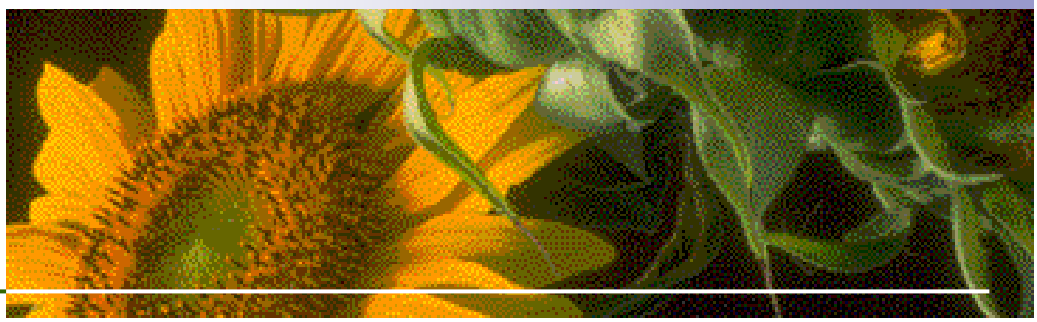
Village News: Puttenham, Wilstone, Long Marston, Astrope



December 2012

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

Inside this issue:

Church services	*3*
What's on	*4*
Council news	*10*
Andy Ashwell	*18*
Local contacts	*30*

Special features:

- Turkey cooking 12
- Suduko 15
- The Horti Page 15
- Agricultural 16
- Tring Reservoirs 21
- TP Men's Soc 25
- Allotments 25
- Italian Trip 28

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

Community shop up and running

by Phil Buchi

ON November 1st the Wilstone village shop opened as usual at 7.30am. But this was not a business-as-usual day at all. Overnight the village shop - run by Liz and Ron Faulkner since 2009 - had become the Wilstone Community Shop Limited, operated by villagers for the local community.

Customers and volunteers enjoy the first morning of the new community shop.

For six months a committee of volunteers has been working on all the necessary paperwork to set up this new venture as an industrial and provident society, and has also raised the necessary money to make it happen. To celebrate there was a fine party in the shop that morning and our picture shows customers and shop volunteers enjoying the free refreshments.

Liz and Ron will continue to help with the new community shop as volunteers themselves. Liz said: "At the start I had no idea how this would work out.

I wanted to keep a shop going in the villages, and in that we succeeded.

I would like to thank all the people who helped me by volunteering to serve in the shop. Without them we would not have got this far. This is the end of one phase, but the beginning of another as a way has been found to go forward on a sound footing. Ron and I are pleased to be still involved and you will still see us behind the counter." More shop volunteers are needed - particularly people who are available to open up at 7.15am. Contact Diana Crapnell (01442 826043) if you would like to help.

Membership of the new venture is being offered to all villagers through the purchase of shares. A member has a voice in the society and a vote. The minimum purchase is a single £1 share. Application forms can be obtained from Graham Thorpe, 01442 822923. The committee would like to build a large membership to give everyone a stake in the future of the shop. They have certainly made a great start.

On duty that morning: (L to R) Debbie, Liz, Ron and Elizabeth.

Parish Councillor resigns over affordable housing vote

Turn to page 10.

Wilstone Film Nights

FRIDAY DECEMBER 14th

Starring Jean Dujardin, Bérénice Bejo and Uggie (the dog)

In 1927 the silent movie star, George Valentin, is at the top of his game and is adored by his fans, but then came the 'talkies'. This is the moving and entertaining story of the challenges that George faced in making the transition, with the love and support of his co-star, and his dog! Winner of seven Baftas and five Oscars, this film is not to be missed. If you have seen it, you will want to see it again; if you have not, please suspend your doubts about watching a silent movie. This is a brilliant film and you will love it! It has an utterly beguiling purity.

Friday December 14th

Tickets £6

Available now from

Wilstone Village Stores & Meads Farm Shop.

Film starts at 8pm. Licenced bar opens at 7.15pm.

PG

Village News

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Second time out !

YOU are now reading my second edition as Editor of the magazine. Once again the 'villages-wide' input from contributors has been fantastic. Thanks to all who have provided the content, please keep up the great work in 2013! Finally, I would like to wish all our readers a Happy Christmas and prosperous New Year.

Mark Woodbridge

Deadline for items for our next issue (February 2013) is Thursday 17th January 2013. We do not publish in January.

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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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.

2 December	
10.00am	All Saints Morning Prayer
6.00pm	St Cross Christingle
3 December	**(Monday)**
2.00pm	All Saints Toddler Worship
9 December	
8.15am	St Mary's Holy Communion
10.00am	All Saints Holy Communion
3.30pm	St Mary's Nine Lessons and Carols
16 December	
10.00am	St Cross Holy Communion
10.00am	All Saints Morning Prayer and Nativity
17 December	**(Monday)**
2.00pm	All Saints Toddler Worship
23 December	
10.00am	All Saints Holy Communion
24 December	**Christmas Eve**
4.00pm	All Saints Crib Service
7.00pm	St Cross Lessons and Carols
11.30pm	St Mary's Holy Communion
25 December	**Christmas Day**
10.00am	All Saints Family Service
30 December	
10.00am	All Saints Holy Communion
6 January	
10.00am	All Saints Morning Prayer
6.00pm	St Cross Evening Prayer
7 January	**(Monday)**
2.00pm	All Saints Toddler Worship
13 January	
8.15am	St Mary's Holy Communion
10.00am	All Saints Holy Communion
20 January	
10.00am	St Cross Holy Communion
10.00am	All Saints Morning Prayer
21 January	**(Monday)**
2.00pm	All Saints Toddler Worship
27 January	
10.00am	All Saints Holy Communion and Sunday Club
3.30pm	St Mary's Evensong

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

What's on...

Community Shop Wilstone
FUN CHRISTMAS EVENING

Put the **5th December 7pm – 9pm** in your diaries and pop along to the Community Shop Wilstone for a fun Christmas Evening.

Join us to celebrate the season and have a look at our great range of Christmas gifts, gift boxes & bags, wrapping paper and gift tags. Also available are the Wilstone 2013 Calendar with stunning local scenes and the Community Shop Christmas card painted by Deborah, one of our volunteers.

You'll also be able to order turkeys, geese, Aylesbury ducks and other meats for the festive season from our acclaimed local breeder. Plus pick up locally made Christmas puddings & mincemeat, both steeped in a generous amount of brandy.

If you haven't managed to visit us yet, this is a great opportunity to see what we have to offer.

Community Shop Wilstone
Christmas & New Year Opening Times

Christmas Eve	7.30am-1pm
Christmas Day	CLOSED
Boxing Day	CLOSED
Thursday 27th	9am-midday
Friday 28th	9am-midday
Saturday 29th	7.30am-1pm
Sunday 30th	9am-midday
New Year's Eve	7.30am-1pm
New Year's Day	CLOSED
Wednesday 2nd	9am-midday
Thursday 3rd	9am-midday
Friday 4th	9am-midday
Saturday 5th	Normal opening hours

Newspaper deliveries will take place as normal whilst the shop is closed. If you are planning to be away do please let us know otherwise we will have to charge you on your return.

Diary dates...

Tring Rural Parish Council meetings (8pm)
The public are welcome to attend these meetings.
Wednesday 21 November Wilstone village hall.
Wednesday 19 December Wilstone village hall.

