

# **The Aston Abbotts Chronicle**

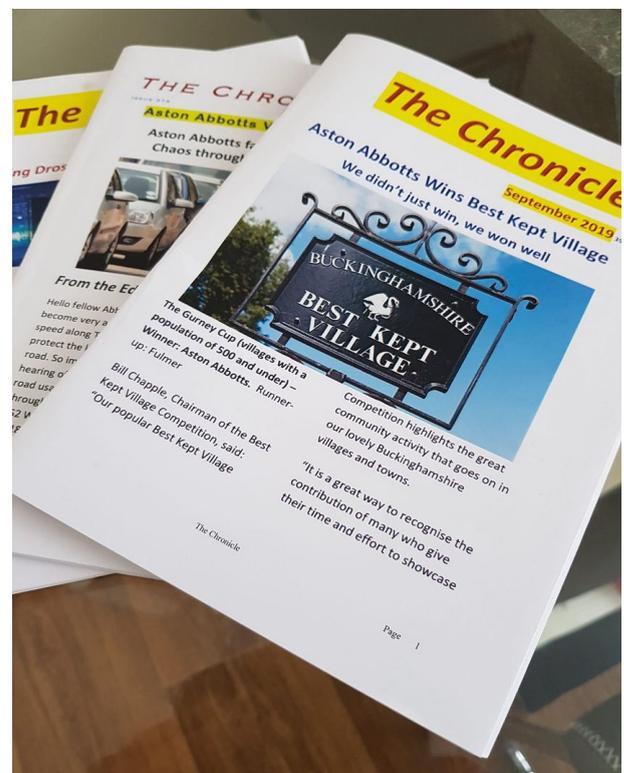
**April 21 Issue 414**

**Here's another packed magazine for your enjoyment. This month takes a look at:**

- **all the latest News**
- **Your Emails,**
- **The Flying Scotsman to pay Bucks a visit,**
- **'The Bierton Murder',**
- **P3 of 'Aston Abbotts as it was',**
- **Places to visit in Bucks after lockdown,**
- **The 'Henderson Rant',**
- **Aston Abbotts link with the Salam Witch Trials,**
- **The Allotment diary,**
- **Book Club,**

- **Church Matters,**
- **Amy Dell - living her dream,**
- **Our sighting of the Northern Lights, and more In one magazine.**

**Enjoy**





## ***The Flying Scotsman to visit Buckinghamshire:***

The 93-year-old vintage train is travelling through the region this spring

The Flying Scotsman is due to travel to Oxford from London Paddington on Sunday, May 23.

The vintage steam locomotive, built in 1923, now does special passenger tours across the UK.

The journey will start at 9.20am and will take two hours and 40 minutes and will return at 7pm. However, you won't be able to book a seat on board as all tickets - selling for £93 for a child and £109 for an adult - have now been snapped up for the trip.

**But you will be able to catch a glimpse of the Flying Scotsman as it steams through the corner of Buckinghamshire on its way to the City of Dreaming Spires.**

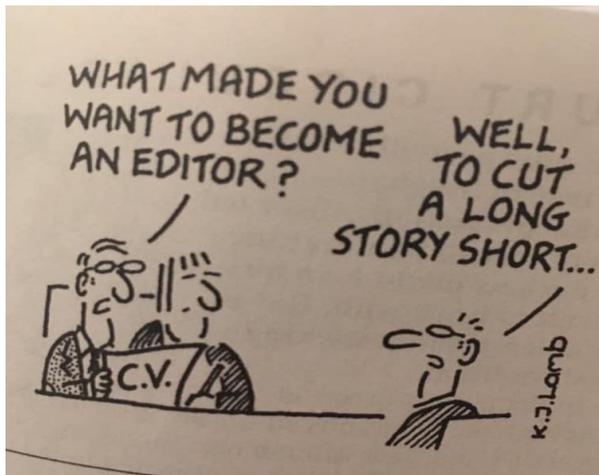
**It's route from Paddington will take it through Taplow and Burnham stations and you'll be able to watch it on its return journey later that evening.**

The Flying Scotsman was built in Doncaster in 1923 for London and North Eastern Railway (LNER) and was known for providing long-distance train journeys.

She set two world records - one for being the first steam train to reach 100mph on November 30, 1934, and another for undertaking the longest non-stop journey by a locomotive when she ran 422 miles in Australia in August 1989.

She was retired from regular service in 1963, however has been preserved under a number of owners including Alan Pegler, William McAlpine and Tony Marchington.

