

THE CHRONICLE

Aston Abbotts Parish Magazine – February 2014

Village Hall Trustees Chairman Peter Shorrock looks pleased as Punch - Find out why inside



EDITORIAL

THE CHRONICLE

Issue 339

February 2014

Ding Dong over the Dung Heap.

Quite an eye catching start to the editorial I thought. Obviously the burning issue in the village at the moment, well at least for those who know or care about it. Will the village be rent asunder by the pro and anti-factions? Will the Royal Oak introduce separate bars for the supporters and opponents? (It'll make the 6.30 club interesting) and will the various alliances tear the Gnomes apart?

Well I'm pleased to say all very good natured so far in typical Aston Abbots tradition (Bucks Herald take note) and let's face it a good source of material for several editions of the Chronicle. Yes the local press have got involved despite the parties involved, including your Editor, trying to dissuade them, it must have been a very slow news week. Even our village regular on national radio, Simon Guy, was surprised to find himself being door stepped by the Herald.

I hope this continues as a rich vein of village humour, especially as I sit here every month thinking what the hell can I write about this time.

Anyway onto other matters:

Can we rely on Dave Lewis to disgrace himself so that Phil Spooner can put a back page together? Probably, and to think he pays a premium to feature on the back page! Hopefully as he approaches 60, or by the time you read this has reached 60, he'll continue to do so. We may even run a series of favourite back pages, well it'll fill some space. We may even tell you the truth behind the stories.

Following the recent press intrusion, a respected Parish Councillor, well RGC, has suggested that we have a mole in the village. I don't know about that but there's a plague of them in my garden. Short of starting a gardening column any suggestions?

At the time of writing the fete continues to be in crisis and looks unlikely to happen this year, see article inside by Diedre Whyte. When you read the notes of the Village Hall meeting and the generous offer that has been made by the Astonbury committee you realise how important these fund raising events are to the village. So come on somebody and take it on this year.

I'm pleased to say that the letters page has been expanded, although with a degree on anonymity. Although I do know or suspect the authors, and also suspect there may be some mischief afoot, but you send them in and I'll print them.

Finally continued thanks to Phil Spooner for getting your Luddite Editor out of the dung at regular intervals.

Phil Corrigan

Snippets & Miscellanea

Royal Oak News

Guest beers for February

Doom Bar

Fullers London Pride

Bass

Valentines night

Special menu

See in pub for details.

I fear we have reverted to the 1970s when we got used to organisations such as the IRA, PLO, SLA, WARA etc., but now we have BASH, SODALL & SAD.

A prize for anybody who can identify SLA and their most famous member.

Welcome to Richard & Naomi Stuart who have just moved into 55 The Green

For what it's worth, I think the dungheap may contain a pumpkin!

Watch out for next autumns competitions.

I suspect subterfuge from Messrs Guy & Bush to dethrone Tony Hinds.

Royal British Legion

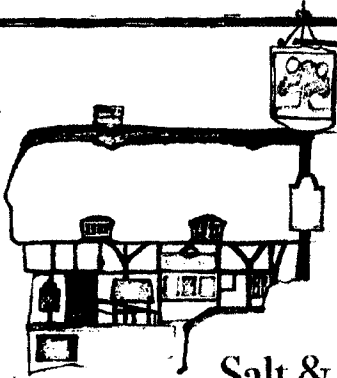
Wingrave and District Branch

There will be an ordinary general meeting at 8pm on Wednesday 12th February at the Rose and Crown in Wingrave.

All members or other interested people are welcome.

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STARTERS

- Salt & Petter chilli squid & dressed leaves
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- Goats cheese & caramelised onion tart
- Feta & Olive salad
- Field mushroom stuffed with goats cheese on garlic toast
- Homemade soup of the day with crusty bread

MAINS

- Ribeye steak garni
- 1kg Moules mariniere on wholegrain mustard mash with pancetta & onion gravy
- Oven roasted lamb rump served with dauphinoise potatoes, mint jus
- Tagliatelle with olives, sun dried tomatoes, pesto & mozzarella served with garlic ciabatta
- Pan roasted Gressingham duck breast, braised red cabbage & apple, garlic saute potatoes & cider jus
- Beer battered cod, hand cut chips & minted mushy peas served with homemade tartare sauce

PHONE : 01296 681 262

Around the Parish

I have been told that the Chronicle needs all the support it can get and in particular more articles. I will therefore try and conjure up something about the countryside around our village.

I write on January 14th and, so far what a mild winter we are having, mild and, in general an easy winter for wildlife. The bird activity around the village has been amazing and the Rooks have even taken to coming back to their nests and are beginning to rebuild for the spring. Cock Pheasants too have been fighting and preparing to attract the Harem of hen birds with whom they fancy breeding. Both these birds are a month early in their thoughts of spring.

The mild winter with plenty of food both in the hedgerows and birdfeeders has, I'm sure, so far resulted in many less deaths in the small bird population. There are still loads of apples some trees, food aplenty here.

I've seen nothing rare in the bird world but I regularly see the most beautiful cock Bullfinch as colourful as any exotic parrot.

It's been a long time since I saw a Kestrel, the only British bird that can truly hover when hunting mice. I am not surprised, many years ago I forecast that the Kestrel would suffer from the 'introduction' of the Red Kite. All birds are afraid of a bigger bird flying above them and Kestrels cannot concentrate on hovering with Red Kites floating above them, no hovering no food.

One big change in the wild animal life of the Parish is the low numbers of rabbits that I see. I'm not surprised at this change, after all the great increase in predators shows itself in many ways. Young rabbits have a job to survive with all the extra Buzzards, Kites and Badgers roaming the fields looking for a meal.

