

The Chronicle

ASTON ABBOTS PARISH MAGAZINE.

ISSUE 56

MAY 88



Editorial

Sorry about the delay, but there were one or two things that needed saying, so I have given myself the Bank Holiday weekend to think through my responses. Firstly to Fr. John Heffer's letter which was published last month [the response appears 'Inside the Back Page'] and secondly to Peter Dines' letter which appears, with my response, on page five. I would appreciate further comment from readers on the issues raised by both Peter and Fr. John.

One further point does occur to me. The Chronicle may be castigated for publishing snide innuendo, but the 'Note of Thanks' from Barbara Romain on page seven, does suggest that the snide innuendo transmitted via village gossip and general tittle-tattle, can be equally effective and hurtful. We should all take note of that. But this is nothing new, we all know that the hurtful smear spread in 'secret' gossip; unattributed and undeniable, is a deadly weapon in the hands of a skilled practitioner. We have all been perpetrators and have all been perpetrated against. Nobody can claim the high moral ground on this issue. Wouldn't it be nice if we could, just for a month perhaps, all go around gossiping about the good in people?

Graham Parker

DEADLINE FOR THE JUNE ISSUE : SATURDAY 28th. MAY PLEASE.

HOW TO PASS ON ARTICLES/INFORMATION FOR "THE CHRONICLE"

1. By telephone to Graham on Aylesbury 681325.
2. By dropping a note through his door - The Cloisters.
3. Leave a note in the Village Shop or at the Post Office.

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Distributed free to all households in the Parish of Aston Abbots. If you would like extra copies please inform the Editor.



WHAT'S ON IN MAY

SUNDAY 15th. : SPIDER FOOTPATH WALK. MEET AT THE GREEN 2 p.m. EVERYONE WELCOME.
WEDNESDAY 11th & 25th : MOBILE LIBRARY. THE GREEN 2 p.m. LONGMOOR 2.35 p.m.
THURSDAY 5th. : BINGO CHURCH ROOM 7.30 p.m.
THURSDAY 12th & 26th . WHIST DRIVE CHURCH ROOM 7.30 p.m.
FRIDAY 20th. : ANNUAL PARISH COUNCIL MEETING CHURCH ROOM 8.00 p.m.
SATURDAY 28th. : COACH TRIP TO BEDFORD. DEPART BULL & BUTCHER 9.20 a.m. FOR RIVER TRIP & SHOPPING. FARE £3. CONTACT COLIN 681343.

BUS SERVICE CHANGES

SERVICE 65. As from Monday 26th April the following changes take place:
7.33 Aston Abbotts to Leighton Buzzard } Will not operate via L/B Stn.
5.40 Leighton Buzzard to Aston Abbotts }
9.30 Aston Abbotts to Aylesbury will continue to Stoke Mandeville Hospital.

BICESTER MARKET (FRIDAYS)

9.30 Aston Abbotts to Aylesbury
10.05 Aylesbury - Bicester (Service 505)
Return 2.15, then 4 p.m. bus home.

BEDFORD

New Wednesday & Friday service direct; operated by Buffalo Travel.
8.35 Aston Abbotts - Leighton Buzzard connects with ...
9.00 Leighton Buzzard to Bedford
Returns at 1.25 p.m., then 2.45 Leighton Buzzard to Aston Abbotts.

MOBILE YOUTH CLUB

THE ROUNDABOUT PROJECT WILL BE AT ASTON ABBOTTS ON

WEDNESDAY 11th MAY

ON THE GREEN FROM 7 - 9 p.m.

OVER 12's ONLY

TRY USING : VIDEO CAMERA : CRAFT BOXES

VETREX VIDEO GAME : PARACHUTE : POOL TABLE

AND MUCH MUCH MORE.

SO, PLEASE COME ALONG TO THE GREEN AT 7 p.m. on 11th.MAY



RECREATION GROUND COMMITTEE

At a meeting on 21st April the committee noted that the baby swings, which had cost £280, had now been erected. A garage, to be used for additional storage, had been donated by Paul Drysdale and would be put up in the summer. It was also agreed that one 5-a-side goal should be purchased with possibly another when funds were available. While the committee had a balance of £198, a bill for a mower service had yet to be received. Fund raising ideas were discussed and it was agreed that a sponsored walk should be held

HAVE YOU WALKED THE LOCAL FOOTPATHS ?

WHY NOT JOIN US ON A SPONSORED WALK TO RAISE MONEY FOR ADDITIONAL EQUIPMENT FOR THE RECREATION GROUND ?

SUNDAY 5th. JUNE AT 10.30 a.m. STARTING FROM THE GREEN. THERE WILL BE A BREAK AT LUNCH TIME AT A PUB EN ROUTE.

SPONSOR FORMS AVAILABLE FROM: MARGARET KENT, JOHN FORD, CHRIS BRANDON or JOHN WHYTE or USE THE FORM BELOW.

IDEAS PLEASE !

If anyone has any ideas about further projects for the recreation ground ... please make your ideas known to a member of the committee or a Parish Councillor better still why not join the committee; new blood would be VERY WELCOME.

JOHN WHYTE (CHAIRMAN).

YOUR PARISH COUNCILLORS

Colin Higgs, [Chairman & Acting Clerk]
6 Wingrave Road. Tel:681343.

