Village News

March 2016

Your independent village magazine - produced and delivered free to every home in the Tring Rural villages entirely by local volunteers.

Long Johns adrift as unlikely treasure seekers triumph in spite of parrot plot

by our man at the bar, Luke B. Hynde-Yew

TREASURE ISLAND? Surely some mistake. This new adventure for panto contrived by the amazing Mr Neil Gurney BEM, meant that the audience had even less chance of knowing what to expect. The cast too regarded it as a different experience and threw themselves into the production with renewed vigour. Any production featuring pirates (large and small) is a great opportunity for pirate talk and 'hello sailor' jokes, and indeed the script was not lacking in this respect.

(Continued on page 27)

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- Quick! March 18

We depend on readers' articles and pictures. So let's have them!

Riding on the crest of a wave **All photographs: John Kaye**

Has anyone seen this car?

Last chance, read all about it on page 25

Picture: Phil Buchi

Take a gander through our pages

All goose pictures by Ken Lawless

T' Scallywag Florence tests the sea worthiness of the good ship Ashwell

The full(er) story on page 23

Picture: Andy Ashwell

The Great Flydini astounds his assistant (and the rest of us)

More astonishing acts from Maggie's Cabaret on page 31

Picture: John Painter.

Village News

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Receiving your contributions for this month's Village News, two things struck me.

Firstly, we are now well into Lent and rapidly heading towards Easter, as can be seen by the number of events that are happening, linked to this major festival of the Christian calendar.

Secondly, there are a lot of events that are being run by and for the people of the parish, whether it's Wilstone Community shop or the Queen's Head in Long Marston, churches being used for wider community events, or events being run by local people for the wider community. There's plenty to read about this month and others to find out about and go along to.

So thank you to all those that are contributing to making Tring Rural a great place to live, and to everyone else, please support the excellent events that are being provided on your doorstep (in same cases literally), perhaps even get involved in running some!

Wishing you a healthy Easter, and as Martin reminds us, a happy New Year (old calendar!) too.

The next edition will be for April 2016 and the deadline for items is: Wednesday 16 March 2016

Read *Village News* online at:
www.tringruralpc.org.uk (Click on Village News)
www.wilstone.me.uk (Click on Village News)

Church services

St Mary's Puttenham
St Cross Wilstone and
All Saints Long Marston

You are most welcome to join us at any of the services.

6th March
10am St. Cross Worship for All
10am All Saints Sunday Worship

13th March
8.15am St. Mary's Holy Communion
10am St Cross Sunday Worship
10am All Saints Holy Communion
6pm All Saints Evening Prayer

20th March (Palm Sunday)
10am St. Cross Holy Communion
10am All Saints Holy Communion

22nd March
10am St. Cross Holy Communion

25th March (Good Friday)
2pm St. Mary's Last Hour

27th March
10am St. Cross Sunday Worship
10am All Saints Holy Communion
3.30pm St. Mary's Evensong

28th March
10am St. Cross Eggs

St. Cross, Wilstone.

Village News is written, edited, produced and distributed entirely by local volunteers. Only the final printing is done by a commercial company. We aim to be local, interesting, informative, fun and a good read.
Let us know if we are not!

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What's on...

PALM SUNDAY

FOLLOW THE DONKEY
FROM WILSTONE
VILLAGE HALL TO
ST. CROSS

MARCH 20TH
AT 10.00AM

EVERYONE IS WELCOME

Tambourine Jerk

Live @ Wilstone Village Hall

Sat 16th April 2016
8 - 11pm

A fund raiser for First Steps Pre-School in Long Marston
Tickets on sale at Wilstone Village shop priced @ £10.00
There will be a licensed bar on the night

For one night only Tambourine Jerk will be rocking out the village hall with 40 of the best pop and rock songs from the last six decades of music. Their set will take you on a sonic journey from fifties Rock 'n' Roll right through to 21st Century pop classics.

From Beatles to Bowie, The Rolling Stones to Jason Mraz, Neil Diamond to the Kings of Leon. There is something for everyone from disillusioned teenagers to silver surfers!

Diary dates...

Tring Rural Parish Council meetings (8pm)
The public are welcome to attend these meetings.
Wednesday 2March Long Marston village hall.
Wednesday 6 April Wilstone village hall.

Saturday 5th March
Tennis Club Quiz Night, 7pm, Long Marston Village Hall.
Sunday 6th March
Mothers' Day service St Cross 10am
Friday 18th March 2016
Wilstone film night: - The Lady in the Van
Sunday 27th March
Half Moon Scrabble night, 7:30pm
Tuesday 22nd March
Tea afternoon and Library, All Saints, 2pm
Monday 28th March
Easter Egg Hunt, St. Cross Church, 10:30 prompt start
Sunday 2nd April
Jumble sale, Puttenham, 2pm
Friday 8th April
Cecilia Tea Rooms, Puttenham, 3pm
Saturday 16th April
- Mentmore Plant Sale, 12-4pm
- Tambourine Jerk, Wilstone Village Hall, 8-11pm

Sunday 24th April
Half Moon Scrabble night, 7:30pm
Tuesday 26th April
Tea afternoon and Library, All Saints, 2pm
Sunday 1st May
- May Day, Puttenham, 6am
- Cricket 1st round National Village Cup 2pm start.

Tuesday 3rd May
The Thankful Village, Theatre at Puttenham, 9:30pm
Sunday 15th May
Ashridge Estate Spring plant sale, 11am - 4pm
Friday 27th May
Annual Village Football Match, LM Recreation Ground
Sunday 29th May
Half Moon Scrabble night, 7:30pm
Sunday 19th June
Marsworth Steam Rally, Startops Farm
Sunday 26th June
Half Moon Scrabble night, 7:30pm
Friday 8th July
Cecilia Tea Rooms, Puttenham, 3pm
Saturday 6th August
Long Marston & Puttenham Annual Village Show
Victory Hall , Long Marston.
Saturday 3rd September
Jumble sale, Puttenham, 2pm
Saturday 1st October
October supper, Puttenham
Friday 28th October
Cecilia Tea Rooms, Puttenham, 3pm

... don't miss anything with our guide to local events! Free listings.

ST. CROSS LENT LUNCH

Wednesday 2 March 12noon—2pm

Wilstone village hall

A frugal lunch of soup, bread and cheese, tea and coffee.

All welcome----no charge

Follow Long Marston Cricket Club at www.pitchero.com/clubs/longmarstoncricketclub/

MOTHERS DAY

MARCH 6TH

A SPECIAL SERVICE AT ST. CROSS AT 10.00AM

BRING **ALL** THE FAMILY TO CELEBRATE MOTHERING SUNDAY IN WILSTONE

COFFEE WILL BE SERVED AFTER THE SERVICE.