Friday 30 November
Tring's Christmas Festival. High Street from 6.30pm.
Saturday 1 December
Maggie's Christmas Cracker, Wilstone village hall, 7.15pm.
Saturday 5 December
Xmas evening, Wilstone Shop, 7pm-9pm
New Year Entertainment, Cecilia Hall, 12.30pm.
Advent Concert, St Cross, Wilstone 8.00pm.
Thursday 6 December
Brownies Christmas Tea. 6pm, Wilstone village hall.
Saturday 8 December
Christmas Craft morning at All Saints. 10am - noon
Sunday 9 December
Christmas Fayre, Mentmore VH, 1pm-5pm
Friday 14 December
Film Night. Wilstone village hall, 8pm.
Friday 18 January 2013
Film Night. Wilstone village hall, 8pm.
Friday 22 February
Film Night. Wilstone village hall, 8pm.
Friday 8 March
Cecilia Tea Rooms, 3pm.
Friday 22 March
Film Night. Wilstone village hall, 8pm.
Saturday 6 April
Jumble Sale. Cecilia hall, 2pm.
Saturday 4 May to Monday 6th May
Flower Festival. St Cross, Wilstone

Wilstone village shop opening hours are:
Monday to Saturday: 7.30am to 1.00pm
Sunday: 9.00am to 12.00noon.

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

Times for mobile library Route 72

Thursdays, fortnightly: 13th & 27th December.

Tringford (Piggeries Pine)	**11.00 to 11.20**
Wilstone (The Half Moon)	**11.25 to 11.55**
Astrope (Astrope Lane)	**12.50 to 13.15**
Puttenham (Church Lane)	**13.20 to 13.45**
Long Marston (Queen's Head)	**14.00 to 15.15**

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

A Dickens of a Christmas Fayre

◊The Olde Mentmore Tea Shop ◊
◊ Roffe's Yuletide Wreaths ◊
◊ Mrs Dack's Sweet Dainties & Delights ◊
◊ Bush & Co, Purveyors of Pickles & Puddings ◊
◊ Father Christmas & Elsa the Elf ◊
◊Competition for Children's Best Fancy Attire ◊
◊ Curiosities, Fancies, Tombola & more…

Mentmore Village Hall
Sunday 9th December
1pm to 5pm

For information contact:-
Penny at penny1922@live.co.uk, or Diane on 01296-661141

Donations can be left at the Stag, Mentmore

Profits to:- Children's Christmas Party, Mentmore Church + other local causes.

CHRISTMAS TEA

Hosted by 1st Long Marston and Wilstone Brownies

ON

6th December at 6pm

at Wilstone Village Hall

All Welcome

Christmas Crafts at All Saints, Long Marston

Saturday 8th December 2012
10am–12 noon

£5/child

Suitable for Children from 4–12

Please contact Emma Brough (01296) 662251
or Sally Smith (01296) 661689
to book a place or for more information

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To come and shop locally in Long Marston, attend a Christmas Open House special, book a personal skincare consultation, re-order or host an event (great incentives), please call me; Rebecca, on 07788 612 659.
Come and have a coffee and chat and sample the gorgeous products. Bring a friend too!

Community Shop Wilstone
Society membership

It is the Society that runs the Community Shop. By joining the Society you have your say and a vote.

IF you are over 16 you can join the Society by picking up an Application form from the shop or downloading from the shop website. Membership costs at least £5 for which you receive a membership share entitling you to a vote at Members meetings thereby giving you a say in the business. You can of course opt to give more monetary support by giving more than £5 for your membership even though it is always one vote per Member. The shop is **HUGELY** grateful to everyone who has joined the Society so far and all the money received will be a big help towards the objectives. The shop business is a community asset run by the Society for the benefit of the community. For more information please do any of the following :-
Call in at the shop located in Wilstone; phone the shop on 01442 891167 or see the shop website:- www.wilstonevillageshop.org.uk

Community Shop Wilstone
Jumble sale result

WE raised a magnificent **£650** for the Save Wilstone Shop fund. The Management Committee would like to say a huge thank you to everyone who contributed items, worked like slaves to sort it all out in record time, put up an emergency gazebo when we overflowed from the hall, served customers during a slightly manic couple of hours and then helped to clear everything up afterwards. By 10am on Sunday morning not a trace remained – amazing!

News from All Saints

THE Quiz raised almost £1,000 – fantastic.
A big thank you to everyone who supported us on the night and to the Chefs and Quizmaster who helped make it such a success.

Christmas. We do hope that you will be able to join us during the festive period. At All Saints there will be a Nativity Service on 16th December at 10am and we also have the very popular Crib Service at 4pm on Christmas Eve. On Christmas Day there will be a 10am Family Service.

The Social Afternoon in December will be on Tuesday 18th when we shall have carols and mince pies (hopefully). January 29th will also be the first one in 2013.

A Happy Christmas everyone from us all at All Saints.

Carole Harrison 01296 668526

Community Shop Wilstone
Do you hate the Christmas queues?

THEN why not pop along to the Community Shop Wilstone and see what we have on offer. If you haven't tried a turkey or goose from our famous local Aylesbury duck breeder then you've missed out on a real treat. Not only does he supply turkeys and geese but he also has ducks, of course, turkey crowns, thighs and legs, capons, hams and joints of beef. All are delivered to the Shop so they are simple for you to pick up on or around Christmas Eve. Last day for orders is Mon 10th Dec, so just come in and see us or call 01442 891167 during shop opening hours.
We also have locally made luxury Christmas puddings, steeped in brandy and Guinness, plus mincemeat made with a generous soaking in brandy and port. Both are available with or without nuts, and all made with vegetable suet so they are suitable for vegetarians.
The 2013 Wilstone Calendar is also now available. With its stunning pictures of local scenes it makes an ideal small gift for family and friends, particularly those living far away. Deborah Chalmers, one of our shop volunteers, has produced a Christmas card this year featuring our very own Community Shop in festive array.
We also have a range of wrapping paper, gift bags, Christmas cards, gifts items, boxes of chocolates and chocolate selection boxes. Why not call in and see what's on offer and we'll save you that trip into town!

Bah humbug? No, we're spreading the Xmas spirit!

THE long-held traditionl of exchanging cards at Xmas helps brighten up many a home and spread cheer at a time of the year when dark and cold prevail. Who could not agree with that? Yet, there is a flip side….
In this time of deepening austerity and with mounting concern about the environment, do you ever pause to think about the waste associated with giving cards to people you see every other day? Do you ever consider the carbon emissions associated with producing card and ink, transporting and then recycling it after Xmas…never mind the financial cost? Well, we do. So, the Johnson family have decided to dispense with local card giving this year…however, we're not going all bah-humbug about it! Instead, we'd like to take this opportunity to wish all our lovely friends and neighbours in Wilstone and beyond, a very happy Xmas and prosperous New Year! And in the true spirit of Xmas we are going to take the money we would have spent on your card and we shall be donating £10 to the Wilstone Village Community Shop.
We'll be really happy if you don't send us a card this year either and utterly delighted if you decide to also join us in supporting this very worthwhile cause. Seasonal greetings everyone!
Caroline, Jeremy, Katie and Molly Johnson

Advent at St Cross Wilstone

Christingle Service

Sunday 2nd Dec, 5.00-6.30pm
Join us for Tea
Get messy making a Christingle
and welcome the Travelling crib.

Candlelit Advent Concert

With Richard Grylls & The Ridgeway Chorale
followed by wine & nibbles.
Wednesday 5th Dec, 8.00pm
Free admission.
Retiring collection for
Habitat for Humanity in Kyrgyzstan.

Carol Service

Christmas Eve, 7.00pm

We look forward
to welcoming you to
St Cross

St Cross Church Wilstone

Back by popular demand !

Richard Grylls

& The Ridgeway Chorale

Present

A Candlelit Advent Concert

Wednesday 5th Dec, 8.00pm
Wine & Nibbles

Free admission
Retiring collection for:-
Habitat for Humanity in Kyrgyzstan

SAVE WILSTONE SHOP 100 CLUB

Again, a HUGE and heartfelt thanks to all participants.
In the November draw (102 numbers) the lucky winners are:

85 = £102
101 = £51
57 = £25.50

Next draw is 12 noon Saturday 15th December.
MORE NUMBERS NOW AVAILABLE !!
contact Graham Thorpe
g.thorpe@btinternet.com
01442 822923

CHRISTMAS GIFTS ON YOUR DOORSTEP

My new business, Maison Française, brings reasonably priced French style home accessories to the Puttenham, Wilstone & Long Marston areas.

