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# The Ascott Grapevine

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Issue 53

Winter 2007

## 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 Spring issue of The Grapevine should be submitted by April 4th.

Call 01993 832163 or email:

[ascottgrapevine@dial.pipex.com](mailto:ascottgrapevine@dial.pipex.com)

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

## Church Services

The details and times of the regular services are advertised on the various notice boards around the village and in the church porch, but here are some of the special services that are coming up over the next few months:

### 1st Sunday of the month

10.00am Holy Communion - Common Worship

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday

8.00am Holy Communion - Book of Common Prayer  
10.00am Family Service

### 3rd Sunday

10.00am Benefice Service

### 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday

10.00 Morning Prayer

Please check the notice boards for special services over the Easter period.

We look forward to welcoming you and worshipping with you.

*Tim Lyon*

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## Chase News

Further information about what's happening in the Chase Benefice is in the *Chase News*, included in the centre of this issue of the Grapevine.

## 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.

## A Choir for Christmas

At the beginning of September I thought about forming a 'scratch' choir to sing a few carol - type anthems as part of the Ascott Carol Service in our church. I got in touch with the Revd. Mark Abrey to see if he would allow us to take part, and after his affirmative reply, started to ask around in this village and adjoining villages for anyone interested.

The response was most pleasing and we began having Monday night rehearsals to prepare some work which I had chosen. It seems as though there were quite a few people who had never sung in a group but would like to try if given the chance.

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## Bellringers

Like many churches Holy Trinity in Ascott finds difficulty in recruiting bellringers to ring for Sunday services and special occasions. Is there anyone in the village who learned to ring when they were younger,

As my work has been to train choirs (amongst other forms of music making) I set to, and we all worked hard to produce some three- part-harmony.

It gave us a cheerful atmosphere in which to explore the newly found potential! Each session was concluded with a glass of wine and a chat, This was also a chance to get to know new friends too.

We hope that having sung at the Carol Serv-

ice, both on our own, and also to lead the congregation in the well - known carols, we may go on to have further chances to sing together on other occasions.

Are you a frustrated singer without a choir? If so, do get in touch with me and whenever we get together again you might 'try your hand' (or your voice!) with us. It was good fun.

*Daphne Abe*  
*daphne.abe@virgin.net*



stopped because of other commitments but would now be willing to attend the occasional practice session and Sunday service?

We tend to ring rounds and simple call changes. Our aim is to

make a joyful sound rather than learning complicated methods.

If you think that you might like to join us contact: Mike on 830058 or Stuart on 832004.

*Stuart Fox*

## Births

On 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2006 to Ailsa Palmer Stuart and Sean O'Mahony, a son, Blake Emerson O'Mahony.

On 11<sup>th</sup> October 2006 to Sarah and Steve Russell, a son, Thomas James Fulier.

On 16th January 2007 to Helen and Philip Pratley, a daughter, Philippa Olivia Pratley.

## Marriages

On 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2006 at St. Andrew's Church, Hatfield Peverel, Essex, Anthony Wood to Charlotte Ryder.

## Deaths.

On 1<sup>st</sup> December 2006, Francis James Hawley, aged 79 years.

On 8<sup>th</sup> December 2006, Elizabeth Constance Rainbow, aged 93 years.

## A Grand Day Out

Thank-God for Tesco, that's what I say!

On a mild and overcast morning on the 2<sup>nd</sup> December, friends of Anthony Wood, set off for Hatfield Peverel, near Chelmsford in a twenty-four-seat coach hired by Rosemary Dawbarn, for the wedding of Anthony and Charlotte. These are my recollections of the trip to Essex.

Why, you may say should I praise Tesco in Aylesbury? Well, it would be fair to say that most of those travelling could be compared to old houses, full of character, but with dubious plumbing! I leave you to guess why I praise Tesco and their facilities!

After our stop in Aylesbury we continued with

out too many problems with traffic in the competent hands of our driver, Martin Grantham. In conversation I discovered that Martin's father, Horace, worked with me at Smiths Industries in Witney 30 years ago. We often got into trouble for playing about and not paying enough attention to our work. As a boy Horace attended the Roman Catholic Church in



Chippie and had got into serious trouble for putting ink into the holy water. Our playing about kept us sane while working on the assembly line at Smiths; but back to our day out.

By noon we stopped at a pub just outside Chelmsford for a meal, which we all enjoyed. The food was good and the cost reasonable. I have a Scrooge-like nature and always look to see if I am being ripped-

off. After the meal it was time for the ladies to dress for the big occasion; they all looked very glamorous when they boarded the coach, but I never understand why women make such a fuss over dressing-up for weddings! I waited to see if one of them asked, "does my bum look big in this?" Being ladies this question wasn't asked.

We arrived at Hatfield Peveler at 2.00 pm, half an hour before "kick-off" sorry, I mean before the wedding. St. Andrews was decorated with seasonal flowers; I had the feeling that this was the beginning of Christmas.

The organist and a young man on a trumpet played some fine music before the marriage ceremony, the rousing Toccata and Fugue setting the scene. The service was simple but moving, both Bride and Groom showing their nerves. There was more fine music, singing and poetry before Anthony and Charlotte walked down the aisle as

husband and wife, to the joyous sound of *Sortie in E flat major* by Louis Lefebure Wely. I do like music that lifts and cheers me.

After the usual photographs and greetings outside the church, we moved off to the reception. The whole event seemed very English, but don't ask me to explain what I mean.

Driving up a long drive to the house where the reception was being held, we arrived outside what I would guess was a redbrick Georgian mansion. I half expected to be greeted by Jane Eyre and Rochester, but I wasn't.

We entered a warm house full of friends of the bride and groom; again my 'Scrooge-like' thoughts were with me, how much did it cost to heat a place like this?

After plenty to eat and drink and in a merry mood, we left for home at 6.30 pm.

It was a comfortable and sleepy ride back to Ascott, our only concern was for Jim Beveridge who had been

ill for most of the day. I do hope that by the time that this goes to print he will be fully recovered.

I discussed with Eleanor and June hymns suitable for weddings, but after one attempt at singing one it soon petered out. The football songs of my youth would not have been suitable for the ladies of refined tastes on the coach. Even for me with more genteel tastes and as a practising Christian the lewd and bawdy songs of my youth should be banned and those singing them locked-up and the key throw away! (*Fred I don't believe you. Ed.*)

Arriving back in Ascott at about 9.00 pm I was greeted by my dog who was very pleased to see me; I was also in time to watch Match of the Day.

We all agreed that it had been a grand day out. My thanks to Rosemary for organising the coach and to Jill Stedeford for booking the lunch at the pub.

**Fred Russell**

## The Long Barrow

Although it is now almost forty years since Don Benson completed his excavation of the Neolithic long barrow at Ascott-under-Wychwood this year sees renewed interest in the remains of this ancient burial place. The plan to return the barrow stones to the village coincides with the imminent publication (by Oxbow Books) of the final report on the excavations, including the results of an extensive post excavation research

project led by Dr Alasdair Whittle at Cardiff University.

One of several burial mounds in the area the Ascott barrow, built around 3,700BC on open scrubby grassland, is probably one of the earliest of more than 140 barrows constructed in earth and stone that are scattered across the Cotswold-Severn region. Wayland's Smithy on the Ridgeway and the Whispering Knights at Rollright are two good

examples of this type of burial mound with Belas Knap and Notgrove in Gloucestershire also being worth a visit.

The Ascott long barrow, which was used by several generations of our Neolithic ancestors to bury their dead, appears to have been built in two stages, in a series of bays defined by lines of stakes and stone, filled mainly with earth and turf, with some stone, and enclosed or faced by dry stone walling. The barrow contained two opposed pairs of stone burial chambers or cists.

The cists contained the remains of at least 21 people (of all ages and both sexes), deposited in a variety of conditions from cremations and fleshed burials to incomplete selections of bones from bodies that had previously been exposed to the elements. This process of excarnation resulted in the bones being bleached through direct exposure to sunlight.

