soaking it up like a native.

Although he never said so, I think Grandpa was chuffed to see me take a gap year in Geneva and then study French at University. He came out to see me in Paris during my work placement year and again, I think, he thoroughly enjoyed me showing him around my haunts, especially Chez Paul at the Bastille. He loved being a bit of a show-off with the wine waiters. This continued into 2002, 03 and 04 when already well into his 70s he would enjoy excursions on the train to see me in Birmingham. We loved our trips to the Hotel du Vin!

Faffa Jim was a great man whom we all miss enormously. He lives on in us all and I know every time my children speak a bit of French or sing Frère Jacques that he will be looking down with an approving smile.

Emma

Donations totalling £328.19 were received at Jim's Funeral Service and were sent to the 'Children with Leukaemia' fund.



Sonia Mary Edginton 1920-2010

Born on the 31st May, 1920, Sonia Mary Keep came to live in Ascott-under-Wychwood when she was three years old. Her father was chauffeur/handyman at The Grange and the family lived in Grange Cottage. She went to the Village School and then to Shipton School.

Sonia, always known as Sonie, was a very fine seamstress and always smart in her appearance. At some time she worked for Badcocks Drapery Stores in Oxford. During World War II, Sonie travelled daily by train to Oxford where she worked at the Pressed Steel plant on war equipment. When war ended she married Arthur Reginald Edginton whose family had lived in Ascott for generations. He was a well known local historian and they lived with his parents in High Street. Reg died in 1979 and Sonie remained in High Street until 2005 when she moved to Castle View, Chipping Norton, where she spent four very happy years. Sonie died on the 2nd January 2010 aged 89 years.

ELIJAH PRATLEY AND THE TIDDLY QUID

Probably one of the attractions of local history is the mysteries that it produces, incidents from the past that intrigue and provoke. We want to unravel the mystery and get to the bottom of it. One such mystery which has intrigued me for the last ten years, concerns a family named Pratley who lived in the bottom house (Shipton Road end) of Church View, formerly The Row. I came across the incident when I was researching the men of Ascott who died in the First World War and at last my curiosity has been satisfied.

On the memorial plaque by the church gates is listed the name E. Pratley, but on the Roll of Honour kept in the Tiddy Hall, two E. Pratleys, Elijah and Elisha, are recorded and beside both of them are inscribed the letters R.I.P. Elisha Pratley certainly died in the War but why had R.I.P. been inscribed beside Elijah Pratley's name when he is not recorded on the War Memorial? They were brothers, Elijah the elder by two years, and they were part of the large family of Pratleys who lived in that end house in Church View for around forty years.

William, the boys' father had become the tenant in 1881. At the time he was a farm labourer aged 42, his wife Elizabeth was aged 30 and their family consisted of Sarah 12, Jemima 10, William 8, Mary 6, Joseph 3 and Frederick 10 months. Ten years later the 1891 Census records that four more children

had joined the family, Edith, Charlotte, Elijah and Elisha, and by 1901 Ada and Alfred were also recorded. The family had further increased to include Albert and Lilian, the illegitimate offspring of two of the daughters. Unfortunately it seems that William, the father, was inclined to like his liquor and was known, at times, to cause trouble locally. This was particularly noticeable during the episode of the Ascott Martyrs when he was amongst those besieging Chipping Norton Police Station where two of his sisters-in-law were imprisoned, following the Martyrs' trial. So it seems likely that at times life may not have been very easy for the youngsters of the family.

But to return to the mystery. A couple of years after my initial research I was alerted to the fact that in the County Record Office were the Absent Voters' Lists. These first began in 1918 when so many men were away fighting in the First World War. The 1918 List and also those for 1919 and 1920 record an Elijah Pratley from Ascott under Wychwood serving on H.M.S. Royal Sovereign. I then began to think that there had been an incident related to the aftermath of the War during which Elijah must have died. But despite a few inquiries I could not follow up the mystery until last year when the Service Records of Royal Navy Seamen became available to

download from the internet. Finally I found my answer.

Back to the Pratleys. As the children grew to adulthood, they gradually left home, the boys to find work elsewhere, two on the Railway, and the girls to go into service, several moving to the London area. But when Elijah reached nineteen, having worked as a groom and a gardener, he must have decided that his destiny lay in the Royal Navy and he duly signed the papers on 2nd January 1907 to begin training as a stoker. Four months later, on his eighteenth

birthday, Elisha decided to follow in the footsteps of his elder brother and became a Royal Navy trainee on 23rd May 1907.

Physically the brothers appear to have been of a similar appearance. Both were described as brown haired with brown eyes, and a sallow or dark complexion. They were on the short side, around 5ft 4 inches tall with a chest measurement of 36 ins. On entering the service, Elijah already sported tattoos of an eagle and a snake on his left forearm. Although Elijah started his service as a trainee stoker, Elisha rose from boy to able seaman before switching to stoker training, four years after joining the Royal Na-

vy. In the seven years leading up to the First World War, the brothers were only on the same station once, for just a month in March and April 1912. At that time they were both stationed on Victory II which was the administration and accommodation depot for stokers situated in H.M. Naval Base at Portsmouth.

Following various lengths of service on thirteen ships, when the War began, Elisha, by then a qualified stoker First Class, had just been assigned to HMS Good Hope, an armoured but ageing battle-cruiser of 14,100 tons furnished with a large complement of guns.

Elijah's first assignment, for six months from



the 2nd January 1907 was on HMS Nelson. She was an armoured cruiser built in 1876. After several years on the Australian Station, she returned to Britain and in 1902 had been converted to a training ship for stokers. Elijah then had brief spells on HMS Cressy and HMS Hecla, a ship which had played an important role in the development of British torpedo forces. On 22nd January 1908 he joined HMS Goliath, a battleship commissioned in 1900. Goliath and her five sister ships

had been designed for Far East service and were smaller, faster and lighter than their previous class battleships, to enable them to transit the Suez Canal. They were also the first British battleships with water tube boilers which led to fore and aft funnels, rather than the earlier side by side funnel arrangement. However in March 1907 Goliath was transferred to the Home Fleet and underwent an overhaul at Portsmouth. Elijah joined the ship in January 1908 just before she sailed for Mediterranean Fleet Service. Before she reached Malta, one of her propeller shafts fractured and she required a four month repair. So it seems that Elijah enjoyed a lengthy stay in the sunshine of Malta. The following April Goliath returned to Portsmouth and was decommissioned. It was during his time on Goliath that Elijah rose to the rank of Stoker First Class. He then spent a few months on the home base of Victory II until he joined HMS Topaze in August. The Topaze had only been completed in 1904. She was a 3rd Class Cruiser, larger, more heavily armed, better protected and faster than previous ships of this type and for the first time this type of cruiser was expected to operate with the main fleet. Elijah remained on her until 21st December 1911 when his initial period of engagement came to an end.

But the sea had entered his blood and by 25th January 1912 he was back on the shore station Victory II waiting

for his next assignment. A typical sailor he had also acquired a whole lot more tattoos. A lady, snake and dragon on his right forearm, a flag and lion on his chest and roses around his neck, and he had signed on this time for twelve years. Throughout his career in the Royal Navy Elijah's character was always assessed as very good and his ability as at least satisfactory.

His career now took him to the Far East. He probably travelled to China on the protected cruiser HMS Spartiate before serving for a short while on the armoured cruiser HMS Minotaur. Soon he transferred to HMS Alacrity, a despatch vessel furnished to a high standard, she had served for many years as a transport for diplomats and high ranking officials. But her usefulness was coming to an end and in March 1913, with Elijah on board, she returned to England to be sold.

Back in Portsmouth Elijah then joined HMS Ariadne, built in 1898 and recently converted into a training ship for stokers. So he was probably then passing on his acquired knowledge to newly joined trainees.

When the First World War broke out in August 1914 Elijah was aboard the revolutionary battleship HMS Dreadnought based at Scarpa Flow. Dreadnought's launch in 1906 as the fastest battleship in the world, had marked such an advance in naval technology that all ships built earlier became known as pre-dreadnoughts. She was also the ship that initiated the race

**ASCOTT-U-WYCHWOOD
VILLAGE FETE**

JUNE 12TH

**AT THE SPORTS
PAVILION, HIGH STREET**

12.30 opening

Dog Show

**(Bring your dog and enter the various
classes)**

Debbie Arthur's Jazz Band

**Performances from the local Schools
Stalls**

Children's Corner

.....and much more!

**Come and treat yourself to lunch at our BBQ,
sup a good beer, Pimms or soft drink in the
tent, and have afternoon tea later on!**

All proceeds go to our Village Church

of all other naval nations to match her abilities, notably that of the German Kaiser. By 1914 she had been succeeded by super dreadnoughts but still held her own as the flagship of the Fourth Battle Squadron in the North Sea.

It is at this point that Elijah's service record indicates the tragedy that struck the Pratley family. At the Battle of Coronel, a naval engagement that took place in the Pacific just off the coast of Chile, Elijah's brother Elisha was killed. The British Commander, Sir Christopher Cradock led a slightly older fleet against a crack squadron commanded by the German Admiral von Spee. His more modern vessels proved too much for the British and

the two major battleships HMS Good Hope and HMS Monmouth were sunk with the loss of all hands. The Good Hope on which Elisha was serving lasted only a short while before exploding in a great column of flame which rose high into the sky, silhouetted against a backdrop of a rapidly setting sun. This disaster occurred on 1st November 1914 and from the 5th to the 11th of the same month, Elijah was on leave from the Dreadnought. The following March he was still a member of the crew when Dreadnought rammed and sank the German submarine U 29, the

Page 12

only battleship ever to sink a submarine directly.

From June 1915 until April 1916 Elijah spent his time at either the shore establishment of Victory II which was relocated to the Crystal Palace, London, during the War, or the Torpedo Training Station based on HMS Vernon. Then he was assigned to the newly built mighty battleship HMS Royal Sovereign. He stayed with her for the next four and a half years from 18 April 1916 until 25th October 1920. A fortnight after he arrived on board the ship was launched from Portsmouth Dockyard. Her overall length was 624 feet with a beam of 88 feet. She had

eighteen boilers in three boiler rooms and all the funnel uptakes turned into one allowing just one single funnel. This was unique at that time. During construction it was decided to convert her to oil firing and bathrooms for the crew

were built in what were originally designated as coal bunkers. She was renowned as an extra smart ship, with highly burnished brasswork and holystoned decks and to her crew she was known as the top notch of the fleet – a 'tiddly' ship. Hence the sailors' nickname, the 'Tiddly Quid'. Sovereign-British Pound-Quid.

Don't forget about the Ascott website:



When she left Portsmouth for Cape Wrath and the Pentland Firth on her maiden voyage, there were 1400 persons on board, but she was still undergoing gunnery trials when the Battle of Jutland took place, so did not take part. The remaining years of the War she spent at sea in all weathers, in monotonous patrols of the submarine infested waters of the North Sea, or escorting Norwegian convoys. Probably the most significant episode of her life up to that time occurred after the Armistice, when she was part of the Grand Fleet escorting the humiliated German Fleet back to Scarpa Flow. Elijah must also have been present when the whole German Fleet was scuttled in that anchorage.

In early 1920 the Royal Sovereign sailed to the Mediterranean as part of the newly named Atlantic Fleet, and after a stay in Malta sailed for the Gallipoli area where trouble was brewing between the Turks and Greeks. The Red and White Russians were also fighting in the Crimea and with wealthy Russian refugees fleeing for their lives, the Royal Sovereign took on board at Prinkipo, the Princess Galitzine. When the ship returned to Britain in October, Elijah's service with her came to an end.