You can see my homewares on line at www.mamaisonfrancaise.com or call me and come to Wilstone and see them for real. I can deliver locally for free.

Prices range from £2.50 for lovely scented honey and almond, and lavender, soaps, to £6.95 for these wooden hearts. Stone pots from £8.95 are so attractive indoors or out, and there is a range of French style clocks at £14.95. I also have some uniquely styled cushions from £15.95, and much, much more to see.

Contact me, Jill Walker, on 07796 804044 or email me at jillmarywalker@btinternet.com.

Maison Française

Www.mamaisonfrancaise.com

Wilstone Film Nights

The January film night will be Friday Jan 8th.
Tickets will go on sale just after Christmas.

my week with
MARILYN

Join the Brownies for tea

EVERYONE is welcome to join the Brownies – for their Christmas tea that is, from 6pm on Thursday 6th December at Wilstone village hall. 1st Long Marston and Wilstone Brownies will be hosting this annual fun event at which all the Brownies help with the teas (and washing up perhaps?) The Brownies provide fun evenings and loads of activities for local girls, and are a real asset to the community. Their invitation is an opportunity to show our support.

SOLE to SOLE
Mobile Reflexologist

Stuck for a Christmas present? How about giving a voucher for a reflexology session in the comfort of your own home?

Call Debbie Roberts on 01296 668892
or 07970 799896 for more information

Eating out:
local restaurant review by Gilly Mac

Tamarind 75 High Street, Tring
(01442 827788 & 822333)

ON a very wet and cold November evening, feeling a bit fed up and not in the mood to cook, I decided to take my daughter and her friend to the Tamarind in High Street, Tring. This is a contemporary Bangladeshi and Indian restaurant, and I had been meaning to go there for some time. Upon arriving, I was greeted by a friendly waiter who asked if I had booked a table. We hadn't. Fingers crossed, we waited to see if he could squeeze us in. He did find us a table – soon we were all seated and very quickly our chosen drinks arrived.

I am always hungry, and started off with the Prawn Purée, a lovely dish of prawns, spice and tomatoes enveloped in a fried chapatti. To follow, I had a King Prawn Biryani – a dish of Basmati rice cooked with wonderful king prawns and spices – and a vegetable curry on the side. The girls opted for Chicken Tikka Masala with rice, and the most delicious Bombay Potatoes.

All of our food was presented very nicely, and everything we ate was hot and fresh. The waiters were very attentive and kept our water glasses topped up throughout the meal. The restaurant was clean and warm, and by the end of our meal if was full up and buzzing with people. I will certainly be going back soon. The Tamarind also delivers take-away meals in Tring and the surrounding villages. The total cost of our meal (for three people) was £66, including drinks, side orders and tips. *Gilly Mac.*

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From our reporter at the Parish Council meeting by Phil Buchi

Councillor resigns over affordable housing vote

A COUNCILLOR resigned on the spot at the November meeting when the Parish Council voted not to support the scheme to build eight affordable homes in Wilstone.
Cllr. Abby Fermont said that she could not continue to be a member of a council that would not support the provision of local affordable housing. Mrs Fermont has been a Parish Councillor for 12 years, and has led the council's project to provide affordable rented accommodation for local people. This began seven years ago and gained planning permission in 2010 only for the developer to pull out at the last minute. This time the councillors voted not to support a similar proposal from a different developer, Hastoe Housing Association, by four votes to two. Only Cllr. Fermont and the chairman, Cllr. Mike Tomlinson, voted to support the proposal.

Before the vote Cllr. Fermont told the meeting that Dacorum Borough Council, which owns the site between Tring Road and Grange Road, were determined to either develop or sell the land. She said that the proposal for affordable housing gave the Parish Council control over the development and would meet the needs of some local families - alternative developments were an unknown factor and were unlikely to offer the same element of control. Other councillors said that there was confusion over the number of eligible families who needed the homes. Dacorum Borough Council had provided a list of ten eligible families, but these figures were questioned at the meeting. Some councillors felt that the need for more affordable housing in the parish had now been overtaken by the granting of planning permission for two other developments - at Gubblecote and at Dixon's Wharf - both of which would include an element of affordable housing. In addition there were objections from some residents near the Wilstone location.

Dacorum have said they are unlikely to back a proposal that did not have the support of the Parish Council, so it remains to be seen what happens next. Until recently the Parish Council backed the scheme, and indeed over the last few years have put much energy into influencing the size of the development and establishing the policy of letting to local people. This vote reversed their position.

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WILSTONE

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'Community Wheels' here?

A community car scheme - where volunteers provide rides for villagers who need them - may be introduced in this parish if there is sufficient interest. Deborah Fogden, community transport officer for Community Action Dacorum (a charity) told the meeting about research she has conducted here to establish local transport needs. Although most people have access to a car, she found that there is a need for a community car scheme to supplement the local bus service. Shopping and hospital visits are among the journeys most frequently mentioned by those who needed help with transport. If launched here, volunteer car owners would be paid 40p per mile expenses. Users would pay 60p per mile for the service. Details of the proposed Community Wheels scheme will be published in a future edition of *Village News.*

Footway feasibility

Dawn Slade, Clerk to the Council, has managed to get an officer from the County Council to come and discuss how to use the 'S106' funding from the developer of the Gubblecote housing scheme so that it would benefit the community. Some of the money is earmarked for highways, and the Parish Council would like it spent on providing a footway along Wingrave Road to connect Gubblecote with Long Marston. Though as all local pedestrians will know, there are quite a few practical difficulties, the discussion was positive and at least talks have begun.

Your Parish Councillors are:
Mr Michael Tomlinson (Chairman) 01296 661 311
Mr Chris Griffiths 01296 668 257
Mr Alan Winfield 01296 668 977
Mrs Abby Fermont 01442 825 352
Mr Nick Murrell 01296 668 190
Mrs Jill Finlan 01296 661 716
Mrs Olli Wheeler-Cornell 01296 662207
Mr Richard Briant 01442 825674
The Clerk to the Council is:
Mrs Dawn Slade 01442 824 138
Email: clerk@tringruralpc.org.uk
***The Village Warden is*:**
Mr Colin Reedman 01442 822 031
Parish Council Website:
www.tringruralpc.org.uk

You can view and comment on planning applications at
www.dacorum.gov.uk/planning
www.aylesburyvaledc.gov.uk

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

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Traditional Christmas turkey cooking hints and tips *by Caroline Nicholls*

THE traditional breed of turkey such as the Bronze, is much slower grown than the White turkey. It is also dry plucked and hung for the flavour to mature and therefore has a superior taste, especially when it is Free Range and produced just down the road in Gobblecote! Our production and processing methods means that our birds needs less cooking time.

- The turkey should be removed from cold store 2 hours before cooking.
- It is best not to stuff the turkey but to place a peeled onion in the cavity. You can stuff the neck if you wish. Season with salt and pepper.
- The turkey should be placed breast side down in the roasting tray.
- It does not need basting.
- No need for foil but could cover legs and wings if they start to burn.
- Preheat the oven to 180˚C (gas mark 4).
- Turn the turkey over on to its back for the last 30minutes of cooking time.

- Cooking Times:-
4kg bird = 2hrs, 5kg bird = 2hrs 15mins,
6kg bird = 2hrs 30mins, 7kg bird = 2hrs 45mins
8kg bird = 3hrs, 9kg bird = 3hrs 15mins
10kg bird = 3hrs 30mins

- Check the juices run clear from the thickest part. Then rest the turkey uncovered for about 45 mins. If you wish to reheat before serving then reheat the juices and place the meat in the juices, do not directly heat the meat.
- There are very few turkeys that do not fit in an average oven.
- While we are talking size, we recommend 500g per person for one meal and 750g per person with a bit of leftovers.
- Turkeys come boxed and oven ready.
- If you have any more cooking questions then just ask Jonathan at College Farm, Gubblecote but I'm afraid he can't actually cook it for you- he's cooking mine!

