

**DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT EDITION - FRIDAY 5<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2001  
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**HOLY TRINITY CHURCH, ASCOTT-UNDER-WYCHWOOD**

**AUGUST**

Sunday, 5 <sup>th</sup>	10.30 a.m.	Matins
Trinity 8		No Family Service
Sunday, 12 <sup>th</sup>	9.00 a.m.	Holy Communion
Trinity 9		
Sunday, 19 <sup>th</sup>	10.30 a.m.	Holy Communion
Trinity 10		
Sunday, 26 <sup>th</sup>	9.00 a.m.	Holy Communion
Trinity 11		

**SEPTEMBER**

Sunday, 2 <sup>nd</sup>	10.30 a.m.	Matins
Trinity 12	4.00 p.m.	Family Service
Sunday, 9 <sup>th</sup>	9.00 a.m.	Holy Communion
Trinity 13		
Sunday, 16 <sup>th</sup>	11.00 a.m.	Holy Communion
Trinity 14		
Sunday, 23 <sup>rd</sup>	11.00 a.m.	Holy Communion
Trinity 15		
Sunday, 30 <sup>th</sup>	11.00 a.m.	Harvest Festival
Trinity 16		

N.B. There will be changes to the pattern of Sunday worship. Please look on the Church notice board for the times of future services.

**From the Parish Registers:**

Holy Baptism:	6 <sup>th</sup> May	Arron Bates
	24 <sup>th</sup> June	Ryan Alec Weston
Holy Matrimony:	9 <sup>th</sup> June	James Richard Holden and Sonia Kirilova
Funeral Service:	30 <sup>th</sup> June	Evelyn Barbara Given

On 10<sup>th</sup> September at 8 p.m. in St. Kenelm's Church, Enstone, the Revd. Mark Abrey will be inducted as priest-in-charge of the Chase Benefice [Chadlington, Spelsbury, Enstone and Heythrop] together with Ascott-under-Wychwood. We hope that there will be a good turnout from Ascott at this service. Mark and his family are leaving a large inner city parish in Liverpool for what, I am sure, they hope will be the relative calm of West Oxfordshire. It is a large benefice and I am sure they can count on the help and support of the people of Ascott.

Mark's first service in Ascott will be on 16<sup>th</sup> September when he will celebrate Holy Communion at 11 a.m. Please come along and give our new vicar a warm welcome.

**CHURCH FÊTE**  
**Thank you to all who helped and supported the  
 Church Fête on the 14<sup>th</sup> July.**  
**We raised £1,661.25.**  
*Parochial Church Council*

**ASCOTT-UNDER-WYCHWOOD PARISH COUNCIL**

The whole village is most grateful to Simon Gidman for all the time and energy he expended on the production of the very successful village photograph. It was a major effort carried out to a fine conclusion leaving an important archive of the village in the year 2000, for the future. Both Simon and his many assistants deserve our great thanks.

A public meeting concerning the future of the Corner House Farm site was held on 25<sup>th</sup> June when in excess of ninety people attended. However in recognition of a petition which was organised following the meeting, it was resolved to follow with a referendum distributed to all electors to ascertain the true feelings of the village regarding a shop.

The Playground equipment has all been installed and the surface completed underneath providing a grand new facility for the children.

The next project facing the Council will be provision of new gates for the church to replace the Memorial Gates commemorating the dead of the First World War. Sadly these gates are now beyond repair and it is hoped to replace them with purpose built wrought iron gates which hopefully will last well into the twenty first century.

**Wendy Pearse, Parish Clerk.**

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**RURAL BUS SERVICES**

**Charlbury Town and Station.** We now have a **regular bus service to Charlbury town and the station** that runs ten times each day, Monday to Saturday, to meet the London and Worcester bound trains and give people direct access to the amenities and shops in the town. Timetables are available at the Swan Public House [thanks to our publican, Ian Merritt], on the bus, at the station and copies are pinned to the notice boards.

The bus is a new white Mercedes 16 seater. The destination board reads 'Hotel de Ville' for some unexplained reason but the bus will shortly [at the time of writing] receive its striking purple and green livery and be easier to spot. It comes into Ascott down London Lane, drives around the Green, Church View and past the

pub and back up London Lane. It will stop on demand, though the preferred pick-up point is the pub. Usage to date has been slightly disappointing and we hope, as people become confident that the bus is reliable, safe and comfortable more and more will use it, thus securing its future past the currently funded period that we hope will soon be extended by the Council to 2003.

**Witney.** Following discussions with the County Council [and with thanks to the support we got from our Councillor, Rodney Rose] a daily bus service to Witney, via Leafield, will run through Ascott-under-Wychwood [Dawls Close] from 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2001:

<i>Depart</i> Dawls Close:	7.48 a.m.	<i>Arrive</i> Witney:	8.16 a.m.
<i>Depart</i> Witney:	5.45 p.m.	<i>Arrive</i> Ascott:	6.10 p.m.

