

THE CHRONICLE

Aston Abbotts Parish Magazine



EDITORIAL

THE CHRONICLE

Issue 351

May 2015

Well some positive feedback from the question posed last month “does anybody actually read this” In reality not everybody will read it, as not everybody uses the pub or goes to church we all make choices. Those that took the time to respond either directly, e mail or text thanks.

What seems to have become a village perennial, (if that’s the right word, I’m not a gardener!) the allotment muckheap has made its presence known again, either by position or smell I’m not sure. Anyway there are mutterings of nefarious goings on and people helping themselves to portions (a portion of dung the mind boggle) a prominent local Councillor has offered to make these deliveries in his tractor.

I don’t know about anybody else but it seems wrong to me that with all the polls predicting a very close election we are effectively disenfranchised by the apparent tradition of the major parties not fielding a candidate against the Speaker. Although interestingly major parties in various parts of the UK stood against the Speaker in the 1974, 1979, 1987, 2001 & 2005 elections!

I know our travel correspondent (Chesh) is off again soon, so no doubt more tales from the high seas in future editions. We may also lay claim to a foreign correspondent soon, Capt. Jens Martin is bobbing up and down in the seas off Teheran for a couple of months and may send the odd despatch. His first brief missive was that he’d been given a warfare survival guide.... In Farsi! Apparently he’s grateful for the pictures.

Due to school holidays rather than get our usual contributors to submit early can I have any submissions by 27th May and will aim to distribute during the first week in June, thanks

As ever thanks to Phil Spooner for the front cover photo, not sure if he’s pleased about the arrival of spring or was thinking about his Sunday lunch!

Phil Corrigan

What's on in May

Sun 3rd	Rambling Club	Wolverton 2pm
	Evensong	St James 6pm
Tues 12 th	Mobile library	The Green 10.30
	Rambling Club AGM	13 Moorland Wing 8pm
Thurs 14 th	Coffee Shop	Village Hall 10-12pm
	Bingo	Village Hall 7.30pm
Sunday 17 th	breakfast in Village Hall	9.30-10am
	Followed by family service	10-10.30
	Village footpath walk	the Green 2pm
Thurs 21 st	Coffee Shop	Village Hall 10-12pm
	Whist Drive	Village Hall 7.30pm
Thurs 28 th	Coffee Shop	Village Hall 7.30 pm
OTHER DATES: Open Gardens		
Sunday 3 rd	Ascot	
Monday 25 th	Nether Winchendon	
Sunday 31 st	The Claydons east	



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20TH APRIL, 2015-04-21

I think that last month I wrote that we needed rain. It's difficult to believe that a month has passed with no significant rainfall – we are forecast some for the coming weekend – my goodness we certainly need it. The spring flowers and blossom all look wonderful as they have not been physically damaged by rain or hail and no significant frosts have harmed them. What a Spring! I have spent all my life living and working in the English countryside and yet it can still leave me speechless with its beauty.

The warm weather has also seen the very early arrival of Swallows – I consider April 22nd to be the usual date on which I see my first Swallows of the year. This year I was telephoned on the 8th by triumphant Kate telling me there was a Swallow on the wires by her house – that did seem early. However, I can report that at least 2 frogs turned up to our little pond last month and that on 14th April tadpoles had broken free from spawn and were swimming freely – again much earlier than usual.

Have you noticed the new Badger excavations right beside the road over Lines Hill? It is partially hidden by a bramble bush on the left as you drive down to Weedon. Now, over the years I have had a few problems with sheep and Badger setts and I am curious about the repercussions of the latest expansion Badger housing. Badger setts are protected by law – not only should no-one interfere with a sett but a farmer is not allowed to encroach within 50 metres of a sett with heavy machinery. It follows, therefore, that Lines Hill should be closed to all traffic while Brock has his home under the road, or perhaps we should be issued with licences to allow us to drive over a Badger sett!

I learnt at the weekend that Moles are a protected species in Germany and that the only sure way of a German protecting his garden from mole damage is to bury mole proof wire netting 2 ½ feet deep all round the garden. Wow – surely moles aren't rare over there are they? What about rats – are they allowed to trap rats? It all gets rather silly doesn't it.

What a spring for lambs – plenty of young clean grass producing milk from the ewes and no cold wet weather to hamper their growth. It may yet be that farmers lambing in May see the worst weather for young lambs. We always said sunshine makes the lambs grow and that is about right.

There's the magnolia (magnolia as a friend called it) in front of the Old House. A particular blackthorn in Bellinghams fields absolutely solid with blossom as white as driven snow, which would grace the best of gardens; a small delicate cherry tree in the arboretum in the Grove behind the Abbey – lovely blossom, perfectly shaped tree; three young Gloucester cattle in a nice paddock at Lower Burston; a more likely choice for the coveted award is that relatively rare sight of a herd of milking cows enjoying the sunshine and spring grass. Turning out time (cows come out from winter quarters into grazing fields) was always a red letter day on the farm. The times John and I have stood together watching the cows enjoying their spring freedom – we relished the moment as much as they did.

Star Prize – no way to choose so let's just say spring in the Aston Abbots countryside – it can't be bettered.