John Whyte, 14 Bricstock. Tel:681685.

John Ford, 2 Ross Road. Tel:681865.

Richard Speakman, 79 The Green. Tel:681042.

Bryan Round, 11 Nup End Lane, Wingrave,
Tel: 681621.

LITTERBLITZ SUCCESS

The 'Blitz' on Saturday 23rd gathered in twelve sacks of cans, bottles, tins, endless card cartons and even an old carpet.

Many thanks to all the volunteers who did an excellent job lets see if we can now keep it clean its up to all of us, please keep the village tidy.

ASTON ABBOTTS RECREATION GROUND COMMITTEE SPONSORED WALK.

NAME

ADDRESS

AMOUNT

<u>NAME</u>	<u>ADDRESS</u>	<u>AMOUNT</u>



ASTON ABBOTTS FESTIVAL

SATURDAY JULY 23rd & SUNDAY JULY 24th.

The Festival Committee have met to plan the broad outline of events and activities. In addition to the usual range of stalls and events, we hope to include a troupe of Morris Dancers and an old fire engine. This year also, we are introducing a "Best Decorated Wheelbarrow Competition" - any theme will do; so put on your thinking caps and clean down your wheelbarrows ! Any ideas about other attractions would be most welcome.

The success of the Festival requires a lot of forward planning, and is dependent upon sufficient help to take responsibility for running the various stalls and events on the day. We would therefore welcome firm offers of help as well as donations both for the stalls and also the raffle. Every little bit helps.

More detail in the next edition of the Chronicle but if you can help in any way then please let me know, or better still, come along to the next Committee Meeting at 8 p.m. on May 26th. in the Chapel School Room.

TONY HEWITT (FESTIVAL COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN)
(TELEPHONE 681390)

ASTON ABBOTTS AND CUBLINGTON

LADIES CLUB

We met on April 21st with Mrs M.E. Smith for a demonstration of party cooking. Mrs Smith prepared sweet and savoury dishes suitable for a buffet party which, in the main, could be served hot or cold. An added advantage being they were equally suitable for a family meal by increasing the proportions.

The finished dishes were colourful and interesting and made excellent raffle prizes.

Our next meeting on MAY 5th has the intriguing title "Life Under Occupation" by E.A. Longford. Following that on MAY 19th we have the Annual outing for the 'Not so Young'.

SUNDAY SCHOOL

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN RE-ESTABLISHING A SUNDAY SCHOOL IN THE VILLAGE ?
IF SO PLEASE COME ALONG TO A MEETING ON 16th MAY at THE CHAPEL at 7.30 p.m.

This will be a joint venture by the Church and the Chapel and both the Vicar and the Methodist Minister will be there. The meeting is to find out if there is sufficient support within the village ... we have the people willing to take the classes, although more would be welcome, so do not be put off attending for fear of being asked to run the school, so PLEASE COME ALONG IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE A SUNDAY SCHOOL STARTED IN ASTON ABBOTTS.

RUTH WATTS



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Graham,

Much about The Chronicle is good but I am not at all sure about your policy of accepting unsigned articles or allowing authors to use a nom de plume. In a close community this allows the snide innuendo to be made and does absolutely nothing for cohesion. If folks have things to say they should be prepared to put their name to it or not say it. I suppose most people know I write the Church Notes but perhaps this should be said.

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

Peter.

[Peter Dines, 87 The Green.]

In Reply

Peter's letter, plus the terse and obviously deeply felt moan on page seven, does bring the matter to a head. In my innocence, ignorance or naivety I rarely see the snide innuendo alledgedly buried in the contributions made by Chronicle correspondents. Not that contributions have not been received that are full of snide innuendo; indeed some have consisted of little else. Such contributions have not been published.

But what of the main thrust of Peter's argument? Well, as he will doubtless appreciate, not everyone wants their authorship known. This is not because of some snide comment they have made but because they would prefer to be anonymous; because

perhaps they fear the cruel criticisms that a close community can pour in snide gossip on those that venture into print. The Chronicle, in my view, would be less of a magazine if we did not have the occasional article by L.O.Mebuty, Double Scotch, Abbotsbury or F.Retloup Snr. These people have produced some of the best writing we have published and have certainly been the most admired by our readers. Had I refused to print without the 'real' name being given these articles would not have appeared.

But, perhaps Peter was not firing a general broadside, perhaps the comment was aimed at something in particular. 'View From the Corner of the Green' perhaps, which returned after many people had expressed regret that 'View from the Corner of the Bar' had ceased, but the authors there can hardly be said to have made 'snide innuendos'. Perhaps then its the 'Moan Board'; and if that is the target I would accept that last months moan and this months response may fall into the category of snide comment. There will certainly not be any more included that could be taken personally, always assuming that my innocence, ignorance or naivety enables me to see that the moan is in fact targeted.

Finally can I say that I have never published an 'unsigned' article, although I have and will continue, to allow people to use a nom de plume if they so wish. - a tradition well established in the press from Parish level to Wapping and Fleet Street. I will endeavour, as in the past, not to print articles that contain snide innuendo.

Graham Parker.