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### **WHAT IS NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH?**

When a group of neighbours form together with the express idea of caring for their community and the people who live in it, they are on their way to creating a Neighbourhood Watch scheme.

I am the Watch Administrator for West Oxfordshire and I help to set up the schemes and assist in the liaison between the neighbours and local Police Officers. Neighbourhood Watch is free to join.

It is run by volunteers who agree to receive information, via a pre-recorded message system, from Witney Police Station. These co-ordinators, as they are called, then pass the relevant details on to their neighbours. Therefore keeping the community informed about incidents that may have happened or forewarn them of any potential problems, like distraction burglaries or bogus officials.

It is generally accepted that a co-ordinator and a deputy work together to inform approx. 20 households between them. By having groups of co-ordinators on an estate or area the message is soon distributed.

It is hoped that the passing of information is not a one way thing, that co-ordinators feel they can contact my office to discuss local issues that the Police might be able to assist with.

If you are interested in finding out more about Neighbourhood Watch please feel free to contact:- Janet Mott, Watch Office, Witney Police Station, Welch Way, Witney OX28 6JN. Tel: 893811, Fax 893906. E-mail: [w.oxnhw@thamesvalley.police.uk](mailto:w.oxnhw@thamesvalley.police.uk)

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### **WYCHWOODS LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY**

The season finished with a very interesting talk by Beryl Schumer, the renowned authority on Wychwood Forest, describing the effect two very different personalities had on life in the forest, one in medieval times and one in the nineteenth century. The Society will be having a walk in the Forest on the 6th October. It is also hoped that a field walking day will be arranged later this summer.

The first two meetings next season are as follows:

**Thursday, 20th September at 7.30 p.m. Milton Village Hall**  
John Rawlins From Chipping Norton to the Wychwoods in the 1930s.  
**Thursday, 18th October at 7.30 p.m. Shipton Village Hall**  
Tim Copeland AGM and The Story of Grimsditch

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

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### **HEDGEROWS**

Look out of your windows or walk the Parish footpaths and the one dominant feature of the landscape is the pattern of hedgerows that mark field boundaries and pathways. Some of these hedges are ancient, others less so, having been planted in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, at the time of the enclosures.

Although we are close to the most heavily wooded area of the Wychwood our parish has relatively little tree cover and much of our parish has probably been open grassland since the Bronze Age, with some woodland encroachment in the period leading to the Norman invasion.

Wychwood became a Royal hunting forest, but there was always pressure from local inhabitants to assart (clear) the land for crops and animal grazing. The clearance of adjoining areas created some of our oldest hedges. Today these hedges are often referred to as "ghost woodland" and are of interest to historians, as they indicate areas of cleared woodland and naturalists because of the wide range of species that they contain.

Other ancient hedges came into existence along pathways and roadways and today still mark out these routes within the landscape. Priory lane is part of one such ancient route, its hedgerow indicating the existence of a pathway from Priory Farm through the Parish and into the forest. Most of the hedges that mark out field boundaries were planted during the Enclosures. They usually consist of a few species; often hawthorns predominate and they were planted in straight lines.

How can you calculate the age of a hedge? First by observation. Does it have straight edges or does it meander across the landscape? Older hedges tend to follow an uneven course. What plants are growing at the base of the hedge? If you find woodland plants such as, dog's mercury, primroses, wood anemones and bluebells then the hedge is almost certainly a remnant of old woodland. What woody plants can you see? If these include field maple, dogwood, spindle, hazel and guelder rose this indicates an older hedge. Other species such as elder, hawthorn, blackthorn and dog rose will quickly colonise a newly planted hedge and do not indicate great age.

There is a method of dating hedgerows called "Hooper's Hypothesis". Examine a 30metre section of hedge and count all the woody species, ignoring bramble and ivy. Each species counted represents 100 years of age. This method works best with old hedgerows in lowland Britain, providing the soil is neither excessively acid nor chalky, as these soil types restrict the range of species that will grow.

Where are the oldest hedges in Ascott? I can't give a complete answer, but old

hedgerows are to be found by Five Shilling corner, along the footpaths towards Pudlicote following the river path from the Mill, and on the main road through the village from the A361 across the Charlbury to the Burford road and beyond to Kingstanding. Some of these hedgerows contain five to six species in a 30metre length and therefore could be 500-600 years old!

Are hedgerows important, other than as animal-proof field boundaries? Yes, a good species-rich hedge will contain many of the plants, animals, birds and insects associated with woodland habitat. This kind of hedge is often called linear woodland. Hedges act as “green motorways” allowing species that would otherwise be isolated into small genetically vulnerable groups, to move freely throughout the countryside, ensuring survival and preventing inbreeding. In spring the hedges are full of nesting songbirds. The yellowhammer, which is in decline nationally, is to be found in local abundance in Ascott, nesting regularly each spring.

