
The Ascott Grapevine



Issue 48

Autumn 2005

Grapevine Appeal

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

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

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

Call 01993 832163 or email:

ascottgrapevine@dial.pipex.com

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

Services at Holy Trinity Church

6 November 10.00 HC	11 December 08.00 HC P
13 November 08.00 HC P 10.00 Remembrance Day Service	24 December 15.00 Crib Service 23.30 Midnight Communion
27 November 10.00 FS Bapt 16.00 Christingle	25 December 10.00 FC
4 December 10.00 HC 18.00 Carol Service	1 Jan 10.00 HC
	8 Jan 08.00 HC P

Please check Notice Board for full details.

What's what

EP= Evening Prayer/
Service

FC = Family Communion

HC = Holy Communion

MP = Morning Prayer/
Service

QP = Time of Quiet
Prayer

BS = Benefice Service

Bapt = Holy Baptism

C = Contemporary Language

P = Book of Common
Prayer

Content & Editorial Policy

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

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

From the Rector

Across the Benefice we have been celebrating Harvest Festival. When I think back to my childhood on the farm in Suffolk I remember Harvest Festival was always a big thing. Every farmer and – as I recall – nearly every family, would be in the village Church to give thanks for the harvest that had just been gathered in. It was perhaps one of the only times in a year that the Village as a whole came together to give thanks. There was an air of excitement amongst us children at the village

school. A real celebration!

Only 30 years later and things are very different. Harvest Festivals seem to have had their hey day (no pun intended!) and the sense of excitement that I remember from childhood has been replaced with something of a ‘heavy heart’. I am sure this is due in part to the fact that agriculture is going through such a difficult time. But perhaps also, because so much of our supermarket food is sourced from other countries, we have

become disconnected from the natural world around us and our place within it.

Harvest Festival has an important message for us. It serves to remind us that for all our cultivation of the land, we did not create it; and in spite of all our efforts to make something of ourselves, it is God who made us and not we ourselves. When we neglect or seek to deny that we are subject to our Creator, then we become disconnected from the creation around us, and sink into self-centredness on the one hand, or low self-esteem on the other.

As country people who are surrounded by God’s creation, we can offer this awareness as a gift to those whose urban consciousness cuts them adrift from the Creator God in whom we live, move and have our being. But we will only do that when we ourselves are connected to God, and know our dependency upon God.

With all good wishes.

Mark Abrey

Attention All Mobile Phone Owners

Following the disasters in London, East Anglian Ambulance Service have launched a national ‘IN CASE OF EMERGENCY’ (ICE) Campaign with the support of Falklands War Hero Simon Weston. The idea is to store the number of the person or persons you would want to be contacted “IN CASE of EMERGENCY” under the word ‘ICE’ in your mo-

bile phone address book.

Ambulance or hospital staff will be able to quickly find out who to contact in an emergency. It is so simple that everyone can do it, PLEASE DO. Please inform as many people as you can because it really could save your life, or put a loved ones’ mind at rest. For more than one contact name - ICE 1, ICE 2, ICE 3, etc.

Services at Holy Trinity

It is hard to believe that another year has flown by and that we are on the run up to Christmas once again. At least the weather has been kind to us this summer. The downside is that the grass in the churchyard is still growing furiously! At Holy Trinity we try to provide services that meet the worshipping needs of as many people as possible. With that in mind, earlier in the year we introduced a morning Family Communion service which, whilst aimed at all ages, focussed on making Church interesting and relevant for young people. Unfortunately the numbers of young people who attended were so low, or indeed non-existent, that the service which the clergy had carefully prepared was often suddenly very inappropriate for the actual congregation! So we have consulted with parents and have decided to re-introduce the Family Service, which is aimed at younger children, at

4.00 pm on the 4th Sunday of the month . This also allows us to bring back Morning Prayer at 10.00 am on the 4th Sunday. So the pattern of services for the months from the beginning of October will be:

1st Sunday -
10.00 am
Common Worship
Communion
2nd Sunday -
8.00 am Holy Communion - Book of Common Prayer
3rd Sunday -
10.00 am Common Worship Communion - a Benefice Service at either Chadlington, Heythrop, Ascott, Spelsbury or Enstone.

This will be by rotation and the location advertised on the church and village notice boards.

4th Sunday

10.00 am
Morning Prayer
4.00 pm
Family Service

5th Sunday (when applicable)-

10.00 am
Book of Common Prayer - a Benefice Service.

Special services:

13th November -
Remembrance Sunday

27th November -
Christingle Service

4th December -
Carol Service

Christmas Eve -
Crib Service

Midnight Service

Christmas Day -
Holy Communion

Please check the various notice boards for full details of times.

We look forward to welcoming you to our services.

Tim Lyon



Don't forget about the Ascott website:

Harvest Festival 2005

The Harvest Home in 2004 seemed to be pretty popular and so we thought we would do it all again in 2005. The celebrations started in Church at 4.00pm with the bell ringers in great form. There were some 50 people in Church to enjoy the traditional harvest hymns when, it must be said, I always feel a bit guilty that I do not actually

‘Plough the fields and scatter the good seed on the land’ but I am very grateful to those who do! After Church we de-camped to the Tiddy hall for a splendid supper and another evening of outstanding locally produced entertainment. The new lighting in the hall certainly added to the ambiance. My thanks to all those who worked so hard to

decorate the Church, those who prepared all the food for the evening, our performers, organisers and, of course, everyone who came along to support it. I have a feeling that we will be back next year!

Tim Lyon

The ‘Kissing Gate’ from Church View into the churchyard

- your views please!

Living in Church View means that from time to time I see people struggling through the gate with pushchairs, small children, parcels, shopping etc.

I suspect that now we have the shop, more people are walking though the churchyard as the main route through the village. The alternative routes can be quite dangerous, especially the corner by Crown Farm which is quite blind and yet all

too often drivers do not seem to feel the need to slow down.

The gate is the responsibility of the Parish Council but since it opens into the churchyard, the Parochial Church Council has raised the issue with them. We really need to know your views.

Do you think that the existing gate should be replaced with something that is easier to manage or should things be left as they are?



I am happy to collect your opinions. Please drop a note to me at 15 Church View, OX7 6AA or email tim@newtricks.co.uk.

Tim Lyon

Introducing our new Associate Priest...



My name is Mary Crameri and my husband Peter and I moved into the Vicarage at Enstone in August, ready for me to be licensed in September to the Chase Benefice and to Ascott-under-Wychwood, to assist Mark Abrey in whatever ways I can. I am licensed to work part time, working for the equivalent of two days a week plus Sunday services.

I was ordained deacon in London, in the Kensington Area and served my curacy in a parish not far from Twickenham Rugby

Ground! We moved here from Salisbury, where I worked for seven years training men and women for the ordained ministry from three different denominations on a part time non-residential training course. I was ordained priest in Salisbury Cathedral in 1994 and moved in 1998 into a multi-parish team of thirteen churches, where I was a team vicar. Sometimes I took 7 services on a Sunday and had to drive from one end of the team to the other, covering some 15 miles or so!

I spent a year as a Team Rector in the Whitton Team (near Marlborough) (6 villages) before retiring, but then I worked as a part time prison chaplain at Guys Marsh prison in Dorset.

My first love and God's call has always

been to parish ministry and when the opportunity arose to move to this area and to resume parish ministry in a retirement capacity, we were very happy to respond. Also we wanted to be nearer to our married children. Our son Alan lives in Lancashire and our daughter Clare in Stratford-on-Avon.

Please keep us in your thoughts and prayers as we begin this exciting new adventure here among you. I am very much a people's person, and am looking forward to getting to know you all, but please be patient while I find my way around all the villages and hamlets that make up this glorious part of Oxfordshire.

Mary Crameri
(01608 678424)

Deaths

On 10th September 2005, Dorothy Harrison aged 81 years

Dorothy Harrison 1924 - 2005

Dorothy was born on the 24th May 1924 in Ascott-under-Wychwood to Kate and David Simmonds. She attended Ascott Primary School and then Shipton School until she was 14 years old when she left school and entered into 'service' at what was then Chestnut Close. At 17, desperate to sign up, she got her mother to forge her father's signature so that she could join the WRAF.

By 18 she was in charge of a group of WRAF manning the barrage balloons in London's East End during the Blitz, and then did the same job at Newcastle in the dockyards. She then retrained as an aircraft mechanic and it was whilst doing this work, she met her future husband, Al, who was a pilot based at the same airfield. They were married in Holy Trinity Church, Ascott on 8th March 1947 in the

midst of the severe winter and a path had to be dug through the snow to enable them to reach the church, definitely a white wedding in every way!

After service in the RAF, Al joined the Metropolitan Police and once his training was complete Dorothy joined him in London. As he rose through the ranks they moved house from Hackney to Stepney and later to Wembley. Whilst living in Hackney their only child, a daughter, Diane was born.

When Al retired from the police they eventually decided that they missed country life and returned to live in the Wychwoods. They found a bungalow that suited their needs in Milton and made it their home in 1980.