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Once the flesh had rotted the bones were then transferred to the barrow for burial.

Perhaps the most startling find was the vertebra of an adult male with a flint arrowhead embedded in it. The arrow had entered the body through the stomach and lodged in the spine. Death would have been very quick, but we will never know whether this was a tragic accident or evidence of a more sinister event. But we do know that the arrow must have been released from close range to have penetrated so deep.

The archaeologists also recovered pottery, flint, axe fragments, stone querns for grinding grain, and the bones of both wild and domesticated animals including cattle, sheep and pigs.

When published the final report on the excavations will provide more detailed information about the life and death of some of the earliest inhabitants of our valley.

The finds from the excavations (with the exception of the human bones which are in the care of the Natural His-

tory Museum in London) and the site archive have now been deposited with the Oxfordshire County Museum Service and will be stored at the Museums Resource Centre at Standlake. Volunteers are being sought to assist with the final stages of documenting the archive to make it more easily accessible to the public. Anyone interested in helping with this work should contact Carol Anderson on 01993 814105 or email [carlanderson@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:carlanderson@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

*Carol Anderson*

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## Have you made your resolution yet?



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Please contact Bridgette Crundwell at Home on: 01993-830671; at her Office on: 01993 832592 (Mon to Wed) or at the Shop on: 01993 831240 (2.30pm to 6.30pm Thur) if you are interested or would like more information.

# Volunteering on the Tenteleni Project

After six months attending fairly uninspiring weekly meetings, and struggling to fundraise to finance my flight and expenses, last July I flew out to South Africa. To be honest, I was beginning to question why I had ever applied to Tenteleni, a small student run charity that sends about 150 British students annually to Southern Africa.

I had seen posters advertising the charity one winter evening, when I was stranded late one night in the library, slightly put out that I had an essay to finish while I knew my friends were out, enjoying themselves. More than slightly disgruntled that

I had not learnt my lesson, and had again left things to the last minute, in the knowledge that I had a long night ahead of me, the poster caught my attention, and offered a glimpse of something far more exciting than issues of political philosophy! So, from this evocation of sunshine and something other than essays, books and the library, I became involved, and the opportunity that had been provided for me, proved to be quite amazing.

As part of the Tenteleni project, I stayed alongside 14 other British students in a Game Reserve situated in the Mpumalanga



Province of North Eastern South Africa. The basic accommodation was more than compensated for by the stunning scenery and wildlife, with zebras, Rhino



and Giraffe regularly grazing outside our huts. The township within which we were volunteering, about a 40 minute drive away borders Kruger National



Park, and from one of the schools elephants are regularly spotted.

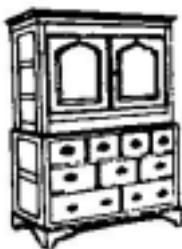
We were to have one week of training, before embarking upon our voluntary placements as teaching assistants in the Matsulu township for 8 weeks. In this training week, I was cheerfully told that the school that I was to be placed in, was the poorest in the community. While I was aware that it was in the rural part of Matsulu (people are permitted to keep animals) I knew not what to make of that comment, when we had all been prepared for schools with intermittent (if any) water, no electricity and a lack of basic educational resources, to include paper and pens. To add to this, many of those children, who we would be coming in to contact with, were orphans from HIV/AIDS, and were themselves infected, and thus sick. The task ahead was daunting, and the bus ride to school the following Monday morn-



ing was crisp with silence, as we all sat in contemplation, aware of the very real possibility that we had bitten off far more than we could chew.

At 7.30 that Monday morning, what greeted me at Benjamin Primary school, were rows and rows of happy smiling faces, and a level

of celebrity status. As one of the first white people to have come in to contact with these children, there was much fascination over my white 'chicken skin' and 'soft hair.' That morning, there seemed to be a sense of joy exuberating from every classroom, as the youngest children transfixed by



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our very presence, hung out of windows and shouted as they waved madly, trying to gain our attention. There was no doubt that our presence was clearly appreciated, but then that was evident the previous week, when we had met the local members of the education circuit, who had spontaneously burst in to song to celebrate our safe arrival.

Much was evidently expected of us!

The happy atmosphere could only mask for a short while, the harsh reality of the situation. The fact is, these children have very few resources available to



me, people are either infected, or affected. In the knowledge of such facts, one would think it would be heart breaking to be working in such



them, and their lives are being ravaged by the HIV/AIDS virus. The figures are disturbing. It is thought that 40% of the local population have HIV/AIDS (the highest rate in the whole of South Africa) and between 80 - 90% of the children in my school are orphans; as one teacher explained to

company when so many of those young individuals have such a death sentence around their neck, but this thought rarely occurred to me. It was an honour to be in the company of individuals, who had gone through so much, and despite everything, continued to have a smile on their

faces. When the children are so brave, and matter a fact about death, a reality that punctuates their life, it was impossible to be morbid.

I was placed in one of the township's larger primary schools, with 1095 pupils aging from 4-18+ (if children fail exams, which is common, then they must repeat the year.) There were just 24 teachers, teaching classes of between 50-75 children in simple brick built rooms, with wooden desks crammed in, with



a chalk board at the front of the room. Along both sides there were windows, many with broken window panes, which opened just wide enough to allow for a small breeze,

but the crowded rooms still got very hot.

One of the most challenging situations that we found ourselves in, was in the promotion of awareness in issues concerning HIV/AIDS. As

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living positively with the virus felt like we were betraying these children, accepting that this virus would continue to control their lives.

that sleeping with a virgin will cure AIDS, awareness is improving, and there is increasing access to anti retrovirals.

I am very grateful that I did manage to stumble upon such a fantastic opportunity, and was able to spend a time, even if it were too short in the presence of people who are truly humbling. I wish to thank

all those people who helped me with my fundraising efforts in order to make the whole trip possible.

To find out more, visit the Tenteleni website at [www.tenteleni.co.uk](http://www.tenteleni.co.uk)

*Leisha Braithwaite*



part of the Life Skills curriculum, we were responsible for teaching about the facts of the illness, it's transmission, and ways of living positively with it. It was particularly challenging facing 65 - 75 faces, teaching about protecting oneself from the virus, while the chances were that nearly half the class had already contracted it. Somehow it felt like we were giving a false hope, continuing the culture of denial. Yet equally, emphasising the ways of

Nevertheless while it can not be denied that the virus has, and will shape the lives of these children, there is hope. While many still believe

## The Vicarage Ghosts

For my generation, that is those born just before the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War, we are perhaps the last people to know the ghost stories connected with the old vicarage. One concerned the ghostly light that was supposed to travel from the house along the drive to what was the old stable block. It was a well-known tale, but I never met anyone who had actually seen it.

The other story was the haunting of the house by the ghost of Miss Tweed and I do know some people who had seen a figure of a woman. Miss Tweed was the sister of the Reverend Tweed, who lived at the vicarage in the 1860's.

Doris Warner told me that her Grandmother had seen the ghost and I know of a young man who had seen the figure at the bottom of the cellar steps. He was so frightened that he ran off and never ventured near the place again.

Doris Warner was a great collector of village stories; she could have filled the Grape Vine with her recollections.

The Reverend Nicholls was the last vicar of Ascott to live in the vicarage. In those days it was an unnerving place to visit on a dark night. Most of the village had electric light, but the vicarage was still lit by oil lamps. The Reverend Nicholls lived there alone during the 1950's and seemed unconcerned by tales of haunting. He was a cheerful young man, who did much to bring the village together.

By the 1970's part of the vicarage was rented out to young families. Some years later I met a young woman who had lived there and I jokingly

asked if she had ever seen the ghost. She said "yes I did, I went to get a cold drink in the early hours of the morning and saw a face looking at me through the kitchen window." She also said that she had felt a presence move through the kitchen towards the cellar door.