Then followed a few months on HMS Colossus, one of the ships close to breaking up, due to the terms of the Washington Naval Treaty. Moving on to HMS Coventry Elijah was on board during March 1923 when a torpedo explosion whilst in Malta, caused the death of two of her crewmen. His next assignment was to the pre-dreadnought battleship HMS Agamemnon which early in April 1920 had been converted to a target ship. The Commander in Chief, Grand Fleet, Admiral David Beatty, decided that a large target was necessary, for the battleships of the Grand Fleet which had seen little action since 1916, to undergo realistic gunnery practise.



The ship was rewired for radio control and stripped, but she was not intended to be sunk, so a crew of 153 was assigned to maintain and operate her when not under fire. She was straffed, machine gun fired, subjected to small calibre shell fire and early on, even exposed to a cloud of poisonous gas to determine the effect it would have on a battleship. Elijah spent nearly three years on this assignment.

For his final year in the Royal Navy Elijah spent time at the shore bases of Victory and Vernon until his final stint on HMS Centurion, the battleship converted to a target ship to replace

HMS Agamemnon sold for scrap in 1927. So a less illustrious end to Elijah's naval career.

The Royal Sovereign also met a less illustrious end. She served during the 2nd World War but in May 1944 was loaned to the Soviet Union and renamed the Arkhangel-



sk. She returned to the United Kingdom in February 1949, a sad and sorry sight, totally unkempt. She was renamed the Royal Sovereign but was scrapped within the year, at Inverkeithing.

Early in 1929 Elijah left the Navy. Aged 41, probably sporting even more tattoos and blessed with a rolling gait acquired by years afloat, he disappeared into civilian life, until his death in Lambeth, in 1962, aged 75.

So it seems, Elijah was not resting in peace over all those years, but was happily pursuing his chosen life at sea. I wonder if he ever knew that his passing had been re-

corded so many years earlier, apparently by mistake. By sheer coincidence, Elijah's medal, shown in the photographs above, have recently been discovered in an antique shop. If anyone knows a member of the Pratlley family who would have an interest in the medals, they are welcome to get in touch with me.

Wendy Pearse

Bed & Breakfast

In Ascott

Excellent independent
ensuite rooms
for your friends or relatives
coming to stay

Children welcome.

Please ring
Mrs Ingrid Ridley

01993 830612

visit the website
www.meadowbank-ascott.co.uk

ASCOTT-UNDER-WYCHWOOD LITTER PICK



A **big thank you** from the Parish Council to the fifteen volunteers who took part in our Annual Parish Litter Pick.

Altogether nineteen sacks of rubbish were collected and included the usual selection of crisp packets, wine and spirit bottles, cigarette packs, many cans both of soft drinks and lager and sweet wrappers. Collector's items this time included; a rubber glove, a complete car wing mirror and an exhaust system and silencer! I even found a carefully packed bag of mixed rubbish tied up and then thrown into the hedgerow. Why?

The trail of rubbish down the hill from the Chipping Norton road and also down London Lane was appalling; do drivers passing through Ascott think that we are a rubbish dump?

Stuart Fox



PARENTS AND CHILDREN TOGETHER

www.pactcharity.org

Have YOU ever thought about FOSTERING?

There is a recognised shortage of 10,000 Foster Carers in the UK. PACT, founded in 1911, is also known as the Oxford Diocesan Council for Social Work inc. We are a registered charity working to improve life chances for children. The focus of our work is within Berkshire, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire and aims to build and strengthen families.

We are an approved Adoption and Fostering Agency. We have a history of finding safe, loving families for children in care. Here are a few facts about Fostering:

1. Did you know you don't have to be married to become a Foster Carer?
2. You don't have to have children already although you do need to have experience of caring for children.
3. Did you know you get paid a Fostering Allowance of £335.70 a week to be a Foster Carer which is tax free and won't affect any other benefits?
4. Most of the children who need fostering are known as 'hard to place' children, they will usually be 8+ years of age.

Fostering is a hard but very rewarding job. If you think you might have what it takes to become a Permanent Foster Carer or you want to find out more then contact PACT now on **0800 731 1845** e-mail fostering@pactcharity.org

WHO ARE WE?

Do you sometimes want to be awkward, just for the sake of it?

Do you sometimes want to be unpleasant, just because you can't stand people who seem to be nice all the time? Nice is a sickly word anyway.

Do we by acting who we think we are, become the person we are, or do we have little control over who we are? Do you think we humans are complex creatures or are we just lumps of flesh and bone, who, when prodded in the right place, all react in the same way? Such things bother me. Is it better to live in a Fool's paradise or Hell's reality? I asked Carole Angier this question. Carole has a degree in Philosophy. She said it is better to live in reality. I am not sure I agree. I will try and explain by giving two examples.

Supposing a little boy was always picked by the football team, which made him think he must be their best player. But the truth was, he was picked because his father supplied the transport for away matches.

Supposing Cinderella met her Prince Charming, she fell in love with him and they married, only to find out quickly afterwards that his real affections were elsewhere.

Would it have been better for Cinderella to have had a happy and full life without knowing?

I have to admit I am religious,

which is not an easy thing to do in this

age of reason and self, but why are most of us Sunday Christians such boring people? We are as boring as I find most Atheists are intellectual bigots. We Christians are told it is part of our duty to administer to the sick. I have tried this and it does work. Most people I meet will say to me, 'Listening to you for two minutes makes me sick.'

My mother would often say to me, 'I am not going to talk to you while you're in one of your moods.' I think mothers make the best psychologists. They know what makes us tick. I don't know the answer to the questions I've asked. If they leave you muddled and uncertain, then I realise I am not alone.

Fred Russell

DEADLINE FOR

SUMMER 2010 EDITION

JULY 5TH

PLEASE DON'T BE LATE

Acousticana Came To Ascott-under-Wychwood

On Saturday April 3rd a group of accomplished singer/songwriters performed a selection of their own compositions and familiar material in Tiddy Hall, under the umbrella of Acousticana. The audience was entertained by voice, guitar, mandolin, harmonium and dobro (resonator guitar), with folk, alt-country, blues, some pieces you just couldn't stick a label on and amazingly, some jazz on the harmonium. One song was two hundred years old, another, two weeks.

The musicians, David Menday, Linda Watkins, Braham Levy, Sandra Shallis and Mark Pidgeon very kindly gave their services free of charge to raise money for Ascott Village Charity and Tiddy Hall. Richard Watkins, sound engineer, did an excellent job and even managed to keep the performers under control, no mean feat!

Hopefully a good night was had by all, the musicians certainly enjoyed it. I would like to thank everyone who came along and supported the event, but special thanks must go to Karen and Harry Kappen, Roger and Ros Shepherd and John and Debra Cull for their considerable help and enthusiasm and to Sue Boyer for helping on the night.

Elaine Byles



GARDENING NOTES

I do hope that by the time you read this a sunny, dry spring is underway and plants are growing away well. What a dreary, cold, wet and long winter it has been. Snowdrops flowered well into March and it seems to me that was the only benefit of the winter since there was a much longer time than usual to appreciate those delicate-looking flowers. On the minus side, there has been a long wait for the flowers which traditionally herald spring, the daffodils. In our garden early daffodils like 'February Gold' began to flower at the same time as the later ones like 'Jack Snipe' meaning that the daffodil season has not been as prolonged as in other years. Despite the dire weather, there seem to have been few plants which have succumbed though I have noticed that some clumps of perennials seem to have lost some of their volume due to the wet conditions.

Like me I expect you have been trying to catch up with all the jobs that have had to be held over to April. It has not been easy with April being such a busy gardening month, anyway. I did manage to plant onion sets

and garlic in the middle of March and added some elephant garlic which is supposed to be less pungent than ordinary garlic. Everything else had to wait until April. The elephant garlic cloves certainly lived up to the name being about four times the size of the ordinary sort. It will be interesting to see how well they grow and what they taste like.

I am writing this at the beginning of April and thinking ahead to the end of the month and beginning of May. By that time all the potatoes which have been chitting since February will have been planted. Broad beans will have been sown where they will flower and be harvested, likewise beetroot, chard, carrots, parsnips, French beans and mangetout peas. Sweetcorn, courgettes and brassicas will have been sown in pots to set out as strong young plants. I have found that if I sow these plants directly into the ground they are likely to be eaten by slugs, snails, mice or pigeons before they get established. Whereas they are far more likely to survive predation when put into the ground as sturdy plants. For the same reason runner beans will be sown in pots in the middle of May and planted out in June when all danger of frost is passed. I have cheated this year



and bought in young pepper, aubergine and tomato plants instead of growing from seed. It has made life easier but there was a lot less choice of varieties and it was much pricier than starting from seed.

You may remember that we had planned and laid out the garden without any thought of leaving a space for a bonfire and were wondering how we were going to manage. While trying to make enough room to fit the car into the garage for winter we found a collapsible incinerator which we had totally forgotten about. It is just four panels of open wirework which fit together to form a 2ft by 2ft square with a fifth panel slotting in to form a bottom. They make a cage with an open top to contain the garden refuse for burning. We have used it this spring and found it ideal for burning dry material such as spent grasses and dead flower stems but it collapses under the weight of anything heavier. But with two WODC green bins, composting and shredding as well we are keeping up with eliminating our garden debris much better than we thought we would.

My resolution for the coming months is to provide adequate but unobtrusive support as the flowering plants are growing rather than wait until they collapse and the stems have

to be pulled together with string tied to a cane or two. It looks so ugly when that happens. I've tried using those circular plastic frames with criss-cross bars that the plants grow through but have found they break too easily. I have not got the patience either to make a framework of canes with a cat's cradle of string tied between them so I have started using metal semi-circular supports with legs at either end which push into the ground. They are very effective with tall plants and are quick to use. The only really challenging part is pushing them into our stony Cotswold soil and it can take several repositionings before success is achieved. They do cost some money but are very strong so will last a



lifetime. The other thing to get right is to position them at just the correct time – too soon and you'll be looking at a forest of metal until the plants grow to camouflage them, too late and the plants may have already collapsed. Whether it all goes well or not the important point is that thinking about staking means Summer is coming. The promise of beautiful flowers and tasty home-grown vegetables gladdens the heart and nurtures the body and spirit. Bring it on!

Yvette Keauffling

A SAD FAREWELL

Ascott-under-Wychwood village shop bid a very sad farewell to Mary Barco, a truly valued and most popular member of staff for almost six years. Mary is leaving Oxfordshire, with her husband and three sons in tow, to return to her native Cornwall.

Some of her friends, both staff and customers alike, arrived at the shop on her last day to say farewell and some tears were shed at the heartfelt speeches

made by Mike Pearce, Deputy Chairman, Ascott Village Shop Management Committee and indeed Mary herself.



Mike Pearce, Maggie Lyon, Mary Barco

We wish Mary and her family the very best for their new life in Cornwall and wish them much happiness in this new chapter in their lives.

There will always be a warm welcome for them from all of us whenever they visit the Cotswolds in the future.

Maggie Lyon



Some of Mary's friends who turned out to wish her well

Photos by Ash Ismail

ECO-RENOVATION

Are you renovating your home or having building work done? There are lots of ways that you can make your home improvements more eco-friendly. Some of these things are well publicised, such as insulation and double glazing, but there are many other choices you can make that will lower the environmental impact of building and renovation work.

Many of the materials that are used are very energy intensive to produce, so making greener choices does have a significant impact. There is a huge variety of 'green' materials available, from sheep's wool insulation, and lime based concretes and plasters, to natural paints and varnishes.

