Hilltop News

100th edition

December 2018 & January 2019
In this issue we have included some of the many images that have appeared in the 100 editions of Hilltop News.
I can’t begin this article without mentioning the enormous debt of gratitude we owe to Graham Lincoln, editor since Christmas 2007, and Michael Spark who has brought his intrepid professional expertise to our production and design since 2006.

Since this is our 100th edition, I don’t think there can be a better moment to offer a toast to them and everyone else who has made this possible. Without their energy, enthusiasm, encouragement and hard work we wouldn’t be here.

There are the people we miss: Maureen Newall – the driving force behind Hilltop News; Imogen Vallance, who co-ordinated the societies, and John Phimester, the first person we went to for advice during the occasional chaos of the early years.

I am particularly grateful to Christine Haysom, who played a huge part in the early days. Her skills as both writer and journalist set a pattern for the on-going success of Hilltop News.

We might never have come through without Tony Taylor whose patience and skill with the new technology made typesetting the magazine seem deceptively straightforward. When Brian Lake took over, he made it seem just as easy.

Luckily our linchpins are still with us: David our Vicar, whose messages of hope appeared in every single issue until his illness in November 2017; Paula Angell, our impeccable and talented proof reader; Rosie Pearce – Hilltop News wouldn’t reach you without her organisational skills and her team of distributors; and Ann Horn, who has nurtured our advertisers and run our advertising with impressive efficiency since the beginning. As a free magazine we’d be lost without her – and them.

We must award long service medals to Lulu Stephens, whose famous Apple and Lemon Tart appeared in our first edition and who has unfailingly produced a recipe in every issue ever since; Jim Hetherington, whose ‘Asylum Seekers’ you would have read in 2002 and whose ‘Badgers’ bring you bang up to date in this issue; and Chris Brown whose Nature Notes and articles on the History Group are some of the foundation stones of our editorial pages.

And to those of you who, over the years, have reported unfailingly on the WI, Hort.Soc, HCCPS, Cricket Club, local Pubs, Parish Council, Bucks CC, Neighbourhood Watch, the Hilltop Churches and the many other activities in the Villages – we thank you all. And we must acknowledge our printers: Strongs of Berkhamsted, with their consistent high standard.

And since we’re celebrating an anniversary and Christmas, we’ve recalled what we think are one or two of our most entertaining and interesting articles that we hope you’ll enjoy.

Sixteen years later we’re proof anything is possible! This is our 100th issue. We must have done something right!

Anne Butterworth
THE PARISH COUNCIL
I would first like to introduce myself as the new Parish Clerk and whilst this is my first time writing an article for the Hilltop News, it is a privilege to acknowledge this as the 100th edition!

There’s been an awful lot for me to understand in my first month as Clerk, some of which seems incredibly complex, but I am enjoying the experience so far. I look forward to further understanding the intricacies of the allotments, the planning system and the various regulations that go with being a Parish Clerk. I am very lucky to have the support of the councillors who probably know my job better than I do at the moment!

Winter will become truly evident when you see the piles of grit at the side of the roads in preparation for the morning frost. I’m very pleased that the roads from Greenway to Rays Hill were resurfaced in the summer, especially if we’re to have the winter the weather forecasters are predicting. As major works to our roads have been completed, we shall now be working closely with Buckinghamshire County Council to ensure that all our minor single-track roads are brought up to an acceptable standard.

The damaged heritage finger post at Heath End is being replaced/refurbished under the initiative of the Parish Council. There are still allotment plots available at Springhall Hill, so please contact me using the normal email address (see below) if you are interested in leasing a plot or would just like to have a look around.

Just a reminder regarding the defibrillator, if you have needed to use it, please call the council to let us know in case replacement pads, etc are required, and to ensure it remains securely stored.

Don’t forget to check our website: www.cholesburyparishcouncil.org.uk where you can find all you need to know about the parish council together with local information on our noticeboard, including surveys, details of meetings and updates on local services that will affect you!

Finally, I would like thank everyone who has helped and contributed to the Parish throughout 2018. Have a very Merry Christmas and prosperous New Year!

Any queries regarding the Parish please get in touch…

Joanne Martins, Parish Clerk
01296 633323 parishclerk.csslpc@gmail.com

THE COUNTY COUNCIL
Many congratulations to the editorial team who ensure that the Hilltop News reaches such a wide circulation and for achieving the 100th edition! Many themes repeat themselves but one current success is the much-improved condition of many local roads. At the time of writing I can say that BCC has accepted a quote to improve Cock Grove - you cannot imagine how much effort has gone into this! And Arrewig Lane can expect more improvements in time. TfB agrees with me that you cannot patch forever, sooner rather than later more rural roads must be resurfaced.

2018 has been an important year in Buckinghamshire in terms of celebrating the 100th Anniversary of the RAF and the 100th Anniversary of World War 1. A most uplifting service was held at St Mary’s Chesham with the RAF and many families joined together on Remembrance Sunday to reflect on local people lost in the Great War.

The announcement of one Unitary Authority for Buckinghamshire, whilst long overdue, means a new direction for local government. Staff may be required to reapply for their jobs, the number of councillors will be reduced substantially and hopefully the reduction in overheads will release money for roads and social care. Each County division will have two councillors and in Chiltern Ridges this means a reduction from five. It is hoped the new council will be up and running by April 2020.

The tranquillity of Buckinghamshire is under threat in many ways. BCC is absolutely against agreeing more houses along the proposed Oxford to Cambridge Expressway. Aylesbury is grinding to a halt in the rush hour with so many new houses and more proposed at Halton and Woodside. I believe the fight is on to deter government from building HS2. The Forestry Commission has opened up Wendover Woods to hundreds more cars and coaches. As a Trustee of the Chiltern Society I have urged that tourism is carefully managed in the Chilterns.

Christmas will soon be here and I do hope you have plenty of good cheer and enjoy the hunt and all the other sporting events on Boxing Day.

Please let me know if I can raise your concerns with officers at County Hall.

Tricia Birchley (01296 651823) pbirchley@buckscc.gov.uk
ensuring sufficient computers, hardware and software in the ICT suite, supplying whiteboards and cameras for each class, providing external education programmes, additional sports equipment, repainting playground sports lines and equipping the new kitchen.

The garden project was completed in 2002 and only two years ago the willow tunnel was restored. A superb area for Reception and Year 1 children, sports wall, quiet area, outdoor church, play area, windmill mosaic from HG Matthews, pond and a dedicated area for Forest Schools outdoor learning have all been introduced or restored over the last ten years.

The three school houses, Putnams, Orchards and Dinnets were all named after properties around the school. Reception has always been called Windmills and, in more recent times, Years 1 to 6 were renamed, in order, Honey Pots, Little Peppers, Folly Fields, Holly Crofts, Cherry Platts and Great Oaks. All of these names were chosen for their links with local fields and woods.

Academically, the general theme from Ofsted has been “Good” and a definite conclusion that the school is currently firmly established in an upward direction under the leadership of Mrs Phillips. The last inspection was “Good with areas Outstanding” and the 2017 SIAMS report from the Church of England Education Office came to an “Outstanding” conclusion, summing up with “The school, through its distinctive Christian character, is outstanding at meeting the needs of all learners.” Mrs Phillips is supported by Mrs Hughes as Deputy Head and a full staff of teachers for all classes, all of which are supported by a number of Learning Support Assistants as well as two SENCO staff. These staffing levels ensure that as much support and encouragement can be given to the children’s learning.

For this special edition of the Hilltop News I am looking back, as well as forwards, at Hawridge and Cholesbury School.

Founded as a National School in 1874, on land given by the Lord of the Manor, the school has been fortunate to keep the surrounding grounds that it was initially granted. The land and school were conveyed to the Minister and church wardens of Hawridge for the joint parishes of Hawridge and Cholesbury, in trust, for a public elementary school. The original school house, on the main road, was still an integral part of the school until it was sold in 2010 and restored as a private home.

Over the years the school building has been extended and altered. In 2000 two further classrooms and lavatories were added, a new classroom for Year 6 was built in 2006 and a new classroom for Year 5 in 2009. The building now has seven classrooms, a new library, staffroom, kitchen off the school hall, storage areas and an ICT suite. Most of this has been done since Hilltop News started.

Funding for these improvements has come from the Diocese of Oxford, the sale of the old school house and money raised through the PSA and parents. The PSA money raised has been spent on furnishing and supplying the new library, card designs, wrapping paper orders and the Christmas Bazaar on 1st December. Meanwhile, the school will be looking ahead to the Key Stage 1 Nativity and the Key Stage 2 Carol service.

On behalf of everyone at the school, we wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

James Morris
CHOLESBURY-CUM-ST LEONARDS W.I.

In 2015 the WI celebrated 100 years since the formation of the first institute in the UK and our own evening institute was started in 1979. While in 1915 the intention was to revitalise rural communities and encourage women to become more involved in food production during the First World War, the aim since then has broadened and the WI is now the largest voluntary women's organisation in the UK.