BIRTHDAYS

ARKLE O'SULLIVAN 4th May.
ROSINA WEBB 11th May.
PERCE RICKARD 11th May.
CHRIS BRANDON 11th May.
HANNAH BRANDON (6th) 12th May.
TOM MANNING 22nd May.
NEIL CHESHER (52nd) 26th May.
MARALYN SYKES 27th May.

IN USE

The new swing for the smaller children has now been erected in the Recreation Ground, and is proving very popular. Yet again we must thank John and Chris for doing the necessary work.

CONGRATULATIONS

to Debbie and Tim Askew who are expecting their second child in October.

MOAN BOARD

Not all moans are done through malicious or nasty intention, some care for the welfare of kids in the village. And mothers, you also seem to have forgotten that not so very long ago you were moaning just as heartily about the kids that have now grown on and they were good kids too. But if you wish your kids to fall off things, get run over, or brake something, I for one will say nothing.

From a mother who cares for the village kids.

P.S. I hope you'll print all of this in the next issue but I bet you don't.

[Having thought about it, and taken note of what Peter Dines has said elsewhere in this issue, it would perhaps be best not to include this. So no more personal moans aimed at individuals, please]

A NOTE OF THANKS

I would like to thank the person who took such an interest in my lovely cat.

I can assure her/him that in no way would I ever leave him unless I made the proper arrangements for him to be looked after.

It is nice to know that someone cares enough about the welfare of my animals and I thank you, as does my little 'Spotty-Botty'.

Barbara Romain


[Please see the Editorial for comment]

TIME TO SPARE?

WHY NOT VOLUNTEER?

Ring Aylesbury 81666

Aylesbury Vale Volunteer Bureau
Walton Parish Hall, Walton Street,
Aylesbury, Bucks. HP21 7QX

 THE WINGRAVE SINGERS

At the Passiontide Evensong the Wingrave Singers broke from their normal tradition and sang anthem by the 20 Century composer, Kenneth Leighton which was, in places, atonal and excruciatingly discordant. It did, however reflect well the anguish and torture suffered by Jesus and I hope those who attended the service felt that this anthem helped us to meditate on the meaning and purpose of the Passion. My thanks to Janet Rickard for her moving delivery of the text.

It was pleasing to note that the congregation is slowly increasing in number and perhaps in the not too distant future Evensong will regain more of its past support.

Preparations are now well underway for our Spring Concert which will be held in the Church of SS Peter & Paul on Saturday 21 May. The programme includes Haydn's Nelson Mass and Vivaldi's Magnificat which will be performed with orchestra together with some light part-songs by Vaughan-Williams and the Pie Jesu from the now famous Requiem by Andrew Lloyd-Webber. The concert sees the return of visiting soloist Bruce Kershaw and Phillip Pettifor however we shall also hear from Ruth Bone and Jackie Bignell who are regular members of the Singers. We are also providing an opportunity for counter-tenor, Michael McQuire, who is a final year student at the Royal College of Music, to gain some professional experience.

For those who attended the "November Marathon Concert" please be assured that this coming concert will last from 8.00 to approx 9.30pm including the interval. Tickets will be on sale shortly.

Plans for the rest of the year are also in hand with our Concert of Light Music on the evening of 16 July; and visits to Hereford, St. Albans and St Edmundsbury Cathedrals later in the year. The Singers will be giving a recital in Aylesbury Methodist Church in October and we are hoping to sing for the MacIntyre Scool Christmas Service in St Albans Abbey on 22 December.

We look forward to receiving your continued support.

Malcolm Bury.



PUZZLE PAGE

This month taken from the Geographical Association's 'Worldwise Quizbook. Answers next month.

Yes, But Where's The Other One? - 1

This round asks you to identify the location of some of those places which have a name the same (or remarkably similar) to somewhere else. For instance, if I said to you 'Victoria is the name of a London railway station, a lake in Africa and also a city; could you tell me where the city called Victoria is' You would probably say, "Victoria in Western Canada," although there are a good number of others spread around the world.

1. Toronto is in Canada, but where is Taranto?
2. Dacca, (spell out) is the capital of Bangladesh, but where is Dakar? (spell out)
3. Kingston is a town in Surrey; where is Kingston the capital of a whole country?
4. Munster is a province of Eire; where's the other place which is spelt the same, but pronounced differently?
5. Halifax is a town in Yorkshire; where is it a city?
6. Sierra Nevada are mountains in Spain; where else?
7. Rhode Island is a state in the USA; where is there another island called Rhodes?
8. Valencia is a town in Spain, but also a frequently used set of very rainy weather statistics! Where is the weather station called Valencia? (sometimes Valentia)
9. The Queen recently visited Amman, capital of Jordan; but where is the state of Oman?
10. Edmonton is a suburb in London - But where is it a city?