Certainly if you have the budget, then it is possible to find 'green' alternatives to a huge number of building materials. However very often it is too costly to make these choices. However, that doesn't mean you have to throw your good intentions out of the window! Simply by using reclaimed and second hand materials, you can make a huge difference. If you are using a builder or tradesman for the work, ask them if they are happy to use reclaimed materials. You may have to put in a bit more time but it may also save you money on the project too.

Oxford Eco-Renovations run a series of open houses, where people who have renovated their homes will do tours of their houses and talk to the public about how they went about their project and what suppliers/ builders they used. If you are interested in seeing what you can do to your home and how you can make it more eco-friendly, then these are valuable opportunities to find out what sort of things work well/ are cost efficient etc.

Below are some useful sources of information:

Oxford Eco-renovation

www.climatex.org/ecorenovation

01865 275 856

Includes a comprehensive list of suppliers, services and links to grant and energy information.

Natural Building Store

www.natural-building.co.uk A good fairly local source for green building supplies

Orinoco www.oxorinoco.org Oxford based scrap store for recycled paint, tools, materials, etc.

Oxford Wood Recycling

www.oxfordwoodrecycling.org.uk

01235 861228 For reclaimed wood at reasonable prices.

Jenna Saunders

WYCHWOODS LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

The next meeting of the Society will be on Thursday, 20th May at Milton Village Hall at 7.30.p.m. when Liz Woolley will talk about The Parish of St. Thomas the Martyr, Oxford - 800 Years of History.

This will be followed in June by Martin Way talking about The History and Archaeology of Radcot Bridge, at Shipton Village Hall on the 17th June at 7.30.p.m. .

Old and new members are welcome. Subscriptions are £6 for an individual and £9 for a couple which includes a copy of Wychwoods History when published. Visitors are welcome at any meeting at £2 per head. **More information can be obtained from Wendy Pearse on 831023 or the WLHS Website www.wychwoodshistory.org**



Stop Press !

We have relocated but only just over the road.

We are now in Market Street. Charlbury

(Next to the Rose & Crown)

We still offer an excellent Picture Framing service, so whether its just a reglaze or a complete new frame, we've got it all, lots of mouldings to choose from, Computerised Mount Cutting

We also offer the option of Schott Mirogard glass for that finishing touch.

Don't forget we have a great selection of gifts from the unusual to the traditional So whether its a Birthday, Wedding or just a treat for yourself you know where to come 'Cotswold Frames'

Market Street ♦ Charlbury ♦ OX7 3PL ♦ 01608 811805

Monday - Friday 9-5.30

Saturday 9-5

Sunday 9-4 (excluding Jan/Feb/March)

Closed all day Tuesdays

Ascott-under-Wychwood Village Fete - Saturday 12 June

I can't believe it's almost that time when the Village come together again to celebrate (hopefully in glorious sunshine!), the yearly Fete. We're hoping to build on last year's successful day and provide yet another enjoyable afternoon packed with live entertainment from the local Schools, The Debbie Arthurs Jazz Band, The Dog Show (what an incredible sight last year with all the differ-

ent dogs competing!) an exciting Children's corner (with some new and old favourites!) and of course our lovely traditional stalls

(14 so far) Don't forget the sizzling BBQ for lunch (as we're opening again at 12.30) washed down with some fine beers or Pimms, then after you've walked that off round the various tents you can treat yourself to afternoon tea. Vintage cars and tractors, and the mini golf area will also be featuring again this year and it wouldn't be a Fete without the Raffle! Some fantastic prizes: £150.00, Meal for two at The Swan, Daylesford Hamper and Burford Garden Vouchers!

The Committee who are: Louise Woods, Mary Barnes, Jacquie Budgea, Vikki Godfrey and me (Debra) have had great fun in organising this event over the past 5 years, but like everything, it needs new ideas, new lease of life (not that we're past it!) However we have to be careful we/it doesn't become stale. We have been able to refine it in many ways and the organi-



sation of it all is now very easy as everything is detailed and in a file. It's never been a chore and we always enjoy our meetings. It's now time however to step aside and let some new faces join the Committee. We

wouldn't of course abandon you and we'd support you all the way at next year's Fete, but we would like to start taking more of back seat. So how about it? We'd love you on board now and our next meeting will be in May (date TBC). Guaranteed a lot of fun and maybe a glass or two of wine! I look forward to hearing from you.

Debra Cull

All proceeds of the Fete go to the Village Church

Dog Classes are:

- * Best puppy**
- * Best senior**
- * Prettiest bitch**
- * Most handsome dog**
- * Best odd couple**
- * Best trick**
- * Best 6 legs**
- * Best child handler (under 12)**
- * Best catcher**
- * Dog most like its owner**
- * Judge's favourite (i.e. best in show)**

Each class is £1.00 to enter and there's a prize for everyone! *Registration will take place at the Fete.*

Please don't forget all dogs must be kept on leads and any mess to be picked up.

STALLS

Do you have something the following stalls could sell? If so please contact the relevant number below:

Bottles ... June Holmes 830272 or Anne Braithwaite 831282

Home made cakesCharlotte Wood 831214

White ElephantYvette Keauffling 832144

(From May onwards please)

Planted bowlsIngrid Ridley 830612 or Philippa Carter 830344

PlantsKathy Pearce 830058

BooksCarole Angier 830414

ToysRosemary Dawbarn 831632

Present moments (new gifts)Susie Boyer 830142 or Philippa Carter 830344

ALSO WANTED: Three or four volunteers to help with the car parking and selling our “Lucky number Programme” at the entrance (Just for the first hour).

PLUS Do you have a small freezer (transportable) for us to use in the Pavilion to store the ice cream?

Please contact Debra 831621

THANK YOU FOR ALL YOUR HELP



**Holy Trinity Church
Ascott-under-Wychwood**

**Come and enjoy a coffee
(and home made biscuit)**

Between 10.00 and mid-day

In the Church

on:-

**Saturday 5th June
Saturday 3rd July
Saturday 7th August
Saturday 4th September
Saturday 2nd October**

MY MUM - THE LAND ARMY GIRL

Of all the things you expect your Mother to know a bit about, the complexities of starting a pre-war Fordson tractor is probably not one of them. So, when I took Mum to an agricultural museum, I was amazed as she chatted knowledgeably with the curator about the machinery on display. Of course, I knew that she had been in the Land Army but had not realised how completely these young women had taken over the jobs of the men who had gone to war.

Mum was 17 when war broke out and was working in a library in Bristol. My grandfather owned a ship repair yard in Avonmouth and was comfortably off so there was nothing in Mum's background to prepare her for the telephone call from her best friend Molly, who announced that she thought it would be a good idea if they joined the Land Army. After



signing up they had introductory training at Callington Agricultural College and then they were both posted to a farm at Coln St Aldwyn near Bibury.

Here she spent the summer on a dairy farm hand milking the dairy herd and she has had a passion for cows ever since. She enjoyed her time there but the farmer was not an easy man. During the war the clocks were set forward two hours so that people could get home in daylight. This particular farmer decided not to join in with the rest of the country so they existed in a different timezone! When the winter arrived the farmer could no longer afford his land girls and so they

were transferred to a farm at Codrington near Chipping Sodbury. This farm was run by a couple from London who had bought it to avoid the bombing and who were, in Mum's opinion, completely useless. When Molly had to return home to look after her ill mother, Mum decided it was time to move on.

Her final farm was at Snowhill Hill, a few miles from Snowhill and a community in its own right. The farm boasted an important pedigree herd of Ayrshires and on this farm Mum's role was primarily that of a tractor driver and general labourer, hence her knowledge of farm machinery. She lived with a group of good people and still exchanges cards with the daughter

of her landlady 65 years later. With hard but generally enjoyable work in wonderful surroundings, it was a very satisfying period of her life which bred a deep love of the Cotswolds and all things agricultural. Much of the work was done by hand and she can still recall the agony of picking sprouts, still white with frost, wearing gloves that became more and more sodden. No possibility of rubber gloves in the war. I am amazed at the distances that she cycled from farms to stations and to towns. She was not the only one to travel

under her own steam; the children of the farm walked to school and back to Blockley every day, a distance of nearly 5 miles (the equivalent of Ascott to Charlbury) collecting more friends at each farm gate. Only on very wet days would the farmer take them all in the back of a cattle truck.

With the end of the war came the return to 'Civvy Street'. I have often

thought that for both of my parents, the change must have been very hard to take. Mum swapped the agriculture that she loved for a job as a bank clerk and Dad, after a war largely spent on Destroyers escorting convoys and hunting U Boats in the North Atlantic, returned to a desk in Bristol.

They were an extraordinary generation who experienced things which are quite unimaginable to those of us born when the war was over.

Tim Lyon



READING OLD FARM BUILDINGS

To an interested viewer there are still signs of old farm buildings to be seen in the countryside. The most obvious of these are the large barns for storing and threshing corn. Built of stone or brick, they were higher than the other farm buildings of their time, and large enough to hold a substantial percentage of the farm's corn crop at harvest time. Many of the barns had large porches in the front, which formed the entrance. These porches had a pair of doors high and wide enough to allow the wagon loads of corn sheaves to be drawn into the barn, and a smaller pair of doors in the opposite wall to enable the wagon to be drawn out after the corn had been unloaded and stacked in the barn. On



farms of more extensive acreage the barns were much larger and had two pairs of doorways instead of one. Some examples of these are the early monastic or tithe barns which are preserved through the National Trust or other bodies, but which served the same purpose. The centre of the barn between the doorways was called the midsty (pronounced midstee) and within living memory had a wooden floor. Historians tell us that this provided a softer surface so that the grain did not split

when threshed by hand. My only comment is that it gave better grip to the horses' feet when they pulled the loaded wagons into the barn. In the days when corn was threshed by hand with flails, the doors would have been open on both sides to create a draught to winnow (blow) the chaff out of the grain. The only access of ventilation and light otherwise, were the vertical slits and the triangular holes through the walls. These latter were also used by owls, to catch mice inhabiting the stack of sheaves of corn.

In later years when corn was threshed by large mobile threshing machines, these were drawn right into the centre of the barn. As

a small boy I remember the machine standing in the middle of Coldstone Farm barn, Ascott – now the house called Coldwell Brook – with the driving belt running from a tractor in front of the barn and the threshed straw coming out of the threshing machine into the rickyard at the back of the barn. There were always clouds of dust from a working threshing machine, so it must have been very unpleasant for the workers inside the barn at the time. Barn machines such as grain mills,

root crop shredders, winnowing machines and chaff cutters to chop hay and straw into short lengths for cattle feed, had become available, and were usually turned by hand, but larger farms sometimes used power provided by a horse gin, a type of capstan pulled round and round by a horse. This turned a shaft which ran through into the barn and connected to the machines. On very large farms some barns had purpose built round stone buildings attached. These housed a powerful gin which was turned by a team of horses. The extra power was needed when the first mechanical threshing machines were invented and constructed on site inside barns.

In Victorian times when steam power became available the landlords of some estates provided the tenant farmers with a stone built engine house next to the barn, to provide power for the barn machines. Some of the engine house chimneys can still be seen on farms that were once owned by the Sarsden Estate. Later on, in some cases, petrol engines were used instead. In the barn at Coldstone two pillars against a wall held a steel shaft at the top, which carried at least six wheels of various sizes. This was powered by a flat belt which ran through the wall to a petrol engine in an adjoining shed. The different sized wheels would have provided power at various speeds to a variety of machines. Changes in farming methods rendered these barns obsolete many years ago, and the

majority of the surviving ones have been converted into houses. At least this has provided a use for them as opposed to dilapidation or demolition.