EASTER EGG HUNT

MONDAY 28th MARCH

ST CROSS CHURCH WILSTONE

10.30am prompt start

HOT CROSS BUNS

AND COFFEE TOO!

Winter fun

Cheddington Bowls Club

Join us for Winter fun at Cheddington Bowls Club – you and any friends you bring will receive a warm welcome.

Arrive at 7pm for a 7.30 start

Race night **Saturday 8 April**

OUR bowlers and their partners have just returned from a 4 day treat at Potters Leisure Resort (Hopton on Sea), tired, but full of the joys of 'winter'. Potters is the home of the World Bowls Championships; shown each January on BBC.

Potters is perhaps better known for its leisure facilities, its theatre school and West End quality shows, good food and dance and big band weekends. Potters is a favourite with many Club members, so Potters all inclusive holidays come highly recommended. *We have already booked again for next year!*

Free Parking at the Recreation Ground, High St, Cheddington.

During Winter weeks we have Short Mat bowls (2), Bridge and Cribbage sessions at the Club

More info? Club Sec. Tony Duke 01525 220644/ Web. cheddingtonbowls.org.uk

Wilstone Film Nights

FRIDAY MARCH 18th

The Lady in the Van

Written by Alan Bennett and starring Dame Maggie Smith

The film tells the true story of the relationship between Alan Bennett & the singular Miss Shepherd, a woman of uncertain origins who 'temporarily' parked her van in Bennett's London driveway and proceeded to live there for 15 years. Their unique story is funny, poignant and life-affirming.

8pm Friday March 18th.
Doors open 7.15pm
Wilstone Village Hall. Licenced bar.
Tickets £7

Village Networks' wireless broadband project - update

Good progress has been made with ten early installations around the parish completed, together with the first one in Wilstone.
Simon Mead has kindly agreed to the installation of a node on top of one of the silos at his farm, which will enable coverage of the rest of Wilstone and Dixon's Wharf.
Village Networks have got agreement in principle with the residents of key houses in the main streets around Wilstone and Long Marston for the establishment of additional nodes on their properties, which will then provide coverage for neighbouring houses.
Plans to reach outlying properties around Gubblecote, Astrope and Puttenham are in development, and Village Networks are sure that they will be able to deliver their network there, once the main network backbone is in place.
Village Networks will soon be publishing a roadmap of planned installations.
To register your interest for Village Broadband go to: www.villagenetworks.co.uk/register t: 03333 321817

Bookings Secretary - Long Marston and Puttenham Victory Hall

We would welcome expressions of interest from anyone who would be willing to take on this vital volunteer role.

The "job" includes liaising with hall hirers from the first enquiry, through possible viewing of the Hall, confirming the booking and processing payment and associated paperwork, updating the calendars, so that other interested parties (Cleaner / Maintenance) know when the Hall is being used, getting keys to the hirer in good time and collecting them back after the event, and returning the deposit

The Booking Secretary is expected to update the committee at each meeting (these are held every couple of months) and to provide a report for the AGM

We use a number of websites to publicise our facility and have a regular advert in the Village News

Community Shop Wilstone opening hours:

Monday to Friday: 7:30am to 2:00pm Saturday 7:30am to 1:00pm Sunday: 9:00am to 12:00 noon.

From our reporter at the Parish Council meeting

Wilstone Village Hall.
The Council agreed to pay for the refurbishment of toilets in the village hall. The hall committee will repay the net amount, while the council will reclaim the VAT.

Flooding
Meetings have been held between villagers, David Gauke, and representatives from Thames Water, with little result. A request was made in writing for answers about the capacity of the pumping station. Councillor Hollinghurst said that he had requested a survey of Chapel Lane to investigate other services and utilities underneath prior to any work to lower the road. In response to a question as to whether the council could do culvert clearing and then bill the riparian owner for the work, it was explained that a court order would be required. Councillor Hollinghurst revealed that various county councils were working together and contacting the Environment Minister to try to get more power to force culvert work by owners. These powers are currently spread between several different agencies and authorities. The Gubblecote ditches have been ordered to be cleared.

Budget
The council had re-visited the budget and produced a proposed precept of £18260 or just under £30 per house on average. A detailed breakdown of spending in the budget will be issued.

Broadband
Village Networks have said that the cost to the council of £3600 will be refunded if 100 or more customers sign up. As there are already 70 this should not present a problem. The council decided to proceed by requesting a fully detailed and costed proposal.

Holiday Camps
Stuart Hunt from Apex 360 gave a presentation. The company organises and runs summer camps for children. Ages are 5 to 13, attending a 1 week camp with sports, arts and craft activities. The council agreed to proceed with this idea, in both Wilstone and Long Marston

Councillor Nick Hollinghurst attended the meeting.

Ditches/culverts

By Olli Wheeler-Cornell

In respect of clearing the ditches, we would like to reiterate they are the responsibility of the riparian land owners.
Tring Rural Parish Council have no powers or rights to enforce this matter.
The Environmental Agency state it is a civil matter, and the only course of action is in the courts.

Council news -continued

Vote for our Parish Project in Tesco !
By Lucy Bancroft

As you may have read in earlier editions of Village News, the Parish Council intends to install some outdoor gym equipment in both Wilstone and Long Marston recreation grounds. The equipment was to be funded from some of the money received as part of the Solar Park Community Fund. Back in November we applied for an open spaces grant from the Tesco Bags of Help scheme run in conjunction with Groundwork. We have found out that the parish is to receive at least £8,000 to go towards outdoor gym equipment and an outdoor table tennis table. Nearly 5,000 applications were received by Tesco so it is great news that the Long Marston and Wilstone project has been selected. Tesco are making three awards within our area, £8k, £10k and £12k. The public have the opportunity to vote for which project gets which amount in local Tesco stores between February 27th and March 6th.

You can vote for the Long Marston and Wilstone project in the Tring Tesco and also in Berkhamsted and Northchurch. If you shop at Tesco or are able to pop in between 27th February and 6th March, please vote for our parish project. The more money we receive from the Tesco Bags of Help scheme, the more money will be left in the Solar Park Community fund to be spent on other things within the parish.