How many out of season flowers have you seen?

Dandelions and Daises are quite common in the fields at present, but the first prize in unseasonal behaviour goes to Kate and Peter Curry's hedge alongside Norduck Drive, there are fresh green leaves and bursting buds all along the hedges length and one bush is pretty well in leaf - 14th January!

Keep your eyes open as you walk about it's all there for you to see.

Peter Knight

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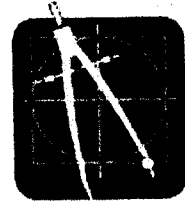
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Very Important Page

YOUR FETE NEEDS YOU

Sadly, there has been no response to the appeals for a Co-ordinator for this year's village Fete which should take place on Sat 26 July. It is a possibility therefore that the Fete may not take place.

The Fete is not only an important village social event but also provides much needed funds for the Church, Chronicle, Recreation Ground and other village causes. As we are now the proud owners of the Village Hall these funds are more vital than ever.

The duties of the Co-ordinator are really not too onerous as: the Fete tends to follow a well-established pattern, the Fete Committee meet regularly and shares the load and I would, of course, provide help and support throughout the next few months. As previously mentioned, the standing attractions of the Silver Band, Morris Men and Children's rides are already booked so, aside from some Committee meetings there is really not a lot more for the Co-ordinator to do until July.

You don't need any local knowledge so if you are new to the village what better way to get involved and meet lots of lovely people! The role could also be shared so talk to your spouses, partners, mates and drinking buddies.

If you would like any further information please contact me for a chat - in strictest confidence and with no obligation - so don't be afraid to pick up the phone. I promise at least one glass of wine. (I might enquire just for the wine Ed)

Come on Aston Abbots.
Your Fete needs you.

Deirdre Whyte
14 Bricstock
01296-681685
07980067967
deirdreawhyte@hotmail.co.uk

Get free tickets to see "Spirit in Motion" - Heritage Flame Celebration

A celebratory event for Stoke Mandeville, the birthplace of the Paralympic Movement and Heritage Flame, ahead of the Winter Paralympic Games in Sochi, Russia.

Sunday 2 March, 7.30pm

at Aylesbury Waterside Theatre

The extraordinary story of the birth of the Paralympic movement at Stoke Mandeville will come to life in this unique event, which brings together leading Paralympic athletes, film, visual arts, live music and performance.

This is a "not to be missed" opportunity to see aerial circus performers from the 2012 Paralympic Opening Ceremony as well as inspiring past and future athletes, together with a very special performance by Andrea Begley, winner of BBC One's "The Voice".

Hosted by disabled actor Ben Owen Jones, whose appearances include the BBC's dramatization of the story of Dr. Ludwig Guttmann, the event will also feature visual artist Rachel Gadsden and, soprano Denise Leigh.

The Sochi Paralympic Torch will also make a special appearance at the event. This will be lit the day before at the flame lighting ceremony at Stoke Mandeville Stadium, a pilot event for how the Paralympic Heritage Flame will link Stoke Mandeville to all future summer and winter Paralympic Games. The Ceremony will be broadcast to a global TV audience as part of the Paralympic Games Opening Ceremony in Russia and will be witnessed live by a small audience of international, national and local community guests.

How to apply for tickets

Tickets to the event are free via a ballot which can be entered by anyone who lives or works in Aylesbury Vale. The ballot will close at midnight on Sunday 16 February and you will be notified if you have been successful by Tuesday 18 February. A ballot of tickets for disabled people is also taking place.

For more information about the event or to enter the ballots visit www.buckslegacy.org.

Village Matters

WHAT'S ON IN FEBRUARY

Sunday 2 nd	Rambling Club	meet at Woburn	2pm
	Evensong	St James Church	6pm
Wednesday 5 th	PCC Meeting	Village Hall	7.30pm
Thursday 6 th	Coffee Shop	Village Hall	10am
Thursday 13 th	Coffee Shop	Village Hall	10am
	Bingo	Village Hall	7.30pm
Friday 14 th	St Valentine's Day		
Tuesday 18 th	Mobile Library	The Green	10.30am
	(Use it or lose it)		
Thursday 20 th	Coffee Shop	Village Hall	10am
	Whist Drive	Village Hall	7.30pm
Thursday 27 th	Coffee Shop	Village Hall	10am
Sunday 1 st March	Rambling Club	meet at Rushmere	2pm
	Evensong	St James	6pm

More players needed to support whist drives which have been going for 75 years.

Church Duties	Cleaning	Flowers
1 st	Caroline / Colin	Ann
8 th	Ann / Gordon	Anita
15 th	Alex / Anita	Anita
22 nd	Colin / Gay	Donated

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Letters Page

More on the dung heap and The Gossip column seems to be raising interest, although I suspect a conspiracy.

MUCK SLINGING

One of many tasks I undertake as Treasurer of the Aston Abbots PCC is to gather the rents from Allotment Holders each year. Along with this comes responsibility for maintenance of the area as the Allotments are on Church land.

When the Orchard was laid out the Allotment area was enlarged and where the Allotment Holders used to have their muck-heap is now part of someone's Allotment. Although neither I nor the Orchard Committee was consulted last year the Allotment Holders decided they would get their muck delivered to a new site just inside the Orchard gate and it has remained there for several months.

I attended the Village Orchard Annual meeting in December and was not surprised that the committee asked for the muck-heap to be removed [see article in Dec. Chronicle (page 17)]. When I wrote to remind Allotment Holders that their rent was due in January this year I asked them to do what they usually do and use the muck on their allotments in the Spring. In this way the somewhat unsightly heap would be gone by the time villagers were likely to start visiting the Orchard.