Hedgerows provide shelter to many small mammals, you might see, field mice, shrews, rabbits, badgers, weasels, hedgehogs and the occasional grass snake. Butterflies, like the gatekeeper feed on bramble flowers and 100 species of moth caterpillar are known to feed on hawthorn and 200 on blackthorn!

Just as interesting as the hedge itself is the associated verge. Here wildflowers can proliferate. In our calcareous soils woolly thistles, cowslips, knapweed and scabious flourish. Just outside our parish boundary the county council have created a number of grassland reserves from the verges. Just past the Coldwell brook, on the Burford road, you can find campanulas and pyramidal orchids and by the Chadlington turn, on the road to Charlbury, sainfoin displays its bright pink flowers.

Many of our hedges are in decline, becoming thin with large gaps appearing, especially those dividing arable fields. Ploughing and planting right up to the hedge and spray drift eventually weakens the hedge so much, that it may eventually disappear. Should we mind? To a conservationist the answer must be yes, but to the farmer hedgerow maintenance, in times of low profitability and scarce labour resources, must be a problem. In an ideal world all hedgerows would have a 6ft headland between them and any arable crops and be laid rather than machine cut, allowing hedgerow trees to develop at intervals along the hedge.

**NEWS**

Since writing my last piece, I have been reliably informed that a Red Kite was seen over the Evenlode valley close to our parish. This distinctive bird of prey is about the size of a Buzzard but has a forked tail rather than the Buzzard’s wedge shaped one. This bird may be the offspring of one of those released in the Chilterns as part of the reintroduction programme.

Where were all the cuckoos this year? Although I heard my first one calling on April 27<sup>th</sup> there seemed to very few about this spring.

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

<b>MOBILE LIBRARY</b>				
<i>Please note the new stop</i>				
<b>The Green</b>	<i>Start Time</i>	11.00 a.m.	<i>Finish Time</i>	11.25 a.m.
<b>Maple Way</b>	<i>Start Time</i>	11.30 a.m.	<i>Finish Time</i>	11.45 a.m.

**“HIS NAME BE NOT FORGOTTEN”**

**Part III**

On 4<sup>th</sup> August 1914 the German troops invaded Belgium and the Great War had begun. As they steadily advanced amidst great destruction and bloodshed swinging south west towards the French frontier, the Allies scrambled to range their own armies against them. But the surge seemed unstoppable and even the renowned regular British army who had advanced to Mons by the 23<sup>rd</sup> August, along with their allies was stumbling back in total disarray.

However the Germany campaign based on the Schlieffen Plan proved too grand for available communications and by 29<sup>th</sup> August a gap had been forced in the German advance causing the German troops to swing east instead of west of Paris. Then by crossing the Marne on the 3<sup>rd</sup> September still heading south east, they exposed their flank to the Allies instead of outflanking them as the Plan intended. Suddenly the pendulum hung in the balance. As the Allied counter offensive on the 6<sup>th</sup> September at the battle of the Marne was followed by the battle of the Aisne. This petered out in deadlock at the beginning of October leaving an open flank between the Aisne and the Channel. The ensuing Race to the Sea saw both sides striving for victory in an endeavour to outflank each other as they established their trenches step by step northwards to the coast.

On 9<sup>th</sup> October Antwerp surrendered, the Belgium field army escaped down the coast and the Western Front reached the sea at Nieuport. In places the line was still indecisive as ferocious fighting continued but by the 11<sup>th</sup> November the trenches extended solidly from the North Sea to Switzerland. A long grim war lay ahead for all combatants.

The Front held firm through 1915 and into 1916. However when the Germans attacked the French defences in the Verdun sector on 21<sup>st</sup> February 1916 a momentum began which was to culminate in Britain’s greatest military slaughter, the Battle of the Somme.

A long projected Anglo/French offensive had been planned by Sir Douglas Haig, British Commander in Chief for 15<sup>th</sup> August 1916 but General Joffre, French Commander insisted that the offensive must be brought forward. His force defending Verdun was sustaining impossible losses and he felt that unless something was done to relieve German pressure, total annihilation would ensue. Haig agreed with great reluctance to bring the date forward to 1<sup>st</sup> July 1916. Unlike the other belligerents, Britain had been forced at the outbreak of war to create a new army from scratch. The British peacetime army was merely a small imperial garrison force. But the original British Expeditionary Force of 4 Infantry Divisions and 1 Cavalry had grown by 1<sup>st</sup> July 1916 to 58 Divisions. Despite the very successful setting up and maintaining of this army, the troops though trained,

were green and the majority untried consisting for the most part of the million volunteers who had joined in swarms in 1914 drawn by Kitchener's pointing finger.