Tring Rural Parish Council contacts

Your Parish Councillors are:

Mr Richard Briant 01442 825674
Mr Robert Briant 01442 825674
Ms Andrea Garnham 01296 660767
Mr Chris Griffiths 01296 668257
Mr Nick Murrell 01296 668190
Mr John Thirkettle 01296 661825
Mrs Olli Wheeler-Cornell (Chairman) 01296 662207
Mr Alan Winfield 01296 668977

The Clerk to the Council is :

Mrs Lucy Bancroft 07590 989202
email: clerk@tringruralpc.org.uk

***The Village Warden is*:**

Mr Colin Reedman 01442 822031

Parish Council Website:

www.tringruralpc.org.uk

Tring Rural Parish Council budget

by Olli Wheeler-Cornell

We understand there was some concern about the rise in the precept, as reported in the 'Village News'. Rest assured we are very mindful when setting the budget. At the January meeting we became aware of some mis-calculations. This was due to the way our budget is now formatted.

To be more transparent and to help you to gain a better understanding as to why the precept is set to rise this financial year: last year we reduced the precept, and had to dip into the reserves (which we are recommended to maintain, at a level of £13000.00+).

The precept will rise by 43%. Your contribution is approximately £30 for an average household. The accounts are open for public viewing – they will be posted on the notice boards and are obtainable from the Clerk to the Council.

This year's work entails a new roof to the bus shelter, repairs to the roof of the letch gate at the cemetery and work to the war memorials.

We would like to extend a cordial invitation to all parishioners to the open public meetings of Tring Rural Parish Council. Dates and locations are posted on all notice boards.

Wilstone Community Shop

Run by the community, for the community

We aim to serve the Community by:
- Keeping prices fair
- Offering a wide range of goods and services
- Stocking home-made and local produce
- Being a place where people like to shop and volunteers like to work

Super Spring Suma Sale!

Buy one get one free (BOGOF) may have been in the press recently for all the wrong reasons, but here at Wilstone Community Shop have no fear that you are in for a bargain!

It's vital that our shop is stocked with the staple products which we all need, but it's also good to try new lines to tempt us out of our normal buying habits. So we continually try different things, but as space is limited, they do need to sell.

Tempting Teas...

We recently reviewed our stock and decided that the *Suma* range of products—although initially welcomed—take up shelf space that would be better dedicated to other product lines.

Therefore, from the **1st March**, we will be offering BOGOF on ALL our Suma range while stocks last. This covers a wide range of items from spices to biscuits—and quite literally—soups to nuts.

There are a few Suma products which have always sold and continue to sell well, and Ali is doing her best to ensure that we will still be able to stock these special items into the future.

So do make sure you visit us and take advantage of this truly bargainous Spring sale!

Spices 'n snacks

2016 Annual Members Meeting: Friday 11th March 7:30 pm

We are looking forward to welcoming all our shareholders to our Annual Members' Meeting which will be held on the above date at Wilstone Village Hall.

A complimentary glass of wine will hopefully encourage a good turnout for what should be a fairly swift run through the Agenda.

We are, as always, keen to gather our members' suggestions, comments and observations as to how we can improve our service to the community, so please don't stay silent.

Upcoming Dates

Mothering Sunday—March 9th
Good Friday—March 25th
Easter Monday—March 28th

We will be stocking a selection of Easter eggs, other chocolate gifts and cards suitable for all these occasions!

Promotional feature sponsored by Wilstone Community Shop

Letters...

Dear Friends
I would like to thank everyone who sent me get well messages and cards during my recent time in hospital and in particular the support given to Olga in my absence. I am pleased to say that I am now back at home, albeit minus two small toes, and am recovering well. Hope to be out and about the Village soon.
Best wishes to all. Ken Martin, Wilstone.

To whom it may concern

I am 16 years old and I am raising money to go on a world challenge expedition in 2017 and I would like to advertise my babysitting services.

Many thanks, Sophie Freestone
Telephone: 01442 891877

Brian Allen

by Phil Buchi

WE are very sad to report the death of our friend Brian Allen, known to some as "Printer Brian". He had suffered from a heart condition and died at home on Sunday 14th February. Although he lived in Aston Clinton, Brian was well known locally and was a regular visitor to the Half Moon as well as a keen bowler. He operated his print business 'Printique' until very recently. A good friend to this community, he printed every programme for the Wilstone village fete and would not accept any payment, saying each year that it was his contribution to the fete. We offer our condolences to his family and friends.

ALTERNATIVE B : GREEN WAYOUT

Green actions for social change

We are looking for 5 people aged 18-30 who are interested in starting their own socially responsible community project to attend a training programme

1 week in Denmark March 5th to 12th 2016
1 week in Bulgaria August 2016

Aim of the training

Train young people in key concepts of social and green entrepreneurship, and to develop their ideas alongside other young people from Bulgaria, Denmark & Latvia.

Cost : 50 Euros (£40)

The project has been funded by Erasmus+ and all other travel/food costs will be covered.

If interested please contact Musarat Inayat

See our website http://www.communityactiondacorum.org/alternative-b

Calling all Gardeners
Mentmore Village Green
Plant Sale
Saturday 16th April 12 - 4pm
Professional and amateur growers supplying a wide variety and choice of plants, BBQ, teas and cakes.
A fabulous location and an enjoyable day.
Contact tel: 07795383086

Sewing skills in Slapton

by Maggie Buchi

READERS have told me that they have taken advantage of Sue's sewing skills in Slapton. She has altered many of my favourite dresses - those which just need a bit of tweaking to look fabulous again. She really is a talented and delightful person. I mention this in case you did not keep her number from a previous edition of Village News. Here it is again: 01525 229639. This really is an excellent service to have on our doorstep.

Sudoku Corner by Colin Moore

No 101 Easy

	7							8
						2	5	6
3	6	8					9	1
4				8				9
		9	4				2	5
			5		6			
1					3	4		
			6		8			
8	5							2

Solution on page 27

Getting involved in local life...

Queen's Head, Long Marston: Plan B by Tim and Liz Ayling

TO be honest, we didn't really expect to get the opportunity to provide the villages with an update on our progress; plan A was all about keeping the pub open over Christmas and it's now February. We didn't have a Plan B.

However, we are still in situ, and we've got through "Dry January". Our Tuesday quiz, hosted by the uniquely talented Blinky, goes from strength to strength and we'd love to see a couple more regular teams.

The new kitchen has been put through its paces with some pop-up restaurant nights - Mexican, Indian and, more recently, as a fund-raiser for Tring School's World Challenge initiative, a charming French Bistro. We have a Fish and Chip evening waiting in the wings, and promises of a Thai night too.

Drinks wise we've been working our way through the Fullers stock lists and trying some different wines and spirits, and some particularly interesting Malt Whiskies (Monkey Shoulder anyone...?)