Dorothy and Al soon made themselves very much at home and besides reuniting with old friends and family, they

quickly made many new and good friends within Milton. They joined the Wychwood Bowls Club and enjoyed many happy hours both on their home 'green' and with the many friends they made at their away matches. Dorothy enjoyed attending local whist drives and learnt to play bridge. She loved all quizzes and puzzles and her day was not fulfilled until she had completed her daily crossword.

Dorothy's mother and friends had formed the Wychwood women's branch of the British Legion and she joined when she moved back to Milton. She was a very active member and it was with great regret that due to the age of herself and fellow members, they had to close the branch and 'lay up' the Standard in Milton Church in June this year.

In recent years she was unable to be as ac-

tive as she used to be but still kept in close contact with her many friends in the Wychwoods. She became well known to local historians as a source of information when they needed names put to old photographs or details of local events of the past. She had a remarkable memory and indeed wrote many articles for local magazines.

The Wychwoods were very important to

her, especially Ascott. She was christened in Holy Trinity Church and brought back her daughter and two grandsons to be christened there. The churchyard is the resting place of both her parents and all four grandparents (one grandfather was Station Master at Shipton and the other was Ascott's blacksmith).

Dorothy died peacefully in her sleep after a short illness and is sur-

vived by her husband of 58 years Al Harrison, her daughter, two grandsons and her younger sister Carole Hawtin. She will be remembered by all her family and friends as a kind, good natured and happy person. She was content with all she had and did, and would be grateful that she ended her days as she started them in the Wychwoods.

Diane Harrison - Fuller.



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Ascott Village Shop

As we approach our second anniversary it is good to report that the Village Shop is going from strength to strength. The number of customers are steadily increasing and our product range is expanding. We have an extensive selection of basic foods and a wide variety of something a little different. We now stock smoked fish from Coln Valley Smokery, Leathams Foods from Cirencester, this is a cook from frozen range which is proving to be very popular. We now stock Bensons Juices which is also a local supplier and we have increased our selection of wine.

To build on what we have started and to maintain the success of the shop we urgently need more help, it is all a great deal of work for a relatively small number of people, so if you can possibly spare some time please let us know, you can leave your name at the shop

and someone will contact you. The tasks are many and varied from serving the customers, ordering supplies, unpacking orders, keeping the shop clean and tidy, filling shelves etc etc. Please do your best to be part of The Village Shop and to keep it going.

On the 4th September we had a stand at the Forest Fair which as the photograph shows looked very professional, thank you to Jonathan Woods and Mike Pearce. It was manned by a team of volunteers promoting the shop telling people “Who We Were” and “Where We Were” also



giving out tasters of various produce we sell. The day went very well with lots of interest in the shop and many questions asked. We have served a number of people in the shop as a direct result of this promotion and the most exciting outcome so far is that a local training company has placed a regular order with us.

We look forward to your continued support.

*Ascott Village Shop
Management
Committee*



Apprentice Boys

In the latter part of the 20th century the long established firm of Farrant & Sinden, Solicitors of Chipping Norton, uncovered a chest of documents relating to Ascott's Poors' Estate Charity. After the cataloguing of the chest's contents by the Oxfordshire Record Office a number of copies of the lists of catalogue cards on which were typed brief summaries of the documents, were handed to Ascott Parish Council and the Charity Trustees. Margaret Longshaw has recently found one of these sets of copies which was given to her husband John who at that time was a member of the Trustees.

Grapevine no 42 includes my article about the history of Ascott Charity. This was based largely on the set of copies which is kept in the Parish Council cupboard. However one of the aims of the Charity during the second quarter of the 19th century

was to help with apprenticeships for poor boys. These apprenticeship Indentures cast some extra light on Ascott's inhabitants of the time and certainly illustrate the huge difference in their everyday life when compared to today's village youngsters.

Between January 1823 and July 1848 the Charity Trustees arranged twenty one Apprenticeships for Ascott's youths. Exactly what criteria was required to apply, is unknown, but only 8 families are represented with 2 families having 4 sons apprenticed and 2 families having 3.

The first Indenture was made in 1823 for Luke Quarterman who was sixteen at the time and made apprentice to the trade of shoemaker. In fact 16 of the applicants were bound to training as shoemakers including in 1841 another Quarterman, William, and later the two sons Israel and George, of young

widow Sarah Quarterman. They were both 13 at the time of their Indentures in 1846 and 1847. Sarah's family lived in High Street, at that time known as Upper Street as compared to Lower Street (Shipton Road) the road nearest the river. Luke of the earliest Indenture with consent of his father William was to be bound to John Parrott of Charlbury, Shoemaker for 5 years from 14th January 1823. The Trustees of Ascott Charity, James Ansell (solicitor), Thomas Chaundy, James Hyatt, John Chaundy and John North (all farmers) and C.R.Henderson (solicitor) signed the document in consideration of the sum of £14. It would appear that £7 of the money was paid at the binding to John Parrott and £7 two months later whilst £2 was given to Luke's father at the time of the binding to be laid out in clothes for his now

apprenticed son. Amongst the earlier Indentures the consideration sum varies between £12-£14 (later it rises to £16) but in three cases it is only £6 or £7. This smaller sum may be partly explained by the situation concerning George Venville one of the 3 apprenticed sons of Hannah Venville, a widow who lived in one of the Charity properties in the vicinity of Church Close. William the eldest was apprenticed aged 16 in 1833 to a mason at Burford when Hannah was already a widow aged 32. Charles aged apparently only 9 was apprenticed to a pipemaker at Burford for 7 years in 1834. Then George aged 16 was apprenticed to George Groves of Kingham, shoemaker, in 1843. William and Charles's considerations were for £12 whereas George's was £16 for 5 years. However 2 years later George was reapprenticed to John Padbury of Adlestrop, shoemaker, for £6 for 3

years and 2 calendar months. Presumably George Groves died or went out of business and other arrangements were made by the Charity Trustees.

A number of Indentures are for 6 or 7 years. Apart from shoemakers, 2 were bound to blacksmiths, 2 to tailors and 1 to a mason. I only know the ages of twelve of the applicants which vary between 13 and 17 apart from Charles Venville. It is to be hoped that his lot was not as dire as we might imagine for a 9 year old taken from his home at such a young age. At least he was only in Burford whereas some of the others went to Witney, Eynsham, Faringdon, Hook Norton and Bourton on the Hill. Only two of the youths were able to sign their names on the Indentures but surprisingly Hannah Venville signed all her sons' Indentures despite the boys' inability to make more than a mark.

There is one unusual case when a £7 consideration was arranged for William Baughan in 1833 for a 5 year apprenticeship with a cordwainer (shoemaker) in Bristol. It would appear however that his mother Mary was living in Bristol, so perhaps William had been born in Ascott and therefore qualified for a certain amount of assistance.

I can only follow one boy into later life in Ascott. Two of Richard Weaver's of Upper Street sons were bound to apprenticeships. Charles in 1844 went to a shoemaker in Eynsham and John in 1848 to a cordwainer in Hook Norton. But Charles actually returned to Ascott in the 1850s to ply his trade. He married Mary Ann from Somerset and together they produced a family of six. They lived in the eastern end of Upper Street until at least the 1880s.

Wendy Pearse.

Tongue Pie: Poetry and Prose, 1969 - 2005

by *Fred Russell*

September saw the publication of a book which will intrigue everyone who lives in Ascott, or has lived in Ascott, or is just interested in English village life.

Tongue Pie by Fred Russell offers vivid glimpses of life in Ascott-under-Wychwood over the last sixty-five years.

We all know Fred, who still lives in the house in Heritage Lane where he was born in 1939. As a child he hated school (a funny and moving episode in *Tongue Pie*), and his teachers would not have expected this silent, stubborn boy to become the chronicler of his village (in paintings too, some of which are also reproduced in the book). But teachers, fortunately, are often wrong.

Fred has been writing since his thirties, when he saw the old way of life already slipping away. He writes about his family, himself, the

old village people he loved and admired. He writes comic poems, often in dialect; angry poems about class, and

poverty, and his own failings; lyrical poems about love and landscape and faith.

If Fred had had his way, only the funny poems and stories would have gone into *Tongue Pie*. But I made him dig out the others as well. He is still stubborn, but bit by bit the deeper tones appeared. Ed Fenton, Fred's publisher, watched the book expand with saintly patience; and at last it was done.

On 9 September *Tongue Pie* was launched at Tiddy Hall. Over 90 of Fred's family and friends came from as far away as Leicester. Christine Hale provided the delicious food; Ray Borrett, Fred's friend from the days of their



band, the Beaker Folk, called the barn-dancing; there was far too much to drink; and all in all we had a fabulous party.

In his speech Ed recalled meeting Fred at a creative writing class in 1994, and thinking already then that he would like to publish Fred's work one day. I remembered getting Fred to read his poems to the Ascott Discussion Group, and read out a note of congratulations from its founder, Patrick Hanks, who now travels the world: 'I shall buy at least two copies,' Patrick wrote, 'one to cheer me up in America, and one to educate the Germans with.'