Here we get together once a month to enjoy listening to interesting and amusing talks and presentations, maybe to learn a new skill and to have a chat over a tea or coffee and a biscuit.

No dramatic changes have taken place since Hilltop News was founded in 2002 but we have welcomed new members and continue with fund-raising for worthwhile local causes. Our recent Quiz Night was a sell-out. At the Annual Meeting Carol Henry was elected to continue as our President. We shall be entertained at Christmas by Graham Harrison and, as usual for this meeting, we have a party with invited guests from other institutes.

Our membership runs from 1st January and at the first meeting of 2019 (on Monday 21st), “What’s In Your Attic?” is the guest from other institutes. Our membership runs from 1st January and at the first meeting of 2019 (on Monday 21st), “What’s In Your Attic?” is the

NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH

It has been interesting to look back through past editions of Hilltop News. In 2002 Crimestoppers was (and still is) operating as an anonymous crime reporting service by dialling 0800 555 111. Bogus callers from door-to-door were causing a nuisance as was fly-tipping and vehicles being stolen and dumped or burnt out. By 2004 banking safely online was highlighted, an indication of how the internet has influenced our lives in the intervening years with social media now a primary means of communication.

Although burglary, car theft and fly-tipping continue, Thames Valley Police increasingly send out messages relating to internet-based criminal behaviour. The most recent has been Cyber Resilience Week, emphasising the importance of online security by installing the latest software and app updates (would we have known what an app was in 2002?) and using strong separate passwords for emails.

If you run a business and wish to discuss your company’s digital security or organise staff awareness training, please contact the TVP Cyber Crime Team.

One piece of advice remains the same, if you see any activity which looks suspicious or unusual or causes concern, take a note of vehicle registration numbers (if involved) and descriptions of persons and report it on 101 or dial 999 for a more immediate response.

Shirley Blomfield (758314)

CHOLESBURY CUM ST LEONARDS HORT SOC

‘Over the past 100 issues, Hilltop News has been an excellent way of letting people know what events we have planned. This and the horticultural tips from Sarah and previously Barbara has hopefully encouraged people to enjoy their gardens and to join the Hort Soc, especially as Hilltop News is delivered to every household in the village’... Hort Soc Committee.

So, what was the trend in 2002 (the first Hilltop News Year) I should remember but things blur these days. So, I googled it...

At the Chelsea Flower Show Mary Reynolds, at 27 the youngest ever gold medal winner, claimed Best Show Garden: the trophy for what was described then as ‘her hugely innovative, haunting Celtic Sanctuary, featuring a sheep field, 500 wild plant species, 200-year-old hawthorns and tons of ancient stone wall from Cork.’

Well that seems to sum up the trend since that date – much more natural, less formal and more subtle. In doing so, she beat both world-class garden designers and the heir to the British throne! The story has subsequently been made into a film ‘Dare to be Wild ’released in 2015.

Thinking back, it was about that time that I increased my use of grasses. Although some had been in the original design, I planted many more miscanthus, molinia and stipa tenuissima. The latter were allowed to self seed in the patio but that has proved far too high maintenance and they have been pulled this year for a more formal approach. The grass seed heads are not as good this year, probably because of the drought, but as long as they remain upright I will allow them to stand through the winter.

It was also then that we increased our sheep numbers, partly to get them to graze areas such as the orchard and outer limits of the back garden to create a more natural look than could be achieved by mowing. But some brighter flowers have made a comeback, particularly dahlias. I have had to create a new area for mine as the old bed is now far too shaded by a whitebeam tree.

By the first week in December it is not too late to plant tulips. I plant mine in pots these days – they seem to be less prone to being eaten. Last year I underplanted with winter heathers which I shall repeat this year, but have also got some wallflowers. Otherwise it is time to clear and tidy - or not – some very good seed heads will be left. I find it difficult to get the timing right on clearing before the daffodils and other bulbs appear.

Christmas presents: a little too early to rely on the newspapers/gardening press but I found a long handled Japanese razor hoe in a garden centre recently and asked for it for my birthday. The short handled one is totally indispensable for weeding both short-rooted and tap rooted weeds, hoeing small areas between plants, sowing seeds and even planting annuals. Alternatively why not ask for a ticket to a Flower Show? I trawled through endless websites and magazines looking for a water feature last year – went to Chatsworth Flower Show and there it was, just what I hadn’t realised I was looking for!

Enquiries about membership should be sent to Diana Garner at montana@cholesbury.net.

Happy Gardening
Sarah Tricks
HAWRIDGE & CHOLESBURY COMMONS PRESERVATION SOCIETY

I have been asked by the Committee of HCCPS to offer our congratulations to the whole team who make the Hilltop News publication possible. We believe that it serves the local community in a way which is a credit to all concerned and, after 16 years, continues to be an interesting read, well produced, and free. It is a pleasure to learn of so many positive things going on in our community and of the diverse activities happening here. As contributors to the magazine since its inception, we are well aware of the many people, past and present, who have given so generously of their time to make it happen every two months and we wish you all continued success for the future.

AGM

The AGM took place on 27 November and a report will be available on the website very soon and in the next edition of Hilltop News.

Subscriptions fell due at the AGM and we are really grateful to all those of you who choose to pay by PayPal or Direct Debit. It is easy to do this on our website under HCCPS Volunteer/Subscribe or for other payment options you can contact Ben Lewis treasurer.hccps@gmail.com. For the 8th year in a row we have retained the membership rate at £10 per individual or £20 for a couple (to include children in the family).

Calendar

Our lovely calendar is now on sale from Committee Members or from me (lindsaygriffin@yahoo.co.uk or 758440). It can also be purchased from Chiltern Motors or The Full Moon - £10 (a sturdy envelope for posting an additional £1). The calendar is our major fundraiser for the year and all the money raised goes to carrying out essential work on the Commons. Calendar sales have enabled us to do this whilst keeping the subs down for the last 5 years. We do hope that when you are looking for a Christmas present you will think of these beautiful calendars.

We are again very grateful to everyone who has been involved in its production – to the photographers for so many beautiful images, to Susie Bell who continues to design it at no cost, to Orbitpress who have continued to produce the calendar at the same price for five years and to our sponsors who help with printing costs: The Hilltop Office; George Browns; Hilltop Images; Chiltern Motors; HG Matthews; WE Black; Philip Matthews; MT Loos; Cholesbury-cum-St Leonards Horticultural Society; James Jolliffe; Christmas Tree Farm. Congratulations to Andy Harris who won the front cover competition with his picture of Lotty the dog with a snowman at the Full Moon. We hope Andy will enjoy the prize of a meal for two with a bottle of house wine, kindly donated by Hannah and Philip Matthews.

Memorial bench

We are very pleased that among all the other initiatives to celebrate the centenary of the end of World War I in the Hilltop Villages, a commemorative bench has been placed on the west side of Horse Block above the extensive area of heather, with views to the grassland and to the hillside above Horse Block. As far as we are aware there was no memorial nor a tree planted
on the Commons at the time though those who gave their lives are commemorated in the local churches. Our thanks to Chris Brown for the initiative of providing a bench to mark this occasion, to Chiltern District Council and the Good Neighbours Group for financial contributions and to John Caple for organizing its installation. Philip Matthews kindly provided a Manitou and some workmen to do the heavy lifting on Sunday 11 November. We hope it will provide Commons users with a place for quiet reflection and enjoyment of the views. We have deliberately chosen an area where there aren’t too many trees as this would have been how the Commons looked a hundred years ago, as you can see in the photograph above of a ‘Tug-of-War’ at the top of Horse Block Lane.

Filming at High Chimneys

On 12 November a crew from the BBC were here to film part of a new series MotherFatherSon, starring Richard Gere and Helen McRory, to be shown later in 2019. Plenty of activity around High Chimneys, but no sign of Richard Gere!

Conservation Group dates

We have had a very pleasing turnout at the sessions so far and we like to welcome people of all ages. Currently we have Jess and Ben who are helping as part of their Duke of Edinburgh awards activities. A future programme will be issued in the next Hilltop News but the first sessions will be 13 and 27 January. Details will be sent via New Grapevine.

Lindsay Griffin

David Hawkes

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A glorious summer
on the Common

Some excellent
cricket was played
and witnessed
on Cholesbury
Common this
year. The weather
certainly didn’t
disappoint, with very few games falling
foul of the conditions.

For the Senior teams, there was a mixed
bag of results.

Saturday League team
The Saturday team finished a comfortable
fifth in the Kookaburra Mid Bucks League
Division 2, winning 8 and losing 6 along
the way. The performances were riddled
with inconsistency as skipper Neil Jones
struggled to field the same 11 players on
a week to week basis. However, when the
Hawridge batsmen were able to support
their bowling attack with a sizeable total,
they always looked like a team who would
be difficult to beat. On a positive note,
the team were able to give healthy league
cricket experience to several youngsters,
including Ferdi Maintzer, who enjoyed a
consistent run in the team throughout the
season.