To place an order for a delicious Potash Farm Foods Free Range Bronze Turkey then please call in at College Farm, Gubblecote or check out or website www.potashfarmfoods.co.uk or call 01296 662462. Or you can order and collect from Meads Farm Shop at Wilstone. Remember you need to order early to guarantee your turkey so do it now!

PLEASE BE AWARE THAT THESE ARE GUIDELINES, AND WHILST THEY WORK FOR US AND OUR TURKEYS, THAT ALL OVENS & TURKEYS ARE UNIQUE. PLEASE DO NOT HOLD US RESPONSIBLE IF IT DOESN'T COOK EXACTLY TO THESE TIMES. THANK YOU

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News from LM&P WI

by Lynn Foster

IN November WIs have to nominate their committee and elect a President for the coming year. This was duly done by our WI and Lynn Foster was again elected President. The committee saw quite a few changes, with some newer members agreeing to serve and others, who have been in post for quite a few years, stepping down for a well earned rest. (Although I am sure we will be calling on them for their expert advice!) Tellers from Cheddington WI were appointed to ensure everything was done according to the WI Constitution.

Our speaker for the evening was Gillie Russell-Mann who kept us entertained with a talk and slide show. Gillie is one of our members and said she would come along and show us a few slides. She read from the diary she kept when travelling across Asia in the 1970s and supported this with the slides that she had taken then. The talk was great, very informative and in places, very funny. We are all waiting with baited breath for the sequel! Well done Gillie, you may now have a new role in public speaking!

December will see us celebrating with a party, to be held this year at the Cecilia Hall, Puttenham. We are all looking forward to the New Year and another full diary of events.

New team members for Village News

VACANCIES on the *Village News* team have been filled after a good response to advertisements on these pages.

Vacancies arose when Carole and John Harrison announced their intention to stand down at the end of this year after 25 years' service to this community. The team now has three new members to replace them. Beginning with the December edition (this one) distribution of *Village News* will be managed by Susie Kirchner and Rob Briant. They will receive the magazines from the printer, sort them into bundles for the 23 volunteer distributors, and then get the bundles to the distributors.

The post of Treasurer will be filled by Toby Davidson. He will take over from John Harrison at the end of the financial year, which for us ends in December. Chairman Phil Buchi said: "It was great to get such a good response to our appeal for volunteers to fill these important posts. Without people to do these vital jobs we could not function. I would like to thank all those who rang me about helping with the magazine, and I am grateful to Susie, Rob and Toby for committing their valuable time."

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The Horti page

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AFTER the Fabulous Fireworks display (thanks David!) at the start of the month, one's mind turns to the Christmas season and the Horti's annual 'Carols Round the Tree' evening on Tuesday 18th December. Once again we will have a live band playing the carols and a visit from Santa with presents for the children, as well as free mulled wine and mince pies to help you join in the singing! I would however like to encourage anybody from the villages who plays an instrument, preferably brass, to join in with the band. If you are interested, you must call Toby Davidson on 07970 636168 at least a week before the event.

With no village magazine in January, the Horti are once again looking for volunteers to help us put on our annual pantomime. Our production for 2013 will be 'Sinbad the Sailor' and will be performed during the February half term holiday (21st–23rd). This is a huge undertaking for a dedicated body of people who need your help. As is the case in all walks of life, our core of helpers is getting no younger and we are seeking some fresh blood to help us continue putting on all our village activities during the year. Although grateful for people who can commit more of their time, volunteering to help us need not be the commitment you may think. For example, maybe you could help by making one set of uniforms for the chorus – or come over to Wilstone for one Sunday in January to help paint the scenery and props. There is also ample opportunity to display your acting skills by becoming an actor.

I am not asking for you to make yourself available over a long period, just offer us a few hours of your time to help during the post-Christmas period. If you can offer us any help, please contact either Vicky Hayes on 01296 661586 or Toby Davidson on 07970 636168 or preferably come to our pre-panto meeting at Long Marston Victory Hall on Sunday 2nd Decem-

Sudoku Corner by Colin Moore

No 72 Difficult

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

Seven in the top boxes looks like a good start.
Good luck and Merry Christmas to all Sudoku fans.
Solution on page 31

The Beavers are still sad!

by Jo Woodbridge

THE Beavers are still sad that a leader has not been confirmed to take on the colony from Christmas. The Scout Group as a whole needs more adult helpers, full training is available, it's really not scary! So please please keep this vital community activity running. Contact Jo 01442-891444, wilstone@whscouts.org

The agricultural story line… *by David Mead*

Autumn farming

I CALLED in to see Will Atkins with some logs and apologised for last month's mistake. *(November, page 24.)* Master Baker not Master Builder – bread not bricks! He was telling me about the cormorants on the trout lake, up to about twenty last year. It has also been pointed out that they are a protected bird. I've always thought of them as sea birds, so they are trespassing on inland waterways. It's a bit like eastern Europeans catching carp for the pot. (I believe that the fish were kept in the bath until ready for the Christmas lunch.) The other birds in the news are the clouds of pigeons that have arrived from the continent and are already munching the oil seed rape. If they can be caught there is a ready market at certain restaurants in London. On the subject of birds, there seems to be a few tawny owls about too. As a result grandson Alex has volunteered to put up some nest boxes to suit the various owls that have been heard.

We had a beautiful evening for our annual bonfire. Fireworks, Teresa's soup, sausages, Tring Brewery 'Side Pocket' and grandsons over six feet tall; what are they eating? I'm blaming my wartime rations. I got a shock last year: I've lost 1½ inches! The surgery ruler should be tested.

Granddaughter Jess has returned from the marine biology stint in the Philippines. If things work out, the report on conserving the coral reefs will make a big difference. At the moment anchors from tourist boats are doing a lot of damage.

Chris was able to finish the wheat drilling on 15th November, a bit late but luckier than some on the heavier lands. The variety is Gallant, a milling wheat and a new one claiming to be a strong variety able to stand up to the competition from the black grass. We will see. Some farming press articles have claimed that this last summer and autumn have been the worst in living memory. Some samples of wheat have been so bad they have gone straight to a power station as fuel.

Chris's daughter Bethony was the Champion Salesperson when selling rapeseed oil at Wendover farmers' market. It has always been a bit of a challenge there. 50 bottles for the morning! Dad had better watch out. Perhaps playing in the school band in America inspired her.

I've got mixed feelings about the houses to go up at Dixon's Wharf. It would have been a real challenge to return the land to farming, being once part of the farm until the war started when accommodation huts were needed for Cheddington airfield. On the old map of 1719 the north west end was shown as "The Butts", I suppose for archery training. Could a road, path or house in the new development make some reference to this?

The Christmas food fair was a success. Lots of friends, no rain, and the marquee didn't blow away. Today a load of Christmas trees arrived. Oh dear. Sometimes I think every other year would be frequent enough. No, seriously though, what did you say? Miserable old ***? Maggie's Christmas Cracker party night will get us going.

A Happy Christmas everyone!

Arthur Rank Centre – Computers for rural people

by Katharine Sexton

TO encourage people living in rural areas to appreciate the opportunities provided by e-mail and internet, the Arthur Rank Centre has set up the "Computers for Rural People" to provide computers at very low cost to:

- people retired or approaching retirement;
- a very busy person, trying to organise things by telephone and letter;
- assist school-children with their homework.

The Centre has arranged with the global charity Oasis, to supply re-furbished computers at charity prices. Applicants are requested to make voluntary donations of £12 minimum, to the Centre, to cover costs and help the charity's charitable work.