Fred thanked everyone, with a special men-

tion for Eleanor Edwards, who has so kindly hosted our Discussion Group, and especially its Christmas Pantomime - written, of course, by Fred, and his own favourite funny writing. He read us two

poems, so well that Robert and Charlotte Fenton reported over 50 books sold by the end of the evening.

'Tongue pie', incidentally, is dialect for arguing and nagging, especially by a woman...

Tongue Pie doesn't nag, but it's a tasty pie of words. It's on sale for £6 at Oxfordshire bookshops, and signed copies are available at the Ascott Village Shop.

Carole Angier

Flix in the Stix

If you fancy a night away from the everyday routine and would relish being swept away to New York, the Deep South, beautiful Cornwall or even some fantasy land far away, then Tiddy Hall is the place to be. On the second Thursday evening of each month Tiddy Hall hosts a film night here in Ascott under Wychwood. With the latest equipment and a location on your doorstep, there is no need to travel to be entertained. For just £3 you can see the latest films and meet neighbours and friends for a bargain night out. Oh, and for 50p you also get a cup of tea or coffee plus a biscuit!

'Flix in the Stix' is for local people run by lo-

cal people. So if you want value for money and a thoroughly good night out then come and join us. With the winter nights drawing in we can even arrange for you to be picked up and taken home. Although the next few film nights have been arranged we are still looking for suggestions for future screenings so if you would like to see a particular film let us know and we will see what we can do.

Future films and dates are:

10 November - Million Dollar Baby

8 December - Phantom of the Opera

Doors open at 7.30pm with the film starting at 8.00pm

If you need further information, a lift or have a suggestion then please contact Simon Gidman on 831479 or Ingrid Ridley on 830612.

Shipton under Wychwood are also running a series of Film Nights on the last Thursday of each month.

Their future films and dates are:

24th November - Batman Begins

Thank you to all those who have supported us so far and we look forward to welcoming all you prospective film-goers soon!

Jacquie Bugeja

Ascott-under-Wychwood Parish Council

The work required by the risk assessment on trees around the village to reduce overhanging branches and make trees safe is now almost complete. The Parish Council arranged for the mobile climbing wall from West Oxfordshire District Council to visit the Car Boot and BBQ Breakfast on Bank Holiday Monday. There were not many children at the event but those who tried it out seemed to enjoy the experience. There have been some

enquires about the mysterious disappearance of the signpost opposite the railway crossing. Unfortunately it was demolished in a car accident and has been taken away for repair. The railway crossing will be closed for maintenance work between 11pm on Saturday 26 November and 10.30am on Sunday 27th November. There will be notices at the crossing nearer the time. Vandalism is still a cause for concern in the vil-

lage, particularly at the pavilion. Can we please request that if you are affected or you wit-

ness any acts of vandalism please report them immediately on **08458 505 505** so that the calls can be logged or **999** if you feel an immediate response is required. Thames Valley Police have a new Neighbourhood Police Team who will be working with West Oxfordshire District Council and a public meeting will be held with them at New Beaconsfield Hall in Shipton on 4th November 2005 at 7.30 pm. The purpose of the meeting is for the new team to find out what issues need to be addressed in the Wychwoods. Please see the notice boards for details.

This will be my last report as I shall be handing over to Angela Barnes from November and I hope she will enjoy working with the Parish Council as much as I have. Angela lives in Chipping Norton but has strong ties with Ascott as she is married to Shane Barnes, who was born and brought

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up in the village and was on the Parish Council for a number of years. Her sister and of course mother-in-law Mary also live in the village.

Margaret Ismail
Parish Clerk
(832829)
(Angela Barnes from
14th November –
01608 641045

Parish Council:

Nigel Braithwaite,
Chairman 831282
Elaine Byles 831427
Stuart Fox 832004
Mike Pearce 830058
Wendy Pearse 831023

Crime Reduction

A stranger phones and announces: "I'm a burglar and I've got my eye on your house. When are you next out?" Would you tell him? Of course you wouldn't. But what if a stranger rings, addresses you by name and says: "We were driving down your road earlier and noticed you had some trees which need lopping. We'll pop round on Friday about three to discuss it." You might just, inadvertently, reply: "I don't do business with people who cold call. And anyway, nobody will be in that afternoon." So now a complete stranger knows when the house is empty. (They probably got your name through the electoral register and the number from the phone book).

Recently local police have been getting calls from worried residents realising they have told strangers when they will be out. The secret is never to reveal personal information of any sort, about yourself, your family, neighbours or friends, to callers unknown to you. The same applies to door to door sellers. According to Oxfordshire Trading Standards goods and services offered on the doorstep include alarms, double glazing, tarmac driveways, gas and electricity. They advise not to buy in these circumstances, not give personal details, to be firm, and to call the police if the trader refuses to go.

Back to the problem of strangers discovering who lives where and the

phone number. This time of year households are asked by West Oxfordshire District Council who is eligible to vote. Eventually two versions of the register are published – full and edited. The edited register is available for sale and can be used for commercial activities. However, there is a tick box available on the registration form if you do not want to be included. To reduce unwanted phone calls, going ex-directory is an option (ring 0845 601 5884) and there is also the Telephone Preference Service which, in my experience, stops most sales calls (ring 0845 070 0707).

Bill Butcher,
Crime Reduction
Advisor,
01993 893878

Coldstone Farm, Ascott 1942-1952

Part One

When I lived at Coldstone the whole complex was a working farm with cattle yards, calf pens, pigsties, various barns and other buildings. The building adjoining the house was the stable with hayloft above. After 1952 this building was used for pottery production with a kiln on the site of our old hen house, whilst the stone barn, tool shed, cow milking shed with loose boxes for calving and the cart shed together with the old rick yard and orchard were converted into a new dwelling house and grounds.

Our family moved out shortly after my fourteenth birthday so my memories are essentially those of a young boy. The house seemed very large with five outside doors, a cellar, five flights of stairs, six large bedrooms, three attics together with the other rooms for everyday living. There was a total of ten fire hearths. All this with no electricity meant that there were long dark passages and shadowy corners.

The land extended from the Charlbury-Burford road on the south east to just beyond the A361 Shipton-

Chipping Norton road on the north west. Access to this side was along Gypsy Lane and through a bridge under the railway about 150 yards beyond the bridge over the river. The railway bridge was filled in later on. A spring on this land supplied water piped by gravity to the house and buildings. There was no running hot water but we had cold water taps in the kitchen, bathroom and laundry, and also an indoor W.C. toilet, a comparative luxury in those days when many people were carrying their water in buckets

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from village taps. There was a gas supply from the Shipton Gas Works but it was not always up to full strength and worked by a shilling in the meter slot from time to time.

It always seemed odd to us that the house was in Shipton parish, Coldwell Brook running through the orchard was the parish boundary. Cold is an ancient word associated with boundaries and this must be how Coldstone got its name. The oldest part of the house and the name date back more than 400 years.

My grandparents had their living room next to the front door facing the entrance from Ascott while my parents, my sister and I had a living room facing Shipton Road towards Langley Mill.

To me Coldstone was an haven full of interesting activities and things to do. There were hens, cockerels, ducks and geese all running loose in the yards, also

pigs, cows, calves, other cattle and horses, plus many farm machines and tools to investigate and experiment with.

One particular event which happened is outside my recollection which is frustrating! When Ascott was bombed early in the War the last bomb fell outside the garden wall by the stream about 25 yards from the house. I have been told I was out in the garden somewhere. Dad and grandfather were harvesting in the fields at the time and not much damage was done. A loose chimney pot had to be removed and a barrowful of mud landed by the back door. A neighbour's shed just opposite in Gypsy Lane was hit and burnt down. The bomb crater by the stream became part of the environment and was a good place for frogspawn.



A year or two later there were several times when we woke in the morning to find a number of army lorries parked in our entrance yard. They usually went away during the morning. There must have been an army exercise in the village on one occasion when quite a lot of soldiers came to the farm. They camped in tents by the orchard wall and I remember their row of fires all glowing red in the dark. The next morning they were all washing in the

waters of Coldwell Brook and shaving holding small mirrors. After they left there was one soldier left with a tent outside the gateway for a week, we could see the blue smoke from his campfire. I don't know if he was guarding us or the village, or just keeping everything under observation. There was one major army manoeuvre exercise which could have been in the spring of 1944 when hundreds of tanks, half tracked armoured cars, jeeps and motorcycles came down through the village. They started in the night in the dark and kept on right through into the afternoon. About half of them went round to

Shipton and the rest went along the Gypsy Lane and up through our fields smashing through several gates and hedges. After the War had been over for some time they replaced the gates and gateposts.