On 24<sup>th</sup> June 1916 British guns opened up the preliminary bombardment on the Somme. At 7.30 a.m. on 1<sup>st</sup> July 14 British Divisions climbed out of the trenches on an 18 mile front north of the Somme and marched slowly forward, each man carrying 66 lbs. of kit. They expected to find the enemy, barbed wire, trenches, artillery and defences annihilated by the week long bombardment. Instead they were massacred by German artillery and machine guns as they plodded through no man's land and lined up to pass through the very few gaps which their own artillery had created in the massed barbed wire. It was a catastrophe without parallel in British history. By the end of the day, 57,000 men had fallen, 19,000 of them killed.

One of these 19,000 was CECIL BECK. Cecil had been born in Sulham, near Pangbourne in Berkshire and was the son of Louisa Mary Beck who had moved with her sister Florence to no. 16 Shipton Road, Ascott, now the home of Mrs. Storey. Perhaps feeling he would like to serve in his home county's Regiment, Cecil enlisted at Reading in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, Princess Charlotte of Wales's Royal Berkshire Regiment. His cousin, Mrs. Lily Quinnell, remembers that Cecil and Mr. Farmer who lived in Martin Kirk's house next door, both came home on leave and Cecil's mother held a party for them before they returned to the Front. Mr. Farmer survived the war but Cecil never came home again.

The War Diary for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion records the following. They moved up on the night of 30<sup>th</sup> June/1<sup>st</sup> July to the assembly position for battle, their objective the village of Ovillers, north of La Boisselle. At 7.30 a.m. they advanced, 24 officers and 800 other ranks. By 9 a.m. only about 75 could be mustered. On 2<sup>nd</sup> July the remnants of the battalion were withdrawn. A month later despite repeated offensives no advance whatsoever had been made in that part of the line. PRIVATE CECIL MONTAGUE BECK 9991, 2<sup>nd</sup> BATTALION ROYAL BERKSHIRE REGIMENT, KILLED IN ACTION 1<sup>st</sup> JULY 1916 AGE 19. His body lies in Serre Road Cemetery No. 2, Somme France Plot 3 Row C Grave 6

Nine days later came Ascott's second death. FRANK THORNTON was born in Charlbury but his parents, William and Kate, soon moved to 31 High Street, Ascott, now Yewtree Cottage. Frank attended Ascott school where each year between 1897 and 1900 he was commended by the Inspector. The school log book does record however that in July 1900, Frank and Jesse Moss were very severely punished for impudence. Do we suspect a thrashing? Mrs. Thornton soon called on the headmaster but was apparently quite satisfied at his explanation. Frank passed his Labour Certificate in October. By the time war was declared Frank was living near Hitchin where he enlisted in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment. His brother Frederick also served through the Great War. On 1<sup>st</sup> July at 7.30 a.m. Frank's Battalion advanced on the extreme right of the British attack next to the French. By 8 a.m. the German front line trenches were taken. Having secured the support trenches, the 90<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade went through and captured Montauban. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Bedfordshires were given the

dangerous task of clearing the trenches and dugouts of any remaining Germans resulting in the capture of 300 prisoners. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> July the Germans counter attacked but the Battalion held their trenches until relieved on the night of 4<sup>th</sup> July. Arriving in the rest area, they fell into well earned sleep having had practically no sleep or wash for six days or removed their clothes for three weeks. By 9<sup>th</sup> July they were back in front line trenches once more.

Frank was wounded in action but buried 30 miles away in Abbeville. To reach there he must have gone through the whole process of casualty clearance. Wounded in an advance, a casualty would have to wait to be picked up by stretcher bearers, pass through the Regimental Aid Post in the trenches, then on to an Advanced Dressing Station for assessment of his wound. Possibly then by ambulance to a Casualty Clearance Station for emergency operation or nursing and as soon as possible removed to field hospital or by train to base hospital. It seems most likely that Frank was wounded in one of the first four days of the Offensive when his Battalion was in action, and reached Abbeville through the casualty system. Otherwise on return to the Front he could have been hit by shell or sniper, quickly processed to the train and died en route to Abbeville. PRIVATE FRANK THORNTON, 19108 2nd BATTALION BEDFORDSHIRE REGIMENT, DIED OF WOUNDS 10<sup>th</sup> JULY 1916 AGE 27. He is buried in Abbeville Communal Cemetery, Somme V.C.3.