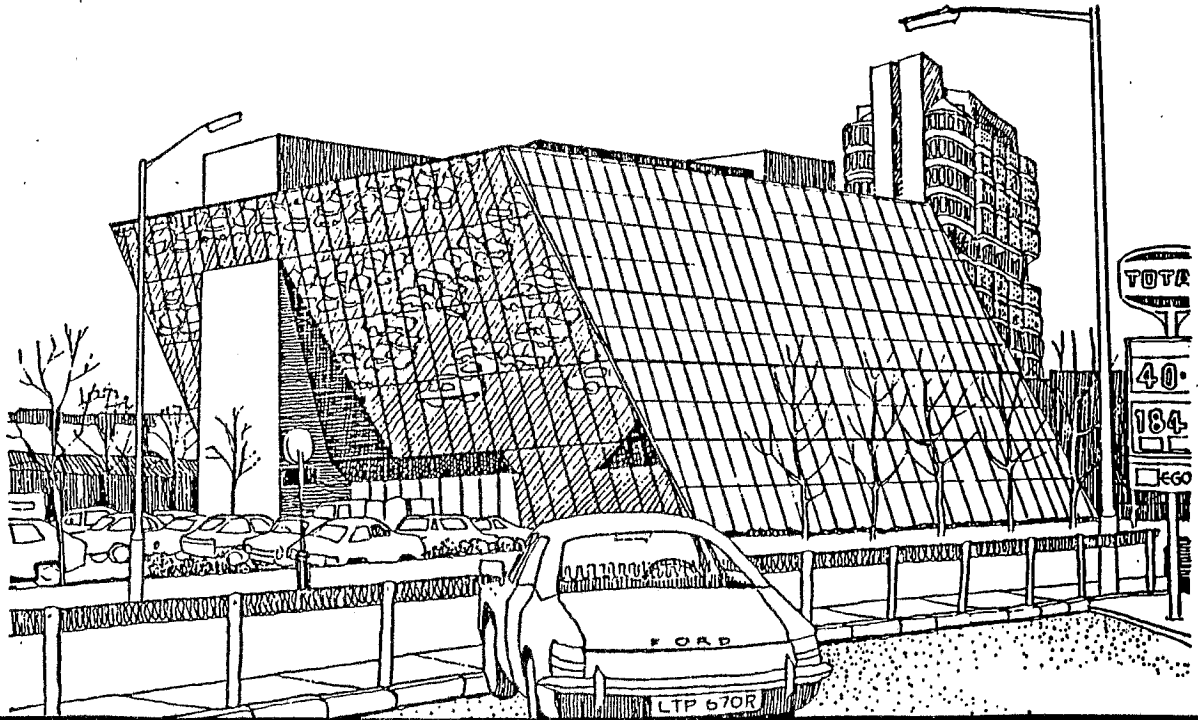
From a wood engraving by Thomas Bewick.

Portraits of Buckinghamshire

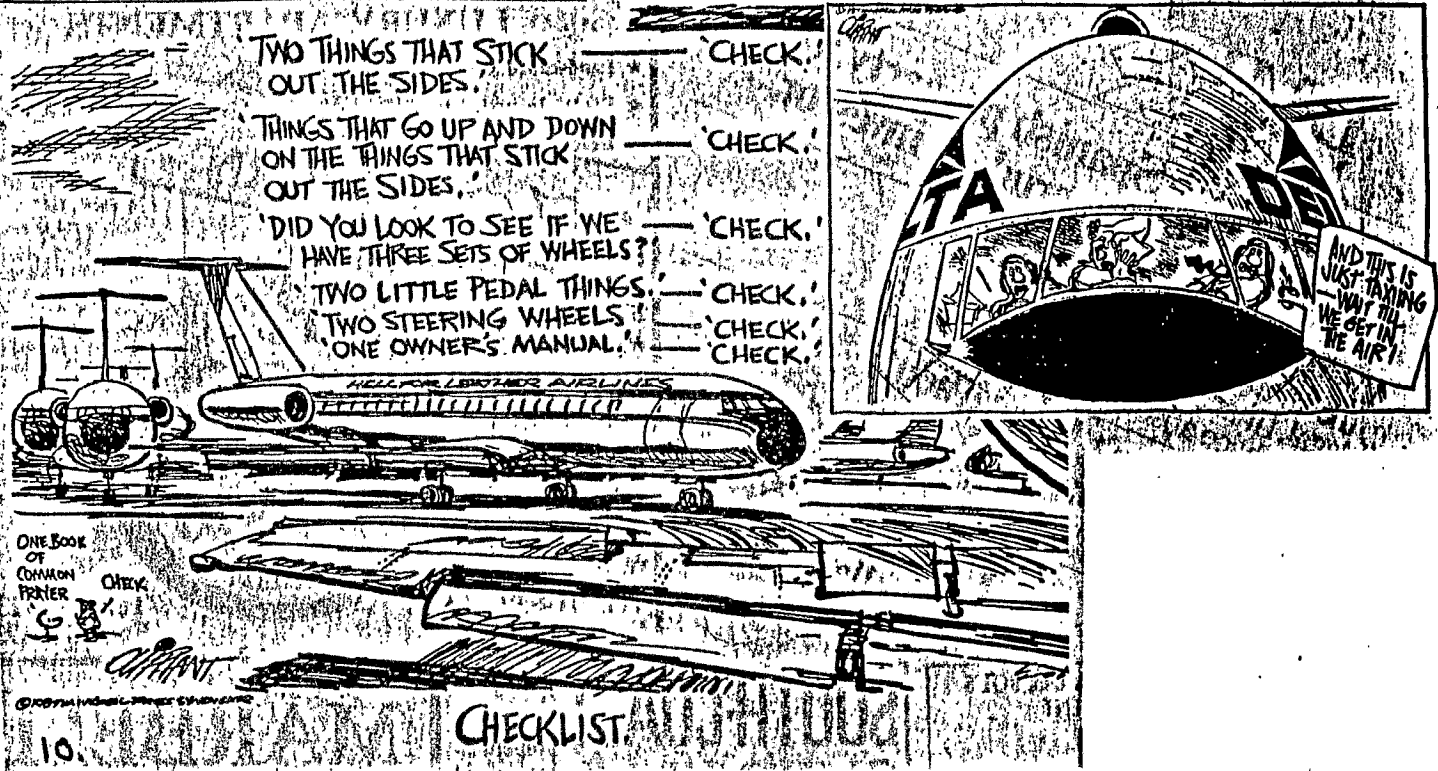
No. 28. EQUITABLE LIFE BUILDING, AYLESBURY.