Having talked to the Equestrian fraternity who have on occasion had to pay to get the by-products of their horses removed, I am working on a solution that should keep everybody happy (mission impossible?). The muck has to 'mature' before it can be used on the land. If this can happen 'at source' rather than adjacent to the Allotments then we can arrange for the matured muck to be delivered to the Allotments in February/March provided it is all transferred to their plots by Easter.

The only problem is where to put the manure between delivery and being used by Allotment Holders to "improve the excellence of their produce". If this period is short (no more than a week or two) then could we not put it on the grass verge adjacent to the road next to the main gate? If this is unacceptable then I would look to one of the Allotment Holders with a plot adjacent to the main path to allow part of their plot to be used as a temporary muck heap. Or has anyone else got a better idea which would be to the benefit of all villagers?

David Gray PCC Treasurer

On behalf of BASH (Ban All Steaming Heaps), only joking chaps!

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More Letters

Dear Editor

This letter from a spokesman of SAD, 'Save All Dungheaps' has been removed at the request of the author.

Dear Ed

I am writing to complain about the woeful lack of content in the recent editions of the village rag The Chronicle. (You should try writing it, Ed)

I don't pay for this free magazine every four weeks only to find that it contains no gossip whatsoever. What has happened to this 'Alison' person? Surely in a village of this size, (taking into account Xmas, New Year, dung heaps and alcohol) there must have been some scandal to report.

Also, whilst I am on the typewriter, I would like to see a return of the 'Birthdays'. I understand that several people have had significant birthdays in January which appear to have been totally ignored. As yours (Ed) is among them I can only assume that this is deliberate.

I would be grateful for your comments.

Yours etc. Disgusted from Tunbridge Wells.

Ed replies:

Firstly Zandy and Marissa are doing a fabulous job with the distribution if it's getting as far as Tunbridge Wells.

Yes given the season, an alarming lack of gossip from our regular correspondent. Where is she? Is she suffering alcohol induced memory loss? Has she taken a vow of silence? Does she feature in most of the gossip? We need to be told.

Yes I understand that a certain Mr D Lewis (Purveyor of TVs to the Gentry) attained the age of 60 in January. Being pedantic, as my, possibly significant birthday, is actually in February, your comment does not apply. But to anybody in the village please feel free to buy me a drink to mark the occasion throughout the month of February.

Dear Sir,

Although I am very new to the village, (I'm guessing 30 years Ed) I have noticed that the so called ALISON'S GOSSIP column has disappeared from the Chronicle.

Quite right too in my opinion!

It was rather a waste of space because I did note that it contained hardly any of the real gossip that goes on in the village.

I found out so much more just by going to the Coffee Morning and the Book Club. (more clues there Ed)

Coming from outside into such a small community it is important, particularly for us girls, to know what is really going on and who are the people to avoid. I really couldn't believe the acrimony and upset seemed caused by some people's actions.

So, let's have some real facts about the village so we newcomers can understand all the undercurrents and the fatwas and avoid talking to the wrong people.

Name and Address supplied

February
2014

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VILLAGE HALL MEETING

Around 40 people attended a celebratory meeting in the Village Hall on Sunday 12th January. The meeting was held to celebrate the granting of a lease for the Hall and also to allow the Village Hall Trustees to present their initial thoughts for the renovation of the Hall.

The Village Hall - formerly the Church Room - was built in the late nineteenth century and, although small, has always been Aston Abbotts' main venue for holding village events. Over the years it has played host to shows, cabarets, Parish Council meetings, Toddlers Groups, Whist, Bingo, Coffee Mornings, discos, a weekly shop, private parties and many more functions. In recent years it has become slightly less used as its condition deteriorated and its aged facilities became less fit for purpose.

For many years some villagers have wanted to update the hall and create a better environment for the various groups who use it. The stumbling block has always been ownership of the building. The Church, the hall's owners, were unable to afford to invest in its infrastructure and villagers did not want to put money into the property without some form of safeguard as to its ongoing use and availability.

After fifteen years of wrangling and interminable delays the issue was finally resolved in 2013 when a group of Village Hall Trustees led by Chairman Peter Shorrock were able to complete a lease with the Church's legal representatives. This guarantees the availability of the hall for 35 years, with an option to extend later.

Plans are now being devised to improve the hall. Much work is needed: fix the floor's subsidence, better heating, replace the single external toilet with a pair of modern cubicles, better disabled access, better kitchen facilities, better décor, etc. Villagers attending the celebratory meeting were rewarded with a glass or two of refreshment and shown a display of some preliminary ideas about the improvements. John Whyte made a very short speech in which he explained that these were only initial thoughts and that a meeting with AVDC planning representatives was to be sought to determine the level of works that would be acceptable, given the age of the building and its position in a conservation area.

Astonbury Money

John Whyte explained to the meeting that as the improvement ideas were only in the discussion phase there was no actual budget for the improvements as yet. However, his 'gut feeling' was that it might cost in excess of £100,000 to do everything that was needed.

John also explained that most of the recent Astonbury events had made a profit, building up a cash surplus that has been held back for village causes like this. Accordingly the Astonbury Committee would make £10,000 available to be used to improve the internal facilities.

However, much more money will be needed to make all of the improvements and the Trustees are appealing for anybody with ideas about fund-raising to come forward with their suggestions. You can contact John on 681685 if you have any suggestions, or if you would like to assist with fund raising activities.

Pleased as Punch

Those who worked so tirelessly to obtain the lease are to be congratulated. The Trustees were very pleased with the interest shown by villagers who came along to the meeting. It is clear that there is a lot of support within the village for their past and future efforts.

No wonder Chairman Peter Shorrock was looking as pleased as punch.