Contact details: http://www.google.com/url?sa=D&q=http://www.ruralchurch.org.uk/communities-and-farming/computers-for-rural-people&usg=AFQjCNHgIiFoEj9X50YWTclx5pMAzDwNg

Canal & River Trust

Canal and River Trust are having an open day on Sunday January 13th (weather permitting)
Marsworth Flight , Lock 43 New Lock fitting

Tours of the flight leave the gazebo, just inside the car park gate by the canal, on the hour from 10am until 2pm

Explanation of the lock workings by a CRT member of staff

Hammer and Tongs metal works will be open at Bulbourne works

Guided tours of Tringford pumping station and Wildlife tours of the reservoirs

If you stay until dusk you may join the otters moat watch on Marsworth Reservoir

Why not make a day of it and enjoy lunch at either the Bluebells Tearooms or The Anglers Retreat pub

Car Parking is free in Startops car park for the day (Postcode HP23 4LJ)

Contact for further information
Dick Pilkman, Canal & River Trust , Waterways Partnership Manager ,
01582 841985

Herts & Middlesex

A new business in four weeks …. with a little help from my friends.

by Jill Walker

ON October 9th, my husband Peter and I drove back from Correze after another lovely holiday in rural France. Apart from the end of holiday feeling I expect we all get, there was something that was missing, identified in the twelve hour journey as being a need to create something new-something rewarding and personally satisfying.

I love the French countryside, their laid back way of life and their eclectic taste when it comes to furnishing their houses. So that was it then! Easy. I will set up a business selling French style accessories for the home; things I would like to have in my own home. As quickly as the idea came into my head, so did all the reasons why I couldn't do it—where do I get the stuff from, where do I sell it, how do I tell people about it? Do I need to register a company, what about a web site? How do we afford it all?

This article is partly a tribute to modern technology, because ten years ago, you couldn't have done this in the time. It is also an expression of thanks to those that unselfishly helped me get this business going.

Fran and Yusuf Hassan introduced me to their neighbour, Jeanette Salisbury, who lives in Wilstone and has her own shop in Gerrards Cross selling a wide variety of home accessories. She was very helpful in pushing me in the right direction. I trawled through the internet looking for supply sources and got a huge amount of advice. Yusuf helped Peter created a web site on line for almost zero cost. Peter designed my logo and printed material. Meanwhile, I was visiting market stalls and other venues where I can set up my stall at minimal cost.

On October 29th, just twenty days after having the initial idea, I placed orders for the items I wanted. I bought a range of French soaps smelling of lavender, honey and almond, candles,

some beautiful metal candelabras and heavy candle holders. I ordered French style cushions, aprons and tea towels, and some really stylish large clocks. I had to be really disciplined in keeping my order at low risk in case the whole thing was a flop. My first sale was on November 9th; Jenny and Simon Mead were kind enough to give me an opportunity of a stall at their Christmas food tasting evening. My first headache - the delivery, due to arrive at Peter Kemp's PRS offices in Pitstone, went missing en route from Carcassonne. With Rob Briant's help, we managed to find it, and after some spirited discussions with the logistics company, it arrived hours before the sale.

Bill Hazel, himself no stranger to selling from market stalls, generously loaned me folding tables and carrier bags. Steve Parkin and his partner Sharon, who has her own market business, offered the use of a van to transport my wares and tables.

That first event was really exciting and very encouraging. My friends and family were very supportive and I did well that first evening, but of course that does not mean that every event would be so rewarding. Indeed not. My second one at Pendley Court Theatre was a disappointment due to low attendance, but since then I have done two more sales, at Tring Park School for Performing Arts and a St.Francis Hospice fund raising event at Ashley Green, with much more success.

Of course, it is very early days, and I expect that after Christmas things will be much quieter, but I do feel that it has got off to a good start.

This article is not meant to be self-congratulatory. I am still a novice at these things. It is meant as a thank you to all those who generously and unselfishly gave their time, skills, advice and knowledge to help me start a new business with no experience. It is also a tribute to modern technology that allows you to research, communicate, create designs, websites, set up accounts, all on line. In time, I will market through my web site, but meanwhile, you could choose an item on my website, call me to order it, and I will deliver locally, for free.

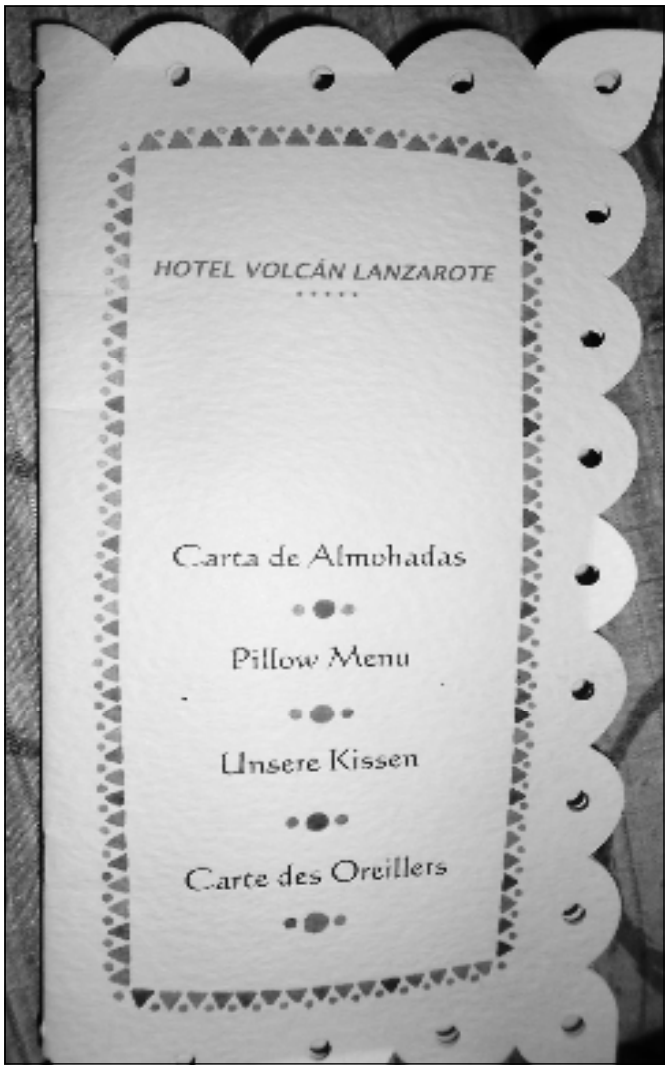
Jill Walker 07796684044

MaMaisonFrançaise.com

Pillow talk

by Andy Ashwell

IN a moment of complete madness – a state that Anna sometimes finds difficult to distinguish from my normal behaviour – I decided to book us a holiday in the sun away from the gloomy UK and all its rain and unforecastable weather. I'd never been to Lanzarote and the brochure highlighted the fact that the weather there should be pretty hot during October and that there was a real active volcano on the island; that was good enough for me so I booked it for the half-term week.



What the brochure didn't highlight though, was the fact that the area where we were to stay – the southernmost part of the island – had been swamped by molten lava in 1730 and was completely barren and even 300 years later was entirely void of any vegetation or greenery. All around, apart from the whitewashed villages, the landscape looked as if a giant earthmover had just scraped the top off an enormous tarmac road and dumped it into huge crumbling piles. Spectacular? Yes; beautiful? No.

As if there wasn't enough to remind us of the volcanic nature of the island, the hotel had an enormous volcano-shaped roof with pretend lava 'flowing' down the side which illuminated at night. That, and the fact that the heated swimming pool wasn't heated (and was, in fact, colder than the other three pools), was all that I could find at fault with the otherwise excellent hotel.