If you've not been in for a while, or perhaps never been in, do come and see us.

We update our Facebook page regularly, but if that's not your thing, please drop us an email at queensheadlongmarston@gmail.com and we can let you know what's coming up.

As ever, we'd like to express our thanks to those who continue to support us in this venture.

Wilstone Scrabble night at the Half Moon by Jane Waterhouse

MANY of the villagers got together on 24th January to challenge their friends and neighbours to an enjoyable game of Scrabble or two. Our congenial hosts provided some of the Scrabble boards and friends and neighbours lent some for the evening – they were needed as we had about 18 players!

We decided to divide into three groups: beginners, intermediates and advanced players. This gave us the opportunity to change groups for the second game with winners going up the ranks and the not so goods, like me, going down. So we played with people of a similar standard. I have to say that the competition in the teams was entertaining and the tactics interesting – no one threw their board in the air in disgust at their fortune but it was proposed a couple of times. The advanced players game was very cut throat and fun to watch – I believe Jane Shirley was the winner of the advanced players games but I may well be challenged on this – I know it was very, very close and I suspect there will be a desire to knock her off her podium next time.

Our main aim though was to have fun and we certainly managed that – with a village councillor and a landlord run ragged with their dictionaries as words were challenged for authenticity and some very good new words and meanings made up. If you hear in your travels some unusual words being tossed into conversations you're probably listening to a Wilstone Scrabbler!

We had such fun that we are doing it again every last Sunday of the month. If you are interested in joining us please just rock up on the night and have a go. Or you are welcome to just come as an observer. Don't forget that there are now Scrabble boards in the pub – so you could always come and hone your skills in between times if you wanted to. Hope to see you there.

HALF MOON SCRABBLE NIGHTS
LAST SUNDAY OF EVERY MONTH 7:30PM

Long Marston and Puttenham WI is fascinating by Margaret Kaye

At our last meeting we were treated to a display of wonderful fascinators. We then had the opportunity to make our own fascinator, so that's Ascot and the next wedding taken care of. At our next meeting we are starting to think about keeping fit and being healthy. With this in mind we will be having a demonstration of Pole Dancing as an exercise. The demonstration will be given by Rachel Clough who is a talented dancer and sportswoman. Visitors are most welcome.

For more information call Margaret Kaye 01296 662975

Getting involved in local life...

Here we go again

by Tony and Julie Marshall

'TWAS a dark and windy day, as we trudged through the sticky mud, heading to our goal. A startled crow cried out a warning, but our gritty allotmenteering resolve pushed us on.

Eventually we reached our destination, the silhouette of a flapping witch made of tarpaulins and netting greeted us.
The weather had taken its toll.

Our Christmas potatoes had started to sprout again, confused by the mild temperatures. Our bird scarer had gone, probably off to, 'not scare any birds' elsewhere and our chairs were cowering in a corner under the purple sprouting broccoli. But on a good side, we have enough water for months……so hey!

It was time.

Hoods up, we started to shovel the heavy manure into barrows to be put on our raised beds, the rain dripping from our ruddy faces.

At one point a *giant squid* attacked, but luckily for us, it turned out to be a large bush and when we untangled ourselves, it continued its mad tumbling run towards the safety of the canal.

Our minds looked back to last summer, an opportunity to see other allotmenteers, to discuss what's growing well, the age old debates of 'Old methods' vs. 'New methods', new inventions and who is bending the wire by the pallets, over a BBQ with a cold can, a cheeky little wine or a nice cup 'o' tea in hand.

Good luck with your Harvests!

Date booked for next AGM is April 11th at the Half Moon.

Tring & District Local History & Museum Society Speaker Programme

by Martin Wells

All meetings, unless otherwise stated, will be held at 8 pm in the Tring Parish Hall (behind the Church of St Peter and St Paul, High Street).

Visitors will be welcome on payment of £4 per meeting.

Wednesday 18th May 2016 - AGM
The 1850s account book of William Brown, of Tring, *Chris Reynolds*
William Brown's client account general ledger contains a wealth of information relating to property in and around Tring, including sales of houses and farms, valuations for probate, etc relating to local families. A significant part of the volume deals with the management of the Tring Park estate. Dr Chris Reynolds is an amateur historian and member of the Society. He has lived in Tring for over 50 years, and currently runs the "Genealogy in Hertfordshire" website. This site includes many pages on Tring, including a digitised copy of William Brown's account book.

Wednesday 20th July 2016
Hilltop hamlet: Tales from Hastoe, *David Ridgwell*
David Ridgwell is an Open University graduate and retired chartered secretary with an interest in local and art history. He has been a resident of Hastoe for over 40 years and is the author of *Hilltop hamlet: Notes towards a history of Hastoe.* Commencing with the inclosures of 1797, the talk will embrace the various 19th century occupants of Hastoe House, the sweeping changes initiated by the Rothschilds and various events and personalities of more recent times.

Wednesday 21st September 2016
The search for Cheddington's history, *John T Smith*
John T Smith is the Chairman of the Cheddington History Society and a Birkbeck geographer. Since retiring after a career in education, he has been researching family and village history, and the First World War in which his father served as a stretcher-bearer. Following the success of a book of Second World War memories of Cheddington, John is now working on a First History of Cheddington as a long-term project. He will describe what has been discovered and the resources being used to fill the large gaps.

Wednesday 16th November 2016
Held at 8 pm in the Nora Grace Hall, Faversham Close, Tring (limited parking at the hall, but accessible from the Frogmore Street East car park).
from Wren to the Performing Arts School, *Mike Hutchinson*
Mike Hutchinson is a staff member and historian at the Tring Park School for the Performing Arts. He has delved into the darkest corners of the mansion's history and will talk about all its previous owners from Henry Guy to the Performing Arts School and the changes associated with them and the building.

Wednesday 18th January 2017
Two Georgian country houses in the Chilterns, *Adam Smith*
His talk will look at two contrasting country houses: classical West Wycombe Park, and Ashridge, the Gothic palace.

Violin, Viola, Piano & Music Theory Lessons in Cheddington

Vaughan Jones G.B.S.M., A.R.C.M. is a friendly and experienced teacher, who enjoys working with both children and adults, focussing on general musicianship as well as a tension free approach to playing.

Vaughan teaches from his home in Cheddington and has slots available on weekdays & weekends.