Phil Spooner



Stewkley Singers

INVITE YOU TO “COME AND SING”!

Karl Jenkins: The Armed Man, A Mass for Peace

All ages and abilities welcome – come and see what it is like to rehearse and sing with a choir.

Date: Saturday 22nd March 2014, 10.00am – 6.00pm (approx.)

Venue: St Barnabas’s Church, Waterloo Rd, Leighton Buzzard, LU7 2NR

Stewkley Singers invite you to rehearse and perform the popular modern choral favourite, Karl Jenkins’s “The Armed Man, a mass for peace” at their exciting early Spring “Come and Sing” workshop. The day will be led by our Musical Director, Jenny Morgan, and we aim to have lots of fun whilst rehearsing and enjoying this fantastic composition. Singers of all ages and abilities, whether in a choir or not, are welcome. Some experience of reading music is useful but if you are happy to just have a go we are sure you will benefit from the experience of working together towards the informal concert which will end the day.

Cost: £16 per person (£18 on the door) including music hire, under 19 free

Programme:

10.00am prompt	Registration and coffee
10.30am - 1.00pm	Rehearsal
1.00pm - 2.00pm	Lunch Break. Please bring a packed lunch, tea and coffee provided
2.00pm - 4.00pm	Rehearsal
4.00pm - 5.00pm	Tea and home made cakes – donations appreciated
5.00pm - 6.00pm	Informal Concert. Friends welcome, donations to choir funds invited

Please complete the form below and send, along with cheque made payable to ‘Stewkley Singers’, to Ron Sims, 5 St Michael’s Close, Stewkley, Leighton Buzzard, LU7 0HN by 14 March 2014. Alternatively email the form to ronsims@live.co.uk and pay by bank transfer to Lloyds Bank; account name: Stewkley Singers; sort code: 30-14-71; account number: 00928521; reference: [your name(s)]. Further application forms and information are available on our website www.stewkleysingers.org or contact Ron on 01525 240671. Note there is free parking at the Church and, for those travelling by train, it is only a 2 minute walk from Leighton Buzzard station.

Name: Voice, state 1st or 2nd:

Choir (if applicable):

Address:

..... Post Code:

Email: Tel:

Aston Abbotts Parish Council
Summary of Parish Council Meeting
Wednesday 22nd January 2014

Present: - Cllr's P Shorrocks (Chair), C Higgs, Mrs J Hardcastle, B Carvey, P Bruton (Clerk), County Cllr. N Glover and four members of the public. Apologies were received from Cllrs. Mrs K Curry, R Clarke and District Cllr P Cooper.

Parish Councillor vacancy – The Clerk reported he had posted the Notice of vacancy as required by AVDC Electoral officer and as a result there was no need to hold a by – election and Council were no able to fill the vacancy by co-option. The Clerk would arrange for the relevant Notice to be posted for interested residents to express an interest in filling the vacancy. Mr. Phil Spooner, who was present, expressed his wish to be considered for the position.

Correspondence to note – The Clerk reported he had received notification of the electoral review of Aylesbury Vale - draft recommendations and the public consultation could be viewed and completed at consultation.lgbce.org.uk – there was no impact on Aston Abbotts in the recommendations.

It was noted that the Village litter blitz would be held on the 8th March 2014.

County Councillor Glover presented her report that included details of a Pop-up Job Club being held on the 5th February at Wing Children's Centre offering tailored support for job seekers and young people. Also GP surgeries are inviting people aged between 40 and 74 to come in for an NHS health check. The recent spell of severe weather had impacted on the Highways and TfB had dealt with 244 fallen trees and visited 272 flood sites, they are now focussing on fixing potholes.

Village Plan – Cllr Shorrocks reported that he was having some difficulty converting the document file, however with the help of Mr Spooner he hoped to have a final document ready for the next meeting. The Clerk would try to contact Mr Perkins to see if any monies were due to the publisher in order to ascertain the remaining allocated funds.

Village Notice Board – Cllr. Shorrocks confirmed he had repaired the Notice Board by the Bus Shelter on The Green for use of residents and that this should now be adequate for advertising local events.

Streetlights for new footpath – The Clerk reported he was awaiting a report from our streetlight maintenance company on the cost of installing lights on this stretch of road.

Neighbourhood Plan – It was noted that the Vale of Aylesbury Plan had been rejected by the Planning Inspector leaving a potential black hole in planning policy. The plan would have to be started again causing a delay in any Neighbourhood Plans as these had to be consistent with the Local Plan. Cllr Carvey reported that at this stage we should continue to wait until the VAP was adopted before considering whether we should proceed with a Neighbourhood Plan as there was considerable cost involved.

Meeting AVDC re Norduck Farm – Cllr Hardcastle reported the meeting with planning was still outstanding and she would contact District Councillor Cooper to try to arrange a suitable date.

14/00045/ATC – The Birches. Wingrave Road – Canopy reduction Silver Birch & pruning of branches two young Silver Birch trees.

The application was discussed and it was RESOLVED to support the application.

Recreation Ground Safety Check: - Cllr Clark had written to report that the Safety check to the playground area had been carried out and there was nothing to report. The recent weather had caused some damage to tree branches and he was arranging for this work to be carried out.

Tree – Recreation Ground – Cllr Clarke had confirmed the memorial tree was dead, due to beetle and bark damage. The tree must be burned on site and any replacement would have to be planted elsewhere.

The next Parish Council meeting will be held on Wednesday 26th February 2014 at 7:30pm in the Church Room.