Peter

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COUNTRYSIDE MATTERS

What a wonderful time of the year, you can actually see the Spring Barley from germination to 4 inches high in a few days, one day the arable field is light brown, and two days later pale green, and then two more days it becomes a darker green. My Grass tenant Bill Rawding, has moved his ewes and lambs into my small grass paddock near the house, so I can keep an eye on them, and to date we have had little fox trouble and no dog problems. Only last week, the field behind the church, off the High street in Wing, a sheep farmer had a ewe with her throat ripped out in the early morning, and the perpetrators disappeared. One of the unseen benefits of having Game keepers on The Ascott Estate is to keep the fox population in control, now that hunting has taken a backseat, apart from the occasional lamb, a fox likes nothing better than pet rabbit, juicy Guinea pig or a young inexperienced cat. Therefore people that feed foxes need to get real and understand that the countryside is not a giant theme park, but a working, living environment, the same applies to people who feed badgers. While on that subject, Bill has also moved 38 beautiful young store cattle into the grass field against the Leighton road. Although I spend much time in the evenings watching them, I have to say, they are beggars when it comes to pushing the fencing over, while trying to graze the young blackthorn and hawthorn bushes, the other side. Also please don't walk your dog (on a lead of course!!!) through my grass fields for the next few weeks, these young cattle have been yarded over the winter and have now got their freedom, they are inquisitive and excitable and the sight of a dog (especially a black one) would cause what I call the "Serengeti syndrome", when their ancient survival instincts cut in, and the dog becomes a potential predator, with sometimes disastrous consequences!! Last Saturday afternoon, I saw my first pair of Swallows flying around the yard, the car shall have to come out of the garage shortly, to avoid the aerial paint stripper, and make sure we have enough muddy puddles for nest building. Spring heralds my campaign against magpies, some of you might view these birds as extremely clever mythological creatures, shrouded in the dark arts, decorating their nests with shiny objects, I, and many other folk born and brought up in the countryside, view them as prolific egg thieves and killers of fledgling song birds, whose parents have fed all winter, on our bird tables. They shall work their way down a hedge, stealing the eggs, killing young chicks, especially black birds, despite all the alarm calls of the fraught parents. I am afraid Jays aren't much better, but they do plant many acorns that they forget about, and later grow to oak saplings. Now that I have upset most of the RSPB members in the village, I shall go and hide. James.

James Henderson

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ALLOTMENT DIARY

Well, Spring is well and truly sprung, and there has been a burst of activity on the allotments while allotmenters dig their plots over ready for the current season's planting. I have been very impressed by the way that a number of the new members of the allotments, who took plots on the strip of land added to the allotments last year, have got their plots into shape. Considering they all started with what had been weed-invested meadow-land they have done extraordinarily well. Despite predictions to the contrary, room has been found on Simon and Mike's allotment for a heap of muck for general use, and I would like to thank them for this on behalf of myself and other allotment-holders

My new seeds have now been acquired, and it now remains to be seen whether they do what it says on the packet. Each year I like to try something a bit out of the ordinary, and this year, carrot fly permitting, I am growing some purple carrots. Interestingly, when carrots first arrived in the country, they were coloured purple. The plant is believed to have originated in the Afghanistan area about 5,000 years ago. Ancient Egyptian temple drawings from about 2,000 BC show a purple vegetable, which is believed to be a carrot; but there is no reference to carrots in texts from the period. (Plant historians have the additional problem that until the last few hundred years, writers seem to have confused carrots and parsnips, despite the difference in size and colour). However, it is certain that the vegetable was known to the ancient Greeks and Romans: Pliny refers to carrots in his writings, and the Emperor Tiberius was said to be very fond of carrots.

The reason why most modern carrots are orange is that when they were introduced into northern Europe in the 15th and 16th centuries, they were cultivated most successfully in Holland, where orange was the colour of the Dutch royal family (and is of course still very much the national colour today). Growers found that they could grow varieties of carrots which were orange in colour, and therefore concentrated on these to the exclusion of the old purple varieties. Given the choice between orange and purple carrots, the patriotic Dutch housewife would clearly go for orange every time. It is only in recent years that purple carrots (and varieties coloured yellow and white) have started making a comeback.

Other non-standard vegetables that I shall also be growing include purple dwarf beans, yellow courgettes, round cucumbers and, largely because I think they are so beautiful, Romanesco cauliflowers.

As the Times put it very topically recently; it's typical that they come over here from Europe, eating our onions and garlic, and before you know what has happened, they are taking over! No, I haven't been converted to UKIP, I am not speaking about east European immigrants, but about allium leaf miner flies. Until I read the article, I had never heard of them, but I gather that this fly has now made into 7th place in the top ten in the list of British gardeners' worst enemies! It is a fly which comes from central Europe, and was first seen in the UK in 2002. Its maggots burrow into the leaves and stems of plants in the onion family, which is bad enough; but rot then sets in as secondary infection from fungi and bacteria. I am happy to say I have never suffered from it, but its high place in this list suggests it is only a question of

However, the main pests on the list are still, as you might expect, slugs and snails. Number 2 was something called wine weevil – which I presume only affects vines and is not a problem for vegetable gardeners; followed by three pests that again I have never heard of (but that is not a very high bar) – cushion scale, lily beetle and rosemary beetle. Aphids, which I thought would be higher, only come in at number 6, and there is no room in the top ten for the cabbage white butterfly, nor the carrot fly – I presume because this is a list voted for by all gardeners, and not just vegetable gardeners.