The Blue Leanie as it is known stands beneath the monument to former County Architect, Fred Pooley. The eleven storey concrete block that houses county offices won awards at the time it was built but is known to most people as 'Fred's Folly'.

Sketch by Elizabeth Ogan in Elizabeth Cull's 'A Picture of Buckinghamshire'.



THE SUNDAY TIMES 14 FEBRUARY 1988



THE BEST OF BRITISH

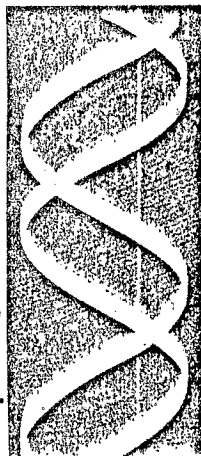
FIVE MORE THINGS THAT ARE
'ESSENTIALLY BRITISH'



CND. From Aldermaston to Greenham the movement has come a long way in 25 years . . . the long march goes on



Queue. The shortest distance between two points without actually stepping out of line



Nobel prizes for science. The boffins continue to deliver the goods



Cup Final. Sweet FA

Langyue (*langyue*), *adv.* (18.) Sr. 1900. [Prop. two vds., see *LANG* *adv.* and *GREY* *adv.*] Long since, long ago. Also *sl. esp.* in *and lang yue*.
Langterloo, var. of LANTERLOO.
Langue (*laŋgwɛdʒ*), *sl. ME.* fr. *F. langue* - pop. L. type *linguistia*, f. *lingua* tongue, language (fr. *lingua*; see *LANGUE*). The *w* is after *F. langue*. 1. The whole body of words and of methods of combining them used by a nation, people, or race; a 'tongue'. b. *transf.* Method of expression otherwise than by words 1606. c. *gen.* Words and the methods of combining them for the expression of thought 1999. d. Faculty of speech; ability

Oxford English Dictionary. In the beginning was the word . . . and then its pronunciation, derivation and definition

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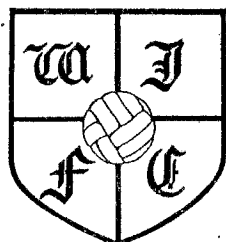
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Friendship football in snow flurries

The traditional Easter meeting with La Bouexiere once again proved a great success both on and off the field. The 'Trophy' was played for at Under 12 level, although both sides were strengthened by some under fourteens. The game was played in a snow storm that followed a week of sunshine ! The resulting draw was as it should be in such fixtures. By the afternoon the weather had improved and the Under 16's played in what passes for spring weather in England. The margin of victory was perhaps a little flattering but the game itself thoroughly enjoyable. The mens team had looked destined for defeat at half time being outplayed by the neat, skillful football of the French, but the one goal half time deficit was quickly reversed in a second half display that showed the strengths of English football - pace, fitness and a relish for the tackle. The final 3-1 victory was well deserved.

RESULTS FOR APRIL

INTERNATIONAL MATCHES 9th. APRIL

UNDER 12's : Wingrave 2 La Bouexiere 2
Anthony Bishop, Darren Springett.

UNDER 16's : Wingrave 5 La Bouexiere 2
Andrew Parker 2, Neil Furguson;
Nick Porter; Richard Hickson.



OTHER MATCHES

UNDER 12's

10th. April : CUP SEMI-FINAL
Corinthians 3 Wingrave 0

17th. April : Wingrave 3 999 1.
Kevin Pretty, Darren Springett and an o.g.

21st. April : Woodside 3 Wingrave 1.
David Arnold.

24th. April : Wing 6 Wingrave 1
Kevin Pretty.

CORINTHIANS booked their place in Sunday morning's Leighton Junior League Under-12 cup final when they beat Wingrave 3-0 on Sunday.

Wingrave didn't let Corinthians have things all their own way with Mark Pope making several good saves. Goals from Mark Jeeves and Paul Springthorpe eventually earned Corinthians a place in the final against Woodside.

UNDER 14's

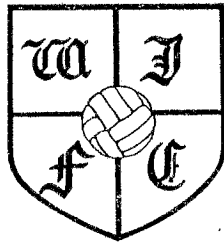
10th. April : Wingrave 4 Arrows 4
[The game was played with three under sixteen players in the side and Meagram, Bishop and Hickson were responsible for the goals]

17th. April : Wing 10 Wingrave 1 (Chris Arnold).

21st. April : Corinthians 2 Wingrave 10.
Billy Barraclough 5, Ky Gatherer 2, Mike Cheval 2, Danny Scott.