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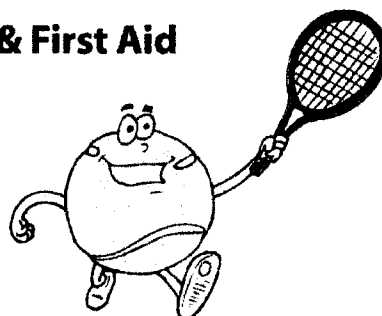
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ASTON ABBOTTS BOOK CLUB

We thoroughly enjoyed our Christmas Quiz wonderfully hosted by Val and Les. The questions that Les devised certainly tested the literary knowledge that we proved we sadly lacked.

There were three teams 'All pride & No prejudice' - Kate, Sally C, Anita, Carolyn & Val.

'WS' (the shortened version of William Shakespeare) - David, Dee, Gay & Sally P,

'The Who are We?' - Pam, Alison, Brigitte & John.

'All Pride & No prejudice' won with a score of 54, the next best scores were 48 & 47. The winners received the Cup, gold medals and a chocolate rabbit each.

The mountain of delicious food and nibbles and the lake of wine were contributed by Book Club members.

Our next meeting is on January 22nd 8pm, again at Val's house, when we will be discussing her choice 'Engleby' by Sebastian Faulks.

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The Breeze in the Apple Trees

(With apologies to Kenneth Grahame)

'The Mole had been working very hard all the morning, spring-cleaning his little home' Thus Mole found himself, once again, cleaning his house ahead of spring arriving and once again his thoughts turned to the riverbank and his friend Ratty. Unlike the first time he'd met his friend this time he had a reason for visiting him, he had received a letter from a cousin of his who lived some distance away.

It was with some excitement, therefore, that Mole arrived at Ratty's home clutching the missive he'd received and determined to find out what Ratty thought of it all. "Come in, Come in" said Ratty as he stood in his doorway observing the excitable Mole. "What has got you in such a spin? It's not like you to get so animated"

"I have a letter" said Mole, "It's from my cousin in Buckinghamshire". "Buckinghamshire?" said Ratty with a querulous tone in his voice (he was a little suspicious of anybody who lived further than a boat ride away) "I didn't know you had cousins there". "They're the Aston Abbotts moles" confirmed Mole "not a bad lot considering and they've lived there for as long as I can remember. Mmmm thought Ratty, he wasn't sure he wanted to hear about Moles cousins, especially as he was contemplating a visit to his local 'The Common Beech'. They'd just got some new, gravity fed Real ales in and he was very much looking forward to trying them. He'd heard they'd got into CAMRA and the landlady was very keen for everyone to know.

"OK you'd better come in then" said a resigned Ratty. "What's so important about this letter that it's going to keep me from my beer?" "Well" said Mole, has he made himself comfortable in Ratty's favourite chair, "apparently they're contemplating having to move home". "Really?" said Ratty, now a little more interested "why would that be?" Mole continued; "My cousin says that there's a problem with the mole hills" Ratty's whiskery eyebrows started to rise in indignation "problem? What could possibly be wrong with a heap or two in a field in the country?" Mole replied "All my cousin would say is that some humans who like looking at fruit saplings are objecting to heaps in the field containing these young trees. He knows that there are two muck heaps but it can't possibly be them as there has been muck heaps there for as long as the moles have been there, possibly longer. "Are you sure" said an increasingly incredulous Ratty "this all sounds a little farfetched to me" "that's what I thought" agreed Mole "but then my cousin did say that this wasn't the first time that the humans had tried something silly. At one point they were objecting to the wrong type of daffodils being planted so it wasn't too much of a stretch to believe that they objected to the mole hills"

Ratty slumped into his least favourite chair and sighed. "What is life coming to when small (or large) heaps cannot be seen in the countryside? After all they're both very natural and we don't want a 'designer countryside' to appear like something off a Country Life magazine cover" "Believe me, my young friend", Ratty continued as his dander continued to rise (easy - Ed) "there is NOTHING--absolute nothing--half so much worth doing as simply messing about on an allotment. Simply messing,' he went on dreamily: 'messing--about--in--vegetable beds; messing----'

Mole interrupted Ratty's reverie "what do you think we should do about it?" Ratty shook himself out of his daydream "we have to go and see Badger; he has a cousin in Buckinghamshire too. Runs some kind of enterprise concerning tractors, pillar of the community apparently, he'll know what to do.

To be continued...

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A word of thanks from the new Village Hall Trustees...

We were really pleased to see so many of you in the Hall on Sunday. Thank you for coming and letting us know what you think.

The plan in this month's Chronicle (drawn by John Hardcastle) is one of two on display on Sunday. As we explained, there are two big challenges that we need to resolve before we can plan the internal details:

- Not a lot of space! Build up to the garden walls of the adjoining properties?
- Yew tree roots and rising ground: extension floor higher than main hall. Have a step between the two? Raise the floor in the main hall and kitchen?

Most people we spoke to wanted to raise the floor if it avoided having internal steps. This is useful to know. John has now asked for a meeting with AVDC representatives – hopefully the Conservation Officer – so that we have a better idea of what they will allow us to do (could be different). Then a full planning application, check back with the Church (still the owners of the Hall), more accurate costs, deciding what we all want inside the Hall, and... raising money!

How much will it cost? Well, six figures. We don't really know yet, but the more we can do ourselves the better! Can you plaster? Paint? Fit a kitchen? Organise a fundraising event? Your time/expertise/donations will all be welcome - thanks to those who gave us their names on Sunday. We'll be in touch. If anyone else would like to be involved now or when work starts, just let any of us know or keep watching the Chronicle for progress. Thank you!

The Village Hall Trustees are:

John Hardcastle (chair), Peter Shorrock, Caroline Lane (names on lease), Nigel Palmer (treasurer), Liz Hall (secretary), John Whyte. Tracy Hinds looks after the bookings and day to day running.