Sunday friendly team
The Sunday team saw Andy Holdsworth
returning as skipper this year. The season,
once again, was dominated by the batting
of James Cath. The majority of Sunday
totals were built around his contribution.

The 40-over format saw more losses than
wins, but once again, Sunday cricket proved
both sociable and competitive. The playing
highlight was the last over, 1 wicket win
over Eaton Bray in early September, a
game for the purist that had everything!
The last game of the season, traditionally,
saw us play Penn Street for the Colin Parry
Memorial Trophy. Colin was tragically killed
in a car crash on the way to play against us
some years ago. This year we wrested the
trophy back with a comfortable win, the
outstanding performance being Andy Spur’s
maiden century.

Colts
Once again, Colts cricket enjoyed a thriving
season:

U9s finished 3rd in the Bucks Big
Bash Division. They also won the
Haddenham 6-a-side tournament – many
congratulations to all involved. Coach
James Morris.

U10s finished 1st in Division 3 South –
again many congratulations. Coach Kevin
Stenson.

U11s finished bottom in Division 2 South.
In the cup they beat The Lee before losing
to Farnham Common in the 2nd Round.
Coaches Giles Pemberton/Martin Grief-King.

U12s finished 8th in Division 1 South.
Coach Alex Neal.

U13s finished 2nd in Division 3 South. In
the cup they lost to Great Brickhill in the 1st
Round.

Colts who have represented the Seniors
this season include:

U15 - Alec Matthews, Mac Harriman.

U13 - Maxi Maintzer, Luke Hames, Dylan
Griffiths, Alex Morris, Ted Smare.

The annual Colts Family Fun Day and
Awards were held on 15 September and
again were a great success. A six-a-side
tournament involving parents and children
was followed by the awards to the best-
performing batters and bowlers and most
improved player in each age group. See our
Facebook page for photos.

Reflecting on his first year as Chairman,
Steve Drane looked back on a largely
successful season, particularly for the
colts. It was particularly pleasing to see a
number of youngsters make their debuts
in senior cricket, and if we can keep them
at the club, the future looks bright. We do
still need more adult cricketers for both
teams though. New recruits are always
welcome, and you don’t have to be James
Anderson or Joe Root – the most important
ingredient is enthusiasm!

More news and photos can be found
on our website (hawridgeandcholesbury.
hitscricket.com) and Facebook page.

Andy Halliday

EDITOR’S NOTE
I wrote the first report in Hilltop News on
behalf of H&CCC when I was secretary of
the Club. It delights me now to see that the
Club is in good hands and its spirit prevails.

Since 2002, significant investment has been
made to improve facilities, including first
class practice nets. On the playing side, the
Colts section, in particular, has made great
progress, which bodes well for the future.
A child’s Christmas in the Hilltops

Emily Phoebe Brackley (1889 – 1986) allows us a glimpse of life in the Hilltop Villages before we were consumed by Internet Shopping and Social Media...

At Christmas we had a huge fir tree in the Infant Room of St Leonards School, beautifully decorated with a present for everyone. We were given tea and sweets, an apple and an orange. We all gathered in the large schoolroom with two blazing log fires in the huge grates. I remember one year when the snow had fallen thick and fast, the drifts were deep and the frost very severe, we found we could walk almost all the way to school on top of the low-cut hedges!

We all enjoyed sliding on the ponds and snowballing in the severe winter weather. But one more painful memory was the dreadful chilblains we suffered. Our old-fashioned remedy was to rub them with a paraffin rag or raw onion and salt!

On winter evenings we would play Ludo, Snakes & Ladders and cards, or my mother would read to us. We were very rarely allowed to sit up late.

Several weeks before Christmas we would all be busy preparing fruit for the mincemeat cake and puddings. All fruit had to be washed and the raisins stoned. The puddings were all well mixed, put into basins, tied in a cloth and boiled for several hours in the old-fashioned copper heated over wood. We then had to follow the same procedure with the cake, which we baked, later marzipanned, iced and decorated. I remember helping my mother make dozens of mince pies at a time for it was a custom that anyone who called during the festive season be offered a glass of homemade wine and a mince pie.

Turkeys were very expensive and a luxury for poor families, so mother bought either a large fowl, leg of pork or an aitchbone of beef and she boiled a ham for slicing at supper time. How we enjoyed it all with our tasty homemade pickles and chutney!

For several years, just before Christmas, Lord Rothschild had hampers delivered to all children of school age: each containing two presents, a cake, chocolate, fruit and a new shilling. You can imagine how eagerly we watched and awaited their delivery.

On Christmas Eve we would gather holly and evergreens to decorate our house, make paper chains and collect up our Yule logs. Bedtime came and mother found us one of her long woollen stockings or one of our father’s socks to hang on the bed rail. We usually woke very early and would light the candle to see what our socks or stockings contained. We were quite happy to find an orange, an apple, a fondant, sweets, nuts and a silver threepenny piece. I often wonder how children today would react to all this...
LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

Having started this season of meetings with two extremely well-attended talks focusing on World War 1, we change tack with our next talk on Friday 7 December, which has the enticing title: Royal Mistresses. The speaker is Roger Powell, an historian who gained his reputation as an author and contributor of TV programmes about royal personages and heraldry whilst also having a career working for Debretts and Burke's Peerage.

By contrast, the first talk after the ‘Christmas Break’, on Friday 11 January, is all about ‘The Great Stink!’ — Engineers, sewerage systems and the Victorian battle against dirt. Dr Tom Crook is a senior lecturer in modern British history at Oxford Brookes University who has written extensively about social history in the 19th and early 20th centuries. His most recent book is about the modernising of public health in Britain during the Victorian era.

Our 1st February meeting sees the return of one of our regular speakers, Tony Eaton, whose subject this time is Duke of Windsor - Royal Traitor or Nazi Dupe?

All these meetings take place at St Leonards Parish Hall. Please arrive at 8pm for a prompt 8.15pm start.

Membership for the whole year is also great value - just £10 for adults. Visitors are always welcome, entrance just £4 at the door, so if you are new to the area or have not got around to coming along before, why not try out one of our meetings, which are a great place to meet others from the villages.

Chris Brown (01494 758890)
email: localhistorygroup@cholesbury.com

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GOOD NEIGHBOURS GROUP

Good Neighbours AGM
Tuesday, 11 December at
St Leonards Parish Hall, 3pm

Come and find out how you can offer something back to your local community.

Join us for a cup of tea and hear about the activities of the Good Neighbours Group over the past year. Find out about the help that is available to those needing advice and support living locally or those who support one or more local residents.

Max from Citizens Advice is coming along to talk about its new service. See below.

Severe Weather Car Scheme
Firstly, a big thank you to those who volunteer with 4x4 vehicles or winter tyres to support the Car Scheme, which will again be operating during periods of severe weather. The idea came from a severe winter some 5 or 6 years ago. Since running the scheme we have seen a sequence of milder winters, but we know our luck with relatively mild winters will run out sometime.

The aim is to provide our rural community with enhanced resilience if the winter weather is severe and prolonged. Its purpose is to help local people who cannot get about or are nervous driving in tricky conditions to get to medical appointments, restock essential food supplies or collect urgent prescriptions – or other essential errands. If there is a major snowfall during the day we could also ‘rescue’ stranded villagers at local stations or in the environs of the villages. If weather conditions prevent social services reaching a client, and near neighbours are not available, then volunteers may also be able to help with certain vital tasks. If you are unable to get out due to the weather do not hesitate to call 0845 8 735 737. Please draw to the attention of anyone you know who might benefit.

Volunteer drivers will respond as needed between 9am – 7pm. If you have a suitable vehicle, we would really like to hear from you. The more drivers we can call on the better prepared we will be and we can also share out any demands across a larger group.

Advice at Home Service from Citizens Advice

Are you over 65?
The Citizens Advice Team based in Chesham has started a home visiting service to support those in our area who might not be able to come into our offices. Maybe you want to check that you are getting the right benefits. Or do you need a little bit of help with looking at your energy bills?

Please contact Max on 07809 408195 or 01494 774748 for an appointment or email homeadvice@chilterncab.cabnet.org.uk. This is a free service.

You can contact the Good Neighbours Group by email: goodneighbours@cholesbury.com or telephone 01494 758890. Chris Brown
FIRST TIME ROUND!

I can’t believe that it’s sixteen years since I sat in the dining room of Old Bruns Farm for the very first time to talk through the possibility of creating a local monthly magazine for the Hilltop Villages. The team included a number of people who are sadly no longer with us but if I was hesitant as I walked in, I was certainly on board when I left!

I was ‘volunteered’ to undertake the design and layout of the Newsletter based on the perceived view of my IT skills. But little did I know what I was really letting myself in for.

Designing the layout for the first edition was possibly one of the most frustrating tasks I think I undertook at the time. There were many late nights, early mornings and lots of phone calls with Anne Butterworth. But we got there. But wait, we then had to do edition two!

Throughout the years I undertook the task we always got Hilltop News out on time thanks to the whole team. Even if it did mean burning the midnight oil. But I’m so pleased that Hilltop News goes on after a few years I sadly had to give up the role to focus on my family and business.