There were a few workers on the farm helping with milking and tractor driving etc. during my early years and I remember in the wartime old Mr Trinder doing various jobs including thatching. He was about 70 then. Another old boy Jim Faulkner about 80, from Andrew's Yard, also helped at harvest time but Mr Trinder said hearing old Jim moaning all the time was worse than doing the

work. One regular was Celia Cook, a cousin of Harry Cook, everyone called her Ceela and she pushed the milk trolley around the village every morning except Sunday when dad used a milk bike. The trolley with two decks would hold 108 one pint bottles and must have been quite heavy to push up hill. The cows were milked in the cowshed, grandfather sat on a three legged stool and milked them into a bucket. Dad then carried the milk round to the dairy which was in the house on the lower side of the front door. The milk was then cooled. It ran slowly down a corrugated cooler about 18 inches wide and deep while water ascended under pressure through the inside of the cooler going into the bottom cold and coming out of the top warm. The cold milk was run into the bottles at the bottom of the cooler, I sometimes used to play with the cardboard tops before



they were put into the bottles but I expect my hands were fairly clean at the time! When Ceela came back with the empty bottles she and grandmother washed them with boiling water and washing soda. The whole milk process would not have come up to modern standards, but it was out of the cows, into the bottles and delivered so quickly that it was definitely fresh.

The surplus milk was put through a mechanical separator which extracted the cream. The skimmed milk was fed to calves or pigs. The cream was made into butter in a wooden churn shaped like a barrel. This was on a wooden stand and turned end over end with a handle on the side. There was more skill to this job than might be expected, if it was turned at the wrong speed, it could take an hour or more before the steady slosh-slosh turned into a thump-thump with the butter sepa-

rated from the butter-milk. The butter was taken out and washed in brine, then worked and patted about with the 'scotch hands' which were shaped like small thin cricket bats with corrugated front sides. This removed all the water and the butter was made up into one pound packs, topped with a pattern and wrapped in greaseproof paper. Quite a number of people came to the door to pay grandmother for their milk or to buy butter, eggs or apples.

I gradually became aware of a threat to my happy world. I remember playing in the garden by the big holly tree and deciding that I didn't like the idea of me go-

ing to school which I kept hearing about. I started going just after I was five years old and subsequently I did not change my mind. The only good thing about Ascott school was the fact that we came out at about 3 p.m. and there was time for friends to come and play cricket or football on our lawn. There was also the absolute bliss of Friday afternoons with a whole weekend of freedom before the dreaded Monday morning came around again.

Jim Pearse

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Wychwood Parish Conservation Challenge

This October sees the launch of a significant new initiative by the Wychwood Project. Our new 'Parish Conservation Challenge' has as its focus the smaller communities within the Project area - that part of West Oxfordshire between Northmoor and Chipping Norton that was within the Royal hunting Forest of Wychwood. The aim of the new initiative, which will run for two years, is to get local people even more involved in the conservation of the wildlife and landscape of the Wychwood

area and, to get the best results from their efforts. There will be many different opportunities for people to become involved if they wish, whatever their skills or interests.

To get the initiative off to a good start the Wychwood Project with the Friends of Wychwood, has been able to raise enough money to offer each participating Parish a few hundred pounds towards the cost of any conservation work they undertake. The 'Challenge' will be for each group to make the best

use of this money within the available time. To help people in their efforts the Wychwood Project will be offering support and advice to identify what the local conservation priorities are and convert ideas into practical work on the ground. A new Project Officer, Jane Bowley, started at the beginning of October working specifically on this project.

Local knowledge of wildlife habitats, rare species of plants, animals and insects and even historical records about how the local landscape has changed over time will be useful in building-up a picture of what could be done for the future. There are no pre-conceived ideas about what might happen in each Parish, only that it should help to conserve or improve local habitats and landscape features in the countryside. It is up to people in each community to decide what they

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consider most important.

The Wychwood Parish Conservation Challenge initiative is being funded from a range of sources including local charities, the Friends of

Wychwood and the West Oxfordshire Network's European Community Leader+ 2000 - 2006 programme. *Ascott-under-Wychwood* is one of the parishes that we hope

will take up the Challenge. If you are interested give the Project office a call on 01993 814143.

Nick Mottram

Nature Notes

As you read this article the dark, damp days of November will be closing in, but shortly before writing it I have been enjoying and photographing the colour in the autumn hedgerows. Bright red hips, rich red haws, shiny blackberries and strings of glossy red fruits hanging from bryony vines. Also in the



hedgerows are the last vestiges of elder fruits that have not yet been consumed by the hungry birds or taken to make elderberry wine.

The elder is one of our commonest hedge-

row trees, growing like a weed wherever a seed is dropped. Anyone wanting to maintain a stock-proof hedge does not like to see elder; its vigorous growth takes over from other species, but it is relatively short lived and so is inclined to leave a hedge full of gaps.

However, the elder is a tree with many uses, some real and some associated with ancient myths and stories. The wood of the elder is lightweight, hard but brittle and rot-prone, but once the soft pith has been removed it was widely used to make musical pipes, whistles and flutes. Its wood was traditionally used to make the whip handles used by hearse drivers.



The wood burns poorly, hissing and spitting in the fire.

All parts of the plant have been used to make dyes and these were once extensively used in the Harris Tweed Industry; green and yellow came from the leaves, blue and purple from the berries and grey and black from the bark.





Wine and cordials are produced from the flowers and berries (I've included a wine recipe at the end of this article) and the flower head can be dipped in batter, fried and eaten as fritters. Elderflower tea made from an infusion of the dried blossoms is supposed to be good for "sweating-out" a cold or 'flu. Likewise a cordial made from elderberry juice mixed with sugar and reduced, by heating, to syrup is said to be good for chest ailments, sore throats, and bronchitis.

The leaves, which do have a distinctive aroma, act as a fly and mosquito deterrent and elder stems would be hung outside kitchen doors, in barns and from horses' harnesses for this purpose. The bark was also used medicinally

to make a strong purgative.

Many superstitions have been attached to the elder and it has been widely associated with witchcraft and its ability to ward off evil spirits. Judas was said to have hung himself from an elder tree and St Patrick was said to have used a wand of elder to drive all the serpents out of Ireland. Elder branches were buried with the dead to ward off evil spirits and a bush growing by your door fulfilled the same purpose.

Never cut an elder branch without asking permission, as you will offend the spirit of the Queen of Trees, Hylde-moder, the elder tree mother! Woe betide anyone who falls asleep beneath the elder, they will have horrific nightmares and become delirious when they awaken. After those dire warnings I'll give you the recipe for a simple elderberry wine, which will only send you to sleep

if you imbibe too much!

Strip off the ripe berries using a fork until you have three gallons, by volume and then pour over two gallons of boiling water. Leave in a warm place for 24 hours. Strain through muslin or a fine sieve pressing out all the juice and then measure the quantity of liquid. To each gallon add 3lbs of sugar, half an ounce of ginger and a quarter ounce of cloves. Boil slowly for 20 minutes and then strain into a bucket and leave until lukewarm, the yeast can then be added and the liquid poured into demijohns.

Add an air lock and allow the yeast to work. Strain and bottle when fermentation has ceased and keep for 2 years before drinking.

One last thought; it is said that any food left beneath an elder tree will be taken by the faeries so if you start to see little people at the bottom of your garden, don't blame the wine!

Stuart Fox

Curator's notebook

I have always enjoyed gardening, from the time when as a toddler my grandfather thought I could be kept occupied by helping him to water his lettuces....I soon discovered that watering grandfather was much more fun. But from then the path led to my first packet of mixed flower seeds and I was hooked. As I grew older I found equal fascination in helping my parents uncover the skeleton of a long buried Edwardian garden complete with the remains of a revolving summerhouse. It was an easy step from there to archaeology.

Sadly my current role with Oxfordshire Museum Services allows little time for either practical archaeology or gardening, so it is a happy coincidence that living in the High Street in Ascott enables me to combine my two interests. March House backs on to the pavilion end of the playing field and even minimal routing

about in the flowerbeds, has produced a fine collection of medieval pottery from the local Ascott kilns. To this have been added examples of pottery from almost every period since, as you would expect in a village that has been continuously occupied from at least the 11th century.

Some time ago my diggings unearthed a small bronze disc, not much bigger than a 50p piece, with a simple stamped decoration on one side and traces of a white paste deposit on the other, slightly recessed side. A small lug protruded from one edge and what looked like the remains of a hinge from the other. When I picked it up I had the feeling it was medieval...you get a nose for these things after a time, but then I'm a prehistorian so didn't necessarily trust my identification. I had no idea what it was or indeed whether I was in-

dulging in wishful thinking in dating it to the medieval period.

The disc was eventually banished to a pot on the kitchen windowsill containing fossils and all manner of other finds and there it languished for several years until a member of the public came into the Oxfordshire Museum with some objects to be identified that she had found in her garden in Bampton. Working through the finds I soon came across a familiar item. My mystery object, but this time it was a complete example. Identification is always easier when you have got the whole thing to work with. The Bampton example consisted of two hinged discs closed with a clasp, not dissimilar to a very small metal powder compact. This time I was certain it was medieval and so began a search to identify both objects.

Eventually the identification was tracked down via finds recovered

from the medieval period in Southampton. What I had found in the garden was one half of a medieval mirror case. The traces of white paste were calcium carbonate, the remains of the cement that held the mirror in place. They appear to have been mass-produced for a popular market and may have been brought to this country from the continent in the late 14th century, although there were also craftsmen at

work in London at this date calling themselves 'mirrorers'. One thousand mirrors were among the goods brought by ship from the Low Countries, to London in 1384. Sadly no details are given which would allow these imports or the London-made examples to be identified with the Ascott mirror.