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681373, carolinelane@btinternet.com

Plans of the proposals are on page 27

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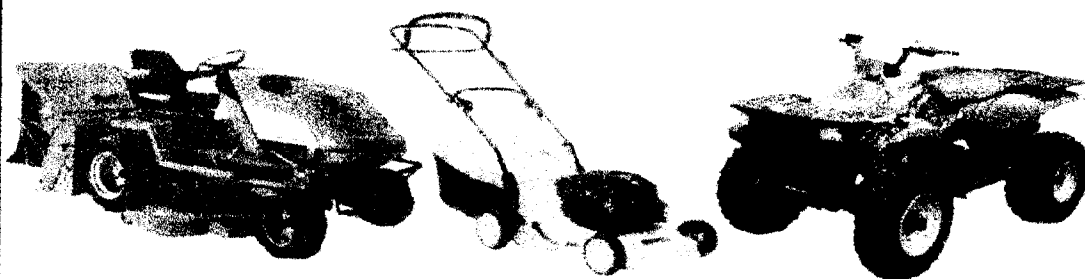
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ALLOTMENT DIARY

Last month I brought you the astonishing news that Brussels sprouts were apparently more popular than Christmas pudding: this month I can report that the cauliflower has now become a trendy and popular vegetable! Marks & Spencer report that sales of cauliflower are up by 68%, compared with this time last year; a Canadian magazine called *Maclean's* has called it the season's trendiest vegetable; and a leading grower in Boston, Lincolnshire, who supplies most of the leading supermarkets, said it had had its best Christmas ever, and probably supplied 30% more cauliflowers than in December 2012.

However, it has to be admitted that cauliflower was starting from a low base: for some reason as inexplicable as its current rise in popularity, production in Britain fell by about 30% between 2000 and 2010. I am totally baffled. My liking for cauliflower, especially served with a white or cheese sauce has remained undiminished over the years, and I had no idea that it had gone out of favour until recently. The article which enlightened me about the above also told me that cauliflower is a jolly good thing, since it is high in fibre, a good source of vitamin C, and may contain cancer-fighting bioflavonoids (whatever they are).

These musings betray the fact that not much is happening on the allotments at the moment – apart from a difference of opinion about a certain muck-heap, which was mentioned in last month's Chronicle. While clearly allotment holders have no divine right to have a heap of manure on the orchard site, I can say that for the 10 or more years that I have had an allotment, there has been a heap on the adjoining land, formerly rented out to Richard Clarke, for the use of allotment holders; and very useful it has been. I think the problem this year is that the current heap, kindly donated by Bob Prouting, did not appear until the summer, by which time it was a bit late for it to be spread on the allotments before planting started – so that there is rather more of it left now than would normally be the case. There is no spare room to put a manure heap on the allotment land (particularly since it must be next to the vehicular access through the allotments, to permit it to be delivered by a vehicle), and I hope that the Orchard Committee will decide that the muck heap can continue to exist. We are, after all, inhabitants of a village in the country, and to deny allotment holders the use of a muck heap does seem to me to be a bit urban.

However, this does remind me that when I was walking in China six years ago, we went past one village in the middle of nowhere, and it was quite evident from the smell that human excrement had been used to fertilise the fields, and there I would draw the line! You will all have read about the modernity and sophistication of Chinese cities like Beijing and Shanghai, but the parts of the countryside I saw were incredibly primitive: I don't remember seeing a tractor; fields were being tilled by hand and cultivated with the aid of horses and mules; the only wheelbarrows I saw were hand-made with a wooden box, a simple frame and a bicycle wheel; we passed by one village which did not have a water supply, so that the local peasants were using a yoke to carry buckets of water from the nearest supply, a mile or so away; and at another the village women were washing their laundry in the stream that flowed through the village, and laying it out on rocks to dry.

While the weather has been very wet and stormy recently, it has been astonishingly mild. Butterflies have been reported in Cambridgeshire; ladybirds in Devon and Co. Durham, and swallows in several places in Southern England. Mallards with ducklings have been reported to the British Trust for Ornithology in several counties, including Buckinghamshire. It was apparently the warmest December since 1988.

My paper today (21st January) had a photograph taken by a gardener in Kent of sprouts of rhubarb already showing – some 6-8 weeks early. Here, my first snowdrops have started appearing. Researchers at Cambridge University say that flowers have bloomed up to 12 days earlier on average over the last 25 years than in any previous quarter-century period since 1760.

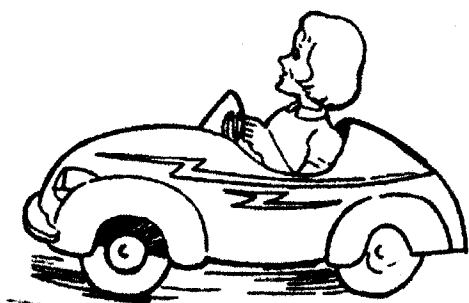
Finally, I have read that the BBC is going to show a programme in the spring called "Grow, Make, Eat: the Great Allotment Challenge" to be presented by Fern Britton. Nine pairs of gardeners will cook their own produce, and be judged by experts including James Buttriss, a Royal Horticultural Society judge. Could this be the next "Bake Off"?