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I was trying to get off the Hilltop News ground. We miss you all…

Joanna has never made a penny from it! I’m so pleased that Hilltop News goes on after a few years I sadly had to give up the role to focus on my family and business.

The Aga Saga

There have been longer, heavier AGA SAGAS since this was written in our 2004 edition – which made their writers a fortune – but none as funny. We’re delighted to reprint it here although our ‘Joanna’ has never made a penny from it!

Well, there it was – big and black, shiny and new, standing in my kitchen – and I hadn’t a clue what to do with it!

First, I stood back and admired it, stroking its sleek form; we glowed at each other for about two weeks. Then I did what I’d been putting off – panicked. IF IN DOUBT PHONE A FRIEND.

‘Problem. What problem? It’s a dodgle’. (After a while, other Aga owners sound so casual, so relaxed, so – smug). ‘It’s a way of life. And when your husband lets you down, it’s still there for you’.

‘But all these ovens. What sane person needs four ovens? I don’t need four ovens!’ ‘OF COURSE YOU DO’. Aga owners talk in capital letters. Then, not pausing for breath, she went on.

‘Bottom Left for reviving ‘dead’ lambs’. (She was a farmer’s wife) ‘Put them on a bed of newspaper. Never fails. Of course, don’t close the door’. Fine. I didn’t have too many of those at that precise moment but – ‘And it warms plates’. ‘And trainers’. This helpfully from her son who was listening in.

‘Top Left: Simmering’. I couldn’t agree more. I’d been simmering since its installation and I wasn’t even tender. In fact I was quite the opposite: I was hard boiled! ‘Top Left – no, sorry, Top Right’. I had to concentrate. ‘Roasting’.

Absolutely. She couldn’t have described me more accurately – after I’d battled with the beast all day. I actually looked as if I’d been basted.

I looked down – Bottom Right. ‘Please don’t bother to tell me about the Bottom Right’ I said ‘I think I’ve got that: What about the tops?’

‘Oh, you don’t have to worry about the top plates. They’re really best for leaning against and warming your bottom after you’ve taken the dogs for a walk. ANYWAY, MARY SAYS YOU SHOULDN’T REALLY USE THEM. Everything should go in the oven’.

‘Even vegetables?’ Who was this Mary who merited CAPITAL LETTERS? ‘Even vegetables’. You can’t cook vegetables in an oven. What’s the point of having top plates if you don’t use them?

‘Can’t I boil a kettle’, I asked ‘or does that go in the oven?’ Note the sarcasm.

‘No, no, you can boil a kettle but be sure to keep it on the hot place at all times and keep it full so as not waste HEAT. Look dear, READ THE BOOK. MARY SAYS…’ It seemed the right moment to put the phone down. Anyway, Aga owners are perfectly happy telling to themselves about the thing nearest their hearts!

My Aga arrived before Christmas. EVERYBODY’S AGA ARRIVES JUST BEFORE CHRISTMAS.

To be continued next time – in a totally calm frame of mind (?)

SADLY, WE’RE NOT ALL HERE

– Notable contributors to the early editions of Hilltop News -

We must mention in particular Maureen Newall, without whom Hilltop News would not have started; for her Golden Jubilee Sewing Project and the many happy stitching hours at Four Acres together with her account of her work as National Chief Dressage Selector and her work with the Pony Club.

Connie Brown for her Chocolate Cake, now forever written into the heart of the Hort Soc Summer schedule. Imogen Valance for taking responsibility for our clubs and societies and her wonderful articles on cycling for charity. Roger Beedell for his articles encouraging young children as they learned to compete in cross-country running events. And then there’s John Phimester – and his wise counsel – indeed he was my first call sixteen years ago when I was trying to get Hilltop News off the ground. We miss you all…

Anne Butterworth.

EDITOR’S NOTE…

Hilltop News had been going for five years before I came on board. All the team I work with today were in place before I came – most of the contributors also. It seems that once you are attached to Hilltop News you can’t get away!

Anne Butterworth has been a constant driving force. Founder, first editor and now co-ordinator, she ensures the smooth running of our Parish magazine.

Joanna has never made a penny from it!
At the time Hilltop News was launched, the problems of Glis Glis in our parish were making local and National news. Roger Hyslop, who lived on Cholesby Common, was moved to write this amusing piece for our first edition...

The Humans Strike Back! Glis Wars – The Sequel

C

oincidentally, the weekend our story was published locally, Glis Glis became National news, with a feature on John Peel’s Saturday morning Loose Ends radio programme. The story continued for three consecutive Saturdays.

Meanwhile, back at Mermaid Cottage, Glis Glis wars continue. First the cats started acting strangely, sitting motionless for hours at various locations in the cottage. The reason for this behaviour was shortly to become vividly clear early one morning when my wife awoke in the guest room, where she had once again fled to escape the latest round of this year’s Glis Glis Formula 1 Championship: an almost nightly event that takes place in our loft above what used to be, in happier times, the marital bedroom.

There on the beam above her head was a rodent racer, clearly triumphant after last night’s endeavours. Cages are reset in the loft and that weekend we catch four more. Our final strike, at the time of writing, is to contact an excellent local builder to come around and do a nook and cranny blocking job. Perhaps no more nooks will lead to lots more nooky?

Sixteen years later, Roger reports that he is still plagued by Glis Glis! More about that in our next issue...

This was the last straw. GG disappears rapidly and we both escape to the guest room. The next day our local pest controller is summoned and, with some feline assistance, GG is tracked down to another bedroom. We manage to coax him into a cage and he is taken out and ‘dispatched’ to the great Grand Prix circuit in the sky. Cages are reset in the loft and that weekend we catch four more. Our final strike, at the time of writing, is to contact an excellent local builder to come round and do a nook and cranny blocking job. Perhaps no more nooks will lead to lots more nooky?

And in response to Roger’s predicament in that first issue of Hilltop News, Paula Angell (then anon) wrote this lovely verse...

The Lodgers
Dear Roger, how I sympathise
Your housemates sound a pain
They’re noisy and destructive
They’re a pest – and yet again
Those liquid eyes can charm a guy
From full one hundred paces
“I’m cute, I’m sweet, I’m innocent”
Is writ across their faces
They live here too, in Parrots Lane
Aloft in nesting boxes
They’re high up in our garden shed
Quite safe from cats and foxes
They’ve tried to scale our house, but failed
Which gives much jubilation
Our builders boarded all the eaves
So Roger, dear, plug up those holes
Get up and nail each soffit
You’ll have to fight to save your roof
And keep those blighters offit!
Entice them to your potting shed
Away from beam and rafter
Let’s hope, like us, you’ll co-exist
In peace for ever after

COFFEE MORNING

On Friday 28 September Shelagh England hosted a MacMillan coffee morning on Buckland Common. It was a lovely sunny day and many came and enjoyed coffee and cake. A cheque for £310 was sent off the next day. Shelagh would like to thank those who came and were so generous and give special thanks to those who made cakes and helped on the day.

Sometimes it can be difficult to cope with the challenges that life throws at us so talking to a counsellor may be helpful.

From my counselling practice near Wendover, I offer a warm, friendly and confidential space for you to talk through any problems you may be facing such as anxiety, stress, sadness, low self-esteem, anger and relationship difficulties.

For further information on how I may be able to help or to book an initial appointment, please contact me.

Natalie McGourty
MBACP, BA (Hons) Psychology

07976 968166
natalie@nmcounselling.co.uk
www.nmcounselling.co.uk
**The Hilltops Remembered**

11 November 2018

*I asked Jim Matthews if he would be interested in helping put on something for the Hilltop Villagesto commemorate 100 years since the signing of the Armistice. His agreement was instant and unequivocal. Philip Matthews also offered his support, so there were – Matthews, Hopkinson, Matthews - the three Hilltop WW1 campaigners.*

Between us we managed to get it all together. With the marvellous help of Ann Horn and Nick Butterworth in particular, St. Leonards church PCC were a joy to work with during the preparations. The churches invited me to their PCC Meeting and allowed me to explain my ‘vision’ and were encouraging and enthusiastic in equal measure. The Local History Group came on board to do a magnificent display and John Farmer was gracious in accepting that from a size, parking and facilities perspective St Leonard’s church was, on this occasion, the right place to host the main event.

We embraced and ran with the national vision of “there but not there” for the pew silhouettes for each church, for which we obtained 100% funding. The Tommy silhouettes were a crowd-funding venture where they can remain. Thank you to ALL of you who donated.

And so the day dawned. The morning kicked off wet and horrible. Not ideal for open top vintage cars or standing at a war memorial. By 8am things were looking a lot better and by 9am the sun was shining on those who turned up at Hawridge Church. Our prayerful service was led by Alan Davis and we were out of church and on the road by 10am.