When first found these mirrors were thought to be of Ro-

man date, but now part and complete mirrors firmly assigned to the 13th and 14th centuries can be counted in 10s with a distribution from Winchester to Perth so our Ascott find, which is now on display in the Ark Gallery at the Oxfordshire Museum in Woodstock, is something of a variety. Keep a close watch when you are digging your garden, especially if you live in the High Street, I'm still hopeful of finding the other half!

*Carol Anderson
Oxfordshire County
Council Museum
Services Manager*

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Exhibitions and events at the Oxfordshire Museum

Treasures Gallery **until 22 January: Keiskamma**

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Free Gallery talk 12 Jan. 10.45am

Picture Gallery **until 22 January: Orwin's Amazing Animals**

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the unique collection of 18th and 19th century paintings of prize farm animals collected in the early years of the last century by C.S Orwin the first Director of the Agricultural Research Institute at Oxford.

Viewings every half hour from 10.30am - 4.30pm Tuesday to Saturday and at 2.30pm, 3.30pm and 4.30pm on Sundays.

The Museum is open Tue. - Sat. 10am - 5pm and on Sundays from 2pm - 5pm. Admission is free.

For details of holiday activities for children and the Young Archaeologists Club for children aged 8-16 please telephone the Museum on 01993 814103 or visit our website www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/the_oxfordshire_museum

***"Remember, remember, the 5th of November,
Gunpowder, treason and plot.***

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- Read the instructions carefully, using a torch or hand lamp NEVER use a naked flame
- Light fireworks at arms length using a taper or a firework lighter
- Stand well back and NEVER return to a firework after it has been lit, it could explode in your face
- Ensure that all children with fireworks are well supervised
- NEVER throw fireworks
- Keep all pets and animals indoors
- Take care of sparklers, wear gloves to hold them and dispose of sparklers in a bucket of water as soon as they are finished.

Wychwoods Local History Society

The new season started with an excellently presented and very informative talk by Martin Maw archivist of Oxford University Press, about the history of the Press. Processes of printing at the Press which had continued in virtually the same way for four hundred years have been totally discarded in the last few decades with the advent of computers.

The next meeting will be on Thursday Novem-

ber 17th at Milton Village Hall at 7.30.p.m. when Gordon Ottewell will speak about The Evenlode Valley - Places and People. There will be no meeting in December. Then on Thursday 19th January again at Milton Village hall at 7.30.p.m. Alan Watkins will bring along some more slides of his postcards of Churchill and Sarsden.

Old and new members are welcome. Sub-

scriptions are £6 for an individual and £9 for a couple which includes a copy of Wychwoods History when published. Visitors welcome at any meeting at £2 per head.

More information about the Society can be obtained from Wendy Pearse on 831023.

The Oldest Tree in the Wychwoods

Is this the oldest tree in the Wychwoods and the Evenlode Valley?

This magnificent oak stands in a field adjacent to the Oxfordshire Way, between Ascott and

Pudlicote. Like all ancient oaks it is now hollow but it is still growing vigorously and has a dense crown and a good branch structure.

Local farmer, Bill Izod, says this tree has provided a home for barn owls and a summer roost for bats and unlike other oaks nearby has never been struck by lightning.

So how old is it and how do we age



a tree like this? Fortunately the Forestry Commission has carried out a great deal of research and have produced a series of tables that allow you to work out a tree's age based on its girth at chest height, the tree species, soil type and general growing conditions. Trees growing in woodland tend to be taller and have a smaller diameter than trees growing in an open field.

Our oak has a girth of 23ft (7 metres), which means that it is over 500 years old! Just imagine when the acorn from which it grew first sprouted Michelangelo was painting the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, Christopher Columbus was discovering the West Indies, the Wars of the Roses had just ended and Henry VII was King of England.

As our oak grew to maturity its branches were removed to form a pollard. This would have allowed our ancestors to harvest timber for fence posts and con-

struction purposes and possibly used in the production of charcoal. The tree was probably 75 to 100 years old when this was done, Elizabeth I was on the throne and Sir Francis Drake was repelling the Spanish Armada.

Sadly there aren't many acorns this year to collect and germinate; perhaps this could be a project for another year?

Does anyone have land that could accommodate an oak tree or two if some trees could be grown from this venerable oak?

Stuart Fox

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Still Life

Preparing her still life
She bought marigolds
And wide eyed Shasta daisies
In from the garden.
She chose the vase
With the fluted rim
To put them in, and then
A red, and a green apple
She place beside on the table.

The brush worked steadily,
Or swiftly; the pointed sable
Affirming the circular scheme
Of each flower, irradiating
The layered petals that seemed
To float, one by one,
Out of the shadowy ground -
Re-made of the light of her
Effortless concentration.

Overheard in the Supermarket

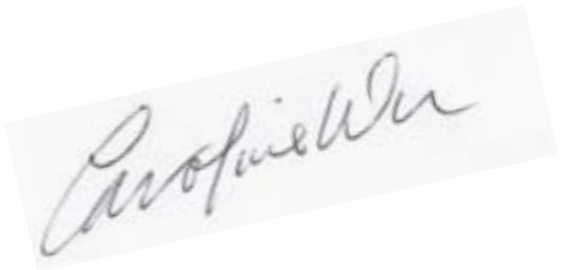
'Just a minute darling' she said.
Her full flanks are visible
in the garden of her dress
as she bends over the basket.

They exchange love's frankest
look
amid the heaped groceries
of the weekly harvest home.
'My heart's treasure' she said.

Her arms lift involuntarily
towards him, weightless with
delight.
'My little passion fruit' she said,
plopping him in the pushchair.
August 1966

She gave me the painting
That leans from the wall.
Nothing is still. The apples
Are rolling from the table;
The wild eyed daisies surge out
From the tilted vase. They spill
Towards us, her gathered energy
Still cascading into our lives
After eighty years.

1966



The Battle of Trafalgar

This month marks the 200 anniversary of the Battle of Trafalgar and up and down our land there will be services and celebrations to remember the heroism of Vice Admiral Horatio Nelson and the gallant crews of his outnumbered fleet.

The battle of Trafalgar, fought 200 years ago on 21 October, is the only one to have a square in London named after it. Trafalgar was a decisive victory, but it was not the decisive victory against Napoleon. I was taught at school that the battle made Napoleon abandon his plan to invade England. It did not. The emperor had already decided against the invasion and marched his men off to wallop the Austrians at Austerlitz. Trafalgar was however important for two main reasons. First, though it may not have guaranteed a British victory, it ensured that Britain could not be beaten. Second, it determined the nature of the remaining decade of the war.

The second point needs some explanation, so please forgive the bit of professional history. Napoleon believed that a state's wealth was to be measured in land and people, not in trade; he also believed that government borrowing was parasitic. This being the case, Britain was doomed because its wealth was based on trade and its government was waging war on credit. The way to defeat this 'nation of shopkeepers' was therefore to stifle its trade. The French therefore insisted that no-one in Europe trade with the British. The problem was that this hit the would-be traders harder than it hit the British and they therefore tried to get round the ban: the Portuguese refused to accept it, the Swedes were evasive, the Spanish revolted against it, and the Russians changed their minds. This meant that Napoleon was forced to send

his armies into the Iberian peninsula and then into Russia; he over-extended his forces and exhausted his tax-payers all over Europe. The Spanish revolt enabled the British to get a foothold on the Continent, and the Russian campaign shattered the French and their allies.

Given the long-term consequences of the battle one is tempted to ask why Napoleon ordered his fleet out to face Nelson off Cape Trafalgar between Cadiz and Gibraltar; now that the invasion of England had been given up, what was the point? It is not an easy question to answer. A French victory would have threatened British trade with the Americas, India and the Far East, but it was improbable that all commerce would have ceased and more than likely that Britain would have muddled through on its own resources. It could be that Napoleon wanted a psychological boost, a victory which would lift



HMS Victory

his own and his nation's morale, but even this answer is thin given that Austerlitz was soon to provide just that boost.

Whatever his reason for sending his fleet to sea, Napoleon had every reason to be confident. His combined Franco-Spanish fleet was the equal of the British in ships and guns, and he had far more of both in reserve than did his enemy. Furthermore, recent government policy in London had cut back naval expenditure to such a degree that the French were far better equipped than the British. But Napoleon's confidence was misplaced for three reasons.

First, the British were far better trained than his own men; thanks to relentless practice, Nelson's ships could fire three broadsides in under five minutes, whilst the French could fire only one. (Readers of Patrick O'Brian will recall Jack Aubrey's mania for gun drill.) Second, Napoleon underestimated Nelson's tactical genius, despite the fact that this had already been shown in the great battles of Copenhagen, where the blind-eye to the telescope myth was born, and the Nile, when Nelson defied convention by attacking as dusk was falling. At Trafalgar Nelson again aban-

doned established procedures; instead of aligning his ships alongside the enemy and letting them slog it out one to one, he sliced through the French line, firing simultaneously

at the ships to port and starboard, and then circled round to isolate more ships. And third, the French leader, who could inspire great loyalty and devotion in his own men, did not understand that in this as in much else Nelson was at least his equal. After Nelson's operatic death, an ordinary seaman on the Royal Sovereign wrote, 'Chaps that fought like the devil sit down and cry like a wench'.