Peter Shorrock



The Jewellery Lady

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 www.facebook.com/holycowhome

The Astonians Part 8

Yossell's willy and the Pickle slicer

Contains some strong

Astonpete

All characters are fictional and hold no association to anyone

Doing my bit for the older generation, I went to see Mrs Speigleberger, Aston Abbott's only Jewish resident, only to be told another yarn concerning her late husband and his friend Yossel Zelkovitz.

"Many years ago Yossel worked in a Polish pickle factory," She said. "For many years he had a powerful, almost uncontrollable desire to put his penis in the pickle slicer already. Unable to stand it any longer he finally sought professional help from the factory counsellor.

After six weeks of intense therapy however, the frustrated counsellor gave up. Frustrated he told Yossel to go ahead and do it; otherwise he would probably never have any peace of mind. So the next day Yossel came home from work very early. His wife, Sacha, became alarmed and wanted to know what had happened."

(I was subconsciously holding my genitals in the cradle of my hand whilst listening to this gruesome story.)

She continued, "For the first time, Yossel tearfully confessed to her his tormenting desire to put his penis in the pickle slicer. He went on to explain that he finally went ahead and did it and he was immediately dismissed.

Sacha gasped and ran over to her husband. She quickly yanked his pants down only to find a normal, completely intact penis. She looked up and said, 'I don't understand Yossel. What about the pickle slicer already?'

Yossel replied, "I think she got the sack too!

Oh how we laughed. Mrs Speigleberger is so full of bullshit about her late husband.

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ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 2015

**THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING WILL TAKE PLACE ON
WEDNESDAY 20th MAY AT 8PM IN THE VILLAGE HALL.**

AGENDA

- 1. Apologies**
- 2. To approve minutes of meeting held on 14th May 2014**
- 3. Matters arising**
- 4. County Council, District Council and Police reports**
- 5. Annual report from the Parish Council Chairman**
- 6. Village Activity Reports – including Village Postie**
- 7. Village Plan – Action Plan Committee**
- 8. Fete 2014 and 2015 – Distribution of profits.**
- 9. A.O.B.**

WE HOPE YOU WILL BE ABLE TO JOIN US.

Aston Abbotts Parish Council

Summary of Parish Council Meeting

Wednesday 8th April 2015

Present: - Cllr's P Shorrock (Chair), Mrs J Hardcastle, Mrs K Curry, P Spooner, C Higgs, B Carvey, R Clarke, County Cllr. Mrs N Glover, District Cllr. P Cooper, P Bruton (Clerk), and 2 members of the public.

It was noted that we had heard nothing further regarding the Royal Oak and the repairs to the Bus shelter had been completed. There were no volunteers for a celebration to mark the 70th Anniversary of the Czech Ambassador's association with the village so unfortunately there would be no event.

The Clerk advised he had received an email regarding the condition of a Cherry tree and various other trees around The Green. It was AGREED Cllr Clarke would contact the resident and agree the action required.

Transparency Code – We had also received confirmation that a new Transparency code for smaller authorities will come into force from the 1st April and this impacted on us. Council would now have to publish various information on a publicly accessible free of charge website. The Clerk had a copy of the document if any Councillor wished to read or it was available on the following link

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/388541/TransparencyCodeforSmallerAuthorities.pdf

County Councillor: Mrs. N Glover presented her report that included the following: Residents are being asked for their feedback on proposed revisions to library opening times – comments can be made via www.buckscc.gov.uk/haveyoursay. BCC have set up a Social Work Academy with the aim to help to overcome the national shortage in social workers for children and families. Residents have also been warned to take care over how they dispose of hot embers after three fires at Bucks. Household recycling centres, believed to have been caused by hot ash in the waste containers. Finally anyone interested in working as an apprentice and how to apply can call 01296 383470, email inbusiness@buckscc.gov.uk or visit www.adultlearningbcc.ac.uk

District Councillor: P Cooper reported that with the upcoming Election it was relatively quiet, never the less the Broadband upgrade was switched on last week although there was an issue with the box at the Wingrave crossroads, however this was hopefully being resolved shortly. It appeared that whoever held the majority after the next election a move towards a Unitary Council would be investigated as a study had been commissioned. It was also hoped that the Vale of Aylesbury Plan scheduled date of 2017 could be brought forward if at all possible

Village Plan Action Committee – Cllr. Shorrock reported no volunteers had come forward and it was AGREED that the issue would be raised at the forthcoming Annual Village/Parish meeting and it was hoped people could be encouraged to be a part of the Action Committee.

Annual Village/Parish meeting – The Agenda for the above meeting was would contact the relevant persons to update the village on the various activities at the meeting. Cllr Carvey volunteered to Chair the meeting in Cllr Shorrock's absence.

Local Area Forum – Cllr Clarke reported that following representations made at the recent LAF meeting it had been agreed that Highways would look at gritting Moat Lane for next year. In relation to the MVAS signs for speed awareness, the LAF had agreed to look at purchasing a 4th sign and Aston Abbotts would then be included in the villages that had access to the signs. There may be some associated costs and County Cllr. Glover would contact the relevant individual. The next stage would be a survey of suitable locations at the 3 entry points to the village.