The vintage vehicles processed to St Leonards, the choir warmed up in the church room alongside the Local History Group ladies putting the finishing touches to their display. The car parking attendants did a fabulous job and by 10.30 the church was packed with people from all the hilltop villages. What a joy: beautiful flower arrangements, 12 handmade ceramic poppy heads and four enigmatic pew silhouettes. Ivor took the service. At the appropriate time we all filed out to the war memorial where, in the sunshine, the wreaths were laid, the fallen remembered and a spine tingling playing of the Last Post by Barry Mills, Yeoman of the Guard, was moving and glorious. Back in to church and The Hilltop Villages Community Choir sang ‘In Flanders Fields’, Richard Charles played Elgar’s Nimrod and the choir finished with a rousing ‘Alleluia’.

And so to the evening’s events where we were very much led by the “Battle’s Over” timetable the centrepiece of which was a huge bonfire on the Common.

The lighting of the bonfire was a symbolic gesture of ‘older generation to younger generation’. Sally Reynolds was flattered rather than offended when asked to hand her flaming torch to eight-year-old John Matthews, who in turn handed it to Lance Corporal Jack Brinklow, local villager currently serving in the Irish Guards. Resplendent in the formal grey coat of the Guards’ winter dress, complete with bearskin, this was a somewhat heart-stopping part of the evening as bonfire sparks and bearskin are not a good combo!

Church bells rang out thanks to Ann Horn at St Leonards, John Farmer at Cholesbury and Elizabeth Tomlin at Hawridge and we can be content in the knowledge that our little Hilltop villages made up the 1,000 churches ringing out for peace. And so to the pub - where there was a well-received barbeque in the car park and a huge throng inside - the place was packed and enjoyed a fantastic evening of WW1 entertainment of poetry and songs, complete with ‘sing-a-long’ song sheets, thanks to Louisa Alice-Rose Haggerty and her boyfriend Julian Wills. What a way to finish the day.

Of course there are many people to thank. As well as those mentioned above, Linda Waghorn, who helped me deliver over 200 advertising flyers; our musical director Michelle Garrard and Nicola Leat. To all those who brought along their wonderful vintage cars - Neil Clifford, John Popple, the Priests, David Strong and Michael Edmonds and to Martin Hecksher for his 1913 motorcycle. To the Cliffords for enabling us to park at Hawridge Court and to the Harris’s ditto at St Leonards and to Bob Whitehead for letting us use Coppice Farm Park for a ‘drive thru’. Thank you to Clive Carey and Andy Harris for agreeing to be ‘official photographers’ along with Graham Lincoln and David Dennis.

Thank you to the Parish Council who paid for insuring the bonfire and to those of you who answered my SOS to provide Tiki Torches for the bonfire. Mark Gardner for his ‘fire safety’ advice (short but reassuring!) when I had visions of an inferno, and most of all thank you to those who turned up, joined in and made it the event that it was.

No-one charged for their playing or performing and the ‘committee’ met all additional and incidental costs themselves which means that in your support of the ‘Tommy’ campaign we will be sending 100% of the money you pledged - a total in excess of £2300 - to the ‘there but not there’ fund which supports the following charities: The Royal Foundation; Walking with the Wounded; Combat Stress; Help for Heroes; Project Equinox - Housing Veterans; Commonwealth War Graves Foundation.

A few last-minute donations have been promised and both churches’ collections are going to the British Legion Poppy appeal, as is the collection at the pub.

Thank you to everyone who played a part to remember such an important event and pay tribute to those who lived through four bleak, war-torn years and those who lost their lives.

*Janet Hopkinson*
Christmas is, of course, an anniversary. You are celebrating the 100th edition of Hilltop News. What an achievement - what an Anniversary! All those who have contributed to its success are making some of the colour and light of local life and the life of the church real and present in your homes.

A few years ago, on Christmas Eve, the ground was covered in snow. Driving to the church was a treacherous enterprise at 11pm, as we ventured forth for Midnight Mass to celebrate that anniversary of the birth of Christ into the world. Hard ice lay under the snow, and there was a freezing fog.

A family from a local, quite remote farm had left at 10pm, to make sure they arrived in good time. The beam of headlamps swung in and then moved gingerly and very slowly towards the church. Some brave souls found the best way was to walk across the fields from the village.

Yet, by 11.30pm, everyone who needed to be there was there. We celebrated the birth of a baby, far away in place and time, as Christmas Eve turned into Christmas Morning under a winter’s night sky, lit with the icy, reflected glow of a landscape wreathed in snow. The light from the church spilled out in the darkness, staining the snow with the colours of the windows. Yellows, reds and blues from the glass were the only contrast to a winter’s night on this white Christmas.

This is what Christmas means: the bringing of colour into a world that was black and white. God’s gift to the world, given through Mary, is a dappled gift, a reflected glory; colour, light and warmth to a world sorely in need of it. It is the same gift that the other Mary, Mary Magdalene, gave to the world when she told the disciples about the Risen Lord on Easter Day - the colour of life bursting into a world darkened by death.

At Christmas we celebrate the white light of Christ that is the combination of all the colours of the rainbow. It is a subtle, nuanced light. It is complex, as complex as life can be. It gives us life and rescues us from the icy grip of death. It is no surprise that we celebrate it at the darkest time of the year, when new life seems so far away. That’s when we need it most.

That year light danced on the snow, and brought depth and colour to a featureless landscape. This year, whatever the weather, may that light shine in our hearts. May it illuminate our lives. May we see its colour in the eyes of our friends and families. May our Christmas be a journey from darkness to light. May the light of Christ, born for you, lighten and warm you this Christmas and always.
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<th>DATE</th>
<th>DAY</th>
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Please note: Rev David Burgess is on sick leave for this period following surgery and will not be available.
A number of services on this rota have therefore been changed from the regular worship pattern in the four churches.

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rodandiane.neal@outlook.com

Churchwardens (contd.)
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PCC Secretary
St Leonards
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giles.pemberton@btinternet.com
Church Matters

Just a brief note to say congratulations and thank you to the Hilltop News team as the newsletter reaches its hundredth edition.

It's great that the publication has maintained continuity with the church-based version from which it followed and that so much work continues to be invested into the preparation, compilation, editing, finalising, and distribution of each edition.

Communication is vital in any large or small community, and the comprehensive way in which Hilltop News goes about it means that most, if not all, issues which affect our villages receive coverage and are highlighted.

Here's to another hundred issues (and maybe more)! ... Rev David Burgess

Cholesbury

Cholesbury Church always raises money for a few specially chosen causes but this year the events for our three charities were, unwisely, on consecutive Sundays. However, people were most generous and there was no sign of 'Donor Fatigue'.

On 30 September, Nick Russell, who is the chief executive of the Church Army, was our guest speaker at the Four Parish service. He gave a talk on the Army’s work to evangelise and bring hope in tough, inner city areas. The Church Army is part of the Church of England and is a great example of the church’s commitment to poor neighbourhoods with people suffering hardship. He is based in South East London where he has situations that we would never encounter in our villages.

The church looked particularly pretty with supper afterwards in the Village Hall. The church looked particularly pretty with many of the flowers from local gardens – the last of the season. It’s a simple and well attended service led this year by David White. Sallie Bright organised a wonderful supper with cottage pie as the main course and an astonishing array of puddings to follow! Our thanks to Sallie and all who supported her. By the time people had bid for and bought flowers, fruit and vegetables (not always what they wanted but expertly sold to them by Richard Baddon and Michael Joseph!) we made a profit of just over £660.

Breakfast Service – We held our Breakfast Service on Sunday 16 September. We were delighted that the family and most of the congregation came to the Church Room for coffee afterwards.

As we approach Christmas, Cholesbury will hold a Candlelit Carol Service with readings, traditional carols and mulled wine on Sunday 23 December at 6 pm. Do join us – you will all be most welcome.

ST Leonards

On Sunday 16 September we held our Harvest Festival – a 6pm service with supper afterwards in the Village Hall. The church looked particularly pretty with supper afterwards in the Village Hall. The church looked particularly pretty with many of the flowers from local gardens – the last of the season. It’s a simple and well attended service led this year by David White. Sallie Bright organised a wonderful supper with cottage pie as the main course and an astonishing array of puddings to follow! Our thanks to Sallie and all who supported her. By the time people had bid for and bought flowers, fruit and vegetables (not always what they wanted but expertly sold to them by Richard Baddon and Michael Joseph!) we made a profit of just over £660.

Breakfast Service – We held our October Service on Sunday 28th - the theme was ‘Remembrance’. Both children and adults alike read, spoke, sang and talked about the importance of Remembrance and one or two people said afterwards they had not been to such a moving and simple service before. Richard Charles played from Elgar’s Nimrod – a fitting end to the short half hour in church. We don’t meet again until Sunday 27 January when you will be so welcome to join us.

Dora Lamasz – Some of Dora’s family and friends gathered together on Sunday 4 November when Ivor Cornish dedicated the new Hymn Books that St Leonards had been able to buy thanks to a generous legacy left to the Church by Dora. We felt it was a fitting way to spend some of her gift since Dora had been Christened and Married in St Leonards. Furthermore, she had played the organ and been Choir Master for over 60 years of her life – cycling from Thorpe, her home in Chivery, sometimes up to three times on a Sunday to perform these duties. We were delighted that the family and most of the congregation came to the Church Room for coffee afterwards.