The cowshed was another significant building on almost every farm. The front of the building was con-



structed with a wide doorway or sometimes two, set between a number of windows. Inside, a long manger on a raised platform ran lengthways along the back. The cows stood on the platform for milking. Just in front of the platform was a gutter which retained any manure until it could be cleaned out between milking times. Between the gutter and the front wall was a walkway for the cows to access their standings. The cowshed at Coldstone adjoined the barn at one end with a connecting doorway into a passage behind the manger, so that feeding stuffs could be taken from the barn and fed straight to the cows.

Tie chains or steel yoke fastenings were fixed to the manger and the cows came in twice a day for milking. They each went straight to their normal positions every time, and were tied up. On most farms until the 1950s this was when the cowmen or milkmaids sat on their three legged stools and milked the

Cotswold Wildlife Park

From ANTS to WHITE RHINOS and BATS to
BIG CATS in 160 Acres of Landscaped Parkland

- Adventure Playground
- Children's Farmyard
- Cafeteria
- Picnic Areas
- Narrow Gauge
Railway (Apr to Oct)

Open
daily
from
10am



Nr Burford, Oxfordshire,
OX18 4JP, 01993823006

www.cotswoldwildlifepark.co.uk

cows by hand into a bucket. In most cases the bucketful of milk was then carried across the farmyard to the dairy for filtering, cooling and putting into milk churns or bottles.

The inside walls of the cowshed were almost always white with lime-wash, for hygiene, but with bad weather in winter-time, the cows stayed in there day and night for two or three months.

Milking machines soon took over from 1950 onwards and modern milking parlours and covered yards made the old cowsheds redundant. Most of these are also now dwellings.

The working horses on the farms required a stable. This was a two storey building. In the front wall was a wide doorway with two half doors, one above the other, and a relatively large number of windows. These had panes of glass in the top half and 'hit or miss' sliding wooden ventilators in the lower half. The larger the farm, the longer would have been the building, with more standings for horses. A strong wooden feed manger about a metre high ran the length of the back wall and above this, up to the ceiling, was a sparred wooden hayrack. Inside access to the overhead hayloft from the stable, was by a vertical wooden ladder fastened to the wall. In the floor of the hayloft was a row of square holes

about 50cms wide. These were over the hayrack with the hole over each horse standing so that hay could be pushed down for the horses to feed. The back wall was almost always blank apart from a wooden door up at the first floor level leading into the loft.

This door could also be in the gable end.

Wagonloads of hay were drawn up under the doorway and the hay pitched up through it into the loft,

ready for use.

When the age of the workhorse was over the stables had a variety of uses; dwellings, offices and industrial units. The Coldstone stable became a pottery production works and the hayloft was a showroom where customers selected their purchases. Most of the loft doorways into stables were later converted into windows. If you see what looks like a loft doorway with old stone steps up to it, the building was probably a granary where corn was kept safe from rats and mice, but if there are no signs of steps it is likely to have been a hayloft.

Many free standing granaries were built from the early eighteenth century onwards. These stood on staddle stones with the floor well clear of the ground and were usually constructed with a strong timber frame and brick or lathe and plaster infill, or with weath-



erboard cladding. Threshed corn was stored here safely until it was used or sold.

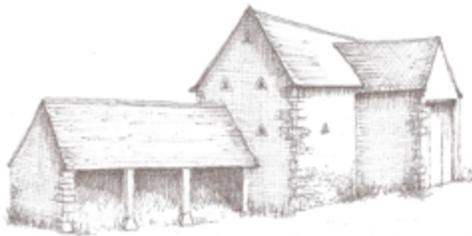
Saddle stones were shaped like mushrooms so that rats and mice could not climb up them. Many corn ricks were also built on these to keep the corn free from vermin and rising damp, before they were threshed. The few remaining freestanding granaries are likely to be listed buildings. One still stands at Manor Farm, Ascott, and there is one at Alvescot. The modern use for saddle stones is to decorate drives and entrances.

There were always cattle yards with open fronted sheds on one side, for shelter. These were simple buildings with a stone wall at the back and each end, and either pillars or posts at intervals in the front to support the roof. If wooden posts were used, there was a short brick plinth or large shaped stone at the base to keep them above the manure, which would otherwise have rotted them. Sadly when the open fronted sheds were replaced by modern covered yards, the sheds were often demolished or simply fell down.



Cart hovels were similar buildings to the open fronted cattle sheds but were usually deeper from the front to back so that they could house four-wheeled wagons. They were almost always built by a stone track or hard surface for access, so in some cases these were later converted into garages.

The old rickyards were areas of activity with hayricks and cornricks being built and thatched. The hayricks were later cut up for use and the cornricks dismantled at threshing time. In most cases these are now areas of lawn and flowerbeds or have houses built on the rickyards.



In general the old farmyards with all their activities, cattle calling, pigs squealing, hens running free, geese squawking, cows calving or coming in for milking, have almost all succumbed to the uniformity of modern rural life. Quiet houses, parked cars and very little activity to be seen or heard. I'm glad I was there to be a small part of the old times.

Jim Pearse

ASCOTT CRICKET CLUB

You can tell when the cricket season is coming, the clocks go forward, spring arrives and yes, you've guessed correctly, it RAINS!!

On Sunday afternoon's this summer, Ascott Cricket Club will undoubtedly produce performances akin to the British weather, unpredictable!! From scores of 50 all out to 250 for 7, from golden ducks to centuries, but there is one guarantee, fun will be had by all, yes even the mickey takers from the sidelines.

The average age within the cricket club has come down drastically, due mainly to the introduction of two young players, George Jowett and Redd Pratley, the latter being the son of former Ascott stalwart Rob Pratley, on a sad note the retirement from cricket of Ady Suter has also brought that average age down, Ady has been a player at Ascott CC for 20 years or so, and although I'm sure we'll see him throughout the summer, as a player he will be greatly missed and I'd like to take this opportunity for and on behalf of Ascott CC to say a huge thanks to Ady for everything he has done for the club over all these

years, not forgetting his wife Tina for all those sumptuous teas.

This season sees the introduction of a couple of new fixtures, and plenty of home fixtures, 13 in total. If you're interested in coming to watch, these home fixtures at the time of going to press are on:

May 2nd, 9th & 16th

June 20th & 27th

July 11th & 18th

August 1st, 15th, 22nd & 29th

September 12th & 19th

Most of the games start at 2:30 so please come along, take the mickey and look out for low flying cricket balls!! I'm not joking, just ask George! The only down side I have to report for Ascott CC is that after match drinks



HOME TUTOR **MATHS and PHYSICS** Primary to A level

Qualified Teacher; CRB checked
Call Richard on 830970

can now no longer be at The Swan as they have been, well, since the dawn of time from what I can gather, as our “Community Pub” refuses to open for us on a Sunday evening as we don’t produce “enough business”. I think it’s important that Ascott has a couple of sports teams, not just for us to play silly beggars on Saturdays for the Football & Sundays for Cricket, but as reported earlier, we have two young lads, taking FULL part in our games, and should there be any other youngsters interested in these sports from within the village, the teams & the structure are there for them to come along, but without a “community pub”

after match frivolities are restricted and that extra bit of comradery slowly but surely will disappear, along with the teams.

So here’s to 2010, may our season be filled with thrills, spills and a bit of fun on the way, and should anybody be interested in playing, please contact me on **01993 831916 or 07921 786355** and in the words of a party invite, bring your own beer!!!

Clive Jowett
Fixtures Secretary
Ascott CC



01993 830268

FLOWERS FOR ALL OCCASIONS

**WEDDINGS, ANNIVERSARIES,
BIRTHS & FUNERAL TRIBUTES
FRESH FLOWERS & PLANTS
GIFTS & BALLOONS, FLORIST SUNDRIES
LOCAL & NATIONAL DELIVERIES AVAILABLE**

**8 CHURCH STREET
SHIPTON-UNDER-WYCHWOOD
OXFORDSHIRE, OX7 68P**



CREDIT & DEBIT CARDS ACCEPTED

CLOSED ALL DAY MONDAY

FLOOD RELIEF UPDATE

It is the beginning of April and I am looking back over a very soggy winter of mixed success with regard to improvements in the drainage of the village. We started the year with an invitation from the Environment Agency to celebrate Ascott's flood relief works at an event championed by the Rt Hon David Cameron MP. Mother Nature has a habit of showing who is boss and so we were not keen to celebrate too obviously! However, on reflection we counted over 20 different projects that have so far been completed, some of which are definitely having a positive effect. The event was an opportunity to learn best practice from the other 8 communities involved and to let the wider world know that



Ascott has already achieved much to be proud of.

Mother Nature, of course, *was* listening and the very next day saw our first real flood of the year (both events were ironically reported in the same local newspaper!). It was hard for us to remain totally calm but once high water had passed, this was a great opportunity to observe the effect of the

new works. I am pleased to say that Coldwell Brook did not burst its banks at the top of Gypsy Lane before the river had covered the floodplain (as it used to), the flood channel behind Meadowbank House became fully operational, the two bunds successfully diverted flow and the river burst its banks at the Chippy Bridge several hours after it had done so at Ascott Earl (suggesting that the Chippy bridge is now coping with greater capacity). There is also a whisper that the general improved drainage of the river, water-

courses and drains might have reduced the incidence of foul drains overflowing. That's the good news.....

Unfortunately, because of the autumn delay to the railway bridge

project, some groundworks were only finished in December and the earth was not stable. This means that, following the flooding, remedial work is required to the flood channel and bund. Also, there are at least 3 weeks' worth of engineering works to be done under the railway bridge followed by reinstatement of the land downstream of the bridge. This has been a time of

frustration for landowners and contractors alike while waiting for dry weather and low water. We continue to be indebted to the landowners who have borne the brunt of this extreme inconvenience.

Residents complained to the Environment Agency that there had been inadequate warning of the extent of flooding in Ascott. The EA had been blissfully unaware but have since been fully briefed with meetings and photographs!! They are working on a system whereby anyone can log onto their website and through cameras observe the river level at four points, including Shipton. Hopefully, this will be in action very soon so that residents can 'read' the river for themselves. We will let you know.

Last but by no means least, you may have noticed recently that there has been some reduction to the flash flooding outside Sunset House. Numerous members of the Parish Council and residents have tried to solve this problem but it has always come down to all parties denying ownership /responsibility for

the ditch. Thanks so much to the public-spirited resident who waded in with his own shovel at one point! OCC Highways have now acknowledged that they may be held partially responsible if there was an accident on their road caused by flash flooding and so have installed a pipe to allow the road to drain more quickly. The clearing of silt from the ditch is still the ultimate goal – we know who we think is responsible but their legal team does not agree. More detective work required!

Wychwood Wrought Iron 

**QUALITY WROUGHT
IRON PRODUCTS**

- FINIALS
- SECURITY GRILLS
- CURTAIN POLES
- LAMPS
- CANDLE STICKS
- ACCESSORIES

All our products are hand-made using traditional blacksmith's skills



Call us on **01993 832850** or go to www.wychwoodwroughtiron.com
email. info@wychwoodwroughtiron.com
Visit our website to see our full range

There are so many factors to take account of in land drainage and those involved have learnt to be cautious about heralding real success. But I do hope you agree that there has been some improvement and I am thrilled to be able to thank so many residents, landowners, councils and agencies for their contributions. In this time of restricted funds, partnership working is definitely the name of the game and Ascott has made some good friends. The icing on the cake will be a clear railway bridge and grassy fields with not a contractor in sight – roll on the dry weather.