All ages welcome from 7 upwards
Violin and viola lessons from beginner up to Grade 8 and diploma standard
Piano lessons from beginner up to Grade 5 standard
Theory can also be taught up to Grade 8 standard
In addition, Vaughan can support students preparing for their ABRSM aural tests up to Grade 8
Lessons are £10 for 20 minutes, £15 for 30 minutes, £20 for 45 minutes or £25 for a full hour

If you're interested in starting lessons and would like more information, feel free to give Vaughan a call on **07870 171194** or e-mail him on: **info@manorhousemusic.co.uk**

Maths Tuition

Key Stages 3 & 4 and GCSE

- General help & revision
- Help with homework
- GCSE practice & Exam technique
- Those tricky A* questions
- Experienced maths teacher & tutor

Please call for a chat to discuss your child's requirements. Andy Ashwell BSc (Hons)
Mob: 07779 899135 Email: aashwell@sky.com

TRING SHOWSTOPPERS

Performing Arts for 6 – 18 year olds

Our workshops are taught by professionals, with classes in drama, singing and musical theatre, ensuring every child has the opportunity to reach their full potential.

To find out more about what we offer in Tring and surrounding villages email kate@tringshowstoppers.co.uk, visit our website www.tringshowstoppers.co.uk

or call Kate on 07790 487 022

LONG MARSTON VICTORY HALL

LARGE HALL WITH STAGE and LIGHTING RIG AVAILABLE FOR HIRE

AFTERNOONS (2-6pm) and MOST EVENINGS (6-11pm)

IDEAL VENUE FOR SOCIETIES, CLUBS and LIVE MUSIC GIGS.

For more details and to book, ring Liz Ayling on 07973 786389.

Marsworth Pre School

Marsworth Millennium Hall, Vicarage Road, Marsworth HP23 4LX
Tel: 07508 179658 Email: enquiries@marsworthpreschool.org.uk

Marsworth Pre-School, held at Marsworth Millennium Hall, is a very popular village pre-school with an outstanding reputation, attracting children from a wide area.

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Roll up, Roll up for the Spring Plant Fair Extravaganza! *By Jane Poole, Friends of Ashridge*

COME along and support the Ashridge Estate! How?... By buying top quality plants at the Ashridge Spring Plant Fair on 15th May 2016. The volunteers at the Friends of Ashridge run a Plant Fair on behalf of the National Trust at Ashridge, taking place on the Green at the foot of the Bridgewater monument. This will be our 20th consecutive Spring Plant Fair - the idea for the first plant fair was formed in 1997 by the then Chairman, Trevor Marwood. The Fair has since grown from strength to strength, in reach and revenue, and we now regularly raise circa £7,000 each year to help the National Trust maintain the Ashridge Estate. This is a very important event for the Friends of Ashridge and forms the basis of our financial support to the National Trust at the Estate, so please be generous!

There is free parking and no entry fee. There is also a tea room available and the National Trust shop to visit. Please come and browse amongst the thousands of plants that will be on display and the plant stock available from small visiting nurseries on a commercial basis. These nurseries kindly donate a percentage of their earnings to the National Trust Plant Fair.

The majority of our plants are from volunteer growers and private gardens. If you have any plants to donate to the Fair then we would love to hear from you. We are especially interested in vegetable plants, border plants and perennials, roses, climbers and herbs. The estate perimeter straddles three counties so plant enthusiasts come from far and wide to purchase the high quality plants on offer.

To donate any plants, please contact the organiser, John Cartwright on 01442 864 984. The Plant Fair is on Sunday 15 May 2016, 11am till 4pm at the National Trust Ashridge Visitor Centre, Monument Drive, Ringshall HP4 1LX. We look forward to seeing you.

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From the Vicarage

by Rev'd Jane Banister

E IS for eggs, which carry so much symbolism for us. Our Shrove Tuesday celebrations use pancakes made with eggs as our big celebration before the days of Lent, days when we learn about prayer, charity and fasting, a time of growth in our spiritual lives. Then on Easter Day we give each other eggs, whether chocolate or decorated hen's eggs, to symbolise the new life that Easter celebrates. Others interpret the eggs as representing a teardrop to remind us of the suffering that Jesus endured, others that it is an image of the stone that was found rolled away from the entrance of the tomb.

A is for alleluia! A word that is Hebrew in origin, and means "praise to you O God". It is an expression of thanksgiving and of joy, and is used before the Gospel, the story of the Good News of Jesus, in our worship. It is a word that we usually do not use in Lent, so that it becomes of greater significance when we use it again at Easter.

S is for spring, the season that we in this part of the world cannot but associate with Easter. It is a time of increasing warmth, of longer hours of daylight, and of seeing the new world spring to life again. What better image could we have?

T is for Triduum, which is the ancient Latin word meaning the three important days that create Holy Week and Easter. Maundy Thursday when Jesus shared supper with his friends, washed their feet, and reminded them and us that we should love one another as he loves us; Good Friday is the day when Jesus was crucified and died, and is one of the most important days in the Church's calendar. It reminds us that pain is part of life, as are hope and love. Easter Day is the highlight of our year, the day when we rejoice together in the new life that we have been given.

E is for east, where the sun rises, and the direction which our churches face to remind us of the women in the garden meeting Jesus early in the morning. It is also the Eastern Orthodox church who celebrate Easter later than we do because of a different calendar, and who have such rich rituals and traditions (and who insist on clergy having beards!)

R is for resurrection, the heart of Easter. However you celebrate it, and whatever it means to you, may is be a time of rejoicing and of growth.

Holy Week and Easter services

Sunday 20th March is Palm Sunday when we remember Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem and this is incorporated into our worship at All Saints, Long Marston , and Holy Cross, Wilstone, which both have services at 10am as usual. On Monday 21st and Tuesday 22nd, Compline will be said at 8pm in St Peter and St Paul's Tring, and all are welcome to join this peaceful and ancient service to mark the end of the day.

Wednesday 23rd March sees a talk by Canon Martin Banister on St Matthew's Gospel, which is the Gospel that we follow through this church year. This will be at 8pm in St Peter and St Paul.

Maundy Thursday is 24th March and there will be a Team service at 8pm in St Peter and St Paul, which includes the washing of feet, and ends with the stripping of the altars and the vigil until midnight. The vigil may well be in all our churches, but please check about that.

Good Friday is 25th March and there will be a Family Service at All Saints which is suitable for all ages. At 2pm, there will be a service at 2pm at St Mary's, Puttenham, to mark Jesus' last hour on the Cross.

Holy Saturday is a day of waiting, and of getting the churches ready.

Easter Day – Alleluia! – is 27th March and there will be 10am Communion services at All Saints and Holy Cross, and Evensong at 3.30pm at St Mary's.

We hope to see you at some or all of these events, and do please get in touch if you want to know more.