Tea Parties – Our Christmas Tea Party will be held on Wednesday 19 December as usual in the Church Room. Richard Charles has already agreed to find something ‘a little special’ to talk about, so after one or two well known Carols, we will go into the Church Room for an equally ‘special’ Christmas Tea. Do join us if you can. As you know, whether you come regularly or don’t come very often - or even don’t come at all - you are so very welcome to join us. If
you need transport, please contact Anne Lake (01296 620169) or Anne Butterworth (758700).

Little Bears came to St Leonards on Friday 28 September for their Harvest Service. They were a smaller group than usual but their generosity knew no bounds and they contributed wonderfully to DENS (Dacorum Emergency Night Shelter) who offer a most amazing service to the homeless. Our food box was full! We are most grateful to Claire and her team.

Please see the article on Little Bears elsewhere in this edition of Hilltop News.

The Carol Service will be held on Sunday 16 December. This is always well attended and the scent of the greenery and the glow from the candles will welcome you all. We are fortunate to be joined again by the Hilltops Choir who add immeasurably to the occasion.

Hawridge

It seems a long while back, but the PCC met at Benton Potts on 1 October. We would love to welcome new members, so if you would like to join us, do ask for further information. We need a new Treasurer, as Sylvia Watson is stepping down, and someone to attend the occasional Deanery Synod, held within the Wendover Area.

The Harvest Festival and Supper were held on the first Sunday in October at Cholesbury, raising funds for the charity ‘Send a Cow’. The following week we joined them to send Christmas Shoe Boxes to Eastern Europe.

With great sadness, we record the death on 13 October of Marion Seal, a long-term stalwart of our congregation. We send our condolences to Stan, Margaret, Joan and all the family. Marion’s funeral took place on 29 October and burial of her ashes will take place at a later date. A tribute to Marion appears elsewhere in the Newsletter.

On 4 November we gathered for our annual All Souls’ Evensong, when we commemorated loved ones and friends from the Four Parishes in the lighting of votive candles.

What’s in store for us in the magic month of December? We have a Four Parish Baptism Celebration at 9.30 a.m. on the first Sunday, taken by our Area Dean, Deiniol Heywood. All who have been baptised recently are especially welcomed, and we hope to have lots of you there to enjoy the celebration.

We have our traditional Christmas Eve Carols at 5.30pm and Parish Communion on Christmas Day at 10am.

Our thanks to Janet Hopkinson for being our recent Hilltop News Correspondent, and for co-ordinating information for publication. We are now looking for someone to take over this role. We would like to thank all visiting clergy who have helped us this year, and are delighted to say that it is looking positive that David will be able to return to us occasionally in the next quarter. If you would like to join our team of readers and intercessors, or to learn to serve at Communion Services, the opportunity is there for you.

LITTLE BEARS

Little Bears is well and truly part of village life at St Leonards. They also join in at St Leonards Fête and would like to extend even more into the community.

Earlier this year ‘Little Bears’ was judged Outstanding by Ofsted, the highest grade achievable and one which is virtually unknown in this area! Behind the exceptionally high standards lies a team of well qualified and highly experienced staff.

Playleader Claire Cox works closely with the committee, particularly the Chairperson, and there is a wealth of friendly help and advice available to new members. Exciting opportunities for positions on the committee, including a Chairperson, have arisen. If you think you would like to be involved with this friendly team, please call (01494 758081) or email (info@littlebearspreschool.org.uk).

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Changes down on the farm…

Looking back to 2002 (the start of Hilltop News) it is quite surprising how things have changed in the farming world and locally.

This part of the Chilterns has never been the most fertile of grounds and the commons and small grass paddocks, together with a lot of woodland, mean that it will never be of major agricultural importance.

But still, with the use of artificial fertilisers, the arable fields can and do produce good crops.

Over these past 16 years machinery has increased in size and output. It would take a day (12 hours) to combine 30 or 40 acres back in 2002 (in good weather and with no breakdowns): now 100 plus acres could be cut in that time. And sorry, I still talk in acres rather than hectares, a sign of my age! There is a combine on the English market at the moment priced at £650,000! This won’t be seen around here: our fields are not large (we’re not prairie farming) and it takes a while to move from one to another - we still have all our hedges.

Today, we leave these for two to three years before cutting, which is good for the production of berries and gives winter feed for the birds.

In 2002 the price of wheat, as an example, was about £68 per tonne and, although there have been fluctuations, today’s price is three times more. As with the increase in size and cost of machinery, so have other costs, such as fertiliser, gone up - nitrogen has risen from £100/tonne to £300/tonne. The smaller paddocks in the area are not viable as arable fields and there are now more horses grazing these, but there is also something of a trend for a return of cattle and sheep due to rotational needs. Grass is good for building up more organic matter in the soils.

Satnav and GPS systems are now in common use in tractors for field operations such as applying fertiliser or drilling seed. It means that variable fertiliser rates can be applied only where needed and a crop drilled using GPS will be in absolutely straight lines, which a man using his eye alone can never achieve. Yield monitors on combines tell the driver exactly what is happening as the crop is cut. Drones are also being used for looking for weeds and for signs of disease or stress in the crop.

A lot of farmers are also trying direct drilling, ie, no ploughing or cultivating after harvest. A slot is put in the soil with a direct drill, the seed is drilled into the slot and it is closed up again. Environmentalists and the ministry say this is a very good way of keeping Co2 emissions to a minimum. There are subsidies available which will pay 40% towards the purchase of this piece of equipment. Of course, with this larger and specialist machinery there are far fewer men employed on a regular basis on farms today and more use than ever is made of agricultural contractors.

In the United States driverless tractors are already being used - the man driving the combine brings up the tractor and trailer to offload by remote radio control. Driverless cars are being tested on roads in the UK and the same techniques are being tested by institutions such as Harper Adams University to be used in agriculture.

I’m sure that these innovations will have an impact in the years to come - and that’s without talking about Brexit and its implications!

Nigel Blomfield
Early winter pub news

Although I originally reported on our Hilltop pubs three times a year, it gradually increased to six times due to ever-increasing adverse developments. Thus, my reflections on the history will naturally focus on the severe economic challenges public houses have faced during the life of Hilltop News. We initially reported on the four pubs along the road from Chesham Vale through Hawridge, Cholesbury and Buckland Common to St Leonards. Eventually, the Bull and the Old Swan were added because many of our fellow parishioners were frequently going to them.

Five of these six pubs were owned or leased by the dreaded pub companies that were formed to purchase about half of the estates of the major brewing conglomerates. Since these “pubcos” were established under a deeply flawed business plan, their businesses needed to feed cash back into the parent pubcos to service unsustainable debt. Gradually, about half the UK pubs were closed, while many more were sold to become free houses.

In the case of the six Hilltop pubs, The Black Horse Inn, the Full Moon and the Old Swan are flourishing as creatively and effectively managed free houses. The owners of the White Lion and the Bull have every expectation of resuming trading as a pub and restaurant.

Work has begun on the new structure for the Village (day) Nursery on land to the south of The Bull Public House. Once the new home for the nursery is completed, the children can be moved out of their present accommodation in the public house, allowing work to be undertaken to fulfil the approved plans to extend the premises and reopen as a pub and restaurant.

Hannah and Philip Matthews at the Full Moon are a good example of what it takes to manage an attractive public house business. Since taking over the lease and management at the beginning of May, the ales have been kept to a high standard, and, under the guidance of Head Chef Andrew O’Connor, the quality of cuisine has been excellent. Andrew does credit to the freshly sourced fish, meat, etc. that go into his dishes.

The Christmas menu will be available from 4-24 December and can be viewed on their web site www.fullmoonpub.info. If you wish to order from the Christmas menu, you need to pre-book and make your intentions clear when you book a table in this period.

Although the bar will only open for two hours at midday on Christmas Day, New Year’s Eve will be a major party. A four-course meal with a welcoming glass of fizz will be served at a cost of £70 per person. Entertainment will be provided by a two-woman duet singing ABBA and other favourite cover songs.

Looking forward into 2019, live musical entertainment acts have already been booked for the last Saturday of each month from January through November. The first one on 26 January will have a Buddy Holly theme. Also starting early in the new year will be regular Quiz Nights on Mondays.

The function room has now been refurbished and is available for private dining, parties, meetings, event viewing on TV, etc.

The roof, wall and ceiling coverings of the White Lion have been stripped back to expose the condition of the structural frame of the Grade II listed building and most of the more modern extensions. Unsurprisingly, a number of rotten timbers have been uncovered. These include floor joists over the cellar and under the bath tub and some of the historic rafters and purlins.

The gents’ WC and walls of the snug have been removed in preparation for extending the bar and trading area into the rear court yard. The southern half of the large outbuilding has been insulated and advance preparations for drinks plumbing have been installed with advice from Dayla’s specialist advisors to serve as the cellars when the pub reopens. Mandy has created a FaceBook page: The White Lion Renovation which has photos documenting some of the findings and progress.