Neighbourhood Plan – Cllr Shorrock had circulated a report/summary on Neighbourhood Plans and a meeting had been arranged with Jean Fox of Community Impact Bucks to answer Councillors questions.

Rural Exception Scheme – There was nothing further to report at this time. Cllr Carvey was disappointed the results of the survey had not been published in the Chronicle. It was agreed that a link would be provided via the Village Postie to the survey, however as not all residents were on the mailing list there would be some who would be unaware of the results.

Resilience Planning – Cllr Carvey raised the matter of a plan that village were required to keep in the event of a major emergency. The Clerk believed as we were smaller Parish we were able to avoid the necessity to develop such a plan, however we had to appoint a point of contact in the case of such an emergency and this was currently Cllr Clarke. The Clerk would check to ensure his understanding was still correct.

Recreation Ground Shed – The door to the shed on the Recreation Ground had been damaged in the recent winds and it was RESOLVED that Cllr Clarke would obtain quotes for the work and was authorised to place the work up to a figure of £150.

The next Parish Council meeting will be held on Wednesday 27th May 2015 at 7:30pm in the Village Hall.

discussed and it was AGREED the Clerk would forward to Cllr Spooner for inclusion on the website and the Village Postie. Additionally Cllr Shorrock

VILLAGE FETE 25th July 2015

Tradition dictates that the Aston Abbotts fete takes place on the Saturday nearest to the Festival of St. James which is 25th July. This year the 25th is a Saturday so the 2015 fete day is set.

So now is the time to get those diaries and calendars (paper or electronic) that Santa so thoughtfully left you for Christmas and make a note of the date.

If you are inclined to spring clean between now and then please put those unwanted books or presents and surplus knick-knacks to one side for us to collect before the fete.

If you can help, either on the day or with distribution of raffle tickets or collecting stuff for the stalls in the weeks before the fete then give me a call on 681952 or email ukdavidgray@gmail.com Thanks

CHURCH BELLS

Occasionally we have visiting ringers who come and ring our bells for $\frac{3}{4}$ hour or thereabouts. This month we have two unusual visits.

Monday 4th May a “Cycle and Ring” event has been organized and Aston Abbots bells may be rung intermittently from 11 a.m. to 12 noon.

Saturday 9th May a “Striking” competition for the local branch of the ringers association has been delegated to Aston Abbots. 6 teams should compete – each ringing for about 10 minutes from 4 – 5p.m. Two judges will sit outside the church in a car to decide the most skilled team.

Just so you know what is going on in the weird world of bellringing.

Peter

— *invitation* —

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AYLESBURY WATERSIDE THEATRE - SUMMER 2015

Aylesbury Waterside Theatre has kindly offered a pair of Press Tickets for each of the shows listed below.

The tickets are free and you will usually be offered a programme and a drink during the interval. If you would like to enter the draw for any or all of the shows listed then either send me an email to

johnhardcastle@me.com

or post a note through my door at Marloes, Lines Hill.

The draw for each show takes place two weeks prior to the show date.

Show	Date & Time
SEX IN SUBURBIA Starring Claire Sweeney	SUN 26 APR 7.30PM
OH WHAT A LOVELY WAR Starring Wendi Peters	TUE 28 APR 7.30PM
AVENUE Q	TUE 5 MAY 7.30PM
BILLY JOEL SONGBOOK	WED 13 MAY 7.30PM
ONE NIGHT OF ELVIS	FRI 29 MAY 7.30PM
ILLEGAL EAGLES	SAT 6 JUN 7.30PM
THE CHICAGO BLUES BROTHERS	THU 11 JUN 7.30PM
THANK YOU FOR THE MUSIC	FRI 12 JUN 7.30PM
CHUCKLES OF OZ	SAT 13 JUN 2PM
EAST IS EAST Starring Pauline McLynn	MON 22 JUN 7.30PM
AN EVENING OF DIRTY DANCING	THU 16 JUL 7.30PM
BASIL BRUSH	THU 13 AUG 2.30PM
VINCENT & FLAVIA World Premiere	THU 17 SEP 7.30PM
JERSEY BOYS	WED 23 SEP 7.30PM

John Hardcastle

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Book Club

Do No Harm by Henry Marsh

It was with some trepidation that I chose a “medical” book for March’s book club title. It was brought to my attention by Les who had heard about a short listed Costa biography award book by a medic. The book’s sub-title, “Stories of Life, Death and Brain Surgery”, caused me to have some concerns on two counts. Firstly, the potential for causing a huge grimace, “not another blood and gore” book, was high. Secondly, there is always the danger of touching unknown sensitive areas for any reader. However, my personal interest in this subject area won the day.

The book’s chapters are divided into sometimes near unpronounceable diagnoses of specific neurological conditions. Although challenging, I don’t feel that this put readers off, though I did have to read out the correct pronunciation of some terms. For me, the fact that Henry was training at a very similar time to myself, did remind me of issues, events and stories from my own experience. The overwhelming impact of the book was not so much the vast range of conditions that might affect our brains. Rather it was the immense enthusiasm, warmth, belief that he could make a difference and yet a continuing awareness that the slip of a knife could result in lifelong disability or worse. Indeed, Marsh says that some disability can be much worse than death.