There was one slightly odd thing, though. In most UK hotel rooms you might expect to find a Gideon's Bible and a trouser press but probably not a pillow menu. On the shelf next to the TV (foreign channels only) was a pillow menu with star billing going to a bow-tie shaped, cervical-support pillow stuffed with goose down. It also offered, to those who were really keen and interested in pillows, a free trip to some of the island's tourist sights. But only, it transpired, as long as you were willing to spend the first hour of the free trip listening to a talk about pillows from their local pillow enthusiast-cum-salesman. Needless to say we gave Mr Pillow and his free trip a wide berth and hired a car instead.

We visited the real active volcano which was not, as one might have been led to believe from the blurb, a smoking crater bubbling with pools of red-hot lava and only seconds away from erupting; it was instead a smallish hole in the ground with rocks hot enough on which to cook chickens – as the chef from the crater-top restaurant was demonstrating when we arrived. The other touristy thing that we did was to ride a camel. Although camels are no longer used for anything other than for carrying tourists these days, Florence enjoyed the rather uncomfortable and bumpy ride and didn't even moan once about the smell.

A more harrowing experience was our taxi ride back to the airport. The landscape, from what I could see from between my rigid fingers, was still bare and desolate and the greenest things I saw all journey were Florence's and Anna's faces. I think Lewis Hamilton would have struggled to keep up with our taxi driver and to give you an idea of how fast he was driving it was about as fast as the white vans that career down Astrope Lane. However, his heroics were all in vain because our plane was delayed by two hours and then once we had boarded it was delayed by a further hour because the ground-crew had decided to take a tea break. When we eventually took off our in-flight meal was served and was surprisingly good, apart from the rather revolting orange, rubberised-sponge dessert which was, quite possibly, a free-sample from Mr Pillow to show us what we had missed.

Because of the grossly-inflated holiday prices that always occur during half-term week, we could only afford to fly economy class. So after a couple of hours in the cramped and uncomfortable seats with my knees forced up under my chin I suddenly realised the reason for the pillow menu in the hotel and wished that I'd bought one of their cervical-support, goose-down pillows to help ease my aching back.

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2012 at Tring Reservoirs

by John Taylor

AS the year draws to an end, I thought I might outline to Village News readers how the last few months have passed at the Reservoirs.

Being on everyone's doorstep, they form an integral part of many villagers lives, whether whilst out walking the dog, enjoying the wildlife, sitting fishing, or just going out for a constitutional. All four Reservoirs, as from the summer, are now a flagship reserve managed by the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust. Wilstone has been a trust reserve since 1998 and now the entire Site of Special Scientific Interest complex will benefit from the Wildlife Trust's stewardship.

The new look British Waterways – now the Canal and Rivers Trust – has also decided that the Reservoirs and adjacent canal will also be one of their premier flagship sites**.** The year began with the Reservoirs at their lowest level for 80 years; this caused the grounding of the 3 tern nesting rafts at Wilstone. When the meagre winter rains began to fill the Drayton basin, the rafts refloated, but slipped their anchors, so new anchors had to be re-attached and some refurbishments made. A new fourth raft was also bought and all four were positioned awaiting the return of the Common Terns migrating from Africa at the end of April.

Because the heronry on the Drayton bank at Wilstone was high and dry during March, the herons were obliged to use just the tallest nests available to be safe from ground predators. As the very tallest tree was taken up by a dozen cormorant nests, this meant that the heronry was effectively reduced to half its usual number of approx. 35 nests. The cormorants managed to rear several young, who spent most of the time 'loafing' on the vacant tern rafts.

The exposed mud at Startops End attracted the attention of a pair of Little Ringed Plovers, who attempted to nest. In 1938 Startops End was the first place in Britain that this species was known to breed. We were hopeful for a return and notices were erected to encourage people to keep to the footpaths and allow them some space. However we needn't have bothered, as by the end of April the return of the rains flooded them out before they had the chance to breed.

In the late spring we had evidence of the presence of an otter close to the Reservoirs, when one was caught on camera in a garden in Drayton Beauchamp. Later in the summer there was report of an otter sighting on the Aylesbury Arm below Wilstone village.

As you know the rains continued to fall throughout the summer and the Reservoirs returned to their normal summer levels, also filling up the two new ponds excavated by Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust earlier in the year behind the reedbeds at Marsworth and Wilstone Reservoirs. These ponds were dug to provide breeding habitats for dragonflies and other invertebrates in the late summer, when drawing off the water for the canal dries out the reedbeds. The continued bad weather proved too much for the terns, causing them to abandon their nests and make an early return towards Africa. The hoped for return of the Little Egrets, which had bred for the first time in 2011, also never materialised and by the end of the summer the results from the bird ringing at Wilstone and Marsworth revealed 2012 to be one of the worst breeding seasons for both resident and migrant songbirds. The number of birds handled at Wilstone, for instance, was the lowest since 1994. For the first time, the number of adult Reed Warblers caught exceeded that of juveniles, because productivity at the Reservoirs and elsewhere was so poor. Those birds that breed early in the spring were hit by the drought, and those that breed later were swamped by the effects of too much rain and cold temperatures.

As part of their launch in June, the Canal and River Trust announced their intention to renovate two side ponds (for the benefit of wildlife) at Locks 39 and 43, on the canal at Marsworth. They need to raise the money to pay for these works and in an attempt to kick-start further donations, Friends of Tring Reservoirs gave £500, the latest in a long list of initiatives towards conservation at the Reservoirs over the past nineteen years.

This winter will see the return of the amphibious reed cutting machine, which has been deployed in the Wilstone and Marsworth reedbeds over the last few years to encourage the continued use of the reedbeds by Bitterns. Rumour has it that the BBC programme Countryfile may visit to record the event!

Most years I am usually away on holiday when rarities drop in to the Reservoirs and this year was no exception. In May I missed the Savis Warbler, heard singing at Wilstone for a few days; in July the Sabines Gull seen at Startops End, and the Great White Egret at Wilstone in late September. However bucking the trend I have seen the first Slavonian Grebe of this century-currently (late October) at Wilstone.

Throughout the year Friends of Tring Reservoirs and Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust hold events open to everyone at the Reservoirs, the next event being the Christmas Walk on Friday 28th December at 11 a.m. at Wilstone. See you there! For further information please visit **www.FoTR.org.uk**

FoTR donate to nature reserve

LOCAL organisation the Friends of Tring Reservoir (FoTR) have donated £500 towards a project to create a nature reserve alongside the Grand Union Canal near Tring. The project, which aims to raise £5,000 and is being led by the Canal & River Trust, will involve clearing the redundant side ponds that are situated alongside locks 39 and 43 of weeds and planting them with new water loving plants. The aim of the project is to try and encourage dragonflies and newts into the area as well as boosting the number of water loving birds that visit the canal. As well as planting, the project will also involve repairing the brick walls around the ponds as well as installing new walkways and handrails to enable visitors easy access around the ponds. Dan Ritsema, project manager from the Canal & River Trust, said: "It is wonderful that the FoTR have supported our project and I would like to thank them personally for this generous donation. We are planning on using volunteers to help with the works and this donation will go towards buying the materials and plants which will be used to create the nature reserve". John Taylor, chairman of the Friends of Tring Reservoir, said: "We are delighted that we could support this project along our local stretch of canal. The canals are rich in wildlife so anything we can do to help encourage more animals and insects to this wonderful stretch of waterways will only be a good thing".

The Puttenham Page

compiled by Christine Rutter

A very Happy Christmas and good New Year to you all

St Mary's Church

Nine Lessons & Carols

Sunday 9th December – 3.30 p.m.

We are having an early Carol Service this year and, as we will be without the Ridgeway Chorale, we shall be singing a lot more carols, so please come in good voice! To ease your throats there will be hot Puttenham Punch after the service accompanied by mince pies and sausage rolls.

Church Decorating: We shall be decorating St.Mary's on Saturday, 8th December from 10 a.m. As always, if you are able to offer seasonal greenery we will be very pleased to receive it on that morning (or simply leave it in the church porch). However, this is a very jolly time, so please join us with the decorating and a very seasonal "elevenses" to help us along.