24th. April : Wingrave 1 Water Eaton 5.
Billy Barraclough.

WINGRAVE JUNIOR FOOTBALL CLUB



APRIL RESULTS (Continued)

UNDER 16's

- 17th. April : Wingrave 2 Thame 1.
Neil Ferguson, Andrew Parker (pen).
24th. April : Wingrave 2 Tring 4.
Andrew Parker, Richard Hickson.

These matches rounded off a season that went better than many had expected. This was the first year we had run three sides. The Under 16's had expected heavy defeats throughout the campaign and although overwhelmed when fielding a weakened side, they were able to show that at full strength they were a match for anyone. The Under 14's were badly hit by injuries and their season was as varied as the under sixteens and finished about as balanced as you could get: P. 18 W. 8 L. 8 D. 2 Goals For 53 and Against 53, with a final league position of fourth. The Under 12's were the unexpected success of the season. The enthusiasm was evident from the large numbers who regularly turned up for training and the season ended with a creditable fourth place in the league and a cup semi-final. Well done to all concerned.

ACTIVITIES FOR MAY

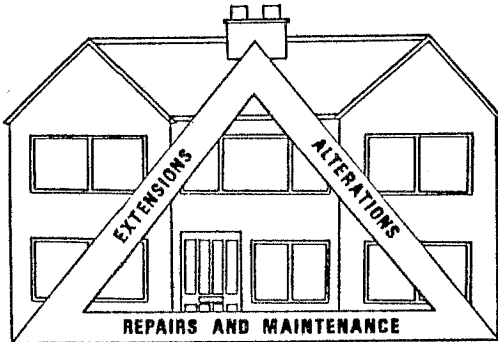
TUESDAY 10th. MAY : ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 8.00p.m. in the COMMUNITY CENTRE, WINGRAVE.

SATURDAY 15th. MAY : CLUB SIX - A - SIDE TOURNAMENT starting at 1.00 p.m. at the School Ground.

CLUB ANNUAL PRESENTATIONS will follow immediately afterwards at The Bell (6.00 p.m. approx.)



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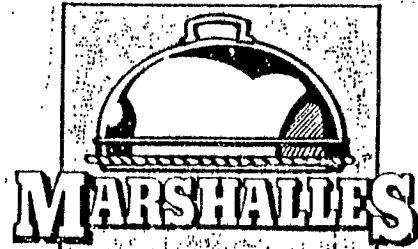
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Graham Parker, The Cloisters, Church Row (681325)
David Watts, 'White Wheels' (681376)
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CHURCH NEWS

I must start by thanking everyone who made the Cheese and Wine Party such a success. This means of course those who bought and set out the magnificent spread, those who arranged the competitions and raffle and those who came! In particular I must mention Grayburn and Joanna of the Royal Oak who not only arranged the licence but gave it to us - a most generous contribution. The profit was the unbelievable amount of £200.01, which will help considerably towards our church funds in general and our repairs in particular.



ST. JAMES THE GREAT, ASTON ABBOTTS, BUCKS.

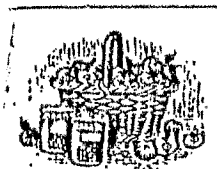
We are looking forward very much to having Miss Angela Hughes to lead our Family Service on May 8th and we are looking forward to a bumper congregation. Looking further ahead our Family Service in June is on June 5th and the Rev Alan Greber who is the Methodist minister who serves Cublington, amongst other places, will lead our service.

Finally, if anyone has benefitted from the Chancellor's tax cuts or from a raise, as the Americans say, and would like to increase their giving to the Church I can assure you that I, or Len, will respond with alacrity!

Peter Dines.

CHURCH SERVICES FOR MAY

		<u>Sidesman</u>
1st May	: HOLY COMMUNION 11.15 a.m. Proverbs 4(10-19) 617 John 14(1-11)	Alison Ford.
8th May	: FAMILY SERVICE 11.15 a.m. Special Readings.	Sarah Lovell.
15th May	: HOLY COMMUNION 11.15 a.m. Ephesians 4(1-13) 630 Like 24(45-53)	Tony Hewitt.
22nd May	: HOLY COMMUNION 11.15 a.m. Acts 2(1-11) 635 John 20(19-23)	Colin Higgs.
29th May	: HOLY COMMUNION 11.15 a.m. See Rector's page.	John Ford.
5th June	: FAMILY SERVICE 11.15 a.m. See Rector's page.	Alison Hewitt.





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 clocks (no clothes please) you take half the money
 made we put the other half towards our P.T.A. funds.
 Please bring your items for auction along to the school.
 We will be open on Thursday 3th May from 3:30 - 6:30 p.m.
 and on Friday 6th May from 3:30 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.
 Please ring the School, Aylesbury 688266 if you need
 any items to be collected.

May 1988

"A Service of Devotion and Prayer for Healing"

An Impression - Janet Rickard

In January Bishop Simon wrote a letter in the Oxford Diocesan Magazine concerning the Church and the Ministry of Healing. Fr. John read the letter, thought a great deal about it, attended a Service of Devotion and Prayer for Healing in London, and felt very much that such a Service could be of help in our parishes.

In February, the Prayer Chain Fellowship met and having heard about the Bishop's letter and the Service in London, felt they too would like to be involved in a Service of that nature.