Tea Afternoons

Come and join us at All Saints for tea and chat at 2pm on 22nd March, and 26th April (the fourth Tuesday of every month). Maybe you have never been in the church before, and want to see what it is like, or maybe you have a burning question you have always wanted to ask about church – then come and join us!

Our Local Library!

As you probably know, the mobile library service is sadly no longer in existence. However, the books have been offered to local communities and both Puttenham and Long Marston have taken up this offer. All Saints' Church now has a wonderful selection of books including children's, both fiction and information, and also adults' books, including large print and detective fiction, which are for lending or swapping. We are open every Sunday morning from 9.30 to 11.30/12ish, and also once a month on Tuesday afternoons – 22nd March and 26th April are the next two dates.

We are looking for a bookcase to store these books, so do let us know if you know of one going spare, and we are also very keen to know when would be the most helpful times for us to be open so that as many people as possible can have access to the books. We look forward to seeing you.

Reader offer: Champagne bargains from Village Wines

Turn to page 15 to see this month's special offers for readers from Village Wines.

Quick! March

by Martin Winship

WELL, it's March, so Happy New Year! You may think that's a bit of an odd thing to start with, but it used to make perfect sense. This month marks the end of winter and the long-awaited start of spring (which is why March is sometimes referred to as the "Janus Month"); a logical point at which to celebrate the New Year, instead of right in the middle of the deep mid-winter. And until the 18th century, that's just what we did. March the 25th was New Year's Day until 1752, when the Gregorian calendar was adopted.

The month takes its name from the Roman "Martius", which was also the first month of their calendar. It was, not surprisingly, named after Mars, the god of war. The month has a reputation for "battle" weather. The Anglo-Saxons certainly thought so – they called it either Hlyd Monath, which means Stormy Month, or Hraed Monath, which means Rugged Month. The Germans must have enjoyed milder climes than us – the name in Germanic was Lene-Mond – meaning Springtime Month.

Mention of the Romans recalls the warning to Julius Caesar to "beware the Ides of March" (see Kenneth Williams: "Infamy! Infamy! They've all got it In For Me!). Of course, all months have their Ides – it's simply the point which divides the month into two equal halves – in the case of March this is the 15th.

March straddles two segments of the Wheel of Life; Imbolc, which ends on March the 20th (the spring equinox), and Ostara, which starts on the 21st and ends on the last day of April. The zodiac signs for this month are Pisces (February 19th to March 20th) and Aries (March 21st to April 20th). In the Tree Calendar, the month lies partly in the Ash Moon (February 18th to March 17th) and the remainder in the Alder Moon (March 18th to April 14th). Aquamarine and Bloodstone are the birthstones, and of course the flower of the month is the daffodil.

The narcissus (wild daffodil) was named after the boy in Greek mythology who was changed into a flower. This is the main daffodil species in the UK, and because it flowers early, and the heads usually fade before Easter, it is also known as the Lent Lilly. Surprisingly, the daffodil only became a popular symbol of Wales in the 19th century, largely through the influence of Lloyd George. He used it to represent Wales at the Investiture in 1911.

Easter is a Moveable Feast, and the determination of its exact date each year inexplicably causes some confusion. Easter takes place on the first Sunday after the full moon following the spring equinox. Simples! Consequently, Easter falls between late March and late April. Eggs are of course given at Easter, and it has been suggested that the game of marbles originated with rolling eggs! Certainly Lent has long been the time for the enjoyment of marbles and skipping – in some places Good Friday was known as Marble Day or Long Rope Day. The games were stopped on the stroke of noon, each year, on Good Friday.

Spring, and a young man's fancy turns lightly to thoughts of love. In the case of the young hare however, his fancy turns to boxing other hares, jumping straight up in the air for absolutely no sane reason, and in general behaving completely bonkers. Although the breeding season of the European hare extends well beyond the end of March, "Mad March Hares" has a nice familiar ring to it, and is firmly lodged in the English idiom (thanks in no small part to the character in Alice's Adventures in Wonderland).

If you have a birthday in March, you are in illustrious company. Roger Daltry showed who was who on the 1st, Alexander Graham Bell rang in on the 3rd, and Antois Vivaldi started making music on the 4th. Barbie (the doll) celebrates her official birthday on the 9th, and Earl Grey began stirring things up on the 13th. Albert Einstein joined his relatives on the 14th, Jerry Lewis began fooling about on the 16th, and Wyatt Earp shot into town on the 19th. William Shatner beamed down on the 22nd, Henry Houdini escaped into the world on the 24th, and Elton John began his journey down the yellow brick road on the 25th. Leonard Nimoy explored the final frontier on the 26th, Vincent van Gogh lent an ear on the 30th, and Rene Descates became philosophical on the 31st.

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There are lots of opportunities to celebrate in March; here are a few of them:-

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2nd	OLD STUFF DAY	17th	ST PATRICK'S DAY
3rd	MULLED WINE DAY	18th	BIODIESEL DAY
4th	GRAMMAR DAY	19th	LET'S LAUGH DAY
5th	ABSINTHE DAY	20th	RAVIOLI DAY
6th	DENTIST'S DAY	21st	FRENCH BREAD DAY
7th	BE HEARD DAY	22nd	GOOF OFF DAY
8th	PROOF READING DAY	23rd	NEAR MISS DAY
9th	GET OVER IT DAY	24th	CHOCOLATE COVERED RAISIN DAY
10th	PACK YOUR LUNCH DAY	25th	TOLKIEN READING DAY
11th	WORSHIP OF TOOLS DAY	26th	SPINACH DAY
12th	PLANT A FLOWER DAY	27th	PAELLA DAY
13th	OPEN AN UMBRELLA INDOORS DAY	28th	SOMETHING ON A STICK DAY
14th	LEARN ABOUT BUTTERFLIES DAY	29th	MUM & DAD BUSINESS OWNER DAY
15th	EVERYTHING YOU THINK IS WRONG DAY	30th	PENCIL DAY
		31st	BUNSEN BURNER DAY

Tring Rural Parish Council: official notice

Vandalism is a criminal offence

Members of the Parish Council are very disappointed that the new door to the meeting room at the Long Marston recreation ground has been damaged by vandals. The graffiti scratched into the metal door cannot easily be erased. Members of the public are asked to be vigilant and report suspicious activity to the police. Vandalism is a criminal offence, and we should not have to tolerate it in our community.

Published on behalf of Tring Rural Parish Council, November 2015.