Philippa Carter

**DEADLINE FOR
SUMMER 2010 EDITION**

JULY 5TH

PLEASE DON'T BE LATE

ASCOTT PARISH ALLOTMENTS

The Parish Council has one/two plots that are available for immediate occupation.

‘Keep fit and eat fresh vegetables’

If you are interested please contact Stuart Fox
01993 832004

PIANO LESSONS

with

Roseneath School of Music

Tuition in Pianoforte and Music Literacy
for adults and children of all abilities in Shipton and Ascott

Pauline Carter

BA, A Mus LCM, CTABSM, Dip CS

01993 774568

www.roseneathmusicschool.com

NATURE NOTES

In our busy overcrowded island the natural world often seems to suffer; how often do we hear of an animal or plant being under threat or close to extinction, but it's not all doom and gloom.

Driving home recently I stopped the car to watch a Red Kite flying along the Evenlode Valley, a magnificent sight and one that a few years ago would not have been possible. A few days later I watched another, this time on the edge of Leafield, being mobbed by the local Rook population. Later that week three Buzzards, making their distinctive mewling cries, were circling high over Ascott. Twenty years ago such an occurrence would have been a rarity, today it's commonplace, not only in the village but across West Oxfordshire and beyond.

The return of these two raptors is a success story, brought about by reintroduction in the case of the Red Kite and lack of persecution and more careful use of pesticides and the banning of poisons, in the case of the Buzzard.

In mediaeval England the Red Kite was a common bird, both in the countryside and in the towns and cities



where it scavenged for food on rubbish tips, but in the 16th century a series of Vermin Acts was passed requiring the destruction of Red Kites as well as other creatures. The persecution intensified and in the 18th century, during the enclosures, the gamekeepers of large estates, waged war on our raptors, usually by laying poisoned bait. Both the Buzzard and Red Kite were targeted because of the perceived threat to livestock and game.

By the late 18th century the Red Kite had disappeared from England, Scotland and most of Wales. It was only in rural Mid-Wales that a few breeding pairs managed to survive. Reading a book published in 1905 it suggested that



only five birds remained in England. In a later edition of the same book the last breeding pair were said to have nested in Devon in 1913. Sadly their eggs were taken by collectors.

The Buzzard suffered less and remained widespread in west-

ern England until the 1950's when the introduction of myxomatosis caused a 99 per cent decline in the Rabbit population. This wiped out the Buzzards major food source, an unintended result of an agricultural policy, and caused their numbers to fall dramatically.

Our present population of Red Kites is the result of a series of reintroductions. The first, starting in 1989, brought breeding adults from Spain and established a small group in the Chilterns. This was successful and allowed the RSPB to take chicks from the Chilterns group to other areas in the Midlands, Wales and Northern England. A second wave of reintroductions brought birds from Sweden and Germany to various locations in Scotland, including Inverness, Stirling and Dumfries. This has not been as successful as the Chilterns project which now boasts 200 breeding pairs, whereas the Scottish population has not grown and remains at about 35 pairs. In 2004 a further reintroduction was made in the Gateshead area. Overall there are between 300 and 350 breeding pairs in Britain today.

The Red Kite is mainly a scavenger feeding mainly on carrion, it will also take live prey, such as

small mammals and young chicks and young Rabbits. Like Seagulls they will also follow the plough, taking earthworms and insects, they are not fearsome hunters. On the wing, with their five to six foot (175 to 195 cm) wingspan they are graceful seeming to glide over open countryside with little effort and yet they are surprisingly agile when flying below the woodland canopy to get to their nests or communal roosts. Considering their large wingspan they are not heavy birds weighing no more



than two to two and a half lbs (0.7 to 1.1kilo). In flight they are easily recognised by their forked tails and the rich russet body colour. Although we tend to see individual birds flying over our area where they breed in the Chilterns they are gregarious birds, roosting in large numbers and putting on 'aerial displays' just for the pleasure of performing. In flight the Buzzard has a fan-shaped tail and much broader wings than the Kite, with a span of four to four and a half

feet (120 to 135 cm) and its body colour is dark brown rather than the reddish colour of the Kite. In flight it gracefully rides the warm air thermals or takes advantage of rising air currents over hills and mountains



often rising to considerable height and will travel great distances. Like the kite it will take carrion, but its usual method of hunting is to sit motionless in a tree, often for several hours, swooping down when the unsuspecting prey passes beneath. Its numbers never fell as low as the Kites and today there are an estimated 14,500 breeding pairs in the British Isles. The only areas where it is still uncommon are East Anglia, Eastern Kent and Lincolnshire.

I hope that these two beautiful birds continue to thrive and in the case of the Red Kite, perhaps even start to breed in the woodlands of the Wychwood area.

Stuart Fox

STOP PRESS

Since writing this article I have received three interesting reports of birds seen in the Parish. The first of a Little Egret, which is normally a Southern European bird. Secondly of two Ravens, disputing territory and finally of an Osprey passing by on its annual migratory journey.

Robert Gripper Antique Furniture Restorer

Repairs & rebuilds, veneering, carving & turning, colouring, French polishing, finishing, upholstery, desk leathers, gilding mirrors & picture frames, insurance work & valuations, clock repairs, and much more.....

**Manor Farm
Ascott under Wychwood
Oxfordshire, OX7 6AL
01993 831960
01993 830395 fax**



robgripper@btinternet.com



WINDRUSH VALLEY SCHOOL BOY'S ON THE BALL

Windrush Valley School under 9's football team, travelled to Kitebrook School on 26th January, for their first match of the New Year.

The boy's started in impressive form, passing the ball well and tackling with great commitment. Michael Crofts played strongly in the centre of the defence, ably assisted by Harold Lear and Max Boyns. Windrush were soon 3 nil up, and following several positive runs from Dan Milner and Edward Butler, finished the first half 6 nil ahead, with the Windrush goal keeper, Ben Newport, not having touched the ball!

With the start of the second half, Ben Newport stayed in goal hoping for a bit of action, and Edward Butler was joined by under 7's; Mark Milner, Rufus Worne, Lorimer Kay and Jack Wilson. It was a well played half by both teams, with Ben Newport certainly having to make several confident saves, and several vital tackles were made by his team mates.

The match ended with an 8 – 0 win to Windrush Valley School, with goals from Dan Milner (4), Edward Butler (2) and Michael Crofts (2).

Well done boys, a very comprehensive victory.



From left to right:
Mark Milner, Jack Wilson, Dan Milner, Lorimer Kay, Ben Newport, Rufus Worne,
Michael Crofts, Edward Butler, Harold Lear, Max Boyns



WINDRUSH VALLEY RUNNING ALL THE WAY TO THE NATIONALS

Four teams from Windrush Valley School, travelled to the regional ISA (Independent Schools Association) cross-country heats in Bedford on 9th February, on what initially appeared to be a fine, but cold, day. After a long journey, the children were ready to go, and the heats commenced with Rachel Purvis as our only runner in the Under 10 girls race. This was Rachel's first visit to Bedford, and she was a force to be reckoned with, coming 16th out of 52 runners, plus having dealt with the added disadvantage of a hail storm during her race! Well done to her.

Rachel had set the bar high for the Under 10 boys to aspire to. They did not let themselves down, with Daniel Milner coming in fourth, alongside Edward Butler in ninth position, out of a field of 54 runners. Ben Newport and Harold Lear also ran a tremendous race for the Under 10 boys, with lots of over-taking on the home straight.

With 2 incredibly successful Under 10 teams, the Under 12 years were feeling the pressure. However, in true Windrush style, they came out on top. Tiana Thomas came in third out of a field of 56 runners, and will go on to represent North London ISA in the cross-country National finals later this year. Her co-runners, Augusta Townley and Hollie Taylor came in a very

commendable 23rd and 27th place respectively, and following not too far behind them was Flo Denham.

We fielded a very strong Under 12 boy's team, with 3 Windrush boys coming in the top 10; Ross Hedigan (3rd), Alex Roscoe (7th) and Luke Milner (10th) out of a line-up of 56 runners. Their team mates; William Burnell, Henry Gardner-Roberts, Andy Dunstall, Charlie Spencer and Neil Atkinson were close on their heels, and gave them a real run for their money. Our top 3 boys, Ross Hedigan, Alex Roscoe and Luke Milner will all accompany Tiana Thomas to the ISA National cross-country finals.

Headmaster, Mr Alan Wood, said: *"we are all so proud of the teams that represented our school at Bedford, and immensely proud that we have 4 children going to the ISA Nationals cross-country finals this year. Consistently, since we have been taking part in this event and bad weather hasn't intervened, we have had one or more runners representing our school at the ISA National finals, which demonstrates the children's talent, hard work and determination."*

Windrush Valley School: 01993831793



SECOND OUTING FOR WINDRUSH VALLEY SCHOOL NETBALL SQUAD

A group of girls from Windrush Valley School visited Kitebrook School on a very cold February afternoon recently, on only their second outing as a netball squad. They played with real gusto and determination, and even when 8 nil down, kept their heads high and fought to the end.



Unfortunately, the final score of 8 nil did not reflect the standard of play from both teams. However, the girls came away happy after a good game and a well deserved after match tea.

Well done to: Lizzie Cornish, Augusta Townley, Catherine Hawkins, Hollie Taylor, Tiana Thomas, Florence Denham, Georgie Townley and Romy Dawkins.

3 of the 4 runners going to the ISA National Cross-country Finals later this year



From left to right: Ross Hedigan, Tiana Thomas and Alex Roscoe

ASCOTT VILLAGE CHARITY

“Helping the community where it matters”

Since last year’s article in The Grapevine, The Ascott Village Charity has helped fund a variety of projects. A new strimmer for the Church was part funded by the Charity, a contribution to the flood prevention scheme on the Chipping Norton Road Bridge, and a donation was given to the PC for the Christmas lights for the tree on the Green.

We were also kindly left a legacy by the late Jussi Brainin and a generous £200.00 was collected from the Piggy Bank which sits on the counter in the shop! So as you can imagine the current account is looking quite healthy and as Trustees we would like to remind you all that this is the Village’s Charity, YOUR charity.

The money is here to help support wide ranging projects or for anyone requiring financial help. Jussi Brainin’s legacy is particularly to help young students with books, course and exam fees or research projects etc.

If you need to know more, or you have a specific project you would like to discuss with us please write or contact one of the Trustees:

John Cull	831621
Mark Dawbarn	831632
Stuart Fox	832004
Elaine Byles	831427
Mark Abrey	01608 676572

With thanks and we look forward to hearing from you.

John Cull

ASCOTT-UNDER-WYCHWOOD PARISH COUNCIL

The Parish Council has continued to be busy conducting its monthly meetings and addressing the issues arising there-to. The annual litter pick was held on Saturday 27 March. This, once again, proved to be very successful and well supported with the help of WODC providing gloves, litter pickers and bags. Thank you to everyone who took part and supported this voluntary event.

Parish Councillors and the 2010 Elections

Well the immovable deadline will have passed for parishioners to send their nominations to become a Parish Councillor and represent their Village. If I may explain your Parish Council consists of 5 Parish Councillors and a Parish Clerk, however as long as the Parish Council has a quorum, this being a minimum of three, it can operate and conduct its monthly meetings but will need to co-opt a further two councillors. The Annual General Meeting of the Parish Council is scheduled for Monday 10 May which is when the Parish Council will elect their Chairman and Vice-Chairman. Please note that this date is subject to change pending the date of the General Election.