Wendy Pearse tells me, that the Reverend Shackleton, who lived there in the years between the two World Wars, had performed a service to rid the vicarage of unwelcome spirits. It is of interest to note that the Reverend Shackleton was a close relative of Ernest Shackleton the great explorer.

I have worked in the vicarage grounds for over twelve years and I'm

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pleased to say that I've not seen any apparitions, but on occasions my old dog, Tam, would stand rigid on the drive and I would have to pull hard on her lead to make her move. I have no such trouble with my present dog, Holly, who races around everywhere. Her only concern is how many biscuits she will be given by her friends, Dr. and Mrs Goodford!

My only frightening experience was to run the lawnmower over a small shrub, which was

a treasured possession that had come from Prince Charles' estate. I'm pleased to say that it survived and is now a large and flourishing bush.

My other concern is to try and recreate Leonardo's painting, the Last Supper, as a piece of topiary from a box hedge. My first attempt left the figures looking more like skittles from an Aunt Sally game. I know nothing of topiary, so when I am trying to cut a chin or neck on one of the fig-

ures the poor disciple ends up without a nose.

Now the vicarage is filled with electric lighting the ghosts have departed. Perhaps the answer to all hauntings is to fill the house with light, music and laughter, unpleasant spirits will then depart.

*Fred Russell*



# COTSWOLD Wildlife Park — and Gardens —

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## Ascott-under-Wychwood Parish Council

First, the Parish Council wish one and all a Happy New Year.

The coming year will no doubt prove to be another busy one, as was 2006 with the Parish Council dealing with the many issues that are brought before them. The Parish Council has carried out a Risk Assessment and we are pleased to report there are no serious issues that need attention. The play area in the Playing Field has now been replenished with fresh play-bark, the

Horse Chestnut Tree on the Green needs to have an annual inspection, which is due to take place in January. The project on the Pound is ongoing, more slowly than one would have hoped, but nevertheless progress is being made. I'm sure that many of the problems that came to our attention in 2006 will still occur in 2007, such as speeding, parking and petty vandalism. Finally the Parish Council are in need of an Internal Auditor - should

anybody be interested in helping with this or would like more information, please contact the Parish Council's Responsible Financial Officer, Stuart Fox.

### **Parish Council:**

David Wilkinson,  
Chairman 832144  
Stuart Fox  
Responsible Financial  
Officer 832004  
Elaine Byles 831427  
Bridgette Crundwell  
830671  
Sally Franks 831432  
*Angela Barnes - Parish  
Clerk: 01608 641045*

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## Wychwoods Local History Society

The next Society meeting will be on Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> February at 7.30.p.m at Shipton Village Hall when Alan Watkins will give a talk entitled Fred Lewis of Chipping Norton and Baseball. As a previous Grapevine illustrated, baseball was a feature of Ascott village life in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

On 15<sup>th</sup> March Martin Sirot-Smith will give a talk on Sulgrave Manor and the Wash-

ington Family at Milton Village Hall at 7.30.p.m.

Then on 19<sup>th</sup> April Dr Gill Hey will talk about The Earliest Farmers in Our Region-Ascott Barrow at Shipton Village Hall at 7.30.p.m. This will be a most appropriate meeting for Ascott since the Parish Council is at present negotiating with the Museums Services about returning the large stones from the Barrow to the parish,

where they will be relocated in the restored Village Pound.

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

*Wendy Pearse*

## Nature Notes

When asked “what birds visit your garden?” the reply will always include at least one member of the Tit family, often the active Blue Tit or his larger cousin the Great Tit.

These woodland birds and their relatives have adopted our gardens and will happily spend the winter, feeding on peanuts and other food we leave out for them rather than re-

habitat. In spring many will return to the countryside, but Blue Tits will take advantage of a suitably sited nest box and remain in the garden throughout the summer.

There are seven Tits native to Britain; six belong to the family ‘*Paridae*’ and one the Long-Tailed Tit is not a true Tit but the sole representative of the family ‘*Aegithalidae*.’

You won’t find all of this family of birds in your garden; the Crested Tit is confined to the Scottish Pine Forests and both the Willow and Marsh Tit are infrequent garden visitors. The Willow Tit prefers damp woodlands and the Marsh Tit, despite its name, lives in mixed woodland.

The largest of the Tits over wintering in our



gardens is the Great Tit; a distinctive bird about the size of a sparrow with a black and white head and a yellow breast. It has a squeaky two or three note song, which earned it the name of Saw finch. Because of its size, it can be something of a bully, driving the smaller birds away from the bird-table. In the breeding season, it can also be very territorial, although later in the

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year it will often remain in small family groups. Its normal diet is small insects and caterpillars, but it will happily take peanuts and other bird treats and especially likes sunflower seeds. In spring it has the unfortunate habit of stripping fruit-tree buds in search of insects and it can also be a pest of beekeepers, catching bees as they leave the hive. When it comes to nest building they are not very choosy and will construct their nests in upturned flowerpots, post boxes, cavities in a wall, a hole in a tree trunk and any suitable sheltered place. The nest will be made of moss and lined with hair or down and 5 to 10 eggs are laid. The female builds the nest and incubates the eggs which hatch in 13 to 14 days and the young are ready to leave after a further 15 to 21 days. Second broods are uncommon.

The Blue Tit is the garden acrobat, either swinging from a string of peanuts or searching the branches of nearby trees

and shrubs for small insects and spiders. With its blue and yellow colouring it cannot be mistaken for any other bird. Of all the Tits it appreciates man-made nest boxes most and a single pair will often raise two families in one year from a well-sited box and may even return to the same box the following year.



Make sure the box is not accessible to the local cats and don't place it in an area that has full sun throughout the day, otherwise the interior of the box will become too hot. The nest tends to be a rather shapeless mass of soft material, moss, wool and hair with a cup like hollow where 6 to 10 eggs are laid. Nest building commences in April and a second brood will be completed by midsummer. When the young

are in the nest the parents will feed them, throughout the daylight hours, with a variety of insects, and even when they have fledged and left the nest the parents will still continue to offer the occasional meal to a begging youngster.

The final regular garden visitor is the Coal Tit, similar in size to the Blue Tit, but more soberly coloured, being rather drab grey with a



dull yellow chest and a black head, set off by white cheeks and a white spot on the back of its neck. Although its nest is similar to the Blue Tits it will rarely settle in a nest box, preferring to build at a lower level, often within a foot or so of the ground. It will lay 8 to 12 eggs and incubate these for 14 to 17 days

and the young will leave the nest 20 days later.

My personal favourite is the Long-Tailed Tit,



perhaps because it is only an occasional visitor, passing through the garden in a small but noisy family flock, searching for insects in the trees and shrubs. This bird is very distinctive, with a very small body, flushed pink and a tail longer than the body. They are more insectivorous than the true Tits and will rarely take scraps from the bird table. Perhaps because of this they suffer a very high rate of mortality in a harsh winter; it has been suggested that 10 out of 12 die from one breeding season to the next. Their nests are works of art, domed and completely enclosed with an entrance hole in

the side, built in the fork of a tree, hidden in the centre of a thorny bush or amongst an ivy thicket. The nest can take up to 18 days to construct and may be used to raise two broods between April and June. These birds tend to stay together as a family group and it has been noted that the young of the first brood help feed the second. Watch out for flocks of these birds working the hedgerows, never stopping in one place, always on the move.

If you want to attract any birds to your garden feed them regularly and make sure there is a supply of fresh water available for them to drink and bathe. Peanuts, birdseed and cake crumbs, together with a suspended coconut shell and a strip of suet or one of the commercially available fat and seed balls will keep them fed during the worst of the winter weather. **Don't** give them crisps or salted peanuts, birds cannot

process salt and it will poison them! Make sure that bird tables, and feeders are kept clean to prevent the spread of disease and stop feeding whole peanuts when the breeding season starts; nestlings can easily choke if the parent feeds them a whole nut. In the spring it is better for the young to be fed on insect food that is high in protein anyway.