# Editor's Notes



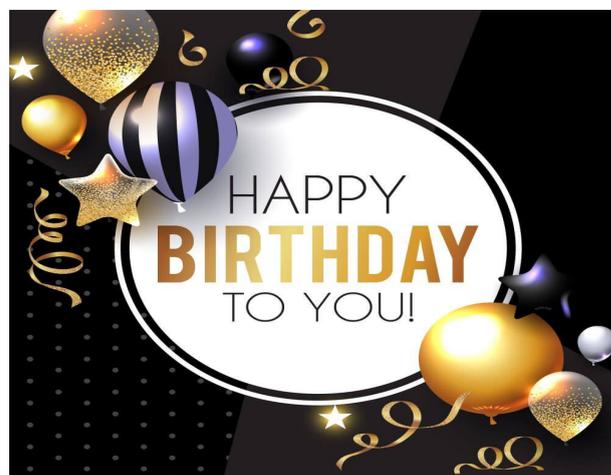
I'm glad that the Chronicle has been one of the things that has continued during 'House Arrest'. I'm thankful that it is being enjoyed and receiving positive feedback.

As Editor I do receive many emails from all sorts of sources on local and national issues. So many I'd like to give my opinion on but obviously realise, this is not my magazine.

**BUT.....**, I was incensed when Thames Valley Police sent an invitation to attend a 'Webinar' to help drivers of 60 and over to improve their driving following lockdown. *'We know that older motorists have a wealth of experience, confidence and tolerance, the cheeky sods said, 'However, sight, hearing, reaction time and judgement of speed and distance may not be as sharp as it once was.'*

Now this may come to a shock for some but I'm 60 this year!! 😞

Until next time, stay safe. **Ed!**



## April

**Caroline Lane - 5th**

**Phil' Wheaton - 6th**

**Ade Bystra - 11th**

**Avi Gupta - 12th**

**Anthony Palmer - 13th**

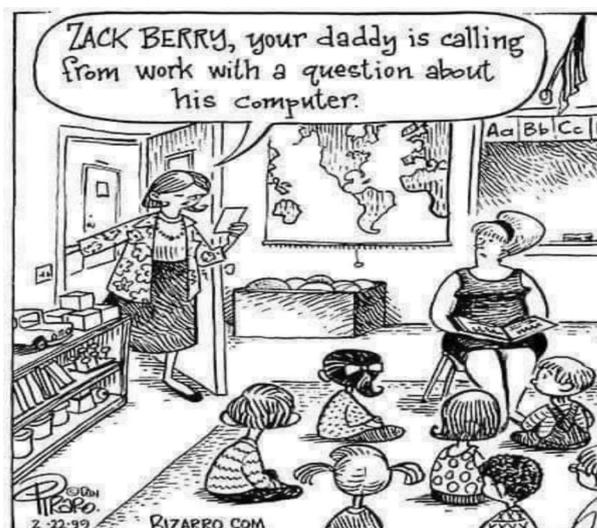
**Alison Lewis - 20th**

**Matthew James - 23rd**

**Kate Curry - 27th**

**Kirsty Peacock - 28th**

**Chris Espley - 30th**



# ***News from in & around Aston Abbotts***

## ***Woolly Escape***

Whilst carrying out high visibility patrols tackling rural crime, officers from TVP Team 5 with the assistance of two members of the public came across approximately 30 sheep strolling around Aston Abbotts.



These woolly friends decided to 'give it legs' but we managed to catch up with them eventually and safely secure them into a nearby field across the road from the Alpaca farm.

## ***Horrific attack on sheep***

Buckinghamshire Conservation Trust finds 'horrifically maimed and butchered sheep' at Quarrendon Leas site near Aylesbury. The Trust found sheep mutilated 'by cutting implements' Sunday 7th March.

The Trust said: "Over the weekend we received a report from the farmer that he had discovered a butchered sheep. The sheep had been horrifically maimed and butchered in a deliberate attack by a person or persons with cutting implements. This also resulted in the death of three unborn lambs which were left to die attached to their mother. "The photographs are too horrendous to post and are devastating for the farmer to deal with.

"Another sheep had also been attacked but it is thought had escaped. Thames Valley Police are said to be investigating the incident.

The Trust continued: "The identification tags in its ear were ripped out, a member of the public contacted the Trust as this sheep was found stuck in the River Thame absolutely exhausted after getting through or over three fences, you can only imagine the sheer terror this sheep went through.