Annual Village Meeting

This is scheduled for Monday 26 April in the Tiddy Hall at 8.00pm and your

Parish Council will give its report on the past year's activities. The Parish Council also invites local bodies to attend and give their reports, these being:

Chipping Norton Police
Pre-School
Tiddy Hall
Cricket Club
Parochial Church Council
Ascott Grapevine
Leafield C of E School
Ascott under Wychwood Sports Club
Wychwood Forest Football Club
Village Shop Management Committee
The Village Charity

Planning Applications

Planning still remains quiet.

Flooding/ Contingency Plan

This has been covered by Philippa Carter who has kindly written a lengthy up to date report which is included in this version of the Grapevine, please refer to.

Sports Pavilion

The Parish Council are still looking for somebody to take on the bookings for the Sports Pavilion and should anybody be interested please do not hesitate to contact any of the Parish Councillors listed below or indeed the Clerk.

Parish Council:

Stuart Fox	832004
Elaine Byles	831427
Bridgette Crundwell	830671
Rob Morgan	831958
Angela Barnes (Parish Clerk)	01608 641045

After 8 years serving on the Parish Council, both Elaine Byles and Stuart Fox will be stepping down. With effect from 10 May the two new members on the Council will be Philippa Carter and Laurence Mellor.

KEEP ON MOANING

I bet by the time you finish reading this, you will think to yourself, what a moaning old fogey. He ought to get out more.

I am again going to moan about the BBC.

If you have watched Lark Rise to Candleford, have you noticed it is filmed in warm colours to give the effect of a country idyll of the late nineteenth century.

What I know of this time comes from my memory of the stories my grandmother told me of village life at this time.

Some of the attitudes portrayed are true. There was always ill feeling between Ascott and Shipton. There still is with some of us. Leaffield (or Fieldtown) was to be avoided if possible. You went there at your own risk, even in the early part of the twentieth century. I knew a man who had stones thrown at him when he cycled through there, and even when I started to play football and cricket in the late fifties, there was always that feeling we could

Leaffield Picture Framing

(Tony Croft)

Complete Picture Framing Service
Mount Cutting
Wash Lining
Tapestry Stretching

Door to door delivery and collection
Home consultation if required

Please telephone
01993 878357 or call
Tony Croft
Cotswold View, Ascott Road, Leaffield
for
Free Estimate or Further Details

finish in Leaffield Pond, if things didn't go well.

What is not shown on T.V. is that there was much more aggression in village life. For most men their only relaxation was drinking in the pub.

My great grandfather Thomas Hanks, would go off drinking at the Churchill Arms with Blacksmith Alden. Then come home drunk and kick the kitchen table over, and throw his dinner along the back garden. A lot of it I think, was out of frustration. Thomas couldn't read or write but he did have the knowledge of animals, and the medicines made from plants found in the fields and hedgerows.

I think it was to the credit of the Nonconformist Church at this time, to be so opposed to drinking alcohol.

I also think village people were more militant than the happy peasants dancing around the maypole. Perhaps Ascott was the exception. You have only to look into the history of why the seats are on the village green.

One of the many faults of old village people and remains today - we don't like people who want to Get On or better themselves. They should remain with their own kind and not get above themselves. Pride comes before a fall and I still feel great delight when someone falls flat on their face.

I have looked forward with great interest to what Wendy Pearse has written about Ascott over the centuries, in the Grapevine. I came across a comment made by the village parson in

1811. I quote, ' A few of the lower orders absent or too generally neglect their church not out of principle but idleness.' end of quote. I am all for idleness, dumb insolence can sometimes be greater than the sword.

What advice can I give if you don't want to become a narrow minded yokel like me. Travel as much as you can. I have travelled very little, I get frightened when I get the other side of Oxford. What little I have done, I have found people are much the same wherever you go!

Fred Russell

**DEADLINE FOR
SUMMER 2010 EDITION
JULY 5TH
PLEASE DON'T BE LATE**

CROWN FARM EQUESTRIAN CENTRE SUMMER EVENTS 2010



Come and soak up an array of equestrian sports this summer at Crown Farm Equestrian Centre in Ascott-under-Wychwood. The Centre hosts and runs a number of equestrian competitions – with riders from across the region and beyond taking centre stage to compete in the village. Spectators are more than welcome to attend the events – entry is free and car parking is also available (at no charge). Below are some of the key attractions:

- **25 April ISIS Dressage Competition**

Takes place in the indoor arena at the Centre. Watch horse and rider combinations perform this truly harmonious discipline (a kind of ballet on horses!).

www.isisdressagegroup.org

- **5 & 6 June British Eventing (BE) One Day Event**

Eventing - a culmination of dressage, show jumping and cross country. A great spectator event taking place on both sides of the Ascott under Wychwood to Leafield road with dressage and show jumping across the road from the cross country course. More than 250 competitors will be taking part in different classes across the two days – including, for the first time at this level, a special section for retrained racehorses (kindly sponsored by the RoR (Retraining of Racehorses) charity). Refreshments and trade stands on site. Full details see www.britisheventing.com

- **17 & 18 July BE One Day Event**

The second BE event which is being sponsored by the NFU. A range of additional attractions will also be on site for this event – promising to provide something for everyone! A children's corner will be open from 11 am to around 4.30 pm and will include animals from Foxbury Farm, a bouncy castle, together with face and plate painting. Wychwood Brewery will be serving up local ales including Hobgoblin beer and Ross Bearman will be offering local cheeses. There will also be a range of trade stands and refreshments on site. See www.britisheventing.com for details on classes.

- **12 September Fell Pony Show**

Come and see some of the Queen's favourite breed of ponies – the Fell. This is the South of England's annual competition aiming to crown the best of breed across a range of classes. Gates open at around 9.00 am.

For more information on any of the above events contact Chris or Janet Badger on 01993 832083 or email chrisandjanet@fireflyuk.net.

www.ascott-under-wychwood.org.uk

Page 51

The Swan at Ascott

Fabulous Food
Sunny Garden
Cosy Bars
Five Elegant Rooms



Stay for a pint or a weekend!

Shipton Road, Ascott-under-Wychwood
01993 832332 www.swanataascott.com

WYCHWOOD FOREST FOOTBALL CLUB

Photograph taken after recent 1-1 draw with Chipping Norton which has kept the club on course for the Division 1 title and promotion to the Witney & District Premiership.



Back row (l-r): Chris Marshall, Craig Wighton, Chris Jones, John Smailes, Nick Basson, Ricky Williams, Rob Marsh, Chris Herbert, Dan Sollis.

Front row (l-r): Andy Stock, Lee Manley, Chris Jordan, Jon Goodman, Mike Bolt.

Up to date information on how the teams are doing can be found on our website: <http://www.wychwoodforestfc.moonfruit.org>

CHADLINGTON DANCE

For those of you who may not have heard of us before, or as a reminder for those who have, Chadlington Dance offers a monthly programme featuring a variety of dance styles taught by experienced teachers. Partners are not needed.

We meet on the second Wednesday of each month at 7.30pm in Chadlington Memorial Hall and there is a session charge of £5.00.



We are a very friendly group and we have lots of fun – do come and join us.

The remainder of our programme for this session will **be Irish Dance** on 14th April, **Salsa** on 12th May and we finish for the summer with **African Dance** on 9th June.

For further information call Ann on 01608 676302 or Helen on 01608 676114.

Bed & Breakfast

**Fiddlers Hill
Shipton under Wychwood**

**2 excellent en suite rooms
One twin - One Double
Television - Tea Making
Guests' own Patio/Garden
Parking**

**Please ring 01993 830640
Mobile: 07803 399697**

LOCAL BUSINESS

Villages like ours can often become lifeless during the day as the population commutes to work, only returning in the evenings and weekends. Local businesses, whether it be the shop, pub, school, garage or farm, are essential in order to retain a vibrant working community. Most of these businesses are family concerns, often with a long-standing presence here.

Tyack's is an excellent example of a family business headed by Michael and assisted by his two sons, Robert and Gary. The company was started by Michael's father in 1973 and was originally based in Adlestrop, but in 1991 Michael moved to Ascott and purchased the coal yard from Curtis Bros.

Initially they only sold coal and coke and concentrated their deliveries in the local area. Each year up to 2,300 tons of coal products were distributed. Today they provide a wider range including, logs, kindling and compost and the coal sales have reduced to 1,000 tons.

www.ascott-under-wychwood.org.uk

Processing timber products, now that so many people have wood burning stoves or like to have an open fire, currently accounts for seventy percent of their activity. They now deliver to a much wider area travelling as far as the Guitings, Brockhampton and North Leigh.



The logs they sell are obtained from forestry thinnings. When woodland is first planted the tree cover is very dense, but as the trees grow it is necessary to open up the woodland by removing the surplus trees. These trees are usually used for firewood. Timber is currently coming in bulk ship-

ments from Guiting woods and Chepstow in the Wye Valley. The timber is sawn and split and the logs are stored for twelve months to dry before they can be sold. Hardwoods such as Ash are ideal whilst conifers are best for kindling.

Mushroom compost is another introduction. It is purchased in bulk from local mushroom farms, bagged-up and sold as a soil improver. It's usually available until April.

I was curious about the origin of the family name as it isn't one that I have come across before. The family originated in Cornwall and were farmers. In

the Cornish language Tyack means farmer.

I hope that Michael and his two sons will continue to serve Ascott and the surrounding area for many years to come.

Stuart Fox

LAWRENCE HOME NURSING TEAM

Photographic Competition

We are looking for a very special photograph to be used as a Christmas Card and sold at the end of this year in aid of The Lawrence Home Nursing Team.

Having had such a snowy Winter and observed so many photographers out taking wonderful pictures of local scenes, we decided to hold a competition. Anyone who has taken photographs of snow scenes or anything associated with Christmas is invited to enter. The winning picture will become a Christmas Card with the photographer's name and acknowledgement on the back, unless he or she wishes to remain anonymous. Mr and Mrs Graeme Garden have kindly agreed to judge the entries.

The **closing date is 1st June** and entries should be submitted as a photograph, no bigger than 5" x 7" and sent to Nikki Knott, Litchfield Farm, Enstone, with a SAE

HEAT AND DUST

I first visited Saudi Arabia in the late 1970s when working for a company with extensive business interests in the Kingdom. Travelling the length and breadth of the country, I collected many a souvenir, including an unwanted one, a dent in my skull from a car crash.

Having recruited countless expatriates to earn lots of tax-free lolly, I then decided to join their ranks, and spent two years working in the oil port of Jubail on the eastern coast.

Saudi was a much rougher and tougher place socially in those days. The police would have a purge on motorists to swell their coffers and the standard fine was a stiffish 900 riyals, about £150. If you weren't toting that kind of cash, they'd haul you off to the local jail until you paid up. The jails were hellholes, you were given no food and the police told nobody that they'd arrested you. Companies employed government relations officers, Saudis whose job was not only to deal with passports and work permits, but also to scour the local nicks and hospitals when your friends reported you missing.

Families bathing on the beach and ladies wearing swimsuits in front of other men that were not their husbands were also taboo. The answer was to buy a 4WD and drive over a big stretch of sand to a deserted beach. If the police came to investigate, their big

Chevys would sink through the top crust of sand long before they got anywhere near the beach.

In mid-2009, I returned to the Kingdom for the first time in 25 years as part of a team to design, build and manage Saudi's first biotechnology incubator in the centre of the capital, Riyadh. An incubator offers premises, equipment, business advice and guidance to entrepreneurs looking to commercialise their ideas.