Also echoing my own journey through the NHS, Marsh highlights the current trends of management targets, following protocols, health and safety, limited resources and clinical governance. All these seem to be overwhelming the NHS and “do nothing for patient care”. All this has to be put into the context of his being a surgeon, always noted for their independence and forthright views. Indeed, one reader felt that the author came across as pompous.

Despite some misgivings from myself and some other readers at the outset, the majority of readers felt this to be an enjoyable, informative and very interesting choice.

Val Smith

Malala: The Girl Who Stood Up for Education and Was Shot by the Taliban by Malala Yousafzai

Malala is an extremely courageous, insightful and inspirational young girl who, from the age of 11 years onwards, has been striving to gain education and other human rights for oppressed women.

Her story commences with an account of her family and a description of her life living in poverty in the Swat Valley, in Pakistan: it covers both pre- and post- Taliban eras. Her father, an influential schoolteacher, is unrepresentative of many people living in that area: the birth of Malala, his daughter was, for example, greeted with pride and excitement rather than the more typical expression of 'disappointment' that his first-born was not a son. Malala's father clearly influenced the development of her thinking and, from an early age, she was exposed to attitudes to women's education which were in stark contrast to those of many in that region. The attitudes to women and the atrocities and events she describes are extremely shocking.

Malala was returning home from school on the school bus one day when she was shot in the head and almost died. Two of her close friends were shot at the same time. Malala being close to death was flown to England for urgent specialist treatment, after which she made an almost full recovery. She now continues her education and lives with her family in Birmingham. She keeps in close contact with her friends in Swat whom she misses very much but Swat remains far too dangerous a place for her to return to. The family nevertheless all hope they will return to Swat one day.

Malala has become an international symbol for peace and human rights. As such, she has been visited by world leaders, spoken at the United Nations and many other forums and is the youngest person ever to have been awarded the Nobel Peace prize.

This is a moving story about one young person's courage and Malala describes her experiences without bitterness or anger. The Malala Fund has now been set up and was inspired by her; this is a non-profit organisation which provides funds and aims to empower girls through quality secondary education.

Ten people attended the meeting and apologies were received from absent members. Some claimed the book 'A really worthwhile read'. We also found it interesting to get an 'insider' perspective, as opposed to a western perspective, on the events. The comment was also made that the description of so many different people in Swat became a little tedious and difficult to follow at times.

Pam Hewitt

Theatre & Music

THE RAT PACK VEGAS SPECTACULAR

I was the lucky one and won the press ticket for the show the Rat Pack, well I say lucky as you will read it was not as good as I had hoped. But firstly some younger readers may not know who or what the rat pack was so as way of introduction...

The Rat Pack was legendary for its Las Vegas Strip performances. For example, the marquee at the Sands Hotel might read DEAN MARTIN—MAYBE FRANK—MAYBE SAMMY. Their appearances were valuable because the city would flood with wealthy gamblers. Their act (always in tuxedo) consisted of each singing individual numbers, duets and trios, along with seemingly improvised slapstick and chatter. Their jokes revolved around adult themes, such as Sinatra's womanizing and Martin's drinking, as well as Davis's race and religion. Sinatra and Martin supported the civil rights movement and refused to perform in clubs that would not allow African-American or Jewish performers.

This show was billed as The Rat Pack Vegas Spectacular – featuring Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin and Sammy Davis jnr. Unfortunately 'spectacular' was not what was seen at Aylesbury theatre. The back drop was just brown/grey, with films of the original stars, which did nothing to create a razzmatazz feel. Another aspect that wasn't perhaps the show's fault, but the content has not aged well. In the original Dean Martin would either be drunk, or act drunk, and I suppose in the 60s that was perhaps seen as funny. He would always be holding a glass and stagger around the stage. Rightly or wrongly this just didn't seem funny anymore.

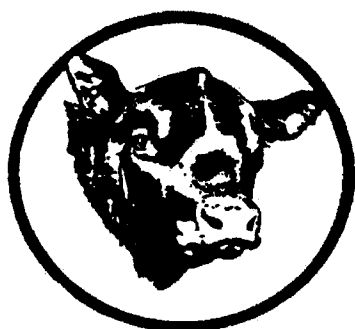
Of the singers, Dean Martin was the best followed by Frank and then Sammy. All the usual songs were there such as Fly Me To The Moon, Under My Skin and Mr Bojangles, but I did feel the singers were straining to sound like the originals. The small brass orchestra could have been made more of, with just one small solo piece by the saxophone.

Lastly the theatre was poorly attended and that must make it hard for any performance to create an atmosphere. There seemed to be times that it was embarrassing for the players as when they wanted audience participation there was little to be seen.

So I loved the songs, but unfortunately that was about it. However, I must say thanks to John Hardcastle for the tickets, I will certainly be applying for more shows!

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More Theatre

SPAMALOT

We attended Monty Python's Spamalot at the Aylesbury Waterside Theatre on 13 April. This is a musical comedy adapted from the film Monty Python and the Holy Grail (1975) by Eric Idle (lyricist) and John du Prez (composer). It parodies the story of the legendary King Arthur's quest to find the Holy Grail and was performed by a group on tour from the West End travelling around the UK, including Milton Keynes later this year.