Trendz

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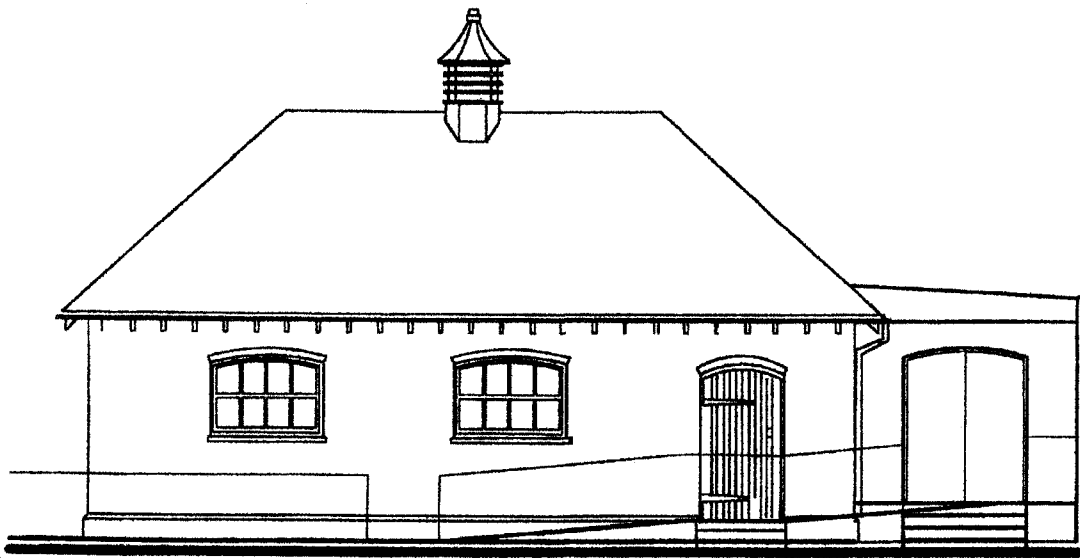
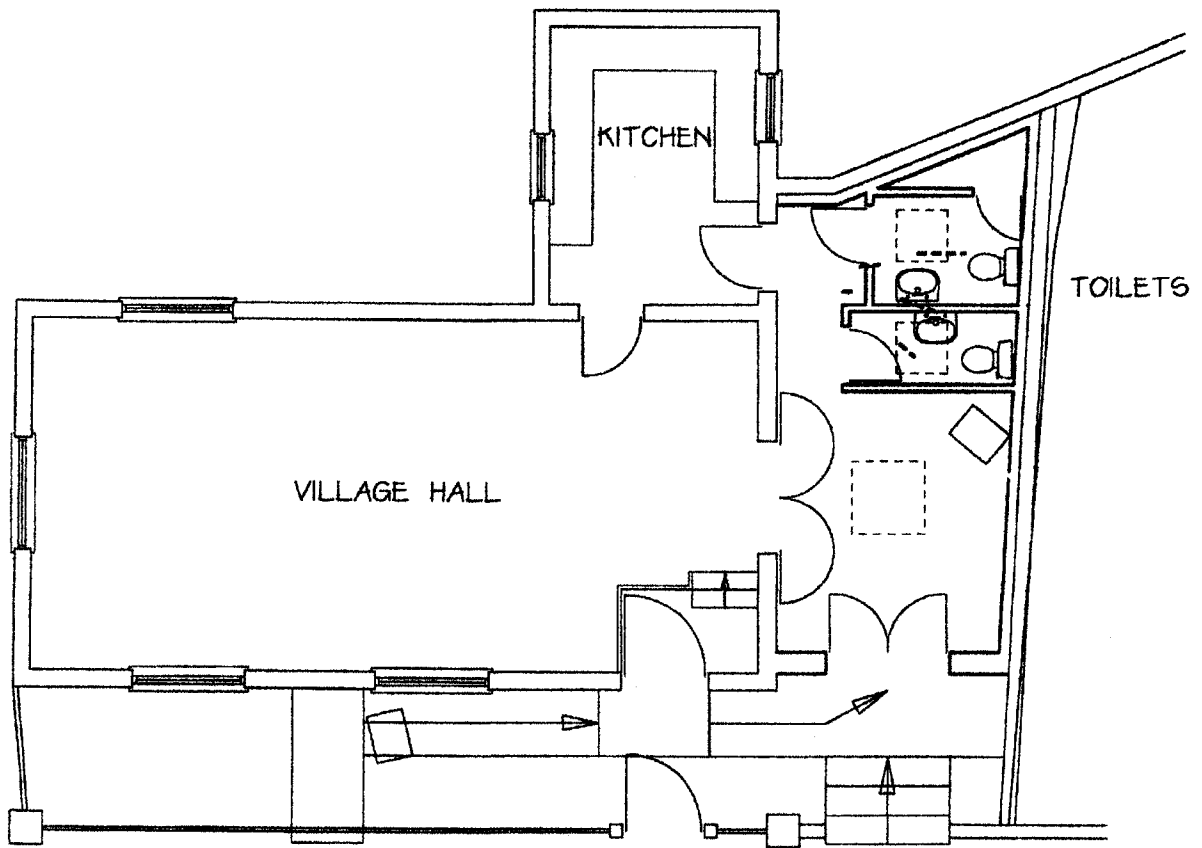
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A Few Brainteasers

Word play

What English word seven letters long can have a letter removed from seven letters to one, but leave a proper word each time:

What is the word and what are the words that can be made?

What six letter word contains ten others without re arranging any letters?

Anagrams

"A nut roast" could be a high flier

"Clues he'd" could be a timetable

"Both altered" could be a promise

Uxbridge – Oxford Dictionary

The English language is ever evolving and becoming more informal, here are a few of the latest examples:

Aperitif set of dentures

Dilate live longer

Dreadlocks fear of canal holidays

Dialysis call your sister

Paradox two doctors

Incontinent not an island

Retard very hard in Yorkshire

Portable poorly built furniture

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The Arty Bits... Books...Music and Theatre (no reviews this time)

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If you would like to request tickets for any of these shows then let me know by emailing me at johnhardcastle@me.com or put a note through my door at Marloes, Lines Hill with a contact phone number.