St Mary's Church

Midnight Mass

(The first Communion of Christmas)

Monday 24th December – 11.30 p.m.

We shall be pleased to welcome you to the church, fully decorated for Christmas, and to sing the traditional carols.

The Friends of Puttenham Church

New Year lunch-time entertainment

Saturday 5th January – 12.30 p.m.

A soup lunch with dessert + raffle. Dispense with the after-Christmas and New Year "blues" and come to Cecilia Hall to belatedly bring in the New Year, raising funds to solve St.Mary's damp problems.

Tickets: £5 – Christine: 01296 668337

Correction !

From our New Year Events List last month,
The August St.Mary's Festival date should have read Sunday, 11th August.

Thank you to everyone who has helped to clean St.Mary's and provide the lovely flower displays throughout the year, namely: Ernestine, Sheila, Margaret, Eunice, Helen, Liz, Pat J, Pat & Steve, and Ali. Your help is very much appreciated and noticed by visitors to the church. The "cleaning list" for 2013 is up-and-running – we hope you will join us again.
Please contact Christine.

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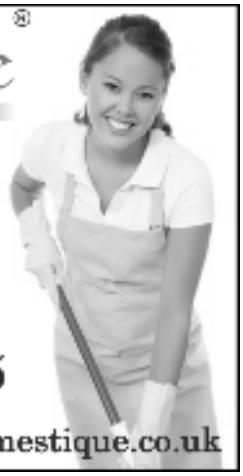

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John Bunyan: Man v CoE

Tring Parish Men's Society

by Martin Wells

JOHN Bunyan was the Man and CoE was the Church of England. At our November meeting our Reporter, Leslie Barker, gave a most interesting illustrated talk on his fellow Bedfordian, John Bunyan, the 17th century churchman and writer, whose most well-known book is *The Pilgrim's Progress.*
As a boy Bunyan was unruly and much given to cursing and swearing. He was also a gang leader. In 1644 at the age of 16 he was called up to serve in the Parliamentary army in the Civil War and was based at a garrison at Newport Pagnell for 2½ years . He still engaged in escapades and avoided drowning both in the sea and in the River Ouse.
In 1650 he married Elizabeth, who gave birth to a blind daughter. It was at this point that he had a spiritual crisis: he started to read religious books and went to church, but still retained what he called his "wicked life" and "all manner of vices." Apparently, whilst playing tipcat (a game involving the striking of a pointed piece of wood with a stick causing it to spring up) on the village green, he heard a voice from Heaven calling him to repent from his sins, but he could not respond. He was reproved by a woman neighbour and began to mend his ways. He worked as a tinker like his father before him and had some odd ideas: he thought bell-ringing was "vain" and that the bell might fall upon him.
Nevertheless, Bunyan's spiritual awakening continued. He heard some women talking about "new birth" and "the love of God" but could not understand and had no peace of mind. He became influenced by a non-conformist pastor, John Gifford, and began to want true forgiveness, not just a clearing of his guilty feelings. He studied biblical texts, came to understand the peace of God through the death of Christ and lost his fear of death and judgment. He converted to religion in 1653 or 1654 and was re-baptised in a backwater of the River Ouse.
In a somewhat surprising development the non-conformist leaning Town Council of Bedford dismissed the Anglican Rector and appointed Gifford in his place. In 1656 Bunyan was appointed a preacher and open-air evangelist.
Bunyan's difficulties with the established Church really began with the restoration of the monarchy in 1660. He was arrested for open-air preaching under an old Elizabethan s tatute and was convicted of this and failure to attend Church of England services. At the following Assizes his wife, Elizabeth, unsuccessfully petitioned against his unlawful imprisonment. During his time in prison Bunyan started writing *The Pilgrim's Progress*. He was released in 1672 under a Declaration of Indulgence and became pastor of a non-conformist church known as the Old Meeting House. However, his troubles were not over. In 1675 he was excommunicated by the established Church and again imprisoned. He completed *The Pilgrim's Progress* and after his release in 1676 was able to preach freely until his death in 1688.
The Pilgrim's Progress is a brilliantly imagined allegory of the spiritual journey of a Christian soul. Bunyan based it on real life characters and places in Bedfordshire. For example, the Moot Hall on Elstow Green was the original of Vanity Fair. The first publication sold for 1s 6d (7½p) and the book has been widely read and influential ever since.
The Society's **Brunch** on 3rd November raised £215 for the Parish Project 2013 Return to Kyrgyzstan. The costs were borne by the Society to maximise the amount raised. Thanks to all who contributed to making this event a success.
The **next meeting** will be at 8pm on Wednesday 5th December in the Parish Hall, Tring. Tim Amsden, the Chairman of the Tring & District Local History & Museum Society, will talk on *The Story of Tring: The Local History Museum Project.* This will be an open meeting and everybody is welcome to attend.

Allotment Diaries December 2012

by Jane Waterhouse

WINTER is upon us and Wilstone has transformed into its watery, slippery, cold, muddy, puddly, self, making us forget the delights of other seasons as we hunker down in our six layers of clothing trying to calculate the effect the fuel price rises will have on us. Considering this years climate the allotments have done extremely well in their first year and most are now looking ready for us to start the next year's growing season in style. Winter digging is under way, muck is being flung over beds, and plots are being tidied up. Most have still got crops in that are strong enough to withstand the winter weather and are being slowly picked and eaten. Some have stores of onions, potatoes and carrots that will keep them going through the winter months. Leeks are looking good and squash are ready to turn into soups and for roasting. There have been a great variety of different squashes and pumpkins grown, some were carved for Halloween others, for pie making.
When I look back on our first year's growing the highlight of the year has to be the official opening of the Allotment Well. Many villagers came and joined us for a bacon butty and a look around the plot, It was lovely to meet Phil Buchi's sister Gillian and find out more about their fathers life and work. The well is going to make an enormous difference to the allotment site, both by supplying us with water and also now to act as a meeting point thanks to Stan Smith's lovely benches.
I am hoping that there will be more balmy summer evenings in the coming year so that we can all enjoy sitting and surveying our work on our plots – maybe with a glass of something! There is still a plot available if you are feeling in the mood for a little outdoor exercise. Perhaps it will be your New Year resolution to get fit, eat more fruit and vegetables and save a little more on the food shop. If this sounds like you – and the sort of 2013 you would like, then phone me and start job now!!
Wishing all a Merry Christmas and a productive 2013.

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Our Italian trip

by Colin Davenport

(continued rom last month)

DESPITE not having the car for three days while the garage sourced the spare part and fitted it, it did not interfere with our holiday as we had planned to spend 3 or 4 days in the delightful old historic town of Sirmione on lake Garda anyway. We had a beautiful room overlooking the lake and for some reason they had upgraded us to their best rooms which were large, modern and with a very large balcony. The weather most of the time was excellent except for one afternoon when there was a huge storm including hailstones but it soon dried up when the sun came out.

Wherever we went in the three cars, we were photographed everywhere by the locals and in Sirmione by the hundreds of day trippers who come by car, coach and ferry to visit the old town. When entering Sirmione we were only able to drive through the narrow streets at walking pace because there were so many tourists thronging the streets. Unless you are a resident or are pre-booked into an hotel the police will not let you enter the old town and deliveries to the hotels, shops and bars can only be made by small lorries early in the morning. When the cars were parked outside the hotel I could see from the balcony people posing by the cars and taking photographs.

Many Brits stopped us to say they had an MG or used to own one or belonged the their local MG club. The MG car club uses the phrase "The Marque of Friendship" and that is true the world over.

On the day we all left Sirmione we had parked the three cars in the main square before departing and huge crowds gathered around to look at them and take more pictures. I only wish that I had a Euro for every picture that was taken, it would have paid for the holiday!