Quite a while ago, Saudi began to look at an alternative economy to replace petro-dollars. This is no mean task, oil from the world's foremost producer generates a staggering GDP. Of this, the country's operating budget represents a small fraction, leaving a vast surplus.

Part of the strategy is to create a chain of five incubators. The IT incubator has been established two years, ours was the second, to be followed by advanced manufacturing, nanotechnology and energy.

Flights to Riyadh are now through King Khalid Airport, built over 20 years ago about 22 miles from the city centre. It's a beautiful design, based on Arab tents, a ceaseless hub of activity for the many and varied nationalities that work in the Kingdom.

Multi-lane highways lead to Riyadh city, capital of Saudi Arabia and capital of the Ar Riyadh province. In Arabic, *Ar Riyadh* means 'the gar-

dens', particularly those that bloom almost overnight in the desert after rain. Not that there's much rain here. In summer, temperatures reach a blistering 50C: come winter, they can plummet to freezing. Rains are minimal, with March and April wettest at perhaps an inch each. The atmosphere is very dry being so distant from the sea, but 50C is around 130F and you simply can't walk very far in those kind of temperatures. How they managed before air-conditioning, heaven alone knows, but the Bedouins are nocturnal, generations brought up to sleep by day and work by night.

The worst problem is dust. Some is natural, blown by fierce winds to create a yellow pall reminiscent of the old London smog; some comes from construction sites working round the clock; some is from Iraq, deserts peppered from bombing, then the dust blown south. Within a couple of hours of landing, your nose is blocked solid and your shoes covered in a sandy layer. The Saudis claim that there is no problem with respiratory disease, but you do wonder.

The Kingdom has strong links and influences from the United States. The Saudi riyal is pegged to the US dollar, as are all the Gulf currencies. City layouts are as in the good ol' US of A,

grids with expressways running down the centre of a highway and service roads alongside. On and off ramps allow traffic to move from one to the other.

Entering Riyadh is akin to downtown Houston, low-rent, low rise giving way to smarter, taller buildings. But with the exception of the central area, skyscrapers are not on the agenda. Riyadh's policy has been one of outward growth. Now home to some 7m and expanding at 8% a year, the city will house 9m within about two years. In a bid to combat urban sprawl, the policy is being revised to permit upward expansion. As it is, Riyadh must rival if not exceed Birmingham, with the city's extremities many miles apart.



Faisaliah Tower

To gauge the size, take the lifts to the pinnacle of the Kingdom Tower, one of the two mighty edifices that dominate the skyline. Resembling a giant bottle-opener, the Tower is clad in glass which produces different colours depending on the light. I say 'lifts', because one express lift hurls you 77 storeys in a matter of ear-popping seconds and a second more sedate affair the remaining floors to the Skybridge. Now at 1000 feet, you can walk across the bridge, marvel at the Dinky toys scurrying below and see the lights of the capital disappear

from view in every direction. Great value at SR25 (about £4.50), but not for those that suffer from vertigo....

The Tower and the media company that occupies all the upper storeys are owned by a fabulously wealthy member of the Royal family. Spurred on by his wife, who wants to see the modesty laws for women repealed, he is said to employ a coterie of beautiful Saudi women, who dress in blouses and skirts while at work.

The Tower's neighbour weighs in slightly smaller at 900 feet. Designed by Sir Norman Foster, the Faisaliah Tower is a square needle of glass and steel whose arched cradle at the top holds a golden glass ball. The ball is a fine dining restaurant whose upper level revolves slowly to give clients a view over the city.

Culturally, Saudi Arabia is 180 degrees away from western nations. Religion plays a huge role in Saudi life, none more so than in the capital, where things are more strictly run than elsewhere. Six prayer calls during the day begin at dawn and end at dusk. On Friday, the Muslim sabbath, there is an extra prayer call at 1030-ish. I know all about the dawn call, as my bedroom window faces one loudspeaker on the big mosque nearby. I rarely need my alarm clock. Exact prayer times vary slightly across Riyadh and being on top of a hill, I can hear the calls beginning in the distance, then rolling towards me in a wave.

During the week, Muslims at work will pray at a mosque if there is one on the premises or nearby and some companies provide a prayer room. Otherwise, they will spread a prayer rug on the office floor and use that. Men and women pray separately and often they pray in groups with one person leading the prayers. If driving during the Isha or evening prayer, people will stop by the side of the road to pray, and impromptu groups will form on pavements or car parks. It is fascinating and really quite moving to see a nation united by such a strong and simple faith.

During prayer time, shops and restaurants close. If you are in a shop, you can remain inside but the tills will shut down. No new customers are admitted. In a restaurant, you can continue eating but food service will stop. Apart from Isha prayer, where the prayer time lasts some 40 minutes, these shutdowns are supposed to be 15 minutes. But business owners are worried that the mutawa, the religious police, will fine them heavily for being open at prayer time. So they play safe, shut 10 minutes before the official time and add 10 minutes at the end. Thus most prayer time closures last half an hour.

Expats like me keep a printout of the prayer times for the month on their desk and in their car, as the time for each prayer can vary by a minute or two every day. In winter, the gap between the late afternoon Maghrib

and the evening Isha prayer becomes compressed. But it's uncanny how often you find yourself arriving at a shop just as prayer time is called.

Saudi people are very warm and hospitable, and will go out of their way to help. Arabic is the predominant language and every day I am there, I wish I spoke fluent Arabic. With so many Saudis now educated abroad, English is widely spoken, often to excellent or bilingual level. As 40% of the 26m population is expatriate, English is the lingua franca.

Doing business is rather different to UK. It's rare for business to be concluded at the first meeting, Saudi businessmen want to get to know you and build a relationship and trust. Having your business card in Arabic as well as English scores immediate brownie

points. Arabic is a phonetic language, so even a non-English speaker can understand and pronounce your name.

Punctuality is poles apart from our western on-the-button expectations. Any time within half an hour of the given time is acceptable and frequently, they will turn up much later, offer no apology and expect to have the meeting then and there. Saudi Arabia is obsessed with the mobile phone, which they automatically leave on during a meeting and deal with incoming calls. It can be very difficult to concentrate on the matter in hand with mobiles ringing incessantly.

I sometimes think that Saudi's national motto should be *bukra, inshallah* – tomorrow, if Allah wills. It is far more developed than manana and getting things done on time means starting

WYCHWOOD

FUNERAL SERVICES
(W. J. WRIGHT)
FUNERAL DIRECTOR – IAN MARSDEN
Personal Caring 24 Hour Service, Private Chapel of Rest,
Pre-paid Funeral Plans, Monumental Masonry
Tel 01993 831557
Email: info@wrightsfunerals.co.uk
**OLD BANK, HIGH STREET,
SHIPTON-UNDER-WYCHWOOD OX7 6BA**

the process far earlier and keeping on top of a supplier to make sure it happens. Or have we got it wrong and stress ourselves unnecessarily?

With petrol at 10p per litre and no urban public transport, everybody drives. The driving is appalling, and that's on a good day. Even Saudis from outside Riyadh comment on how bad it is. Only men can drive and that nice calm chap you were talking to can change to an aggressive fiend once behind the wheel. High-speed weaving in and out of lanes, chopping across your bows without warning and forcing a gap, overtaking using the hard shoulder, turning right from the middle or outside lane, these are but a few of the antics. In a 15 minute drive, you can experience driving that would have a British cop reaching for his handcuffs, let alone his notebook. The Toyota pickup is to the Kingdom what the Vespa is to Italy. In every state from pristine to rolling scrapheaps, they are driven pedal to the metal by complete lunatics.

Our star prize still goes to the Saudi in a small Hyundai, who with two wheels on the embankment and two in the gutter, overtook me on the inside doing a wall of death act at 60mph.

Saudi demands a very different driving style, a balanced mix of asser-

tiveness and defensiveness. As ever, arriving safely is the top priority.

The role of women in the Kingdom is changing, not least because King Abdullah is forward-thinking, reformist and wants to see greater emancipation. When I came to Saudi in the '70s, women were restricted to being teachers, working in a hospital or being hostesses for Saudia; now they are being encouraged to study at university, pursue independent careers and start businesses. Many of the construction projects are new universities for women.



Kingdom Tower

there is a family party, the men will have one party and the ladies another. At such an event, the females are likely to wear the height of fashion, bought at outlets such as Karen Millen, Monsoon or Gucci, which are found in very upmarket shopping malls across the city.

The strange dichotomy is the separate education for women, who will then work alongside men who are not then family members. So why not have integrated education? Many Saudis are now asking the same question, both from a commonsense point of

view and also because dual facilities cost more money.

The other major change will be females being uncovered in public. All of them wear ebayas, which cover the body down to the ankles. Headdress can be the scarf, the hijab, which shows the face; the niqab, which shows only the eyes; the burka, which completely hides the face. One health problem for women is vitamin D deficiency, as their skins rarely see sunlight.

Such change will not come overnight and will be driven by the people themselves, not outsiders criticising the regime. As always, opinions are polarised. Some women would cast off their veils tomorrow and jump behind the wheel of a car: others would

feel embarrassed at being uncovered and don't want to drive.

Change is a global phenomenon, but change in Saudi is significant and far-reaching. Despite untold wealth, wall to wall marble and even gold-plated Porsches, the Kingdom still lags far behind in many areas. Help and expertise from outside are welcomed as Saudi Arabia moves towards becoming a global player for reasons other than oil.

Nigel Wild

Have YOU ever thought about FOSTERING?

**If you think you might have what it takes to become
a Foster Carer or just want to find out more then
call PACT now on
0800 731 1845**



PARENTS AND CHILDREN TOGETHER

www.pactcharity.org

ASCOTT VILLAGE SHOP NEEDS TO KNOW - “DO YOU TWEET”?

In the days of my youth, organising my social life was pretty straight forward. Most evenings started in the public bar of the Eastfield Inn in Henleaze, Bristol and the group of friends who gathered either remained there or wandered along to The Beehive for a change of scene. Communication was not a major issue but if it had been possible to send a message to all my friends simultaneously, suggesting that we start in The Beehive, well, that would have been pretty useful.

Enter www.Twitter.com If you are not familiar with Twitter, it is simply a means of using your computer or your mobile phone to let your friends or ‘followers’ know what you are doing, instantly. So, for example, if I was off to The Swan I could tweet “Off to The Swan, anybody fancy a drink?” All my followers will get the message and can join me or not. Simple really.

Twitter originated as a means of using SMS (Short Message Service) to send ‘text’ messages to groups of people simultaneously. Not a lot of people know this, but a standard text on an American cell phone can have a maximum of 140 characters as opposed to 160 in the UK and that is why Twitter allows just 140 characters. The principle is that you have a group of follow-

ers and when you send a tweet they all receive it. Equally, you follow people and you receive all the tweets that they send. You can also direct a tweet to a particular person and if they are one of your followers you can send the tweet privately if you wish.

So it all started as a pretty handy way of staying in touch with your mates. What happened then was that the simple Twitter site was joined by others that took the principle and refined it, the two biggest being www.tweetdeck.com and www.hootsuite.com. Using these sites, you can split the incoming tweets into different categories, so you might list friends in one column, family in another etc. They also introduced a facility that was absent originally on Twitter.com, they introduced the ‘re-tweet’. Socially, that meant that if someone I followed told me of a party and asked me to pass it on, I could simply ‘re-tweet’ and the message would be passed to all my followers who could, in turn, re-tweet to their followers and the original message would spread virally.