Crime Update

There have been two burglaries in Long Marston and Astrope where offenders have targeted outbuildings and garages, and stolen power tools. There have also been other reports in the vicinity outside of Hertfordshire. Herts and Thames Valley Police have been sharing information in order to identify offenders. Covert operations are also taking place.

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The agricultural story line… by David Mead

How to recognise the seasons?

HOW do we recognise our seasons? Flowers - daffodils - it must be spring; or is it November? There have been blossoms right through with a lot more still to bloom. My little almond tree is showing off with the wild plum in February, but it's just too cold for the bees. In passing, this wild plum was introduced as a quick growing hedging plant. It's certainly quick growing but it's lacking in thorns and livestock find it very tasty. It's still about and is as confused as the rest. Ah well, lambing - it will snow in March. As farmers we are known for our moans. The weather, the government, and the price of corn, for example. The best wheat we have ever produced is making £100 per ton, the same price we were getting 30 years ago. Well, what do we do? Produce better bread?

I will have to take a wander up to the Wendover Arm. There has been a lot of activity. Will they rebuild the swing bridge? Will they rebuild the two houses on the site of the pumping station? What about a nice beam engine to pump water out of the Drayton reservoir? I heard a story of Aylesbury complaining about having to go to Wendover for their coal, demanding a canal was built so that coal could be delivered direct to town. What I find extraordinary is this canal is still working, 250 years later.

The Chiltern rapeseed oil producers and deliverers are still feeling the effects of the T.V. broadcast that Sunday. *(Countryfile, BBC1. Ed.)* We had a communication from Anna in Spain, friend Lionel communicated directly after the broadcast, and 50 messages had arrived by the following day. People have called in for a cup of tea to see what it's all about. The golden oil is flowing into the bottles. We were asked for mayonnaise samples; top marks, so off they went. Well we were there!

I had the opportunity to go to Luton and Dunstable Hospital - my first visit. The parking is dodgy but I saw a good man. Pills dispensed and off we go. I expect it's possible to catch a bus - must enquire. With the lack of some good frost it's a job to move farmyard manure (F.Y.M.) on to the fields. Most of the fields growing maize this year are to get a coating. We are restricted to a certain tonnage per acre. With the ground so soft and wet it's a job to get the work done. The maize is not drilled until May so there is still time for the ground to dry out.

There are still a lot of cattle in yards eating silage and needing clean straw bedding. Will there be enough? Lambing starts the beginning of March. I've retired from the scene. They did a wonderful job last year. Plenty of grass for the ewes, the little darlings will be skipping about in all this grass. It was good to hear from an improved Phil Buchi; we wish him well from this department.

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Getting Ratted

by Andy Ashwell

THE subject of getting a pet for Florence has reared its ugly head once again. Fortunately, this time there has been no mention of dogs and, as I am not a great fan of dogs, that is quite a relief. Last time we managed to resolve the issue by getting three chickens – one chicken each. The benefit of chickens over dogs is that they pretty much look after themselves and only require minimal attention, even after their novelty value has worn off. They don't eat much – 8 quid's worth of pellets lasts three chickens three months – there's no having to take them out for early morning walks in the sleet and snow or having to wash the mud and cow-poo (and worse) out of their fur afterwards. Basically, you let them out in the morning, top up their food, collect any eggs and clean them out once a week – with a shovel, with not a poo-bag in sight.

Predictably, I ended up doing most of the chicken-chores, especially once the weather turned bad, so it was rather ironic when my chicken was the first to turn up its toes and die from unknown causes. About 18 months later the other two, who were by then well into chicken middle-age and had completely stopped laying, were despatched in broad daylight by a couple of mink.

After that unexpected tragedy, it all went quiet on the pet-front. Then, just before Christmas, a friend of Anna's invited us over for drinks and to have a look at her daughter's new pet rats. Now before you go "yuk" and turn the page, let me point out that these were not your common-or-garden stinky, vicious sewer-rats that spread the plague and invade your drains. No, these were *fancy rats*. *Fancy rats* aren't just scrubbed-up wild rats – in much the same that a wolf after a shampoo-and-set doesn't become a poodle – but are domesticated animals that are very tame, very friendly and not very smelly.

After half an hour of petting the rats and letting them crawl all over her, Florence was besotted; so much so that two weeks later we found ourselves in Banbury in a rat-fanatic's garden shed surrounded by over 50 rats of all different colours and sizes. Some people's nightmare scenario, perhaps, but try to think more Disney's *Ratatouille* and less James Herbert's *The Rats*. Florence and Anna were quick to get a rat each to cuddle and after a little persuasion I put my rat-prejudices aside and picked one up too. It took an instant liking to me and was soon crawling all over me too. I wouldn't say that I was smitten, but I was quite surprised at how affable the furry, little critter was.

Needless to say, Florence wanted one there and then. Unfortunately for Florence, Ratman didn't have any for sale because, although there were 50 odd living in his shed, they were all his personal friends, each with its own name and many with prize-winning rosettes above their cages. We would have to wait until February when his next scheduled litter was due.

So, despite my best efforts to dissuade Florence, we have just taken delivery of two silver-black rats: Wallop and Pimple. I have to admit that they are quite cute really and seem to have settled in well. Florence is very attentive at the moment – not as much as the cat, though – and the poor little things aren't getting a moment's peace.

Now that they are here the only problem I can foresee, because of their poor reputation, is what to do with them when we go away on holiday. But, thanks to Manuel from Fawlty Towers, the solution is quite simple: I will tell any potential pet-sitters that Wallop and Pimple are not rats at all but are *filigree Siberian hamsters*.

Yes, it's a goose , not a filigree Siberian Hamster

Picture: Ken Lawless

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The Land Rover Defender and its place in the world

by Phil Buchi

DURING February 2016, the last Land Rover Defender rolled off the production line, ending a continuous production run which began nearly 60 years ago in 1948. The Land Rover Company cited the cost of meeting current and anticipated safety and emissions regulations as the reason for their decision, but underlying this must surely be a falling-off of demand from customers world-wide? If there was enough demand the investment would surely have been worthwhile. More on this later.