There were many more behind the camera when this photo was taken prior to leaving Sirmione

On another occasion when the three of us were travelling in convoy on a long fast road, which included many

Part of the old castle first constructed in 1277 forming the entrance to the old town of Sirmione

tunnels, some short and others several kilometres long, we lost sight of the third member of the party in the MGA when we exited one of the long tunnels. We pulled into one of the emergency bays at the side of the road. There, two of the local Caribinieri had apprehended one of the locals for speeding. After a few moments the MGA appeared which the occupants looking very pale. Apparently the fuel pump had packed up causing the engine to lose power and slow down. At the time they were being followed by a large lorry which narrowly avoided them as they stopped in the poor light of the tunnel. When the police had dealt with their speedster, they came to see what was our problem. We had managed a temporary repair to get the pump going again. None of us spoke any Italian but fortunately one of them spoke a little English, enough to be able to make ourselves understood. We said we were concerned about going through any more tunnels in case the fuel pump played up again so they pointed out an alternative route but it meant turning down a road that we had just passed 200 metres before. They did no more but to stop the traffic in both directions thus allowing us to do a U turn in the busy road and turn left across the direction of the traffic. We said our thanks and proceeded on our way. A short while later we stopped to check our directions and a few moments later they pulled up behind us again to check that all was OK. They pointed out the route but mentioned that part of the road had been closed for repair following a landslide but was due to open the following day. They told us to ignore the diversion signs and just carry straight on so we had a new bit of road all to ourselves much to the amazement of the local residents. The Italian police are wonderful!

If anybody is contemplating such a trip, I can recommend some lovely hotels, wonderful roads to follow and good restaurants to eat in. It is not all pasta and pizza, and the Italian Ice creams are fantastic!

From the Vicarage

by Rev'd Jane Banister

Advertisement!

IT is always interesting to see what the flavour of the Christmas adverts is each year. Maybe I am watching less TV (unlikely) but there seems to have been a more gentle approach. The current economic climate has obviously had an effect.

Lots of adverts are going for promoting big price reductions, and Morrisons have gone for the "buy now and put it in the garage for Christmas" theme. Tesco's is low key, with a singing Furby (if you don't know what that is, then be very grateful) and pushing their clubcard benefits and vouchers. Sainsbury's has the line Christmas is more than just one day, a very laudable idea, with little images of family life such as all the mince pies being eaten before mum gets to them. Waitrose has decided on a very simple advert, in order to point out that they would rather spend the money on better deals for customers. The Co-op picks up common themes such as board games that go on forever, and finding just a bit of room for pudding. And ASDA has enraged fathers' groups by suggesting that behind every Christmas there is a mum. I make no comment but turning the kids bunk beds into a bed for guests made me smile, and I think it is fair to say that the original Christmas wouldn't have happened without a mum.

The emphasis does seem to be not on excess but on the little things that make people happy. As usual it is an idealised version of family life, although there is more of a variety than there used to be, but there is still only one place to be at this time of year for the advert makers. At home, which is always warm and comfortable, while it snows outside.

You may not know this, but the Church of England also has a Christmas advert each year. This year there is a picture of a baby doll, with "Godbaby" at the top, and the strapline is "He cries. He wees. He saves the world. Not available in shops". I have seen worse, but I have also seen better and the doll does look a little creepy.

We do advertise what we do, at Christmas and during the rest of the year, but maybe we don't do it well enough. Maybe too many people still have the idea of church as being stuffy and boring; maybe we are seen as people without a sense of humour; maybe people just don't know what we do. Maybe we should say that if financial constraints have forced you to stop memberships of golf clubs and spas, come and join us! We can get you spiritually fit, and emotionally healthy.

What I think we really don't do well, is put across the real sense of community that we have in all our churches. Each congregation is a very mixed group (don't ever judge on appearances) and very few of us fit into advertising's traditional stereotypes. When we gather together in our churches, we do so with all our gifts and our flaws; we share what we have; and we worship God with our hearts and our minds and our voices. That is where the real church is, that is the church brought into being by the baby born in Bethlehem.

Over the last month we have celebrated two baptisms, Harry and Aimee, and one confirmation, Anne, and it has been wonderful to do that together, to rejoice in people's journey of faith as we walk through life together, and not just at Christmas. So I hope we can welcome you at some point over Advent, Christmas and the New Year.

May joy and peace be yours.

With love Jane

Pre-School news

by Abigail Livermore

FIRST Steps Pre-school has had a fun packed autumn this year. Activities have included an outing to College Lake Nature Reserve in Bulbourne where the children explored the hedgerows for wildlife and investigated the hibernation of hedgehogs. Everyone especially enjoyed the painting and sculpting of their own hedgehogs which were made from clay and found sticks! A fancy dress Halloween disco and drawing competition raised £52 whilst the Bags to School raised yet more for Pre-School funds and the purchasing of new resources. Cooking and Creative Arts have been a strong focus for learning this term with the making of homemade vegetable soups, sparkly Diva candles for Diwali and a swath of fantastic red poppies for Remembrance Sunday. The children have also been busy preparing for the coming festive season with the making of xmas cards and practicing for their Christmas concert.

We would like to welcome two new children to First Steps, Jasmine Edwards and Emily Adams who already seemed to have settled in nicely and are making new friends. Unfortunately, the school has had to say goodbye to Diane Brooks who retired at the end of October, but we welcome two new members of staff, Emma Brough and Michaela Lauder each of whom will bring their own expertise to the team.

First Steps Pre-School is held at Victory Hall, Long Marston every Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 9.00am – 12.00noon during term time, with lunch clubs on Tuesday and Friday until 1.30pm. We welcome all children aged between 2½ and 5 and as a result many children stay with us until they 'cross the road to big school'.

If you would like to know more about Pre-School, come and look round, or put your child's name on our waiting list, please contact either Teresa Giddings, Pre-school leader, on 07925 185311 (during Pre-school hours) or our Chair, Abbi Livermore, on 07966 154570 or email: firststepslongmarston@gmail.com.

Long Marston Baby & Toddler group runs on Wednesday mornings 10.00am until 11.30am term time only. For more information call Ali Driver on 01296 662482.

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Changes or additions? Contact the Editor.

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Spotters' Corner No. 473: # Stanier Pacific at Cheddington *by David Prosser*

Stanier Pacific No. 46233 "Duchess of Sutherland" speeds south approaching Cheddington with a steam-hauled special from Derby to Euston on 20th October 2012. This magnificent 4-6-2 locomotive first entered service in 1938. With an output of 3,300 horsepower this class of locomotives was the most powerful ever built for British passenger services, and were more powerful than the diesels which eventually replaced them. (Picture: David Prosser.)

Sudoku No 72 solution

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

FARM P.E. MEAD & Sons SHOP
All You Want For Christmas
-Christmas Trees-
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We will remember them

Members of the local Scout Group and Brownie Pack at the Remembrance Sunday service held at Wilstone
Picture: John Painter

LONG MARSTON AND PUTTENHAM HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY

Carols Round the Tree

COME ALONG AND JOIN US AT THE MEMORIAL SINGING CAROLS AROUND THE TREE.

Tuesday 18th December

At 7pm

THERE WILL BE FREE MULLED WINE AND MINCE PIES AND WE ALREADY KNOW THAT WE HAVE A SPECIAL VISIT FROM *FATHER CHRISTMAS*.

HELP for HEROES

THERE WILL BE AN OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE A VOLUNTARY DONATION TO HELP FOR HEROES.

Wilstone and Long Marston Scouts
Christmas Tree Service

Don't get needles all over your car.
Let us take away your Xmas tree!

We will be offering a
Xmas tree removal service
on the 5th and 6th January
in the villages of
Wilstone and Long Marston.
If you want your tree removing
please call to arrange a collection.
Tel: 07971 404465
All donations welcome.

Proceeds to Wilstone and Long Marston Scout Troop.