*Stuart Fox*

## Gardening Notes

I am sitting writing this in early January and I am beginning to feel the stirring I get every year when I know the year has turned, the days are beginning so infinitesimally to get longer and the snowdrop shoots are showing above the soil. This is when I begin to plan for the gardening year ahead, to decide what projects I will undertake, which parts of the garden will need particular attention and what vegetables I am going to grow. At this time of the year, I am sure everything is possible and the weather will fall in with my plans.

This year I am particularly anxious to get off to a good start because last year seemed to be almost a non-event in my garden and I know others in the village and elsewhere felt the same. The weather was very unkind to gardeners. March and April were too cold, May was too wet and June too hot making it very difficult to sow seed at the best

time and to keep the weeds in check when they were growing apace in May. When it became possible to garden, the heat took your energy away, made plants wilt and in some cases die. The best time by far was autumn, which was long and warm. This year I am banking on good gardening weather from March onwards right into November. It pays to be optimistic because that gives you

the spur you need to believe that planning your gardening activities for the coming year is worth the effort.

Having sufficient water is likely to be part of the plan for this year. Despite the good downpours of rain this winter, the hosepipe ban is still in force and may very well continue throughout the year. Therefore, increasing water storage capacity is very important. A cou-

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ple of water butts placed at strategic points in the garden will be a good idea as I won't have to carry heavy watering cans a long way from the tap. Vegetables will get more watering and grow well. Transplants will have more chance of surviving.

I am also making the resolution to hoe weeds down on every possible occasion when the ground is dry. It makes such good sense, as weeds seem to have the ability to grow, set seed, fall to the ground and germinate overnight, starting the whole process off all over again. Of course they don't do it overnight, it just seems they do.

A new project will take a lot of thought. This could be rearranging all the plants in a flowerbed because they have grown tired and past their best and some have died out altogether or it could be because the colour scheme is dull and unexciting. I'll take the opportunity to dig in plenty of compost before planting up the bed again. It could be trying out some new plants I've never grown such as those being used in tropical-looking gardens, for example bamboos, spiky leaved phormiums, large leaved cannas, fatsia japonica or even banana plants. If I do try cannas and banana plants I will

need to decide how I am going to deal with them during the winter. Would it be better to plant them in pots which I can bring indoors or shall I trust that we will have a mild winter, so plant them out in the garden and give them good protection when summer is over.

It could be that this is the year; I finally work out the shape of the vegetable garden. I've tried various ways to make it ornamental rather than just productive. It is important for it to look good because it's an integral part of the garden not just tucked away at the end. Looking at books gives

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inspiration. Bookshops where you can sit and browse keep the cost down.

What vegetable and flower seeds to buy need to be thought about and ordered through catalogues or bought in the garden centre. Catalogues give a wider choice and by far the most exciting catalogue is from Chiltern Seeds. They offer a vast range of flower, shrub, tree and vegetable seeds. It is always exciting to try a flower or vegetable seed you have never grown before. Will I sow all my seed in the greenhouse or cold frame or will I sow everything outside that can be sown there? Over the last few years I have been thinking about sowing more and more seed inside and not planting out until they've grown into sturdy plants. This year I am going to sow as much as possible inside then plant out. Had I done this last year I would have been able to offset the vagaries of the

weather much better than I did. Sturdy plants have more chance of surviving drought if they are watered in well when planted and then watered regularly thereafter. They can also fend off pigeon, rabbit, cat and insect attack better. Also you can plant them exactly where you want them. Only vegetables and flowers that don't like being transplanted, such as parsnips and Californian poppies, will be sown outside.

It's all very exciting thinking about the future, how will the garden look at its height in June or July? Will the colour combinations be right or will there be exciting or revolting clashes? Planning now gives the chance to get at least some of it right and it gives a warm feeling of anticipation when there is no way you can get out in the middle of winter and actually do gardening. When you read this it will be time to buy seed potatoes and set them sprouting

for an early crop of delicious new potatoes. The weather will, of course, be ideal: you will be able to dig and ready your ground for serious gardening in March and the daffodils will be well on their way to burst forth in glorious gold to tell you that spring has arrived. Let's trust this armchair view turns out to be reality and all our gardening dreams, surely I mean plans, are fulfilled.

*Yvette Keauffling*

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# Wychwood Project

## Wychwood's Ancient Trees

Ancient trees are a particular feature of the UK, indeed our country is home to more than half the ancient trees of Europe. But what is an ancient tree? It is difficult to define precisely. However an ancient tree is one that is old, fat or hollow by comparison with other trees of the same type. Some ancient trees are instantly recognisable but others can be less obvious. Trunk girth size isn't always a good indicator as there is a lot of variation between tree species. However, an ancient tree is likely to have a big trunk girth relative to other trees of the same species.

The former Royal Forest of Wychwood contains many ancient trees. These trees are precious because they are home for a fantastic range of wildlife. The nooks and crannies of old trees provide valuable habitat for some of our rarest creatures.

Looking after these trees is essential if these plants and animals are to survive.

These old trees are also precious to us because of their impressive beauty and for their history in the landscape. There are old oaks in the Wychwood area which were alive when Elizabeth I was Queen of England. Many of Wychwood's oldest trees are in the parklands of the big estates. Many more are in the gardens of large houses, some are in ancient hedgerows. A handful can be found as remnants of earlier landscapes in the middle of fields and woodlands.

Ancient trees can continue to live for hundreds of years with the right care. Finding out where these special trees are and helping tree owners understand their trees and how best to look after them is one of the key aims of a new initiative of the

Wychwood Project - The Wychwood Old Trees Project.

The Gibbet Tree, which can be seen in the distance the east of the A361 near Capps Lodge, is one of the more infamous old trees of Wychwood. Do you know of any others that have an interesting history? Do you know of any really old trees hiding in a garden or field? If you do we would be pleased to hear from you.

If you know of any old trees or you would like to join the Old Trees Project contact Nick Mottram of the Wychwood Project on 01993 814143, email [wchwood@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:wchwood@oxfordshire.gov.uk) or write to the Project at Fletcher's House, Park Street, Woodstock, Oxon OX20 1SN.

The Wychwood Old Trees Project is part of a larger programme of work that focuses upon the ancient habitats in

the Wychwood area and is supported with funding from Natural England, West Oxfordshire Network's Leader+

Programme and the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation.. All the tree records collected for this project will be

added to the national database being compiled by the Woodland Trust.

*Nick Mottram*

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## Wychwood Project Parish Conservation

The PCC has had great fun this autumn with a Wychwood Forest Big Draw art project. Run in collaboration with The Oxfordshire Museum two local artists, Sally Howkins and Tom Ralphs Laman worked with 300 children in Hailey and Kingham schools to create a mural of their impressions of life in the Wychwood Forest. The 30 metre long mural was then displayed in the Brewhouse Gallery at the museum during October. Over 250 visitors to the museum during this time also made contributions to the display which resulted in a tremendously vibrant and entertaining work of art. I am now looking for other venues to display the mural and seeking funding to offer a bigger and more extensive art project to more

local schools during 2007.

The autumn also saw some very interesting joint talks with the RSPB farmland conservation advisor Kirsty Meadows at Enstone and the BBOWT Water Vole Recovery Project Officer Cath Shelswell at Fulbrook. These talks have helped to encourage local people to suggest more conservation activities; for example there are plans for woodland clearance work at Enstone airfield, a dry stone walling training course at Fulbrook on 21/22<sup>nd</sup> April and two more people have started to work with the Friends of Wychwood Bird Aid winter feeding programme for small farmland birds.