It should not be forgotten that Nelson was not the only one to die. Sea battles were ferocious affairs, the murderous broadsides being fired frequently from as

African Safari II - The Chipome Valley, Nyika Plateau, Malawi

close as five yards, and the storming of a ship involved furious hand-to-hand fighting. The British casualties were 449 killed and 1,242 wounded; the French and Spanish lost an estimated 4,400 dead and 2,500 wounded. Many of the dead on the defeated side perished when their crippled ships sank in the storm which followed the battle.

Before the battle Nelson was already a hugely popular figure. After it he was a hero. That he has remained one is not to be wondered at. He was neither aristocratic nor wealthy; he had earned his fame by his courage, his wits, his superlative seamanship, and his tactical genius. That he and Lady Hamilton added spice to the story in no way diminished his popularity, then or now.

After last year's riding holiday on the Nyika Plateau I wrote a brief piece for the Grapevine and offered a follow-up article on what was then no more than a plan to visit the Chipome Valley. The valley is big: the section I travelled with five others between 17 -19 September covered 25 km of the mid to upper reaches of the Chipome and Mondwe rivers. The first night's riverside camp was at an elevation of 4,800 ft, after descending from a point at 7,200 ft on the Jalawe Ridge. The second night on the river was at 5,550 ft - only 7 km from Camp One so the river is flowing at an impressive incline of 6 degrees. On day three we made the long climb out of the valley to arrive on the high slope of Mount Nganda; at 8,552 ft it is the highest point on the Plateau.

The desire to explore the valley came in a moment of euphoria last

year, having galloped to the top of Mount Nganda. I thought then that the valley was relatively unexplored, which is true, except that up until the 1970s many people of Bantu origin lived an iron-age existence in small groups in the valley. They were forcibly moved out by President Banda to safeguard the valley as a conservation area. While riding with our guide (David Foot, who owns the Nyika Safari Company) during the afternoon of the second day, we came upon a settlement site in an area of Miombo woodland: the cooking pots were in groups, abandoned but apparently with some reverence as most were placed in the cooking circle and some appeared whole: we did not touch them or even take photographs - it did not



Camp One on the Chipome River

seem appropriate somehow.

The valley runs from East of Mount Nganda to the NE where the river flows into the North Rukuru and eventually reaches Lake Malawi at Karonga - a previously notorious trading centre of the Swahili-Arab slavers. The M i o m b o (brachystegia) woodland is fairly thick on the valley sides and ridges making progress awkward and fairly slow -

particularly for the packhorse, who never quite got used to her extra width. The terrain is hard and the steep valley sides in particular are assault courses strewn with loose quartz and igneous rock. Some of the water-eroded gullies

are spectacular with vertical sides and exposed red earth with many trees hanging in the balance.

The river is fast running, cold and clear. It is wonderful to be able to drink the water without any additives and the pools along its course are deep enough to swim in.

At the start of our descent into the valley, David spotted six elephants 2,400 ft below us, and right next to our planned campsite. This was good news because we could expect the elephant trails to be in use, which would ease our passage considerably

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African Safari II...



Open Grassland on the Plateau

- the downside was obvious. It took three hours to reach the bottom of the ridge, which we descended in leaps and slides. The trips back up the slope to bring down a second horse were, let's say... tiring. On reaching the edge of the woodland and only 500m from the river we suddenly came upon the elephants: not

six as we supposed but 20 (plus one very young one) were standing and watching us at a range of 30 yards. The horses were magnificent examples of restraint and only shied away when one Bull decided to take a closer look by running towards us - a deal of hand-clapping and shouting stopped him and the herd suddenly turned to its right and moved off in single file to skirt around us at a run. They passed at a distance of no more

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than 25 yards. No-one took a photograph, we sat astride our equally stunned horses and only counted them as they ran past, while the rumbling noise of their going stayed with us for several minutes afterwards.

Our groom – a local man called Robert who has the best natural eyesight I have ever come across (Robert could see and identify things that I could not immediately see with a pair of 10 x 50 binoculars even after the location had been pointed out to me), thought we were mad to want to enter the Valley at all but after that experience he grinned

broadly and made it quite clear that he thought this was a good place to be.

The wider parts of the valley are covered in grasses 15 feet high and the wetlands have reedbeds, which are 25 feet high. The grasses seem to offer the easiest routes, but to dismount and walk makes for very hard going as the grasses are matted together and make every step a serious argument between boot and grass. The horses were marvellous again, high stepping and pushing on with their apparently irresistible strength. Small gullies, often grass covered, posed another problem

and my own horse Curry, the same 16.2 hh Thoroughbred I rode last year, put his hind legs into one and came crashing down – fortunately unscathed.

The only easy riding is on the areas that poachers have burned to drive game into their killing zones but the charcoal filled dust is a choker and we avoided these stretches as much as we could. We came out of the valley in the late afternoon of the third day after a long day's ride through all the different terrain types. Looking back we could see Jalawe Point, our starting place, in the haze – it looked a long way off.

In the following days we rode East to the Dembo River and discovered a Hyena den with at least three pups, who came out to inspect us. We also came across a vicious snare of high tensile steel cable, capable of killing a one ton Eland but more likely to catch a Reedbuck. We disman-



Leaving the Chipome Valley

African Safari II...

tled it and searched up-river for more, collecting seven in the course of an afternoon. The Chief poacher-hunter donated 140 Kwacha (\$1.10) to the Trust as the official reward is 20 Kwacha for each snare found by his wardens.

The Nyika Plateau is some of the least visited country in Africa and

the Chipome is the least visited part of the Plateau. For the most part it is untouched and entirely wild. It is a fabulous place.

If you are interested in visiting the Nyika Plateau, see the Safari's website at:

www.nyika.com or contact Ride World Wide

for a riding holiday brochure on:

RideWW@aol.com or by telephone on 01837 82544.

If the work of the Conservation Trust interests you, please contact: Nick Leadbetter on 01993 831571.

Nick Leadbetter

Ascott Primary School 1964 - 1970

Oh dear! My heart sank when Wendy asked me to do an article for the Grapevine on memories of my time at the village primary school. What memories I thought? I am famous for my poor memory and am a compulsive list maker as a result. So to the task ahead...

How could I ever have forgotten the free school milk - I hated it. Everyday it was dutifully delivered but I almost always managed to give mine away. It was even worse in winter as the milk was placed on the classroom heater to warm it up.

My recollections of 'The Little Room' with Mrs Green are fairly hazy but I recall the days were structured and productive. Mrs Green was strict but fair. There were lots of toys and paints, play-doh, a sand tray, letters of the alphabet on the wall, reading, writing and sums to be done and a bit of tracing (once you'd learnt how to do it). A story, fable or nursery rhyme every day and 'heads down' for a little nap.

I can't remember the precise age at which I graduated to 'The Big Room' with Mr Stanyon (I was prob-

ably about eight) but everything changed quite radically at this point.

There seemed to be endless visits to Wychwood Forest for nature studies and walks 'up Chippy hill' to look for Roman coins, flint arrowheads and bits of clay pipe in the fields. I wasn't keen on the latter as (despite being short and therefore closer to the ground than most) I don't think I ever found anything. Of course there was lots of swimming as well once we had raised the money to build the swimming pool. We

Ascott Primary School 1964 - 1970...

swam at least twice a day weather permitting and often after school. You were awarded a certificate once you could swim ten yards. It didn't matter if all you could do was doggy paddle. The pool was also open during the summer holidays at the discretion of the parents who formed a rota to monitor chlorine levels etc. and supervise the swimmers.

Raising the funds to build the swimming pool was an immense achievement for such a small community. Many of us would never have learnt to swim without this pool. It was a very sad day when the school was sold and the pool dismantled. School fetes were always well supported. Villagers came irrespective of whether they had children at the school. There was a great sense of community spirit. Almost every child from the village went to the village school so you got to know everybody.

Country dancing – I loved country dancing. Even at that age we all had our favourite partners. I think we practised most weeks. On special occasions we performed in public and wore the old embroidered costumes. In later years we also danced around the maypole.

On sports day there were all the usual races – sack race, egg and spoon race, obstacle race, slowest cyclist downhill, three legged race, wheelbarrow race and running. Shirley and I reigned supreme in the three legged and wheelbarrow races, I of course was the wheelbarrow. The school also had a boys football team and girls rounders team. We occasionally played against other local schools and generally fared very well. There were some parallel bars in the playground on the tarmac. Really brave, or perhaps foolish pupils sat on the top bar and swung round forwards. It was mostly the

boys who had something to prove. Amazingly nobody fell off and broke their neck.