Of course one name that has not been forgotten is that of LIEUTENANT REGINALD JOHN ELLIOTT TIDDY, the third Ascott man to die on the Somme. A few years ago Martin Kirk described in "The Wychwood" his search for Tiddy's grave in Laventie but I can add a little more to the story. Educated in Tonbridge and Oxford before pursuing a distinguished University career, Tiddy was a scholar at University College and took a First Class in Classical Moderations in 1900 and a Literae Humaniores in 1902. He was Passmore Edwards scholar in 1903, became a Fellow of University and later Trinity where he lectured in Classics and English. He was also University Lecturer in English. The elder son of William and Ellen Tiddy, they lived in Priory Cottage in Prior Lane. A lover of music, he was very interested in the Folk Dance and Song Movement of Oxfordshire.

Lord Sanderson Furniss who built Chestnut Close, now Wychwood Manor, was a friend of Tiddy and in his memoirs describes how Tiddy bought the land and built the first Tiddy Hall. He also explains how Tiddy joined up owing to a stern sense of duty, though unfitted for army life and so short sighted that only after several unsuccessful attempts was he finally accepted. However he approached army life with buoyant zest his most attractive characteristic, and taught folk dancing to the other soldiers. Only his most intimate friends knew how deeply he felt the horror of war and the misery of his soul. He was promoted Lieutenant on 29<sup>th</sup> July 1915 and spent some months in 1916 in Instructional Duties. However his Battalion, 2<sup>nd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry moved into trenches at Fanquissart on the 9<sup>th</sup> August and shortly afterwards Tiddy was killed in action. One of a lieutenant's major duties was the welfare of his men. Those in forward posts in no man's land all had to be checked during the night perhaps following

wire guide lines to locate them. Sometimes a lieutenant led patrols into no man's land to surprise and attack an enemy patrol or to capture Germans for information. We do not know the exact details of his death. LIEUTENANT REGINALD JOHN ELLIOTT TIDDY, 2<sup>nd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> BATTALION OXFORDSHIRE AND BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LIGHT INFANTRY, KILLED IN ACTION 10<sup>th</sup> AUGUST 1916 AGE 36. He is buried at Laventie Military Cemetery, La Gorgue Nord France 11 D 20.

Despite the disaster of 1<sup>st</sup> July the offensive had to continue and did so for 140 days. Every Allied attack was followed by a German counter offensive. On both sides the soldiers shared the relentless terror and suffering.

On 15<sup>th</sup> September 1916 the weapon which was to have such an impact on land warfare entered the stage. Rumours of a wonder weapon, a leviathan, a war machine, spread like wildfire amongst the troops. In the initial offensive only 32 took part, grinding along at half a mile an hour, their interiors a hell of heat and noise. They opened a gap, soon blocked by the enemy. Their day was yet to come.

Perhaps WILLIAM CLARIDGE the next Ascott casualty who died near this first tank action, was one of those who marvelled at these new monsters of war. William's family lived in the second cottage up the top row of four in Church View. His father James was a carter from Chilson, his mother Sarah came from Ascott and they had lived in The Row [Church View] since at least 1887. William had at least five elder sisters and one elder brother and signed the Parish Register as a witness when his sister Charlotte married Harry Pinfold from Enstone in 1911. 1916 was an extremely sad year for the Claridges. Sarah died in February and James in March so although they never knew about William's death, it must have been a harsh blow for his siblings. Like Tiddy, William enlisted in the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry but in the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion. By the end of September the Battalion had already taken part in several offensives on the Front and on 26<sup>th</sup> was in position behind Morval. Relieved on the 28<sup>th</sup>, on the 29<sup>th</sup> they paraded in "Battle order" and marched to the trenches at Trones Wood. It seems unlikely William ever reached Trones Wood for on that day he died of wounds and was buried not far from the battlefield. CORPORAL WILLIAM J. CLARIDGE, 6<sup>th</sup> BATTALION OXFORDSHIRE AND BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LIGHT INFANTRY 17716, DIED OF WOUNDS 29 SEPTEMBER 1916 AGE 22. He is buried in Grove Town Cemetery, Meaulte Somme France 1 K 16.

The Somme battle continued on through October into November. Regiments from every part of Britain and many parts of the Empire took part and died in their thousands. The French fought on the southern part of the Front. The offensive was finally closed by Haig on 18<sup>th</sup> November.

Ascott's last casualty in 1916 was VICTOR "HARRY" HONEYBONE. Harry's parents Thomas and Naomi were living in Church House which used to stand in Church Close from at least 1884 and after it was demolished they moved to Mary

Barnes' house. His two elder brothers, Peter and Ralph, also served and no doubt attended Ascott school where Harry was commended by the Inspector in 1900, 1901 and 1903. Ascott Banns Register records the forthcoming marriage of