The show was very funny and full of clever jokes and references, some of which have clearly been updated for example the reference to a certain (ex) Top Gear presenter and Mary Berry. The lead role of King Arthur, played by Joe Pasquale a comedian and previous winner of ITV's I'm a Celebrity. Get Me Out of Here, was hilarious and he was clearly at ease to ad lib. Some of the references were adapted to the location and there was one point where the word "Done" turns out to be a reference to seat D1 and led to audience participation from the (un)lucky purchaser of this seat.

Unusually the band was situated right at the back behind the stage and so were only visible at certain select moments of the performance. There were numerous songs with wide ranging topics including the most famous "Always Look on the Bright Side of Life". Particularly memorable were the performances by the Lady of the Lake (Sarah Earnshaw, best known as Maggie from the BBC's Casualty). The Song That Goes Like This... begins with the words "Once in every show, there comes a song like this, it starts off soft and low and ends up with a kiss. Oh, where is the song that goes like this? ..." and continues hilariously mocking of the type of music and style of such songs.

All in all it was an highly enjoyable evening and we were very grateful for the opportunity to attend another of the Waterside Theatre's varied performances.

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A Bacchanalian Adventure Or 3 go mad (and over indulge) at Quaglinos

It was with some trepidation that I once again agreed to accompany my 2 fellow ‘bon viveurs’ on our annual pilgrimage to the London Restaurant – Quaglinos.

As before we justified our trip by taking in a little culture prior to the main event of the day. Last year we called into the David Bailey photo exhibition at the National Portrait gallery (one of our number remains psychologically scarred to this day having encountered a full length nude photograph which left nothing to the imagination!)

This year we decided to visit the Royal Academy and their ‘**Rubens and His Legacy - Van Dyck to Cézanne**’ exhibition.

Billed as a “Royal Academy blockbuster which looks at the influence Peter Paul Rubens has had on artists including Watteau, Turner, Delacroix and Cézanne.”

It has received mixed reviews – The Daily Telegraph describing it as “This superb exhibition (which) demonstrates Rubens's reach into just about every area of art over the past four centuries” whereas The Grauniad were a little less enthusiastic – “Rubens and His Legacy applies a simplistic theory and smashes as much evidence as it can into its rigid, short-sighted argument that Rubens is the fons et origo of almost everything painters have ever done”

Just goes to show you can't please all the people all the time. I would, however, still recommend a visit. (The *exhibition finished some weeks ago Ed*) You can hire a set of headphones which will give you a running commentary as you pass into each room. It would be advisable to check that they are plugged in properly – something that your dear editor failed to do for most of the time we spent there. (I will admit to a technical mishap which thankfully I discovered before demanding a refund Ed)

Having sated our souls it was time for the next stage in our cultural experience – Quaglinos which boasts that it is an “Upmarket European brasserie and seafood specialist, with live acts that draw a dressed-up clientele”. Now at this point, dear reader, I must draw your attention to the last part of that sentence – “dressed-up clientele” For, I had, prior to our entrance into the hallowed culinary halls, had the misfortune to be constantly ridiculed by my fellow culture vultures on a particular shirt that I was wearing – a rather pleasing Paul Smith number – as we entered the reception area the hostess who greeted us exclaimed “ what a marvellous shirt your wearing sir, - I rest my case. (I think we should photograph the shirt and put it to a public vote Ed)

On being shown to the bar area we started as we meant to go on and ordered a bottle of Veuve Cliquot ‘Yellow Label’ Brut NV (apparently it has discreet aromas of vanilla and brioche – who knew?) This went down a treat and we were then shown to our table.

I ordered the Braised pork cheek, crispy ears, truffle mash and cider jus for my starter which was excellent my fellow diners had Beetroot and orange gravadlax, yuzu (a far eastern citrus fruit), cucumber and apple which was pronounced as very good. We accompanied this with a bottle of Pinot Grigio Borgo delle Ocho 2013 from Friuli Venezia Giulia which an excellent choice from the sommelier.

My main course was a superb Dover sole on the bone served meuniere (The word itself means "miller's wife". Thus to cook something à la meunière was to cook it by first dredging it in flour. A meunière sauce is a simple preparation—brown butter, chopped parsley, and lemon—and the name refers to its unelaborate rustic nature.) The other main course chosen was the Wild sea bass, saffron & tomato, Palourde Clams & artichokes pronounced excellent. All this was washed down with a marvellous Sauvignon Blanc 2014 from Cloudy Bay, New Zealand.

We all decided that the cheese course was in order which turned out to be the only disappointing choice of the day. The four pieces of cheese had been pre-portioned sometime before and was consequently somewhat dry. We hid our disappointment by ordering a bottle of Pinot Noir 'Reserve', Trimbach 2012 from Alsace. In fact it hid the 'cheese plate let down' so well that we ordered a second! Finally (for purely health/digestive reasons) we finished the meal with a soupcon of Armagnac – lovely!

All in all a brilliant day – my thanks to my fellow travellers for a memorable experience.