Ian Gourlay from the Friends of Wychwood led a delightful walk on 4<sup>th</sup> November focussing

on the trees around Finstock, Wilcote and Cornbury. He entertained the walkers with fascinating stories of the local area, the history of the trees and woodlands, landowners and local influences on the special character of the area.. More walks and talks are planned for 2007 and will be advertised locally for each event as well as in Forest Update and on local websites and papers. For more information about the Parish Conservation Challenge or if you would like to suggest some conservation activities for Ascott please contact Jane Bowley Project Officer on 01993 814131 or email:

[janebowley@xfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:janebowley@xfordshire.gov.uk)

*Jane Bowley*

## Memories of Coldstone Part 6

When I was a small boy we had some young ducks penned in the open end of a shed just outside the garden gate and when dad was digging the garden we chil-

much bigger and were let out into the yard and the orchard, to get fat for Christmas and they used to squawk like mad when anyone came to the house.

ings with a variety of goods including pots, pans and paraffin. The equivalent of the one driven around local villages by Basil Pratley from Milton in more



dren picked up the worms and took them to the ducks who gobbled them up eagerly and got quite excited. They used to stand up and quack every time we went past. Each spring-time we had three young fluffy goslings with a broody hen in a coop and a run on the lawn. They soon grew

Quite a number of tradesmen came at that time. We had Fishy Rainbow with his horse drawn van on Saturday morning and a midweek day. He brought fish and green grocery. Mr Davy's butchers van came from Milton. Foster's red van "A SHOP AT YOUR DOOR" came on Tuesday morn-

recent years. On Tuesday afternoons the lorry collected the eggs for the packing station at Banbury and there was also a lorry from Hartwells the Ironmongers at Chipping Norton which brought heating stoves and spares like stove wicks, flame spreaders and mantles for lights in ad-

dition to paraffin and many other goods which could be ordered. Mr Bill Lock brought our bread in a van from Peapells the bakers at Leaffield. Their premises was the building which is now the Leaffield Community Shop. However with the severe blizzards in 1947 most roads were blocked and there were no JCB diggers or even front end loaders on tractors, so the roads had to be dug out by hand with shovels. We ran out of bread and dad took a hessian sack and walked across the fields to Leaffield to get

some loaves. Afterwards, I remember seeing the blocks of snow piled up about six feet high on both sides of London Lane. In later years the bread was delivered by "Dennis the Baker" from the Corner Café in Chipping Norton. This stood on the corner at the top of New Street when the road was only about six metres wide. It was later demolished with twenty or more other buildings so that the road could be made wider. On today's layout the café would have been standing on or near the pedes-

trian island in the middle of the road.

Also when I was about five years old I remember the horse drawn loads of barley sheaves coming into the yard and up inside the barn which is now the dwelling "Coldwell Brook". People came from the village and helped stack it inside. The load went in through the big doorway and then the empty wagon was drawn out through the lower doorway at the other side and away through the rickyard at the back. A few months later the barley was threshed. The threshing machine was pulled into the middle of the barn between the two doorways. The tractor providing the power stood out in the yard about where the dividing wall is now built with the big driving belt from the pulley reaching up to the wheel on the threshing drum. Either a baler or an elevator would have stood at the far end of the threshing machine to deliver the

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threshed straw from the doorway towards the rickyard.

It could not have been a very pleasant job threshing inside the barn. Having g



breathed in my own share of threshing dust over a period of ten years later on, I am sure that it must have been quite an ordeal with the machine working between the doorways and only the wall slits for light and ventilation. Dust masks and respirators were not really thought about in those days. At least two people and probably three would have been working on the stack of barley moving the sheaves onto the machine where somebody, the bond cutter, would have picked up each sheaf and cut the string, then somebody else would have fed the loose sheaves in an even flow into the machine. Dad looked after the corn sacks at the front end,

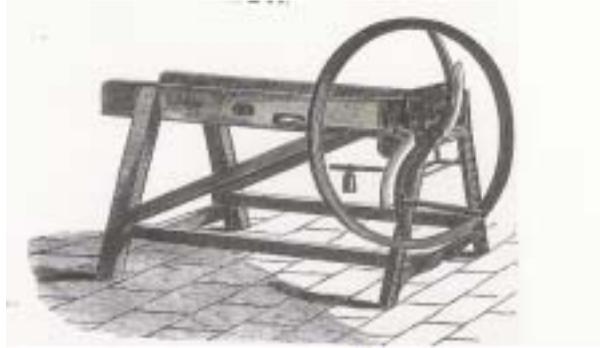
taking them off when full and weighing them into two hundred-weights (100 kilograms). The unluckiest person had to rake out the chaff and the cavings (short, light bits of straw) from under the machine and move the chaff away and into a heap for cattle feed and the cavings either into a heap or more often put it back in with the rest of the straw. The men handling the straw had the cleanest job outside the back of the barn.

Two or three years later a rick in the rickyard was being threshed and I was with three or four other boys all standing by the corn rick with sticks to kill

any mice that ran out but we got bored with this after a time and dad was taking the sacks of corn into the barn so the back doors were open and we went in to try out some machines in there. We got on all right turning the winnowing machine, putting dust and rubbish off the floor through it, then we had a go at the chaff cutter. The machine was for slicing the hay into lengths about half an inch long for cattle feed, with a long narrow box at the back that lined up the hay, then two cogged rollers compressed it and forced it through the front where two long curved blades

on the big wheel with the handle on, sliced through the hay, guillotine style. We were trying to make it work and somehow I sliced off the skin on three finger knuckles. This is when I made my first acquaintance with iodine liquid and learned that if it makes it sting, then it is doing good, but I was extremely lucky not to lose any fingers.

Also in the barn we used to dress the wheat seed for autumn planting. In the days before seed corn was chemically dressed by machine to protect it from soil born diseases, we had some tins of black liquid called Vitrol, rather like thin tar, which we used as a protection. A space was swept clean on the floor of the barn on the evening before drilling, then we went out with a hurricane lantern about eight o'clock. Several sacks of wheat were tipped into a heap, then the Vitrol was spread over the surface and dad and grandfather mixed it in with a shovel while we held



the lamp. The following morning the corn had all to be shovelled back into the sacks ready to take to the fields. But it really made your hands black when you levelled the corn in the seed box on the drill.

The first chance I had to help with threshing was a 2 day Whitsun half term school holiday. They had been threshing some ricks during the week before but on the Tuesday after the Bank Holiday Monday the four landgirls who had been helping failed to arrive. Dad drove to the hostel to find out why and the forewoman there said that the girls had told her that Mr Pearse would not be threshing again until Wednesday and they had all four gone

out for a day's shopping. Grandfather said "They was some bad gals!" The workforce was reduced to dad, two men who came with the threshing tackle, grandfather between times of attending to cows and other livestock and Billy Rainbow, a local character who used to tag along with one of Lainchbury's threshing sets. Smaller than average, wearing long boots with turned up toes and socks pulled outside the corduroy trouser legs nearly up to his knees. This would certainly have stopped any mice running up inside them. He used to stack the threshed straw whether it was in bales or a loose straw rick using the elevator. The threshing machine had

to be set horizontally level for each corn rick and made secure with wedge shaped wooden blocks in front and behind each wheel. They were banged into place with a heavy iron bar and sometimes Bill would decide to help, picking up the iron bar with a shout of "Mind your eyebrows." So with a shorthanded crew I became part of the threshing gang even if it was only raking out the cavings from underneath the threshing machine.

Dad bought me a light axe when I was nine so that I could pollard the willow trees by the orchard wall. There were a lot of branches growing on the crowns, all sizes up to about eight inches thick. Other things also grew on the crowns of those trees like blackberry briars, dog roses and gooseberry bushes where birds had deposited the seeds. It was a joy to hurry home after school, sharpen my axe, get the light ladder from the shed and cut two or

three down before tea time. When down, I cut the branches into fence posts or bean sticks according to size and the smaller twigs I tied into a faggot to dry out for fire lighting. Nothing was wasted and it was all tidy. I had no problems working on my own but one day I was helping grandfather cut out some fence stakes when the axe slipped off the wood and cut a three inch slit in the toecap of my boot. A check up revealed that no toes had been touched but since then I have always made sure that legs and feet are not in line with the cutting arc of the blade. I still use the axe for sharpening fence stakes.