After much thought, prayer, and preparation we held our first Service on Holy Monday, March 28th at 8 p.m. in Wingrave Church.

I can tell you that in a quiet, slightly apprehensive manner we stood and we sat and we knelt, to sing and to listen, to respond and to pray.

I can tell you that we all went to the Altar rail for the Laying on of Hands seeking comfort and healing, but while well aware of our own needs we were most conscious of those known to each one of us who had a greater need.

I can tell you that as the Service progressed we became much more aware of the fact that we were there to pray and to receive wholeness in body, as well as in mind and spirit, and this, not just for ourselves but, for others who were not present with us - our friends and those for whom we had been praying.

I can tell you that it was a Service of inspiration and help to us all, and I look forward to other such Services in the future which I am confident will be of support and encouragement to all of us in our parishes.

The magpies are getting everywhere

BACK in the autumn one of my contributions was entitled "The Ominous Maggoty-Pie". "Maggoty-pie" was what our ancestors called the magpie; "ominous" referred to its reputation as a bird of ill-omen. Now another adjective for this bird forces itself on me — *ubiquitous*. Magpies seem to be everywhere.

Readers have written to tell me they have magpies in West Africa, Uganda, Australia, California, New Guinea and, of course, many countries in Europe. And what has brought the subject to the forefront of my mind again is a conversation I recently had with an old friend who had just returned from northern Norway, where he had been enjoying "exhilarating, sparkling weather with minus 25°C temperatures."

"Did you see any Arctic birds?" I asked him. "Ptarmigan, snow buntings, ravens?"

"No, none at all," he replied, "except magpies. They were all over the place, acting as scavengers, it seemed."

A reader in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, in the middle of the windsoured prairies, tells me that there, when most birds have migrated south for the winter, the magpie stays as a resident. "Hardly a day passes when I do not see at least half-a-dozen of them," he writes. "They are even found in the centre of the city."

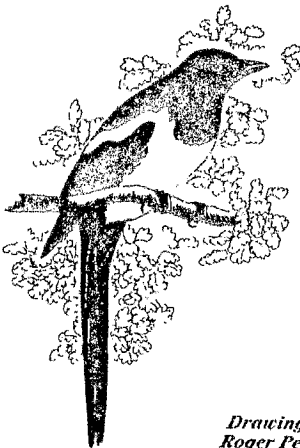
When living in Northumberland, he found that it was customary there to lift one's cap and salute any magpie encountered, repeating the formula, "Good day, my lord, I hope I see you well!" He adds that now, forty years later, he still automatically repeats the ritual.

An Irish reader gives an instance of an almost identical superstition. When an uncle of his, a pillar of the Catholic church, was being driven along a rural lane his chauffeur was surprised to see him doff his hat.

"Sor," he admonished him, "that was a Protestant church we were passing."

The dignitary had to admit, rather shamefacedly, that he had been lifting his hat to a magpie he had spotted on a roadside tree.

A Cornish reader who is also familiar with the custom of saluting a magpie tells me it is done to avert bad luck, while another



Drawing by
Roger Pearce

remembered item of folklore associates the magpie with scolds and witches.

In my previous article I quoted a rhyme, still quite frequently repeated:—

*"One for sorrow;
Two for mirth;
Three for a wedding;
Four for a birth".*

Referring, of course, to the number of magpies one sees together.

Ralph Whitlock

THE GUARDIAN, March 20, 1988



The baleful influence believed to emanate from the birds is illustrated by the alleged remark of an old Highland woman of last century who said she would as soon see the devil as a magpie perched on her roof. An Amersham (Buckinghamshire) reader who nevertheless writes to me from Oman gives an extension of the magpie rhyme:

*"Five for silver;
Six for gold;
Seven for a secret;
Never told".*

Another letter gives a variation on the first four lines. One denotes sorrow; two joy; three a letter; four a boy (when the next baby is born, of course).

All of which has been rendered obsolete by the magpie population explosion of the past ten or fifteen years. I see several magpies, sometimes as many as a dozen or twenty, on my daily walks, whereas fifty years ago the sight of even one was worth recording.

My Amersham correspondent attributes some of the increase to the number of flattened hedgehog corpses on the roads — ready-made meals for magpies, he comments — but a decline in persecution by gamekeepers is undoubtedly a factor. Perhaps most important is the magpie's adaptability and its willingness to become a hanger-on of human civilization.

Incidentally, not all the magpies readers write about are identical with the English magpie. The European ones are, and the American and Canadian species are nearly related, but there are no true magpies in Australasia. The birds that pass for magpies in Australia and New Guinea belong to an allied family, also known as currawongs, butcher-birds and bell-magpies. They are, however, mostly black-and-white birds with stout beaks, not unlike the English magpie. One striking difference, though, is that many of them have very beautiful songs.

The black magpies of West Africa, which are blackish-brown in colour, are nearly related to the European birds. They have similar long tails and associate in small flocks with herds of cattle. Europe has one other species of magpie, the azure-winged magpie, which I was once lucky enough to see in southern Portugal.

"The Ministry of Devotion and Prayer for Healing"

By the Rev. Canon J. H. Hazzard

The Rev. Canon J. H. Hazzard writes in the Oxford Standard
concerning the Church and the Ministry of Healing.
In the letter, though a great deal about it, alludes to
the Prayer and Prayer for Healing in London, and that
such a Service could be of help in our parishes.