Au revoir mes amis or, as they say in France, Un bisou sur une joue Fait rougir les deux joues

À bientôt, j'espère

Noisy mug

Frankly I've no idea how he remembered the detail of the day, must have made notes! Ed



The Village Hall

Detail Planning Consent was granted in November last year. The consultants advising the Trustees have now gained approval from Building Control. It is anticipated that a Quantity Surveyor will be able to report on the anticipated costs by middle of May and have prepared the documents that potential contractors will use to provide quotations.

It will soon be possible for applications to be made to potential funders. Support from the village will be needed.

The Trustees are very keen that all interest groups in the village are represented. If you would like to join the Committee please let me know. Your input would be very welcome.

John Hardcastle

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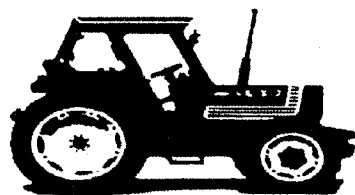
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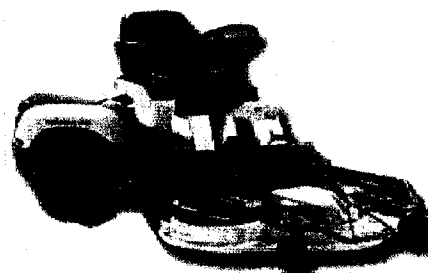
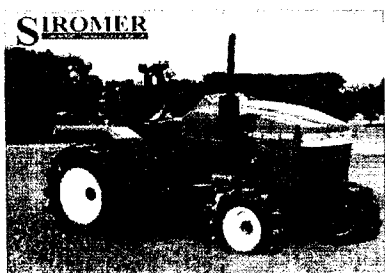
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Church Matters

The diary of St. James's



At the Vestry Meeting on 15th April Caroline Abel Smith, currently our only Churchwarden, agreed to stand for another year. However she indicated that this would be her last year as Warden. So the PCC will be looking for another, preferably two people to be Churchwarden(s) in 2016. The Vestry meeting was followed by the Annual Parochial Church Meeting at which Colin Higgs, long serving member of the PCC stood down from the Committee (see article on Colin elsewhere in this edition). However it was not all bad news as we welcomed Dr Elvina Chu to the PCC.

The Easter services were well attended and stories about eggs discussed with the congregation young and old. It is the time of year where people make a special effort to remember departed friends and family and ensure the Churchyard is looking its best. The new rota for mowing the grass has at least one new name but there is always room for more. Contact Gordon Kemp (681763).

On the evening of Friday 27th March the Village Hall was packed for the ever popular Beetle Drive preceded by a Sausage & Mash supper. After a hard fought contest Pam Dixon came out as the top scorer and was awarded the prize. No Beetles were harmed in the process but some of them looked like they had been in a fight! Our thanks to April, Caroline, Ann, Anita and Colin for organising the event and to Rev. Phil and wife Joy for compering the occasion. We raised £262 for Church funds.

The weather in March was kind to us and the task of refurbishing the boundary wall is now complete. Our thanks to Rob O'Connell (07855 236726) for his neat work. In the end he replaced or refaced over 450 bricks and rebuilt the pillar at the north end of the wall.

The problem of the hedge that surrounds the Allotments on two sides (along Wingrave Road and down the narrow access road alongside No.1 Wingrave Road) persists.

In the last three years a number of contractors with the necessary machinery have been asked to quote but most declined and the only formal estimate received was for £1,800, an outlay the PCC could not justify considering we receive just £320 per year in rent from the Allotment holders. Finally last year we managed to get a quote of £500 and the PCC set aside a budget for the work. However 2014 came and went with no sign of the hedge being cut and the contractor declining to answer the phone or respond to texts.

In January this year the PCC received an urgent request to remove the ash tree in the hedge, the roots of which had damaged the drains in the adjacent house. This cost the PCC £500 so the allocated budget for the hedge was blown. So a member of the PCC set about doing the hedge by hand this Spring and most of the hedge along Wingrave Road has now been cut. If anyone knows someone with the right machinery that could cut the hedge in the future please let us know.

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May 2015**

3rd May	6.00pm	Evensong	Rev. Philip Derbyshire
10th May	10.30am	Communion	Rev. Peter Binns
17th May	9.30am	Breakfast in the Village Hall followed by a short Service	
24nd May	10.30am	Communion	Rev. Roger Hale
31st May	10.00am	Communion at Stewkley	

We look forward to seeing you

100 Club Draw April 2015

1st Prize, £50: June Cox

2nd prize, £10: Andy Bystra

Dear friends,

The clocks went forward one hour and the weather seemed magically to warm up-----a lovely foretaste hopefully of a long and sunny Summer. I know not everyone enjoys the heat and sun but most of us do relish the 'longer' days and evenings to sit outside and enjoy a meal and a drink especially with family or friends.

The early Christians met almost daily to share in prayer, singing and the 'breaking of bread' in memory of the Last Supper of Jesus and His disciples. A special form of fellowship developed---the widows and orphans were looked after by 'deacons' appointed by the apostles, Otherwise they would have had to join the great numbers of the destitute who roamed the wilderness places of the middle east, always at risk of physical danger.