Burford School was an improvement on Ascott but the worst part was the travelling time. Starting from High Street we went down to Lyneham, then back to Upper Shipton, through Swinbrook and Widford, then into Burford by Witney Street calling at the Lower School before going up to the one at

the top of the hill. This meant that coming back we didn't get home until five o'clock. We made many stops on the way and the total number of us was about 50 on a 35 seat bus. The worst bugbare was that for most of the first year we came home after 12.30 on Tuesday afternoons and had to go on Saturday mornings until 12.30 as well, so that by the time we got home and had a meal the afternoon was half over on both those days. Everyone was glad when Saturday morning school was discontinued. Some of the buses were some poor old things when we started and broke down on the way a few times. Then the boys had to get out and push to get going again. On two occasions in hard winters when there was snow and ice on the roads we started skidding going up the hill towards Swinbrook from Shipton and couldn't get up the steepest rise towards the top. With the front on one side of the road and

the back end sliding across to the other side it was quite a while before the driver could reverse back down and drive across to the A361 Burford Road. The vehicles were run by Backs

Coaches of Witney and they also transported the mill workers from the villages to the Witney blanket factories and something must have paid fairly well because within three years

we were taken to school in luxury coaches with names like “Blanket Queen” and “Coronation Coach”.

*Jim Pearse*

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## Ascott in Flood



## WI Cook Book

June Holmes recently gave me a copy of a cookbook containing recipes collected by members of the former Ascott Women's Institute. We will be publishing some of these recipes in future issues of the Grape Vine and we hope to reprint the

book. We would like to collect some more recipes to add to the original book. If you would like to submit your ideas drop a copy into the Village Shop addressed to me or send an email to [stuart@wychwood.me.uk](mailto:stuart@wychwood.me.uk). If these were old or fam-

ily recipes I would welcome some history about them.

One of the recipes from the original WI book is published below.

*Stuart Fox*

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## Cook's Corner: Ascott's Favourite Recipes Recipe from The W.I. Cook Book

*Reproduced by kind permission of Christopher Badger.*

### Lemon Gateau

#### Ingredients:

1 packet of trifle sponges  
6oz caster sugar  
4oz margarine  
2 lemons (rind and juice)  
3 eggs, separated

#### Method:

Line 1 1/2lb bread tin with foil (to assist lifting out).

Beat together sugar and margarine. Add egg yolks, one at a time. Add lemon juice and grated rind gradually (it will look curdled).

Beat the egg whites and fold into the mixture.

Slice the sponge cakes and place a layer of sponge alternately with a layer of the mixture finishing with sponge.

Cover with foil and chill.

Turn out and cover with whipped cream.

*Monica Badger*

*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](mailto:ascottgrapevine@dial.pipex.com)*

# Book Review

## The Periodic Table Primo Levi

Primo Levi was one of the great writers of the last century. His most famous book is probably the first, *If This Is a Man*, a meditation on his experience of Auschwitz. Its fame is deserved; indeed everyone should read it. But I would like to point you to another Primo Levi, the delightful, witty author of *The Periodic Table*, one of the most original autobiographies ever written.

As a chemist, Levi built his book on Mendeleev's famous table of the elements, creating his own personal Periodic Table of the elements of his life. It begins like a traditional memoir, with his ancestors – and instantly subverts the piety of that model with the tragic-comedy of its element, Argon. Argon, Levi explains, is one of the noble gases, inert and unable to combine with any other element. Just so were his ancestors, Jews in the Catholic

provinces of Piedmont: fabulously inert (one, barred from marrying the girl he loved, went to bed for 25 years), and divided from their neighbours by an invisible wall of mutual suspicion.

From his distant ancestors, Levi zooms in on himself – and his second chapter, 'Hydrogen', makes just such a leap between the vastness of space and the smallness of two boys setting out to understand the world through chemistry. The young Levi shows his friend the simple process of electrolysis – which ends, like several of the experiments of *The Periodic Table*, in an explosion. They are shaken; but also awed to think that they have released a force of nature, 'the same element that burns in the sun and stars'.

Nineteen chapters follow, and once again all traditional models of autobiography are subverted. Nothing on

Levi's parents, wife or children; some times dwelt on lovingly, others left out altogether. There are three chapters on his university years, four on his war (but only one on Auschwitz, about which, he explains with Piedmontese modesty, 'I have written elsewhere'); six on the immediate postwar years, and only three on all the rest, which came to thirty by the time of writing. All have the unique Primo Levi flavour, made of wry humour, profound reflection, and deep humanity; all are beautiful, touching, and in the best sense strange. My favourites are 'Iron', about the friend who taught him to face danger in the mountains, and who died as a partisan at 25; 'Phosphorus', about a great love of his youth, indeed of his life; 'Gold', the story of his arrest and capture; 'Nitrogen' and 'Chromium', about his early

adventures in chemistry and writing; and 'Vanadium', the story of his re-meeting with a German from his Auschwitz past, who craves his pardon.

Most strange, however, most beautiful and most Primo-Levian of all is the last chapter, 'Carbon', which follows an atom of carbon through the vast tracts of space and time evoked at the start, and through endless cycles

of life and death, as the atom is bound into the molecular chains of plants and animals, is released, and bound again.

This short tale is a perfect blend of science and literature, and at the same time the most detached and the most personal thing Levi ever wrote. There is nothing human here until the end, when the atom enters the writer's brain, and makes him write the

final full-stop of the book: 'this dot here, this one.' In that dot Primo Levi reaches out to touch his readers, and reading it we reach back and touch him.

*The Periodic Table* is available in Penguin Modern Classics, price £8.99.

**Carole Angier**

*Carole Angier's biography of Primo Levi, The Double Bond, is available in Penguin, price £9.99.*

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## Names from the Past

Recently Anne Cole came to speak to the History Society about Wychwood Place Names and her talk prompted me to consider some of the Ascott Place Names which have survived into present usage, their longevity and possible derivations.

To begin with the village - Ascott under Wychwood. Prior to the Norman Conquest this area of the Evenlode Valley was held by King Harold with his main centre at Shipton and Estcote

(Ascott) at the east end and Westcote at the west end considered to represent the extremes of his estate. The Wychwood derivation is generally accepted to be the Wood of the Hwicc, a small scale Saxon Kingship based in Herefordshire and Worcestershire with Wychwood forming part of the south east boundary.

Moving on to the two parts of the village, D'Oyley (spelt in many ways) and Earl. D'Oyley dates from shortly after the Conquest when the

D'Oyleys, builders of Oxford Castle and powerful landowners, were given one of the two Ascott manors by William the Conqueror. The Ascott Earl name seems to date from the acquisition of the other Ascott manor by the Despensers, Earls of Winchester, prominent in the time of Edward II.

Although not officially a name, Ascott Great Bridge is mentioned in the Hundred Rolls of 1279, possibly owing its existence to the D'Oyleys and cer-

tainly providing a river crossing long before a bridge was built at Shipton.

Moving on to roads. Perhaps the oldest village name is that of London Lane since the 'toppe of London' is mentioned in a Court Book of 1592. With the river bridge established the crossing may well have constituted a major route to London in past times, hence the name. High Street is not an indication of the High Street which we usually associate with towns. It is a derivation of Upper Street as opposed to Lower Street (Shipton Road) possibly indicating their positions above the river. Priory Lane is not a surviving memory of a priory in the village but both the monasteries of Osney and St Frideswides in Oxford contested the ownership of land and buildings in Ascott originally donated by the D'Oyley family. These buildings included D'Oyley House and nos 16 and 18 High Street, for-



merly a barn belonging to the Priory before it's conversion into cottages and of course situated at the entrance to Priory Lane. Church Close I'm afraid is a rather elegant name for what was originally called the Row or Raggs Row of Charity cottages, their site dating back at least to a Charity Deed of 1478. Heritage Lane is listed in the Census of 1891 but earlier in 1851 it was called Longland Lane echoing the name of the furlong which it ran alongside. It would be interesting to know why the name was changed. Mill Lane is a giveaway - surely always referred to in this manner. A mill is mentioned in Domesday Book and

the parish boundary running north of the mill to Chipping Norton Road runs alongside a brook called Holliwell in 1591. The villagers at the time began a survey from the head of the brook referring to it as Holliwell Head. A possible Holy Well or just a nearby Holly Tree?