December will be a busy month at the Black Horse Inn with several special events lined up. The Christmas Menu is available on their helpful web site, www.theblackhorsechesham.co.uk and can be booked for any days from 4 to 23 December. The final Vegan Dining Evening of 2018 will be 12 December. Carols by Candlelight with the Chess Valley Male Choir will be on Tuesday 18 December at 7:30pm.

For quiz enthusiasts, there will be some seasonal variety. The final regular Tuesday Night Quiz of this year will be on the 11 December. On Sunday 16 December from 8pm will be the annual “Quizmas Jumper Party” with bonus points for great jumpers. The finale will be a Review of the Year 2018 Quiz on Sunday 30 December from 8pm. Special prizes for the top three teams have been promised for this one.

Bill Ingram
Did you hear the one about the eccentric vicar?

It has struck me as interesting that so many of the naturalists who gained fame before the 20th century were often also vicars. A bit of research revealed there were so many more than I had imagined. In fact, almost every stone I turned revealed a country parson who had also been interested in the natural world. It seemed to go with the job. So I have picked a small selection whose behaviours were even found strange by their contemporaries.

The Reverend Charles Shaw was ordained in the late 1950s and practised his vocation in and around the Bolton area. Beyond his own parishioners what reputation he did have was not as a priest but as a botanist. His particular obsession was discovering alien plants that had invaded this country or had escaped captivity, somehow appearing on those marginal forgotten or ignored areas, such as industrial dumps or rubbish pits.

One of his favourite sites to visit was polluted ground beside the Crown Wallpapers factory in Bolton which was frequently flooded by the discharge of effluent from the factory. In pre-synthetic wallpaper days the paper was made using discarded rags and plant materials, much of which was imported from abroad. The paper manufacturing process used acids to break down fibres. Amongst the waste water dispersed were seeds and acids to break down fibres. Amongst the waste water dispersed were seeds and

The waste tip Charles found many exotic plants successfully growing and indeed propagating. Examples included date palms, carrots and parsnips. Over the years his reputation grew and he became known by his fellow priests as ‘the vicar of weeds’. Some of you may know Roy Lancaster (of Gardeners’ Question Time fame), who became Charles’ protégé, and accompanied him on plant hunting trips.

Charles went on to discover many new varieties of native species as well as a long list of ‘exotics’ that have since become semi-naturalised invasive species.

About the time Charles Shaw had begun to discover his exotic plants the Reverend Keble Martin was already 80 years old. Having studied botany whilst taking holy orders, Martin continued his botanical interest by first cataloguing and then publishing a flora of Devon. This achievement must have spurred him on to study the whole of Great Britain’s plant species, though it was not until his 80th year that he published his magnum opus: The Concise British Flora. As an accomplished botanical illustrator he produced a flora containing his own excellent drawings that are both accurate and naturalistic.

To achieve such realism Keble Martin was committed to sketching his botanic examples in situ. If seeking to draw cliff-edge plants, for example, he might take along ropes and grappling hooks and having secured the rope around a convenient rock and the other end round his waist, he would swing out to reach the ledge from which the specimen grew, and hanging there used pencil and notebook to sketch away.

Going back to the 18th century we find the earliest examples of what has been described as ‘the parson antiquarians’.

Scientific study of the natural world was only in its infancy. One important explorer of the medical, natural and ancient world was the Reverend William Stukeley. Before he became a vicar he studied medicine. During his studies he was known to steal dogs so he could dissect them! He became a doctor in London, but on hearing that an elephant had died his old instincts came back and together with Hans Sloane, who would later found the British and Natural History Museums, he dissected the pachyderm as part of an autopsy. They concluded that the elephant’s death had been hastened by ‘a great quantity of ale’ given to it by spectators!

Stukeley was described as having acquired over the years most, if not all, the eccentricities of the gentlemen who became his acquaintances. He seemed universally liked and once, when he was laid up with an ailment, he was visited in a single day by over 120 of his friends. His biographer described him as simultaneously “a mixture of simplicity, drollery, absurdity, ingenuity, superstition and capable of being pathetic, charming, admirable, and laughable by turns”. He is known for his investigation and theorising over the purpose of Stonehenge which he concluded was down to the Druids. In later life he adopted the name ‘Chyndonax’ as he identified with the Druids in a personal capacity and was known by friends as ‘The Druid’.

Today almost all the scientific community and at least the majority of the population are comfortable with Charles Darwin’s theories on evolution by natural selection. As Charles also took holy orders and some of his habits were certainly eccentric, it’s tempting to include him as another eccentric naturalist vicar. However, I think we should consider Darwin an eccentric but genius protégé of a number of the more enlightened natural philosophers whom he met and corresponded with during his formative years.

One of these mentors was the Reverend William Buckland. He was firmly wedded to the biblical account of the creation of the Earth and subsequent deluges, the last of which being Noah’s Flood. However, during geological field trips Buckland discovered fossil evidence that caused him to question the biblical account of the history of the world. He discovered the fossil bones of the first giant reptile which he named Megalosaurus and led, twenty years later, to the coining of the term dinosaur by one of his contemporaries.

Despite Buckland’s sound scientific approach he too was an eccentric. He undertook field work dressed in gown and cap, lectured classes on horseback and filled his home with animals, both living and dead with whom he also conversed. Most extraordinarily, Buckland practised zoophagy. This is eating one’s way through the animal kingdom. He hosted dinner parties where guests were presented with everything from flies to mice, crocodile and panther. The story reached legendary proportions when he was once shown a heart, believed to be that of King Louis XIV. Before anyone could intervene he had grabbed it and gobbled it up in its entirety!

Looking at the lives of these vicars it is perhaps not totally surprising why so many were also interested in studying the natural world. Studying holy orders at University was mostly the vocation of the sons of gentlemen and as the curriculum was not that taxing there was plenty of opportunity to take up and pursue other pastimes; hunting or collecting being suitable activities. Perhaps the loneliness of the country parson, starved of the company of like-minded gentlemen, also meant they were just one step away from acquiring eccentricities.

I hope you have enjoyed or at least been amused by this bunch of eccentric vicars.

Chrisbrown@rayshill.com
Malcolm Osborne
1943 – 2018

Malcolm and Di lived in The Cottage, Bottom Road, Buckland Common for 37 years before moving near their family in Cheshire. Just over a week after their move, we received the sad news Malcolm had died on 26 August. Malcolm loved living in the Hilltops; he supported the various events and his experience was greatly valued during the major refurbishment and extension of the Parish Hall in 2004. Malcolm was a Chartered Surveyor and ran his company for 25 years until he retired in 2015. He loved his job and his motto was ‘Love what you do and you will never work a day in your life!’

Malcolm met Di when he was 17 and Di 14: he was leading a Youth Club Hike up Kinder Scout in Derbyshire. When the group took a break at the top, Malcolm offered a beautiful young girl a piece of his orange (being a ‘careful with his money’ Yorkshire lad, he was a generous type!) and as they say, the rest is history - their Golden Wedding Anniversary was just a few days after Malcolm’s death.

Di and the family brought Malcolm ‘home’ in September and following a Cremation Service in Amersham a Service of Thanksgiving took place at St Leonards Church. The Church looked beautiful with flowers from local gardens arranged on the windowsills and Altar. Malcolm’s family and friends filled the Church; some local and some going back to his schooldays in Yorkshire: he never forgot his Yorkshire roots.

We heard a moving Tribute to their father from Kate and Jamie. They began by saying how special he was as a husband, father, grandfather and friend. Throughout their lives Malcolm provided love and support and welcomed Andrew and Sophie into the family. Di and Malcolm were delighted when their grandchildren came along – Toby, Lara, Poppy, Tabitha and Jasper. He went out of his way to encourage the whole family to achieve their goals. He was extremely proud when Kate became an Airline Pilot and Jamie a Doctor of Psychology.

One of his hobbies was tinkering with and building cars, not always successfully! His great achievement was building his boat ‘Kinder’ in the front garden of The Cottage. It was quite a spectacle as a huge crane lifted her onto a trailer in Bottom Road. A project that did go right! With Di, many happy trips were made in Kinder over the years.

The family loved walking and the annual skiing trips - Malcolm taught himself to ski from a book: and the ‘mountains’ of the Peak District formed his practice area!

We heard Tributes by two old friends, Ian Page and Peter Naish from their younger days – highlighting Malcolm as a true friend who could be relied upon completely. Along with Peter, Malcolm joined a crew sailing across the Atlantic from Spain to the Caribbean. Being married to Di, who is an excellent cook, Malcolm’s cooking skills were challenged - he served up fantastic fruit salads but fresh fruit was only available for the first 10 days! During the cruise Malcolm’s dry sense of humour had the crew in stitches.

As Kate and Jamie concluded the tribute to their father, they said how much it meant to be able to be with him at the hospital and hear him remark how much he enjoyed just sitting around and joking with his family. This has very much encouraged Toby’s love of poor jokes and this part of their father will live on. He will be sadly missed by friends, family and the love of his life – their mother Diana.