So why, as a business person, would I be interested in Twitter? Well, the world of business realised that Twitter offered two opportunities. The first is

that it is a means of staying in touch with colleagues, networks and customers both through the tweets that you send but also tweeting links to your website, blog etc. If you tweet useful information and links, people will re-tweet them and those receiving the re-tweets may well decide to follow you. Suppose that you now have several thousand people following you who are interested in you and your business and you can use Twitter to tell them about new products, special events, discounts etc. simply by sending out one simple tweet. Further, suppose that those thousands of people are followed by thousands and they all re-tweet your message, you can see how you can get your message in front of a massive audience, in a matter of hours without it costing you a penny.

Secondly, you can search Twitter. So, if I set up a search on 'Public Speaking' I will start to receive all the tweets including that phrase. Now, if someone somewhere tweets that they hate public speaking, I can jump into the conversation, offer help and point them to my website. Most big organisations now monitor Twitter looking

for tweets that mention them. If it is a complaint, they can step in and sort it out. You can search for your hobby and join in conversations with people who share the same interest wherever they are in the world. You can ask for help; a recent tweet came from somebody whose touchpad on their laptop had stopped working, within minutes a solution was found for her and she was able to tweet that all was working again. Recruitment Agencies are increasingly advertising jobs and seeking candidates through Twitter and the list goes on and on.



So what started as a simple way of staying in touch with friends has become a global business marketing phenomena. The etiquette is complicated, people like you to be yourself and people tend to follow people rather than corporations, so the corporates have to have a human face. People like a mix of business and social tweets, so about 70% of my tweets are really chats with people and the balance are business related.

Through Twitter I have done business, I have forged alliances with people right across the country, I have made friends and I have learned about so

many things from the sites and blogs that have been recommended. What is more, the virtual has become physical, and once a month there is a meeting of the 'Twitteratti' of Oxfordshire when we get together at the Fallow Fields Hotel in Kingston Bagpuise (@fallowfields) for a chat and a drink face to face.

I am @AscottTim the shop is @AscottShop so start following me, I will re-tweet you and you will be away! Still to come, Facebook, LinkedIn, Flickr, You Tube, Digg, StumbleUpon, Reddit, Del.icio.us. Believe me, it doesn't get any easier!

Tim Lyon

So if you fancy giving it a go, visit www.twitter.com open an account, get your Twitter name and start tweeting.

Ascott Village Shop Online!

You can now find the shop on:

Twitter - @AscottShop

Facebook - Ascott Village Shop (become a fan)

Internet - www.AscottVillageShop.WordPress.com

WYCHWOOD LIBRARY

We welcome the long awaited Spring with lots of new gardening books on our shelves as well as other new titles. Why not bring a friend to our Wednesday coffee morning sessions and have a coffee while you browse for books and catch up.

The new Afternoon Reading Group is very active with some interesting discussions on the chosen titles so far. Come and join us. We meet on the second Thursday of each month, except August, at 1.15pm until about 2.30. There is an Evening Reading Group as well but with limited spaces available. Come and have a chat at the Library desk to assess which one would be best for you.

Future events at Wychwood Library include a knitting group called “**I knit Links**”, based on a nationwide non-profit Community Interest Company. Lorna Raye is to run the group which will meet every second Thursday morning from 10.30 until 12. You can contact Lorna on 01993 832 121 for more information.

Adult Learners Week is from Monday 15th until Friday 21st May and we will be having another IT Learning/Ancestry week from 2 – 5pm each day we are open.

We offer one-to-one tuition with expert help from the Wychwood Volunteers for an hour each. Come in and make a booking.

Wordpeckers. We have begun our junior reading group again but we are still open to new members between 8-12 years. We share our reading choices and

talk about the books we are currently reading as well as discuss and practise creative writing. So if you love reading and talking about books and authors, come along and join us. We meet in the library on the first Wednesday in the month.

Remember, you can take out books, DVDs etc from our library and return them anywhere in Oxfordshire. If you do think you are going to be late, and the items will fit, pop them through our letterbox or give us a call to save being charged overdue fines or renew them Online. You just need your library card and a PIN number.

Younger members, keep an eye out for the Summer Reading Scheme being held in all Libraries again this year.

Come in and visit your local Library where it is free to take out as many books as you can carry for at least three weeks. See you soon.

Ruth, Liz and Angela

Opening Times:

Monday: 2.00pm to 7.00pm

Tuesday: **Closed**

Wednesday: 9.30am to 1.00pm
2.00pm to 5.00pm

Thursday: **Closed**

Friday: 2.00pm to 7.00pm

Saturday: 9.30am to 1.00pm

Don't forget about the Ascott website:

TIDDY HALL

Regular Activities:

Monday - Friday Mornings
Pre-school

Contact: Mrs Pauline Plant
07968006451

Wednesday Afternoons
Piano Lessons

Contact: Pauline Carter
01993 774568

Tuesday Evenings 7.30 - 9.00
Yoga

Contact: Jan Holah 01608 810620

Tuesday Evenings 6.00 - 7.00
Karate Class

Contact: Rachel Ealey
07929 338813

Thursday Evenings 7.30 - 8.15
Circuit Training

Contact: Matt Jeffrey 07776
490647

POST OFFICE RUNS EVERY
FRIDAY AFTERNOON FROM
2.00 - 4.00

Special Events:

Saturday 19 June 7.30pm:

Roseneath School of Music
Summer Concert

Contact Pauline Carter for further
details (01993 774568)



To book the Tiddy Hall contact:

Ingrid Ridley
01993 830612

TIDDY HALL REPORT

We've had a few ups and downs at the Tiddy Hall over the winter – problems with the under-floor heating and wall heaters, bulbs blowing, squirrels in the roof! Perhaps the extreme cold weather contributed to these minor hiccups but all seems to be running smoothly again.

April 3rd saw a return of Folk Night at Tiddy Hall with Acousticana and we thank Elaine Byles, John Cull and Harry and Karen Kappen for organising a wonderful evening enjoyed by all. We are very lucky to have such talented singer/songwriters living in our county and some of them came together to entertain us so marvellously with a mixture of folk, country & blues – even a touch of Gershwin! Money raised will be shared between Tiddy Hall and the Village Charity. There will be another Folk Night with Johny Silvo on 20th November. This will be in memory of Joe Packer from The Last Straw, who sadly passed away so suddenly on 3rd June 2008, aged 51,

Two more evenings of Flix in the Stix were held in February and April. In February 'Ice Age 3' was shown in the afternoon and in the evening, the comedy/drama 'The Bucket List' starring those wonderful American actors Morgan Freeman and Jack Nicholson. For those who dared to stay out late, the French period drama, 'Coco before Chanel' delighted us with a superb performance by Audrey Tautou as the

famed fashion designer in this lavish period drama! April brought Guy Ritchie's 'Sherlock Holmes' to our big screen in the village, starring Robert Downy Jr. as the detective himself and Jude Law as his side kick, Watson! These events help to raise important funds for our hall, so thank you to all who have supported us over the years and we are always happy to welcome new faces!

A new circuits class has started on Thursday evenings. This class aims to improve not only strength but also flexibility, joint range of motion, core stability, balance, co-ordination and cardiovascular fitness. For more information please contact Matt Jeffrey on 01608 642169. Do come along – it's a great workout! 7.30 – 8.15 every Thursday.

Don't forget our regular classes of Karate at 6pm and Yoga at 7.30pm, both on Tuesday evenings. New members very welcome!

The floor of the Tiddy Hall is becoming worn and there are plans to have it reconditioned during the summer holidays. This is just one project in a line of improvements that we are looking at over the next few years.

Future events include The Rose-neath School of Music summer concert on June 19th and a Table Top Sale/Coffee Morning is planned for September. More details in the next issue!

Ingrid Ridley

SCENES FROM ASCOTT VILLAGE FETE 1930



ASPARAGUS SEASON IS HERE AT LAST !

ASPARAGUS, MOZZARELLA & PROSCIUTTO PARCELS

Ingredients:

- 16 asparagus spears, trimmed
- 125g ball mozzarella, sliced into 4
- 8-12 slices prosciutto
- 3 tbsp olive oil
- 1 tbsp red wine vinegar
- a small bunch basil, finely shredded
- salad leaves to serve

Method:

Blanch the asparagus for 2 minutes then refresh under cold water. Cut each mozzarella slice in half and sit both pieces on top of 2 spears of asparagus. Top with 2 more spears then wrap the asparagus in prosciutto so the mozzarella is enclosed (you will need 2 or 3 strips).

Heat a little olive oil in a pan, then carefully fry the parcels until the prosciutto has crisped and the mozzarella oozes. Whisk together the olive oil and vinegar and add the basil. Serve each parcel with salad leaves and a little dressing drizzled over.

ONE-PAN SALMON WITH ROAST ASPARAGUS

Ingredients:

- 400g new potatoes, halved if large
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 8 asparagus spears, trimmed and halved
- 2 handfuls cherry tomatoes
- 1 tbsp balsamic vinegar
- 2 salmon fillets, about 140g/5oz each
- handful basil leaves

Method:

Heat oven to 220C/fan 200C/gas 7. Tip the potatoes and 1tbsp of olive oil into an ovenproof dish, then roast the potatoes for 20 mins until starting to brown. Toss the asparagus in with the potatoes, then return to the oven for 15 mins.

Throw in the cherry tomatoes and vinegar and nestle the salmon amongst the vegetables. Drizzle with the remaining oil and return to the oven for a final 10-15 mins until the salmon is cooked. Scatter over the basil leaves and serve everything scooped straight from the dish.

**AIRPORTS &
WEDDINGS**



HKS Chauffeurs (UK) Ltd

**Tel: 07795 171771
or 01993 705993**

**Email: info@hkschauffeurs.com
www.hkschauffeurs.com**

Professional, Reliable and working for you

**Oxfordshire's Premier Executive Chauffeur
and Wedding Car Service
8 Seater luxury Minibus, Mercedes Cars**

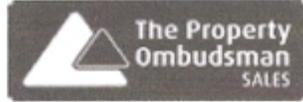


We provide an independent, fully licensed and insured chauffeur and wedding service, when and where you may need it.

HKS Chauffeurs should be your first choice for executive travel.

**We specialise in • airport transfers • hotel transfers • sporting events
• theatre trips • business meetings • private tours • special occasions**

**Heathrow-Gatwick-Stansted-Luton-Birmingham-Coventry
Bristol-Bournemouth-London City-West End Theatre Trips
Wimbledon-Ascot-Cheltenham-Wembley and O2 Arena
01993 705993**



We are an independent estate agency specialising in the sale of property in West and North Oxfordshire and into the Cotswolds.

Providence House
49 High Street
Burford
Oxfordshire
OX18 4QA
Tel: 01993 824800

Dashwood House
Shipton Road
Milton under Wychwood
Oxfordshire
OX7 6JH
Tel: 01993 832288

67-69 George Street
London W1U 8LT
Tel: 0207 298 0314

Email: sales@wychwoods.com Web: www.wychwoods.com

The Post Office Stores Milton-under-Wychwood

The Post Office, The Green
Shipton Road
Milton-under-Wychwood, OX7 6JL
Tel: 01993 832243

Opening hours:
Mon.-Fri. 9am - 5.30pm (Closed 1-2 for lunch)
Saturday 9am - 1.00pm

Post Office Services Available at 'The Tiddy Hall', Ascott
Friday 2.00pm - 4.00pm (Bank Holidays Excepted)

We have a good selection of Greeting Cards, Stationery,
Agents for Dry Cleaners
We will be pleased to see you