As we reach yet another General Election all the talk is of hard work, reward, tax and cuts with very little interest shown by any party in the most needy and vulnerable who are portrayed as scroungers and shirkers when in reality they might be the victim of ill-health, disability or the inadequacies of the 'market'. There are certainly those who fiddle and sponge but they are certainly not all common or ordinary and they are very much the people who Jesus called His neighbour(and are therefore ours' also).

I wonder what any party's view or policy is on Food Banks, soup kitchens etc.

Let's pray for all our parliamentary candidates to use their hearts as well as their brains when asking for our X in the box on May 7th.

God Bless, Philip.

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May 9th	Gordon/ Ann	Ann	Andy
May 16th	Alex / Anita	Colin	Adam
May 23 rd	Colin/Gay	Colin	Phil
May 30 th	?	?	Gordon
June 6 th	Colin/Caroline	TBA	Nigel

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Colin Higgs – the end of a dynasty.

At the Annual Parochial Church meeting in April it was with some reluctance that the Parochial Church Council (the PCC) accepted the resignation of long-time member Colin Higgs. Colin has served the Church as Sexton, Church Warden and Deputy Warden. He will be 80 this year and his family has been involved with the Church in Aston Abbotts for over 100 years, so he said it was time to step down and let some of the younger parishioners take up the slack.

To mark the occasion I was asked to write something on the life and times of the Higgs family.

Colin's great grandfather Richard Higgs, was Sexton of the Church in 1915 (a Sexton looks after the church and churchyard, typically acting as bell-ringer and gravedigger). His first recorded task was digging a grave in Cublington. He was followed by Colin's grandfather, Harry James Higgs, who became Sexton in 1928 at the age of 44. One of his tasks was lighting the coal fired boiler beneath the floor of the nave to produce the hot water which heated the Church via pipes that ran under the pews. This must have involved an early start because Sunday services started with Communion at 8am and continued with Matins (or morning prayer) at 11am through to Evensong at 6pm. So his day of rest sounds like it was anything but! Colin's father Frank Higgs, took over in 1941.

After the 2nd World War Colin joined the Church choir, he was just 10. Two years later he became a bell-ringer and started helping his father with the many regular maintenance tasks. This was well before the age of motorised mowers and during the spring and summer the grass was cut with a scythe in the open areas or using hand shears between the graves. In the autumn the leaves were cleared from the paths, gutters and drains (a job that is still done by hand today). Colin received a florin (2 shillings, 10pence in today's money) for his efforts.

There was no electricity in the Church until well after the war, hence the coal fired heating and the organ bellows were pumped by hand, a job that the young Higgs was also asked to do. The electric motor that now operates the bellows is in the Vestry but a hand written inscription on the panelling behind the organ records the pumping efforts of another long-time resident of Aston Abbotts 'Percy Humphreys 1947'.

Up until 1971 the Church Fete was held in the Abbey grounds, then in 1972 it moved to the gardens of the Old Vicarage but these proved too small and in 1973 it moved to its present location on the Green and (with the kind permission of the owners of the Abbey) overflowed into the Grove. Colin was the organiser for many years though when it moved to The Green it then became the Village Fete and responsibility has since passed through many hands over the last 30 years.

Colin has also managed the Allotments and organised fundraising activities for the Church. He may be stepping down from the PCC but is continuing with many of the jobs that he has taken on over the years, including organising the flowers that decorate the Church windowsills, cleaning the Church carpets, metalwork, pews etc. as part of the rota of helpers and organising the annual 'litter pick' around the village in the spring.

On behalf of the PCC and the parishioners of Aston Abbotts we extend our very grateful thanks to Colin for all his hard work over the years. We wish him all the very best in his retirement.

David Gray

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Air Quality

Your scribe's wife came home from work recently to find me sprawled out languishing in the garden. I pointed out that local radio station *Mix96* had been giving out warnings that older people should not exert themselves due to current poor air quality, so I was being careful. She said she hadn't noticed me doing anything different. She can be so cruel...

Warning

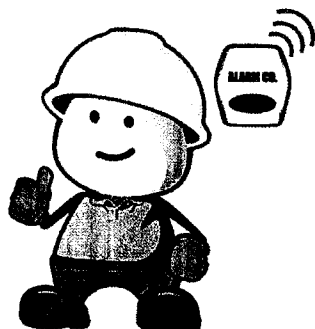
If Dave Lewis tries to pay you with brand new £10 or £20 notes - just say no!!!

John Whyte

Burglar Alarm Installer

New systems expertly installed in a mere seven hours.

Free advice: We will send our assistant around to help choose where to place the siren/beacon box - preferably around the corner down the side of the house where that nasty flashy light thingy does not affect the aesthetics of the building and the horrible shrill squeaky thing does not disturb anybody.



Sore Bum



Being fed up with saddle sores from his hi-tech road bike Dave Lewis has purchased a new Mountain Bike. Apparently the 27-speed gears and suspension makes for a much more comfortable ride. Dave says the new bike is just like himself - built for comfort and not for speed.

Fancy That?

Our Glorious Leader caused a raised eyebrow recently. But it wasn't because he admitted to watching *Poldark*...

No... Our Glorious Leader confessed that he found Ross Poldark more attractive than Demelza or Elisabeth! OK... each to his own...

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