Andrews Yard derives it's name from an Edwin T. Andrews listed in the 1891 Census as a grocer living on the site who came from London to set up his business in Ascott.

The present road to Leafield rising from the Burford to Charlbury Road was known as the Woeful Road supposed-ly from its meander-

ing nature, seemingly a tribute to the typical English drunkard but probably an indication of the furlongs in the earlier open fields of Ascott, the ends of the furlongs forming a series of doglegs. Or perhaps as someone once suggested to me a more sadly romantic explanation could be that when the large parish of Shipton included Leafield and Ramsden (up until the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century) all the burials would have had to take place in Shipton churchyard and the Woeful Road was the route for the coffins. Brazil Lane for which I have no explanation is mentioned as Little Beassell as early as 1591.

Coldwell (Brook), Coldstone (House) and Balls Close where the sheepwash is sited, all refer to a boundary (Cold and Balls) and lie on the parish boundary with Shipton.

Two of the oldest names in use refer to copses of trees that are sited near to the top of Woeful Road. On the

western side of the road is Priestgrove mentioned in 1163 whilst Boynal Copse meaning 'Boia's nook or corner', mentioned in 1278, lies to the east of the road on the top of the ridge. Could Boia be the earliest named inhabitant of Ascott parish, maybe a surviving British local or indeed a Saxon immigrant?

Perhaps the most intriguing name refers to the small copse along the Chipping Norton Road where Ascott's boundary joins Chilson. This is known as Five Shilling Corner. The name dates back beyond 1838. It became a quarry and was

later used as the village dump since it was part of the 'town's allotment' in the Enclosure of 1838. But I wonder who was prepared to pay 5s for it and to what purpose? If for use as a stone quarry it would seem that the stone was probably of a fairly good quality and I wonder where that stone now resides? Before the Enclosure the quarry belonged to the owner of Coldstone Farm so possibly the stone could constitute some of the buildings on that site the earliest of which date back to at least the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

*Wendy Pearse*

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## Community Pubs Week 17th-24th Feb

It's a frightening reality that at the moment at least 26 pubs close every month. The majority of these pubs are not high street theme pubs, but community pubs. A village pub is an important community amenity.

Community Pubs Week is a celebration and promotion of all

community pubs - not just village locals, but urban gems too.

So why not make this the week to celebrate the pub that we have in our community and pay **The Swan** a visit.

As the saying goes - 'It's your local - use it or lose it.'

## Toddler Time

Ascott Toddler Group, supported by Ascott Pre School, is now well into its second year and proving popular with toddlers and their carers alike.

The Group provides a safe, friendly and informal setting in which 0-4 year olds can play together while their parents and carers enjoy a cup of coffee and some adult conversation!

Equally, for new or expectant mums or those new to the area, it offers an opportunity to meet other parents and carers with shared experiences.

A wide range of play equipment is available and the children can take part in a variety of activities, such as play dough, making cards for special occasions and other arts and crafts. During the session the

children are encouraged to sit down together to enjoy a drink and a healthy snack and there is usually a sing-along at the end.

Based at the Ascott Cricket Pavilion, during the summer months the Toddler Group takes advantage of warm weather by having tables, chairs and play equipment under the shade of the trees on the field. During the cooler, wetter months however, the Pavilion provides a cosy and comfortable setting.

Ascott Toddler Group is held on Tuesday mornings from 9.30 - 11.30am and the cost of attending is £2.00 per family. Newcomers are always welcome and for further information Pauline Plant can be contacted on 07968 006451.

*Pauline Plant*

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# A Poem from Leaffield School

*Year 6 at Leaffield School prepared plaster casts of seashells and this gave rise to the poem below.*

## A Description Of My Shells

Out of the cupboard you appear  
A touch so soft, a smell so great,  
Something that my heart holds dear.

The burning red and brightness of yellow  
Mix together like bread and butter,  
And orange soon will follow.

For this model I took great care  
To make it extra special,  
For all of you to share.

Piece by piece I must be steady,  
All the time until it's ready,  
Slow and steady is always best,  
Perfection is put to the test.

*By Ashley Davey.  
(Year 6)*

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## Leaffield School News

### September to December 2006

School started the new academic year welcoming a number of new children and three new members of staff including Miss. Malony who now teaches Class 1. We have been awarded Healthy School Status which every school is required to have by 2009, so we are well ahead on this one and

as a 'Healthy Oxfordshire School' new initiatives include a healthy tuck shop which has proved very popular and a breakfast club which is run by some volunteer parents who we thank very much. We have visits by the children's mobile library and after school clubs include circuit training, creative writing, cookery club, gym club and football

club. We have also just been awarded the Active School Mark too.

Harvest service in church was well supported with donations of food and produce going to 'The Porch' project in Oxford. There was also a collection with proceeds going to the 'Pearl of Africa Foundation' and 'Street Child Africa' in support of two of our

parents who were trekking to the top of Mount Etna to raise funds. Funds were raised for Breast Cancer Research via a non-uniform day and our regular 200 club raises further valuable funds for the school and ultimate benefit of the children.

Music lessons continue with violin and recorder being learnt by a number of children. Class 4 had a very successful trip to Banbury Museum to view the Victorian Exhibition as part of their studies and a number of the older children are looking forward to their residential trip to Yenworthy in February.

The run up to Christmas was as usual very busy with performances by all the children either at school or in our lovely church here in Leafield. The Friends of Leafield School helped with the BBQ at the Church Christmas Fair and also ran a very well supported Christmas raffle for the children and a party at the village

hall which was enjoyed by all.

As shown in our position in the recent League Tables, especially the Value Added, which shows the progress children have made, our results were again excellent and just to confirm this in more detail at Key Stage 1:- Reading, Writing, Maths and Science 100% achieved the expected level with 50%, 25% 62.5% and 38% respectively achieving level 3. At Key Stage 2:- Reading 85% achieved level 4 with 62% at level 5. Writing 85% achieved level 4 with 38% at level 5. English 85% achieved level 4 with 38% at level 5. Maths 100% achieved level 4 with 85% at level 5 and 100% achieved level 4 at Science. These results are above the national and Oxfordshire levels in all subjects and levels. In Foundation our results are also above the levels in all areas of learning. This is down to hard work and support of all staff at this school,

our supportive governing body and the support of our parents. The children of course also deserve praise for working hard and doing their best.

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

*Vicky Greves,  
Chair of Governors.*

## Flix in the Stix Programme

Thursday Feb 15th

Ice Age 2

Milton Village Hall

2.00 p.m.

Saturday Feb 24th

The Queen

Tiddy Hall, Ascott

8.00 p.m.

Saturday March 17th

History Boys

Milton Village Hall

8.00.p.m.

Thursday Feb 22nd

The Queen

New Beaconsfield Hall

Shipton 8.00 p.m.

Saturday March 17th

Monster House

Milton Village Hall

2.00 p.m.

Saturday April 21st

Over the Hedge

Milton Village Hall

2.00.p.m.