The magnificent Defender, Country Station Wagon version. Photograph by Phil Buchi

The Mark 1 Land Rover of 1948 was conceived as a tough but lightweight off-road utility vehicle for the farmers of Britain, to help them modernise after the rigours of wartime food production. It was a huge success, and not just with the farming community. The army spotted its potential to replace the American-supplied wartime Jeeps and various military versions were produced, including a stripped-down 'Lightweight' model that could be dropped by parachute, and a monster 'Forward Control' version for use as an ambulance. Indeed, the name 'Defender' clearly states its military aspirations. Continuously developed over the years, the last Defender version is somewhat larger than the original, has a 2.5 litre 5-cylinder diesel turbo engine, and comes in many configurations from a farmers' pick-up to a 12-seater station wagon. They are a common sight around here in civilian and military guise. Indeed I was the proud owner of a bright red version myself a few years ago - and a jolly fine brute of a vehicle it was too. Power steering has removed the need for a body-building course to operate the beast, but the indestructible (and it was) gearbox and clutch - choice of 10 forward and 2 reverse gears - took its toll on left leg and arm muscles. A comfy driver's seat and a great view were some compensation for the infernal racket of the diesel, and there is no doubt about the feeling of superiority it conveyed.

But all that is not the point of this article. The Land Rover has been around all my life (along with The Archers). For 60 years it has been a favourite of military and civilian authorities around the world. From central Africa to the Middle East, a Land Rover was likely to be seen the background of the TV newsreels covering world events. A symbol that the British were there too. A current example is on view every week in the fictional TV series 'Death in Paradise'. This pleasant drama is set in a curious Caribbean island colonial conundrum: the locals speak French, the Honoré Police wear French uniforms but come under the British Crown, and are loaned detective inspectors from London. And what have the producers used as a clear symbol of British influence here? Why, the cast are condemned to drive around in a battered Land Rover Defender! Better than the Union Flag for declaring who's in charge. That the Land Rover has now fallen out of favour with international customers is interesting, if a little sad. The gun carriage of choice of every self-important insurgent group from Syria to Afghanistan is now a pick-up made in the economies of the East. Well at least they are not using our stuff. But the end of production for the Defender does surely tell us something about our place in the world. I am not suggesting that this is either good or bad; only that it is interesting and should be taken note of.

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More from the pantomime… oh, yes there is!

(Continued from page 1)

Long Johns' (Martin Winship) flagship performance as the terrifyingly massive villain on a wooden leg made your reviewer wonder if the baddies were indeed going to triumph this time. But no, in spite of a seedy sub-plot involving a large parrot, the sometimes baffling twists and turns of the story did eventually lead to the required result. Anyone willing to be stuffed into a large parrot suit for hours on end deserves a mention here, and Serena Williams' fine squawking performance was in the grand style of Dame Phyllis Proctor - who famously stole the show as a chicken some years ago. Jim Hawkins (Terry Veal) and Daisy (Sally Smith) carried the story along with their confident performances, while poor Ian Nicholls was made to play Billy Bones, the Captain and Ben Gunn - how did he keep his place? His nod to Benny Hill (in the Captain) was appreciated by the audience, as was Ben Gunn's facial hair - did he grow it himself? The squire's servant, Mallet (Benjamin Watson) seemed quite unsuited to his calling, while Nellie Hawkins (Samuel Watson) revelled in the role of a traditional dame. Molly the Map (Vanessa Iley) serenely conducted the required magic, and the Geni (Toby Davidson) was magnificent in his make-up for a cameo appearance. We were all amazed when the maid, Miss Hap (Pat Daniels), took off her clothes. Very bold!

The production standards of this village show are amazing with first class costumes, lighting, sets, and music performed by Neil. The scene change to the Treasure Island - executed in full view of the audience - was impressive, and revealed a beautifully crafted set compete with rolling waves. Members of the delightful pirate/treasure chorus all merit a mention here: Aimée Smith, Bella Lewington, Daisie Partridge, Florence Ashwell, Grace Kirk, Phoebe Tomlinson and Zoe Targell. So, quoting from the script, why are pirates called 'pirates'? They just arr. *(Sorry about that. Ed.)*

Picture: John Kaye

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It wasn't that bad really
Picture: Ken Lawless

Chris Griffiths

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The Puttenham Page

compiled by Christine Rutter

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*** ADVANCE NOTICE ***

MAY-DAY

Sunday, 1st May – 6 a.m. St.Mary's Churchyard

Singing-in the 1st day of May from the Church Tower by the Ridgeway Chorale.
As always, this will be followed by a full breakfast in Cecilia Hall at 6.30 a.m.

THE THEATRE IS COMING TO PUTTENHAM……

TUESDAY, 3rd MAY

The Bad Apple Theatre Company present "A Thankful Village".

An original comedy-drama by Kate Bramley with songs and music by Jez Lowe.

Play: 7.30p.m. - 9.30 p.m. with 20 min interval for refreshments

Set against the backdrop of WW1, the quiet village backwater of Bottledale is changed forever by the advent of the Great War in Europe, but the roll-of-honour stone in the village square remains empty and un-etched as the years pass and folk start to wonder.

This is a story of hope, humour and humility, about the men who went away, the women left behind, and the eccentric twists and turns of daily life that led to their reuniting, for better or for worse, in the winter of 1918.

The 'Thankful Villages' were those where no men were lost in the Great War, because all those who left to serve came home again. There are some 52 settlements in England and Wales with this title. **Puttenham is one of them!**

TICKETS: £9.50 Adults / £5 Children : Reserve your seats through Christine 01296 668337
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Small village - BIG PARTY!

by the Wilstone theatre critic (temporary)

Come to the Cabaret - Maggie's of course

HOW Sunday night at the London Palladium would have been jealous. A packed venue, tickets at a fraction of the price, fabulous food, a well stocked bar and then there were the acts!

Who could not be impressed by the full ensemble of the Showgirls (Tiller girls eat your heart out) in an upbeat rendition of 42nd Street - and that was just for starters!

At a fast and furious pace we experienced scenes inspired by the film Jailhouse Rock (Showgirls in jail - WOW); the melodious tones of Dusty Springfield; the unique voice of Debbie Harry not forgetting a surprise visit from Freddie Mercury who really got the audience going.

The Two Ronnies popped in to perform their classic Mastermind sketch and who could forget the Magical Flydini and his able assistant - the things he produced from his trousers had to be seen to be believed!

Freddy Mercury by Toby Roberts.

That wonderful singing group the Crystals (aka the Wilstonettes) were unmissable and appeared again to support Maggie herself in a personal rendition of "Da Do Ron Ron" (his name was Phil!)

Lastly a reprise of old glories to the tune of Amarillo - everyone but everyone joined in.

All of the above compered by our own (but slightly younger) version of Brucie!

A brilliant night enjoyed by all. Congratulations Maggie for producing such a great show but please reconsider your retirement - your audience needs you!

Katy Evers is atomic as Blondie.

Stars of cabaret clubs past and present.

All pictures: John Painter.

All's well that ends well, no not a suggestion that next year's pantomime is based on Shakespeare

All pictures: John Kaye