The draw for tickets is made two weeks prior to the date of the show when I will let those who expressed interest know whether they have been successful or not.

John Hardcastle

	Date & Time
SOME GIRL I USED TO KNOW	MON 17 FEB 7.30PM
RUMOURS OF FLEETWOOD MAC	THU 20 FEB 7.30PM
DIRTY ROTTEN SCOUNDRELS	WED 26 FEB 7.30PM
TONIGHT'S THE NIGHT	MON 3 MAR
THE TWO WORLDS OF CHARLIE F	THU 13 MAR 7.30PM
THE JOHNNY CASH ROADSHOW	FRI 21 MAR 7.30PM
SING-A-LONG-A GREASE	SAT 22 MAR 7.30PM
FAME	MON 24 MAR 7.30PM
NINA KRISTOFFERSON'S BILLIE HOLIDAY STORY	TUE 1 APR 7.30PM
NABUCCO	FRI 4 APR 7.30PM
AN EVENING OF BURLESQUE	SAT 5 APR 8PM
DIAL M FOR MURDER	TUE 8 APR 7.30PM
HEAR THE PEOPLE SING	TUE 22 APR 7.30PM
BUDDY	MON 28 APR 7.30PM

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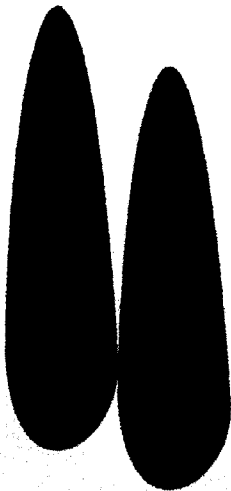
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Some dates for the diary

Beetle Drive March date to be advised

May 24th/25th Flower Festival St James Church, and hopefully open gardens.

July 26th/27th Village Fete & Festival weekend

Saturday 8th March, Annual Litter Blitz, meet at Village Hall 10am sacks and pickers provided.

If you would like to sponsor an element of the flower festival please contact Colin.

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Tuesday 18th Feb

A few brainteasers answers

What seven letter word when having a letter removed can make seven other words?

Snowing, sowing, swing, sing, sin, in, I

What six letter word contains ten others without rearranging any letters

Spared

Spa, spar, spare, pa, par, pare, pared, are, rep, re

Dear friends,

Happy new year to you all---when do we stop saying that?

We've just celebrated the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem in a downtrodden province of the eastern Roman Empire 2000 years' ago.

Along with Britain, colonised by the Romans 50 years after Jesus' birth, Israel-Palestine was the most troublesome area for the Romans to deal with. Rebellions happened on a regular basis. Both provinces has 3 Legions of troops permanently settled in them, the rest of the Empire had 20 in total!

Jesus' family had to immediately pack up and flee to Egypt to get away from a very angry King Herod, an experience similar to many millions in North Africa and the Near and Middle East now.

There are so many examples of mankind's cruelty to others and it calls for more than a leap of faith to adopt a naive belief in the infallible goodness and reliability of many of our fellow men and women.

Fortunately there are wonderful people around who put love of family, friends and country above their own selfish needs. Many of these base their behaviour on Jesus' understanding of loving God and neighbour as ourselves. If we could only get hold of that as a working philosophy and enshrine that dynamic relationship into our daily living maybe, just maybe, we would begin to see the end of such horrors as the Syrian war and exploitation of child workers in India and Indonesia.

God Bless You, Philip.



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ASTON ABBOTTS

WATCHOWER

Vegetable Abuse Enquiry Call

Calls have been made for a full public enquiry into suspected vegetable abuse in Aston Abbots following last months revelation that a village elder has taken to secreting vegetables in his bedroom (The Chronicle, January 2014).

In the meantime, should you see a parish councillor wearing red trousers and cavorting with a courgette, please inform the police immediately.

Much A-Poo About Nothing

The controversy surrounding the manure heap that the allotmenters left in The Orchard has now reached the local newspaper. However we must challenge Mr Simon Guy's assertion in the January 22nd Bucks Herald where he states, "It's not an EU regulation".

Villagers who have observed the EU over many years may well have reached the conclusion that the European Union and horse manure do indeed go hand in hand. Therefore, it is safe to assume that there IS an EU directive covering dung.

Consequently, we are concerned that the pile may not be legal. Having carefully studied Mr Guy's pile of poo at close quarters we see no evidence of the mandatory CE mark that indicates compliance with the relevant EU directives regarding the consistency and size of the droppings.

In short, villagers need to be assured that Mr Guy's poo is up to standard.



More Sex (togenerians)

Hot on the heels of last months sneaky revelation that Dave Lewis has turned 60 comes news of another sextogenerian in Aston Abbots. Unfortunately, the Chronicle editor - Phil 60rrigan - has explicitly forbidden me from revealing the identity of the poor unfortunate soul.

Lost and Found

Found in the recreation ground after the Christmas festivities:

- 18 beer cans
- A bobble hat
- A pair of knickers

The first item has been recycled, the other two may be reclaimed from Richard Clarke.

Beautiful Gift

Celebrate Aston Abbots' famous pile of poo with an exquisite commemorative set of six table mats with six matching drinks coasters, each featuring a full colour picture of the steaming manure heap in the Orchard.

No need to pay, or even to place an order! Just wait, and the allotmenters will come round and leave them in your front garden when you're not looking.



FLACKWELL ELECTRONICS — PURVEYORS OF PLASMA SCREENS TO THE GENTRY