Victor Harry Honeybone to Louisa Elizabeth Pittaway in 1915 so here we have our first war widow. But Louisa later married Percy Charles Faulkner and moved to The Hill, Shipton. Originally Harry joined the 2<sup>nd</sup> Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry but was later transferred to the 5<sup>th</sup> Royal Berkshire Regiment. This Battalion was in the Arras area from October 1916 to the end of the year and like all others took turns in manning the trenches. They relieved the 9<sup>th</sup> Essex on 1<sup>st</sup> December and by the 5<sup>th</sup> had sustained 12 casualties including Harry. There is little doubt these occurred from enemy shelling. Even when no actual fighting took place, the attrition rate from shelling, mortaring and raiding amounted to many hundreds a day along the line. PRIVATE VICTOR HARRY HONEYBONE, 5<sup>th</sup> BATTALION ROYAL BERKSHIRE REGIMENT 39347, KILLED IN ACTION 2<sup>nd</sup> DECEMBER 1916 AGE 21. He is buried in Faubourg D'Amiens Cemetery, Arras Pas de Calais France 1 J 51.

On 15<sup>th</sup> December the French finally attained victory at Verdun. Four months battle on the Somme saw 415,000 British Empire casualties, 195,000 French, and German casualties at least equalled these totals. And still stalemate reigned on the Western Front.

**Wendy Pearse**

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

We had our Annual Meeting in April. We listened as the President and Secretary read their reports and were amazed at how much we have done during the past year and at the variety of places some of the members have visited ranging from the Triennial Meeting at Wembley to a day at the London Dome. The Secretary also read the Minutes of the first meeting of Ascott W.I. when it was reformed in 1947, which brought back memories of many familiar names like Honeybone, Chaundy and Barrett.

Also in April, the Pre-School invited us to a coffee morning in Tiddy Hall and while we enjoyed our coffee, we watched the children at play. They then entertained us by singing and miming a variety of songs. The one that enchanted us all was the one about Mother Duck and her five errant ducklings. It was a delightful morning.

In May Mrs Barbara Gray came and took us through the two Resolutions, which are to be voted on later in the year.

Seven of us went on an outing to Hidcote Gardens in June. We had a coffee to enliven us when we arrived before wandering around the gardens admiring the various species and sniffing the different fragrances of roses and herbs etc. We had lunch there before driving to Weston-Subedge where we had been invited by the W.I. to look round their village and to have tea with them at their President's house. It was a lovely old village and we were very lucky as there had been a

flower festival in the church and we were able to look around the church and admire the wonderful floral displays, which were still looking really fresh. By the time we returned to Ascott, we were all feeling rather weary having had an exhausting but enjoyable day.

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### ASCOTT PRE-SCHOOL

We have had another successful year and due to the demand for places plan to offer a Monday afternoon session from September, in addition to the four mornings. We have also had some staff changes as Helen Hill left after six years. She is very much missed but we are pleased to welcome Sarah Collett and Philippa Keen. We now have four staff each day plus the help of two parents.

The children have enjoyed a range of activities including a visit from Ascott WI who kindly raised £100 to buy a sandpit, a walk to see the daffodils at the church, our annual Easter Bonnet Parade, a visit from the school lollipop lady, a hand cuff bearing PC Salmon and a train trip to Moreton in Marsh and its park for a picnic and ice lolly. This term's topic has been people who help us and the children have enjoyed this theme.

Our fund raising for equipment has gone well. We were delighted to be awarded a £1,000 grant from the lottery for dividing screens. Our main annual fund raising BBQ and Sports Day on Sunday 8 July was a great success. Our thanks to everyone who came along. As well as a fun day with a bouncy castle, mystery wine, bash the rat, flying teddy bears, races, BBQ, beer and teas we managed to raise a magnificent sum of £727.

For the older children we also offer two weekly sessions called "Prepare for School" where the children bring a packed lunch and enjoy activities aimed at preparing them for the move to "big school".

If you would like any more information on Pre-School or Prepare for School please contact Pauline Plant on 01993 830349

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### LATEST NEWS FROM LEAFIELD SCHOOL

Many children from Ascott and the surrounding hamlets are pupils at Leaffield School which continues to flourish. These are just a few of the events which have been held over the last term, and enjoyed by pupils and parents alike.

The School's Sports Day was held on a glorious sunny day on the village green in Leaffield with great support from parents, and enthusiasm and determination from the children. A week later pupils from years 5 and 6 went on a three day activity based trip to Kingswood Study Centre in Staffordshire where they had the opportunity to have a go at fencing, archery, quad biking and music making! Sandwiched in between these events was a performance of 'Jonah Man Jazz' at Leaffield Church held jointly by Leaffield and Finstock Schools.

Not to let all that talent for performing and singing go to waste, Leaffield School decided to end the term on a real high, and put on a special production of Macbeth which took the village hall by storm! Witches, noblemen, soldiers, queens and servants acted and sang their way through an ambitious production of the infamous tragedy specially adapted for children and admirably directed by David

Staines, class 3's teacher, at the school. The experience gained by the children in helping to design and create the set and costumes, as well as performing and learning all of the lines will no doubt remain with them, as will the excitement and euphoria of the after performance party and barbecue!