The Prayer Union Fellowship met and having heard
of the people's interest and the Service in London, felt they
should be involved in a Service of that nature.

At eight, prayer, and preparation we held our first
Service, Sunday, March 25th at 8 p.m. in Kingsgate Church.

It was a quiet, slightly apprehensive man-
ner we sat and we knelt, to sing and to listen, to
the words of the prayer.

As the service went on we all went to the altar rail for the last
time, seeking comfort and healing, but while well aware
of the presence of those known to each other
we were more conscious of those known to each other.

As the service progressed we became more
conscious of the fact that we were there to pray and to receive
in body, as well as in mind and spirit, and this, I
think, was true for all who were not present with
us in spirit and those for whom we had been praying.

It was a Service of Inspiration and help
I think I look forward to other such Services in the future
with confidence with the support and encouragement to all
concerned.

BACK page

The 'Back Page' letter from John Heffer in last months Chronicle was a blistering attack on an inertia that, it was alleged, had swept through the village. The impression given was that in 1981 Aston Abbotts was a model community, full of enthusiasm for village activities and throbbing with life, whereas now we had sunk into lethargy and indolence.

Well, 1981 was not a good year for Fr. John to choose, because the Annual Parish Meeting that year was attended by just one parishioner in addition to the five Parish Councillors and it lasted barely twenty minutes. There was in 1981 no Parish magazine, although Colin (as ever) distributed a monthly news-sheet off his own bat. In 1981 the Festival was a Church affair and the Church Room was entirely a Church responsibility. If we were to judge 1981 on the basis of attendance at the Annual Parish Meeting it could hardly be described as a year noted for great enthusiasm for village life. Yet the village did have enthusiasm in 1981 and its life was indeed 'throbbing'.

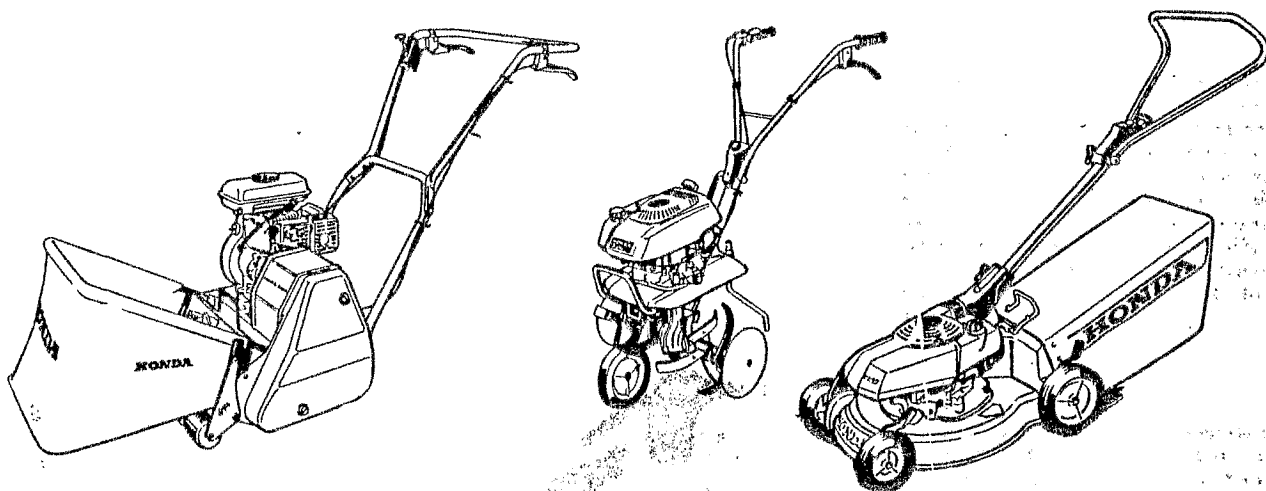
In the same way we must be careful not to judge Aston Abbotts in 1988 by the attendance at the Annual Parish Meeting or indeed the attitudes expressed there. We have always struggled to find willing volunteers to organise the Fete or be on this committee or that committee. It was ever thus, as the minute book shows! Oh, occasionally we get a crowd at the Annual Parish Meeting and we would again if threatened with the Third London Airport or a Watermead development at Lines Hill, but this year we did not have such a crowd pulling issue to debate.

The Annual Parish Meeting is not the barometer of the health of the village. In 1988 we have a flourishing Parish magazine that has a much acclaimed cover drawn each month by Andy Bystra, that is supported by a group of 'Friends' who have undertaken to keep the enterprise solvent. The 'Chronicle Entertainments' organised by Neil Chesher have been a much enjoyed feature of 1988. Michael Cox looks after the finances of the Chronicle as he oversees the accounts of the Church Room Committee, which has since 1981 taken responsibility for running and maintaining the Church Room. Doris Scutchings looks after the bookings of the hall and along with husband Len and Colin Higgs helps run the weekly Bingo and Whist Drives. Jane Plestead organises the Toddlers Group; Les Smith has his occasional keep fit sessions; Tony Hinds captains the darts teams and organises the five-a-side soccer team. A whole team led by Betty Bennett run

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