Back in the classroom, we used to sing along to a radio programme for schools each week and do a bit of 'musical, movement and mime'. Thanks to Mr Stanyon a lot of us learnt to read music and played the recorder. He also taught us some French which seemed quite progressive for a primary school at that time.

On a more serious note, Mr Smith, the vicar visited every Friday and took assembly. The pupils took it in turns to choose the hymns. On special occasions we went to Church – Mothers Day, Harvest Festival, etc. Mrs Tucker occasionally gave us cookery lessons but we were pretty hopeless. Mrs Collett served the school dinners which were delivered by van (presumably from Shipton school). I didn't have school din-

ners apart from Christmas lunch because I only lived two doors away from the school and so went home. I always felt that living so close to the school put me at a distinct disadvantage. If I was off school due to illness in the morning but felt a little better in the afternoon, I wouldn't dare venture outside in case I was spotted.

I'm not sure that there was much time left for the more formal side of our education in 'The Big Room'. The day had little structure. We were expected to do some reading, writing and arithmetic each day but we decided individually when to do it. If you required help, older pupils were supposed to give you guidance! I don't think we studied science, geography or history, other than our trips 'up Chippy hill' looking for relics.

Apart from being chased round the school playground by boys carrying daddy longlegs my scariest recollection is

that of the relief teacher. A large, matronly figure. I was genuinely frightened of her. She was incredibly strict (something we were not used to) and gave us spelling tests.

For eight of us, our days at primary school were numbered. Having taken tests to stream us ready for Burford School we went on our final trip with Mr. Stanyon. He very kindly took all the 'leavers' on a day trip to London by train to see the sights. We were also given a small Collins dictionary

which I have to this day and still use, although after thirty five years the front cover has fallen off.

With this article I must pay tribute to Mrs Green for setting such excellent educational foundations and to Mr. Stanyon for never putting us under pressure, allowing us to discover a lot about ourselves.

Thank you Wendy for making me take a trip down memory lane - 'those were the days'.

*Elaine Byles
(nee Pratley).*

W. J. Wright

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The Garden at Sunset House

When we came to AUW we knew that our patch of land was going to take us many years of hard work and happiness to make into a garden. It certainly has and it certainly is. For us the garden was almost more important than the house and it was wonderful to have what was virtually a field to turn into a garden.

Our garden is surrounded on all four sides with walls. When we first saw it, it was difficult to tell because along the side adjacent to the field leylandii had been planted which had grown to a fearsome height and depth. Two other sides were obscured by very large overgrown shrubs. Our first action, within the first month of moving in, was to have the leylandii removed which revealed a splendid old apple tree and a drystone wall both in good condition. A little later on gravel paths were laid. We then set about the rest of the garden getting



surprises all the time – some good and some bad if not awful. I'll tell you about the awful first.

The garden had been referred to by previous owners as the paddock, little did they know, and I'm sure they did not because it was clear that nothing had been touched for years and years except the grass regularly mown. What appeared to be meadow grass, that is all the rest of the garden bar the old shrubs, turned out either to be covered in tarmac with a layer of soil over the top which had been grassed over or was rock and stone infested. Of course we did not find this out until we set about one fine early summer morning

to dig over the garden. Several weeks later we were still trying to dig out the tarmac. We had several bent forks, frayed tempers, aching backs and blisters. We had to admit defeat and bring in a JCB and operator. He removed some 20 odd tons of rubble some of which we think must have been dumped when the place was converted from a pub. But we also think that at one time there had been a pond in the garden which had been in-filled because in one part beneath the tarmac he was digging layers of rubble to a depth of 6 feet. Nobody we have spoken to in the village remembers a pond so it must have been some long time ago.

We wanted to have a pond but of course did not want it where it had appeared to be in the past and the operator obligingly dug us one elsewhere. That is one decision it might have been sensible not to make because it took 17 tons of topsoil to replace the tarmac and rubble that had been removed from the old 'pond' site and it would have cost a lot less money and effort to have used the old pond site. Anyway - 'Hurray' we said 'Now the digger has finished and topsoil delivered we can really

get started on the garden.' We set about planting on the old 'pond' site and making the new pond hole into a real pond.

'This is great' we said 'Now we can begin on the easier parts of the garden.' I am sorry to say that as soon as we started digging anywhere else we found rocks, large and extra large, stones galore and path foundations some two or three feet down. As many of you will know, by now we ought to be prosperous shareholders in the local skip firm because we have

had one in the garden almost permanently since then, collecting what we have unearthed. The skip almost became a garden feature in itself so much so that we knew it had to be removed in order that people would believe that we were making a garden rather than just excavating for leisure and pleasure. It has gone - but not far - into the smaller garden the other side of the house. We will get rid of it completely soon though it will be a wrench, almost like a comfort blanket -

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The Garden at Sunset House...

there`s always somewhere to throw the garden rubbish.

That`s enough of the awful. Now onto the good. Two good friends and ourselves spent a happy and hilarious long weekend getting the old shrubs out of the ground and making a great bonfire. It is such good fun to do these things with friends and it is always such an entertainment for them when you have been putting your last ounce of energy into wresting a root out of the ground when it comes away unexpectedly and you find yourself lying on the ground with your legs in the air. They never ask if you`ve hurt yourself they just double up laughing.

When we had cleared it all away we found a climbing rose which looked very bedraggled but which turned out to be `Albertine`. It has recovered completely now and gives a wonderful wealth of flowers and scent every summer. We

also found a `snowy mespilus` which had been smothered, has also recovered and is now equally good. These were two lovely surprises to find. The two established trees in the garden a hawthorn and the old apple tree stood out so much better with everything else around cleared away. It was good to have the trees, particularly the old apple which must be some 30 or 40 feet high, because they give age and structure to the garden which would probably take 40 or 50 years to achieve if we were planting them now. Both trees are strong enough to support plants growing into them and we have started off a rose growing into the apple tree. Other pluses are that we found some good size pebbles which it would be fun to make into a mosaic and now that all the ground is cleared of major obstacles we have found it to be generally fertile, quite good at

water-holding and very workable with only a very few patches of clay. This indicates to me that it has been lovingly gardened at some time before the rubble and tarmac appeared. That gives a good feeling of carrying on a tradition begun in the past.

We are at the stage, six years on where we have more or less decided how the garden should be divided up: we have an herbaceous border, a grass bed which is developing into prairie planting and an allium, clematis and rose alley leading to a secret doorway through a wall. We have a vegetable patch. We have planted lots of perennials and trees (some semi mature because time marches on), lain some grass and dotted seats around to view the whole from different angles and we have the wildlife pond. We have nowhere finished the garden, we never will and would not want to. It fulfils so many of our

needs and wants. It gives pleasure, let's you be creative, requires thought and planning,

gives exercise and great satisfaction when you achieve what you had

intended and it gives peace. It's a blissful place.

Yvette Keauffling

Cook's Corner: Ascott's Favourite Recipes

Chocolate Bread and Butter Pudding

Bread and butter pudding is a traditional winter sweet, but this chocolate version will not only warm you up on a cold winter's day but will delight any chocolate lovers in the village!

5 oz Dark Chocolate
70-75 % cocoa solids

9 Slices of white bread quarter of an inch thick, from a large loaf

3oz Butter

15fl oz Whipping Cream

4 Tablespoons of dark rum

4 oz caster sugar

3 Large eggs

A pinch of cinnamon

A shallow ovenproof dish 7ins x 9ins and 2ins deep lightly buttered

Serve with double cream

Remove the crusts from the bread and cut each slice into 4 triangles.

Place chocolate, butter, whipping cream, rum, sugar and cinnamon in a bowl set over a saucepan of simmering water. Don't let the bottom of the bowl touch the water. Wait until the butter and chocolate have melted and the sugar has dissolved, remove from the heat and stir thoroughly.

In a separate bowl whisk the eggs and pour the chocolate mixture over them and whisk very thoroughly.

Spoon 1/2in of the chocolate mixture into the ovenproof dish and arrange bread triangles in overlapping rows. Now pour half the remaining chocolate mix-

ture over the bread and arrange the rest of the bread triangles over that, finishing off with a layer of chocolate mixture. Use a fork to press the bread down so that everything is covered with the chocolate mixture.

Cover the dish and allow to stand for 2 hours at room temperature before transferring to the 'fridge for at least 24 hours.

Remove the cover and cook in an oven gas mark 4 (350F/180C) on a high shelf for 30-35 minutes. The top should be crunchy and the inside soft. Leave to stand for 5-10 minutes before serving.

Any leftovers can be eaten cold.

Beware NOT recommended for anyone on a diet!

Have you a favourite or seasonal recipe you would like to share? Then please jot it down and hand a copy to Stuart Fox, Wendy Pearse, Karen Purvis or Kingsley or email it to: ascottgrapevine@dial.pipex.com

What's It Worth? (antique valuations)

One of the questions I am frequently asked by my customers when examining their antiques is, "what's it worth?"

There are four basic ways to value an antique.