*Gordon Halliday*

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## Wychwood Library

### Opening Times

**Monday:**

2pm to 7.00pm

**Tuesday:**

Closed

**Wednesday:**

9:30am to 1pm/

2pm to 5pm

**Thursday**

Closed

**Friday:**

2pm to 7pm

**Saturday:**

9.30am to 1pm

*Beryl Brown,*

*Library Manager*

*01993 830281*

### **The Post Office Stores Milton-under-Wychwood**

We have moved to our new address

**The Post Office**

**Shipton Road**

**Milton-under-Wychwood OX7 6JL**

**Tel: 01993 832243**

Opening hours:

Mon.-Fri. 9am - 5:30pm (Closed 1-2 for lunch)

Saturday 7am - 1:00pm

### **Post Office Services Available at 'The Swan', Ascott**

Monday 10:30am - 12:30pm (Bank Holidays Excepted)

We have a good selection of Greeting Cards, Stationery, Agents for Sherlocks Dry Cleaners, Abbeycolor Photoprocessing, Passport Photos

We will be pleased to see you.

## Flower Power Quiz

Why not try and solve our New Year's puzzle and win £5. The answer to each clue is the name of a flower, some are wild and some cultivated.

Leave your answers at the village shop in an envelope addressed to Stuart Fox. At the end of February all the correct entries will be put

into a draw and the first one picked wins! Don't forget to include your name and address on your answer sheet.

1. In olden days she waited for a dance, too shy to tempt her partner with a glance.
2. First a swiftly moving thing. Second, might suggest a ring.
3. This young creature in the field one sees. Like many others he has four of these.
4. A means of transport, dangerous, alas, and human beings thought of in the mass.
5. Dainty, white and like a bell, not much harm if it fell.
6. A man's name for the first-well known to you, to write now with the second would not do.
7. Firstly a person who is very smart, and then a symbol of courageous heart.
8. Not often does this beast inspire our terror, the second part denotes a simple error.
9. Advice like this sounds most alluring, yet to wed for this oft means regret.
10. This flower's name means darkness and a shield, but do beware the poison it will yield.
11. In order thus folks often watch a game, all love this simple flower of single name.
12. A girl who might live in the dell, it also has a lovely smell.
13. An animal who swiftly steals away, the second part most of us wear some day.
14. A simple name. If 'in it' you are well, it could be elephants as well.
15. The first capers, jumps and runs along, the second is a herb with perfume strong.
16. Without its aid we could not see, this bloom of stately majesty.
17. A novel's character of fame, takes on this wee red flower's name.
18. A dainty garden blossom we have here, that love's completely happy is not clear.

**Don't forget to include your name and address on your answer sheet!**

## Call for Meeting: Chipping Norton Hospital

West Oxfordshire District Council's Cabinet is supporting Cllr Hilary Biles' request for an urgent meeting because of significant concerns that a deadline set by Oxfordshire County Council will jeopardise future plans for the Chipping Norton Care Home and Primary Care Facility.

Oxfordshire County Council has stated its intention to withdraw from the Chipping Norton Care Home and Primary Care Facilities scheme if a number of financial issues cannot be resolved by 31st March 2007.

Cllr Hilary Biles, Cabinet Member for Health at West Oxfordshire District Council said: "The situation is extremely serious for the people of Chipping Norton and surrounding areas. If the deadline to sort out the VAT and impairment issues is not met, then Oxfordshire County Council will withdraw its sup-

port for this project. Personally I have been fighting on behalf of local people for health facilities in Chipping Norton since 2002. Closure of the care home will impact directly on hospital services and the proposed GP surgery. This can not be allowed to happen. Sixteen beds have already been lost in West Oxfordshire and we can not afford to lose any more."

David Cameron, MP, has also voiced his concerns and has written to all parties supporting such a meeting which he has offered to Chair.

Cllr Hilary Biles and Cath James, Strategic Director at West Oxfordshire District Council, have written to the Leader of Oxfordshire County Council, the Chair and Chief Executive of the Oxfordshire PCT and the Chair and Chief Executive of the Strategic Health Authority asking them to



support the proposed meeting. Because of the issues involved other agencies such as Revenues and Excise are also being asked to attend.

At the Cabinet meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> January many local district councillors echoed their support for the meeting and commented that the hospital campaign has been going on for a long time and people have worked hard, despite all the ups and downs, to secure a new facility which might still be in jeopardy due to Treasury bureaucracy.

For further information contact:

*Carys Davies /  
Samantha Simpson  
Publicity Office  
t: 01993 861615  
m: 07771 965360*

*Cllr Hilary Biles  
Cabinet Member  
t: 01993 832426*

## Neighbourhood Action Group (NAG)–Jan 2007

At the first NAG AGM held at Beaconsfield hall in late October, John Cull & Roger Shepherd were re-elected to serve a second year as Ascott's representatives on the Chipping Norton NAG committee.

The first year took a little while to get started but by the end of the year the relationship between the police (based at Chippy) and the NAG volunteers was starting to pay dividends. The communication was much improved and there was a better understanding of how best to communicate issues affecting the community. During the first year, the main issues centred on anti-social behaviour associated with youth, speeding and parking. These themes have been carried forward to year two with Roger participating in the speeding and parking sub-group and John involved in youth matters.

We have also asked for a regular update from the NAG police liaison

officer and this has been 'posted' by Dave Tustian, our neighbourhood support officer. You can always get local updates from [www.whosmybobby.co.uk](http://www.whosmybobby.co.uk). Dave writes:

"I have researched our crime systems and command and control logging system and since 1<sup>st</sup> of November 2006 there have been no crimes reported in the village. There has only been one incident in the village and that was at the pub when 2 individuals tried to put pressure on the landlord to let in someone who was, and still is, barred from the pub.

So I'm afraid it is a general message about security. Keep items post-coded as sheds on allotments are being broken into and tools stolen. People are unlikely to buy things that are clearly marked. Trailers are also being stolen. Barn conversions and building sites are also having items stolen so please remember to update your security as

the build progresses and when items of value are fitted such as ovens, boilers etc. For tradesmen, there are stickers available from police stations that state 'we do not leave tools in this vehicle'.

Motorists; please do not leave items on display in your vehicle when parking. Please do not park on or partially block footpaths, or where there are dropped kerbs. It could be the access point for a wheel chair user. Parents when dropping or collecting your child(ren) at the school, please think of other road users and park just away from the school.

It is not a good idea to employ people who knock at your door and offer to mend your roof or resurface your drive. Ask your neighbour who they can recommend; often the cheap quote does not turn out to be so good in the end.

Anti social behaviour does not have to be put up with; so take advice from the Police or

WODC anti social behaviour officers. We can't help if we don't know.'

Roger and John hope this update has been useful and if you have any comments, please pass

them to the Editor or contact the 'boys' direct.

They will be back reporting on NAG matters in the next Grapevine.

*John Cull*

## **Tiddy Hall**

### **Regular Activities**

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

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

**Wednesday Afternoons** Piano Lessons in the Committee Room. 4pm - 7:30pm Contact Pauline Carter 01993 774568

**Wednesday Evenings** Badminton. Contact Chris Morgan 01993 831958.

**Saturday Mornings** Dog Training. Contact Sharon Wilson 01993 831801.

**To book the Tiddy Hall contact:**

**Ingrid Ridley:  
01993 830612**

## **FARMERS MARKETS 2006**

**Witney - 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday**  
of the Month

**Woodstock - 1<sup>st</sup> Saturday**  
of the Month

**Chipping Norton - 3<sup>rd</sup>**  
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](http://www.tvfm.co.uk)

## **Thank You! Costa Rica Coast- to-Coast Challenge**

A big 'Thank You' from the whole 'Poor Trait-ers' team to everyone who attended the Race Night for the benefit of the Prince's Trust at Tiddy Hall. A very healthy sum of over £690 was raised.

Also many thanks to those who have given donations directly. The team has now exceeded our original target of £17,000 and everything we raised above this sum goes 100% to the Prince's Trust charity.

I'd like to add a personal 'thank you' to everyone who has wished me luck and given me encouragement when I've been out training. I only hope I've done enough! By the time you are reading this in your cosy living room, I (and the team) will be racing across Costa-Rica!

We'll let you know how we got on in the next issue of the Grapevine.

Thank you Ascott.

*Gareth Evans*



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