Diana and the family would like to thank all the friends from the villages for their kind messages.
Marion Seal

1931 - 2018

Marion was born at Mount Nugent Farm at Bellingdon and moved to Vale Farm, Hawridge at a few weeks old. She spent her early years at the farm enjoying all aspects of country life.

The next move was to the top of the hill to The Laurels. Marion attended the local village school and passed a scholarship to Dr Challoner’s Grammar School in Amersham. On completing her education she followed her love of children to take up teaching as a career. Marion was unable to attend a Teacher Training College until she was 18 and filled the time helping the infants at the village school. She then attended Newlands Park Training College at Chalfont St Giles. On completing her training her first position was at St Mary's Church of England School in Old Amersham.

Marion married Stan in 1954 at Hawridge Church following a romance which started in their early teenage years. They were happily married for 64 years. Their first home was the Granary Cottage at Hawridge Court and this is where their first son Richard was born. Eventually the family moved to Bellingdon, where her sons Andrew and Christopher were born.

Stan’s job involved a lot of overseas travelling and, with her two young children, Marion accompanied him to Tripoli, staying for a year. To go from the English countryside to living in a small Libyan village while Stan was working in the desert on communications to oil company outposts was quite an expedition in 1958!

In the early 1960s there was a shortage of teachers and, after a break looking after her family, Marion was encouraged to return and filled a position at William Durrant School in Chesham, where she remained in various positions until her retirement. In later years this included home tutoring for children who were unable to attend school due to illness and helping Asian children settle into the community.

Throughout her life, Marion enjoyed music and was an accomplished pianist, playing hymns at school at the age of eight and in adult life played the organs in all the local churches. She loved village life and supported village activities in the parish, organising teas at Church Fetes and providing cakes. She supported Hawridge and Bellingdon churches, being on the flower and cleaning rota for both.

Marion had a long-standing association with the Girl Guide Movement, being a guide, lieutenant and captain of the village unit and later an active member of the Chesham Trefoil Guild.

Marion liked to help people whenever she could and was a voluntary driver for the Red Cross. In later years she gave great support to Stan in his capacity as President and Welfare Officer of the local branch of the RAF Association, accompanying him on welfare visits.

Above all she loved family life and nothing gave her greater pleasure than having them all around her. Wife, mother to three sons, grandmother to seven and great-grandmother to one. In recent years Wednesday evenings were family evenings with grandma and granddad providing a meal for whoever wanted to come – including boyfriends and girlfriends. These became known as ‘Wacky Wednesdays’.

During her illness, Marion had great support from her sons and daughters-in-law. The family would like to thank everyone for the support given to them at this sad time and for the letters and cards of condolence.

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I well remember when I was first asked to write a recipe for the new Hilltop News. I was delighted to accept, but said that a name would have to be found for me. Somebody, to this day I know not who, came up with ‘Curvaceous Cook’, but was worried that I would be offended. I loved it then and, three stone lighter, I love it still, so thank you, whoever you are!

Watercress pancakes with smoked salmon

4oz plain flour, ½ tsp bicarbonate of soda, 1 tsp cream of tartar, ½ tsp salt, black pepper.

1 largish egg, good bunch watercress, ½ pt milk.

Whizz all dry ingredients and the egg together, then slowly add the milk till smooth.

Heat a heavy frying pan or griddle till very hot. Smear with oil, then drop spoonfuls of the mix on till bubbling. Turn over and cook just a few moments on the other side. The size of spoon will determine the size of the pancakes, but aim for one mouthful each! Put onto warm plate and cover with damp cloth to keep moist and warm. (at this point they may be stored or frozen).

Mix together 1/3 pt whipped double cream, 1 tsp horseradish sauce, salt, pepper, Tabasco and lemon juice to taste.

Spread a blob on each pancake, and top with some smoked salmon trimmings which have been chopped up. (4 oz is plenty).

If you have it, dust with paprika or cayenne pepper just before serving. Nicest warm, but almost as good cold.

South African Casserole

1lb casserole steak, cut into 1” chunks. 4 rashers bacon, cut into 1” pieces, fried together in 2 oz butter

Lift into casserole with slotted spoon, then in the juices fry

4 oz mushrooms and 1 cup chopped onion.

Add: ½ cup tomato puree. ½ cup dry red wine. 1 cup boiling water,

1 tsp paprika, ½ tsp ground cloves, ½ tsp freshly ground nutmeg and 1 beef stock cube.

Pour everything into the casserole, cover with tight lid, and cook on 350 F/ 175C Gas Mark 4 for 2 hours or until tender. If I still had an Aga (sob) I would do it in the bottom oven for about 5 hours, as I don’t, I would use the slow cooker. It freezes well, and is almost better the next day, so can be made well ahead of time.

The casserole could be served with noodles, mashed potato, jacket spuds, rice or pretty much anything you fancy. We had it with salad, but any green veg would be lovely.

Canterbury Tart

PASTRY

100g cubed chilled butter, 225g plain white flour, 25g sifted icing sugar, 1 beaten egg

I throw everything except the egg into the processor and whizz till like crumbs, then add the egg in a stream delicately until the whole lot just sticks together. If doing by hand rub butter into flour stir in the icing sugar, then add the egg till it forms a ball. Chill in fridge for at least 30 minutes (can be overnight).

FILLING

4 eggs, 225g caster sugar, grated rind and juice 2 lemons, 100g melted butter

4 large cooking apples peeled and quartered. You are meant to arrange slices of dessert apple on the top, but I never bother!

25g Demerara sugar

I find this mix is enough almost for another smaller tart, but if you have a good deep pan it should be fine. Any mix left over can just go in a greased ramekin.

Roll pastry and line the tin. Prick base with fork and chill 30 mins.

Preheat oven to 200/400/gas 6. Put heavy baking tray into oven to get very hot

Beat eggs, sugar, lemon juice and rind together in large mixing bowl. Coarsely grate the apples straight into the mix, and turn thoroughly in the lemon mix.

Spread the mix over the base of the tart and level surface. Put on the slices if you want to.

Sprinkle with Demerara.

Put tart onto heated tray and bake for 40-50 minutes or until surface feels firm to touch, but still has a little wobble when shaken. It continues to set as it cools.

It is fine cooked ahead and warmed on the day, freezes like a dream, and best served warm rather than hot, but is also good cold.

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Hilltop News
The badger

It was a conversation with Sally Reynolds about the baby badgers she was fostering for the Wildlife Hospital that prompted a wonderful article from Jim Hetherington in February 2003. Sally’s only concern: the fact they’d ignored their custom-made sett and had made their home in the garage! Badgers had a benign image; they were free to roam and their only enemy was the motor car.

How times change. Nowadays, Sally’s instinct is still to nurture helpless animals but as a farmer she can no longer bring badgers into her home as she’s acutely aware of the dangers presented by these once harmless creatures.

Jim now writes - ‘The badger is responsible, it is claimed, for the rapid national spread of bovine TB. In 2017, over 33,000 cows with the disease were slaughtered in the UK – up from 27,000 in 2014. The disease continues to spread despite intensive efforts over several years to tackle it. An active badger culling programme - 19,000 were put down in 2017 – has not, it appears, made much of an impression. According to the Wild Life Trust, a further 42,000 badgers (a protected animal!) could be culled this year.

It was hoped that vaccination of the animal would be part of a solution but there is little scientific evidence that this has had the desired effect. Only Derbyshire claims to have produced positive results from a major vaccination programme. Farmers and campaigners eagerly await the publication of a government review of culling and vaccination as bovine TB continues to spread inexorably. Michael Gove will consider its findings which are expected to influence whether to expand the cull even further.

For the moment we don’t suffer here from this dreaded disease but our cattle are watched with a degree of desperation and every dead badger found undergoes a post-mortem. A far cry from my article of February 2003.

Jim Hetherington
Dear Diary

December 2018

7th  Local History Group – St Leonards Parish Hall – 8pm
8th  ‘Mistletoe & Wine’ – St Leonards Parish Hall – 7 for 7.30pm
11th Good Neighbours Group AGM – St Leonards Parish Hall – 3pm
17th  WI – St Leonards Parish Hall – 8pm
19th  Tea Party – St Leonards Church Room – 3pm

January 2019

11th  Local History Group – St Leonards Parish Hall – 8pm
18th  Film Night – St Leonards Parish Hall – 7 for 7.30pm
21st  WI – St Leonards Parish Hall – 8pm
28th  Parish Council Meeting – St Leonards Parish Hall – 8pm

February 2019

1st  Local History Group – St Leonards Parish Hall – 8pm
8th  Race Night – St Leonards Parish Hall – 7 for 7.30pm
We welcome all news, letters and articles which are of general interest and relevance to the Hilltop Villages. Material for inclusion in the February/March edition should be sent to Graham Lincoln or Anne Butterworth (Church Matters) by 10 January latest. Please note that photos sent online must be at least 2,500 x 1,750 pixels in size.

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