Our Leavers Service in which we bid farewell and good luck to all our year 6 pupils moving on to their secondary schools will bring an end of an eventful term. It will be held at Ascott Church on Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> July at 10.00 a.m. and all are welcome.

The summer holidays will bring a well earned rest to staff and pupils alike and give them all a chance to re-charge their batteries ready for the new term in September.

Our Head Teacher, Mrs. Liz Davies, is leaving us at the end of term and we would like to thank her for all her hard work and enthusiasm. We wish her well in her new school.

For a prospectus or information on Leaffield C of E Primary School, please contact the school secretary, Mrs. Peach on 878273.

**Cindy Chapman, Governor**

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### 'FOREST FAIRS OF WYCHWOOD FOREST'

**and the revival event on Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2001 to be held at Leaffield village playing field from 12 noon till 6.00 p.m. immediately followed by a Barn Dance between 6.15 p.m. and 9.00 p.m.**

The 'Friends of Wychwood', the supportive group to the 'Wychwood Project', are busily arranging what promises to be a very interesting and informative day, when they celebrate the diversity and history of the ancient Royal Hunting Forest of Wychwood. This is the second 'Modern Fair', the first being last September, when the 'Launch' of the new 37 mile circular walking route took place at Combe.

In their desire to move the fair around the many historical locations in the old forest area [extending across and into some 41 parishes in West Oxfordshire], the Friends have chosen Leaffield this year, being the 'village clearing' almost in the centre of this Norman forest.

The origins of the old forest fairs is not one of great historical ancestry but of a group of non-conformists in the late 1700's, who were concerned about the drunkenness and criminal element that was associated with the local fairs of St. Giles and, particularly, that of Witney Feast.

In an attempt to show their displeasure of the actions of such bad behaviour, they set up a picnic party within the forest, namely on Newall Plain, being one of the large clearings within the forest. This quiet, polite gathering of god fearing folk, away from the influences of the noisy, depraved local fairs, was slowly infiltrated by local stall holders who brought their goods to sell.

Over the early years of the nineteenth century, the stalls and attractions increased and by approximately 1830 it had reached its zenith. Rows upon rows of animals, human freaks, boxing tents, refreshments, particularly alcoholic beverages, sweets, confectionery, clothes, pickled salmon and much live music, was set out across the plain in lines or streets.

The high point of the event was a procession of carriages that commenced at three o'clock and was headed by Lord Churchill, the Forest Ranger. This title meant that he was the King's representative, responsible for ensuring that the forest and the royal deer were well looked after and ready for the hunting activities, whenever the king chose to visit Wychwood Forest.

Behind Lord Churchill's carriage, came the local dignitaries, nobility and gentry. The carriages made a circuit of the fair as the populace cheered them on their way. Down on the lake, the sound of music could be heard as the Yeomanry Band played tunes from a boat.

Estimates of up to 20,000 people attended the forest fair in 1846 and with the coming of the railway to Charlbury, the numbers swelled to some 50,000 in 1853, when special trains were put on to bring the thousands from Oxford and London.

Once the numbers began to increase, so did the petty crime and drunkenness and in certain years, 1831, '32, '33, '43 and '45 when there was unrest within the country, Lord Churchill banned the event for fear of serious trouble breaking out.

By 1856, the year before the massive 'Dis-afforestation of Wychwood Forest', such were the number of cases of drunkenness and debauchery brought before Lord Churchill at the local magistrates court the day after the fair, that he prohibited the fair from being held again. Ditches were dug across the Plain to prevent access and this phase in our local history came to an end after nearly sixty years.

One of the ongoing connections with the old forest fairs, is the local Hatwell family of fairground showmen. Last year, Hatwells were invited to bring along a few of their children's rides and much to our surprise, George Hatwell, the elder statesman of the family who live at Carterton, was absolutely delighted to have been asked to connect with his forefathers.

George told us how his great grandfather lived at Bladon and built his show ground equipment close to the exit from Blenheim Park. They toured the area during the season, attending the numerous local fairs and always had a pitch at the 'Forest Fair' which was held during the third week of September.

Such was the income from this event, that it was all given to Grandmother to look after and was used by her to feed the extended family from September through to the following Easter, when the family took to the roads again.

George, with a few of his modern rides, is hoping to be at the modern fair on 2<sup>nd</sup> September and if you ask him about his ancestors, he will tell the tale with a degree or relish.

Besides George, we are inviting a wide range of organisations and individuals, from conservation groups and country crafts to locally produced food and representatives of local businesses, for whom the 'forest' is their modern workplace. Heavy horses, Icelandic sheep, pottery, a Formula 1 racing car, archery and rifle shooting, an 'Aunt Sally' competition, plus a good collection of craft and fund raising stalls, including 'Stuart's famous 1000 second-hand books for sale at knock down prices!' will keep you occupied for hours. Several local Morris dancing teams will be holding a convention and from time to time, a local storyteller will be handing on tales of the past and from afar.