The highest is an Insurance Valuation. Many antiques are unique and by definition, irreplaceable. They therefore have an insurance valuation far in excess of their retail value, not only to financially compensate for the possible loss of the piece, but also to give a large enough settlement (in the unfortunate circumstance whereby the piece is damaged or sto-

len) to allow the owner to purchase a replacement, which may only be found in a very expensive shop or fair.

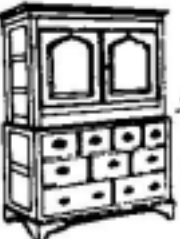
The second highest valuation is the Retail price. This represents the price the piece would command if sold in a respectable high street shop, or a quality antique fair, these traders have often invested in restoration of the pieces they sell, and offer authentication and guarantees.

The third highest valuation is the Trade price (Auction price). This represents the cheaper prices that dealers pay when trading

antiques amongst themselves, or buying at Auction prior to restorations and high street retail.

Collectable items and pieces of high value, will often command a higher price at Auction than anywhere else, because Auctions have access to a large competitive market focused on the same piece at the same moment, a sellers dream when it works, but so often ordinary pieces sell for ordinary prices which realise a disappointing sum once the auctioneer's commission and VAT charges have been deducted. In praise of Auctioneers they will usually give you a free valuation if you make an appointment and take the piece in to them.

The fourth and lowest valuation is the Probate valuation. Obviously no one wants to pay more tax than necessary and the massive increase in house prices in recent years has exposed many more deceased estates to capital



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gains tax. The uniqueness of antiques makes them very difficult to price, permitting a large margin of error. Valuations of the same piece by different experts will often result in very different prices.

A white Ford Transit 280 turbo diesel van registered in 2002, will cost you about £7,000, anyone can know that because the price is published in a book! The volume of second hand

sales tests the market on a daily basis and precise prices become established. I wonder what a 280 turbo transit would be worth if they had decided to only make one of them? It would be unique and much more valuable, but very difficult to put a price on? Many antiques are unique, sometimes valuations are highly subjective.

It is a well known saying, that “a dealer is

someone who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing” it’s not true, I have encountered many dealers who don’t know the price of anything!

In conclusion returning to the question “what’s it worth?” the honest reply is “whatever someone will give you for it”!

Robert Gripper

We’d like to apologise to Robert for accidentally mis-naming him in our last issue.

Christmas Shopping Night

Monday 21st November

7.00pm-9.30pm

Tiddy Hall

Ascott-under-Wychwood

Stalls:

Toys, Cards, Jewellery, Portrait Photography

Cosmetics, Raffle, Handmade paper and much more.

Admission £3.00

(to include a mince pie and mulled wine)

To raise funds for Ascott Pre School

Windrush Valley School

Independent School of the Year

Having finished the last academic year on such a high note - excellent examination results, membership of ISA and outstanding sporting results and with all pupils once again gaining places in the secondary school of their choice, it seemed unlikely that we would start the new school year on such a magnificent high.

But here we are once again celebrating a most unexpected accolade - the award of Independent School of the Year. Having followed our progress over the past twelve months, reviewing our achievements and literature and interviewing a number of current and prospective parents, our school has been chosen to receive this merit award. We are delighted indeed and look forward to publishing our progress and achievements over the course of the next twelve months.

With a record number of parents seeking places for their chil-

dren at our school, we have begun the year in a very buoyant mood. A mood sustained by seeing an outstanding number of parents attending our annual Harvest Festival celebration service in the Holy Trinity Church in Ascott-under-Wychwood, led by the Reverend Mark Abrey. This outstanding turnout perhaps reflecting on last year when parents attended our weekly assemblies in the church. Thanks to the generosity of all parents, we were able to present a magnificent £230 to the church fabric fund.

Everyone is welcome at our services. If, as you read this, you would like to join our school as our children lead their class assemblies, just pop along to Ascott-under-Wychwood church for 9:00am on a Monday morning - you will be made very welcome, we would love to see you.

As the standard of our children's singing grows exponentially year

on year, we have decided to organise three school choirs - junior, senior and select. Auditions for select choir have been completed and the children will begin rehearsals next week. On a similar music theme, a further 28 children have enrolled for wind instrument tuition this year, in addition to the 8 currently learning the piano, so our music master is confident of raising another school band early in the New Year.

With six inter-school competitive matches already arranged, our sporting fixtures have got off to an excellent start, hopefully the right results will follow in similar style. We are delighted with the pupils from Burford and Charlbury Junior schools who have recently joined us, as they will strengthen further the quality of our squads.

We have strengthened our teaching team even further with two

new teachers, thus enabling the school to now provide specialist teaching in science, Latin, French, music, art and IT. Our examination re-

sults could be even more impressive next year.

If you would like to know more about this year's Independent

School of the Year, please contact the Headmaster on 01993 831793.

Leaffield School

Much to Celebrate -

With the start of the new autumn term we have much to celebrate. Firstly, Leaffield School has been awarded a substantial grant as part of the Government's "Travelling to School Initiative". This was due to the submission and acceptance of our School Travel Plan and it is hoped that the funds will be spent on either an outdoor shelter for parents and children or a special secure bike storage area.

A letter of congratulations has been received from Oxfordshire County Council School Development Service for Leaffield School's excellent results in English and Mathematics. This was because we exceeded the Fisher Family Trust estimates and recognition and thanks have been

given to the teaching and support staff and of course, the pupils, as these excellent achievements are so important for future success.

Our 14 new children have all settled in well as has Miss Ranger our new teacher. After school clubs including Gym, Netball and Football are getting under way again and we will soon be celebrating our Harvest Festival as well as thinking about Christmas activities:-

Future Dates for your diary are as follows:-

7/12/05 Class 3 & 4 Carol Service in Church at 6.30 pm

13/12/05 Class 1 & 2 performance in school (afternoon)

14/12/05 Class 1 & 2 performance in school 6.00 pm

15/12/05

Christingle Service in Church all children 2.00 pm

School Places Filling up Fast - For children born between 1st September 2001 and 31st August 2002 who will be coming to Leaffield in September 2006 you should have received your relevant forms. If you are worried you do not have the right information and have not yet made your application, please contact Mrs. Ryde or the school Secretary Mrs. Brown as our places are filling up quite quickly now.

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

*Vicky Greves,
Governor.*

Tiddy Hall

Regular Activities

Monday to Thursday Mornings Pre-School-Contact Pauline Plant 07968006451

Tuesday Evenings Yoga Summer School. Contact David Billham 01993 842061.

Thursday Evenings Yoga. Contact Chris Setters 01608 676236

Friday Mornings Mother and Toddler Group. Contact Pauline Plant 07968006451.

Wednesday Evenings Badminton. Contact Chris Morgan 01993 831958.

Saturday Mornings Dog Training. Contact Sharon Wilson 01993 831801.

Special Events

Thursday 10 November
Film night - 8pm
'Million Dollar Baby'
Rating 12A

Monday 21 November
7pm - 10pm
Craft Fair (organised by Ascott Pre-school)

Thursday 8 December
Film night - 8 pm
'Phantom of the Opera'
Rating: 12A

To book the Tiddy Hall contact:
Ingrid Ridley 01993 830612

Wychwood Library

Opening Times

Monday:
2pm to 7.00pm
Wednesday:
9:30am to 1pm/
2pm to 5pm
Friday:
2pm to 7pm
Saturday:
9.30am to 1pm

*Beryl Brown,
Library Manager
01993 830281*

FARMERS MARKETS 2005

Witney - 3 rd Thursday of the Month	Chipping Norton - 3 rd Saturday of the Month
Woodstock - 1 st Saturday of the Month	Charlbury - Quarterly on Saturdays (Dates to be Confirmed)

Further details from Thames Valley Farmers' Market Association on:
0870 2414762
or
visit the web site at:
www.tvfm.co.uk

*** GRAPEVINE COMPETITION ***

Calling all budding artists...

Would you like to see your artwork on the front cover of the Winter Grapevine?

To celebrate the New Year, we'd like to include a picture from one of our younger readers on the front cover of the next issue.

To enter please send your drawing (in black pen / ink please - no colours) to:

The Grapevine
c/o Ascott Village Shop
by 4 January 2006.

Your drawing should be of some aspect of Ascott-under-Wychwood. Please include your name and age on the back of the drawing.

The competition is open to all under 16s.

Contributions Please!

'The Ascott Grapevine' is your magazine. We would like to have you provide us with:

- your memories of Ascott, or how you came to live here;
- your stories and poems;
- information about upcoming events or reviews of recent activities in the village,

- news about your interests, activities, schools, clubs or other groups.

We need your contributions in other ways too. 'The Grapevine' is provided free to every household in the village and survives mainly on donations. If you would like to help 'The Grapevine' continue, any do-

nation large or small would be appreciated. You can give a donation to any member of the editorial team.

We would also like to thank all of you that have contributed articles, poetry, stories and recipes to The Grapevine and Mr Eric Pratley for allowing us to use his many photos showing Ascott over the years.

As there will not be another issue of The Grapevine before Christmas, the editorial team would like to take this opportunity to wish everyone a peaceful and joyous Christmas and a very happy New Year.



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