Refreshments and a beer tent will be available throughout the day and into the evening.

To conclude the day's celebrations, we are holding a Barn Dance in the hall, with live music provided by two Oxfordshire Folk Music specialists. This event is being arranged jointly with the Witney Folk Dancing Group.

To keep our visitors entertained prior to the Barn Dance, there will be an inter-village 'Aunt Sally' competition, continuing the historic rivalry between the various forest communities, albeit, we hope, in a friendly sporting Oxfordshire traditional way.

Put a big note in your diary or on the kitchen calendar and then make the effort to find Leaffield Playing Field on Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> September, so that you can learn more about this fascinating area and the activities that go on within the bounds on this ancient forest.

For further information contact Ken Betteridge, Chairman of the Friends of Wychwood on 878615.

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### JANET HICKS

Many people in Ascott were greatly saddened to hear of the death of Janet Hicks early in March this year.

Jan, as most people in Ascott knew her, had been a member of our W.I. for many years, joining soon after she came to live in the village with Steve. She very soon became a member of the Committee and indeed our committee meetings were held in Jan and Steve's house for many years so that she did not have to leave her small children.

Jan was, in turn, Treasurer and Secretary and President of the W.I. over the years and could always be relied upon to help in any capacity where she was needed.

Jan was an excellent embroideress and won a Gold Medal (a very high standard indeed) for her work. Cooking was one of her many talents and for some time she contributed to the W.I. market scheme.

Latterly, she took up bellringing and always gave 100% of herself whatever she did.

Most people in the village knew Jan and all feel a great sense of loss with her death.

Our thoughts and memories go out towards Steve and their children.

**Bertha Carpenter, Ascott W.I.**

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### TIDDY HALL

Following the recent AGM we are pleased to report that the regular usage of the hall means that the cost of running the hall is met by the current level of bookings. Fund raising activities will continue to enable improvements to be made to the hall; we are currently looking at installing secondary heating and supplementary lighting in the main hall.

At the AGM the Committee said 'good bye' to Nigel Braithwaite, who for many years has been a tremendous asset to the Committee. Nigel, along with his family, has helped to organise and run many fund raising events, and his expert knowledge in many areas of charitable work will be greatly missed.

The standing Committee are:- Roger Shepherd [Chairman], Lyn Collins [Secretary], Kathy Pearce [Treasurer], Rosemary Dawbarn [Booking Clerk - 831632], Ros Harbour, Adam Scully, Pauline Plant, June Holmes, Sylvia Benfield and Vanessa Rossiter.

**Forthcoming Events:-** Saturday, 3<sup>rd</sup> November Folk Night  
Saturday, 10<sup>th</sup> November Craft Fair

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### **SMALL REPAIRS SCHEME**

For older people who are home owners and private tenants in West Oxfordshire. The Small Repairs Service is run by Anchor Staying Put, which is a not-for-profit organisation helping older people to stay in their own homes by carrying out repairs and renovations.

For further information please contact: Anchor Staying Put - West Oxfordshire, Small Repairs Scheme, 28a High Street, Witney OX28 6HG. Tel. 01993 709788/709524.

### **CRAFT FAYRE**

to be held at

**Olde Mediaeval Tithe Barn, Church Enstone**

**on 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> August**

**10.00 a.m. - 5.00 p.m.**

Several Crafters doing demonstrations, also a pets corner for the children  
Refreshments available

### **ROMAN CATHOLIC MASSES**

**Burford** - Church of SS. John Fisher and Thomas Moore; Sundays at 9.15 a.m. & 11a.m.; Holy Days 10 a.m. and 7 p.m.

**Chipping Norton** - Holy Trinity Church; Sundays at 10.30 a.m.; Holy Days 9 a.m. & 7 p.m.

**Charlbury** - St. Teresa's; Sundays at 11 a.m.; Holy Days 9.30 a.m. & 7.30 p.m.

### **SOCIETY OF FRIENDS (QUAKERS)**

**Burford** - Friends Meeting House, Pytts Lane (off Witney St.); Sundays at 11a.m.

For further information, contact Nigel Braithwaite on 01993 831282

**Charlbury** - Friends Meeting House, Market Street; Sundays at 10.30 a.m.

For further information, contact Andrew or Patricia Pymmer on 01993 882848

### **THE "POST OFFICE" STORES, Milton-under-Wychwood**

Open: Mon.-Fri. 7.a.m. - 5.30 p.m. (Closed 1-2 for lunch)

Open Saturday 7 a.m.-1.00 p.m. & Sunday 8 a.m.-12 noon

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