"It remains to be seen whether this sheep will survive." This dastardly attack has been reported to the Police. Visitors are asked to be vigilant and if you see anyone behaving suspiciously on this or any other site please report it to the Police."

The Trust owns and manages Quarrendon Leas, near Aylesbury, one of Buckinghamshire's historic gems.

## ***Sheep worrying***

This is what the result of sheep worrying looks like. And why it is so important for dog walkers to act responsibly and keep dogs on a lead in the countryside.

Dogs off leads were responsible for this carnage of 66 in lamb ewes, with an average of 1.6 lamb ratio that is another 105 unborn lambs and 66 dead ewes, the rest that escaped some aborted, plus £2000 to dispose of the useless carcasses.



Dogs don't have to attack sheep to kill them. These sheep, many of them in-lamb, died from shock or by being crushed in the flock.

## ***Catalytic converter thefts***

There has been an increase in catalytic converter thefts in the Aylesbury Vale area.

According to Thames Valley Police, several vehicles in the town and its surrounding areas have had the piece of equipment stolen.



Several investigations are currently taking place to catch those responsible, but in the meantime, TVP have issued some tips on how to keep your car safe from such a crime.

### **The tips include:**

Where possible, park in your garage, or if you have a commercial vehicle park it in a secure compound

Alternatively, park in a location that restricts access underneath your vehicle

Consider security lighting

If your catalytic converter is 'bolt on,' you can have the bolts welded shut

Consider the installation of CCTV to protect your vehicle

Identify/etch your converter with a unique serial number and advertise that the vehicle has been protected (window stickers)

They continued: "We are asking the public to remain vigilant and report any suspicious activity to 999."

## ***£1 million funding boost means more buses for Aston Abbotts and Weedon.***

Projects to improve bus services in rural areas of the South East are set to benefit from £2.5 million, Transport Minister Baroness Vere announced, as the Government unveils what they call "The most ambitious shake-up of the bus sector in a generation."

They are hoping to improve 'rural services' across the county.

Buckinghamshire Council will receive £1,114,000 for a project that will see six 11-seater vehicles with Wi-Fi access and full wheelchair accessibility rolled out to boost accessibility to villages surrounding Aylesbury.

The scheme, which would enable passengers to book through a mobile app, would improve the links to villages such as Aston Abbotts and Weedon where there are currently only one or two bus services an hour. It will also improve connections to Stoke Mandeville Hospital.

The service, which is set to run between 6am-7pm Monday to Friday would help alleviate the social-isolation of older residents in particular, and provide better

access to shops, healthcare, education and employment.

The changes include:

Simpler bus fares with daily price caps, so people can use the bus as many times a day as they need without facing mounting costs, more services in the evenings and at the weekends, integrated services and ticketing across all transport modes, so people can easily move from bus to train, all buses to accept contactless payments.

The funding being allocated will enable local authorities to trial innovative projects in rural and suburban areas, where traditional timetabled services often aren't practical.

## **Best Kept Village Competition**

Due to the continued impact of the pandemic, this year's Best Kept Village competition will not be held. Therefore, Aston Abbotts will retain the trophy and street signage until 2022!



### ***The Hole – Part 3. Trevor Hall***



At last, the trilogy comes to an end. To most, it came to be known simply as “*The Hole*” but in our household we had other names for it. We could have called it “*The Siege on the Green*” but that did little for our sanity. Instead, we adopted Eric Idle’s philosophy of “*Always Look on the Bright Side of Life*” and liked to think of it as “*The Sinkhole Circus*”. And why not since we had the best ring-side seat in the village as illustrated in the panorama taken from two of our upstairs windows during one of the main circus acts. And what a spectacle the *Sinkhole Circus* was - running for an exceptionally long season of 72 days and featuring many great talents and attractions.

For an astounding run of nearly fifty days, *Scoop* the digger entertained us by exhibiting phenomenal strength and dexterity in excavating *The Hole*.

Following *Scoop*’s act, the style of the performances changed from largely macho ones to those more sedate. Over this period a vast troupe of performers showed off their skills as new pipework was conjured up and existing pipework given a makeover. This included the “now you see him,

now you don’t” performance of the amazing and courageous *Manhole Man*.

The finale saw the reappearance of *Scoop* who was now accompanied by *Muck* the dumper truck. They performed an amazing grand illusion and managed to make *The Hole* completely vanish – well almost, there was a tell-tale sign that it had existed since there was a strange patch of missing tarmac.

It soon became apparent that this was deliberate. The *Sinkhole Circus* did not want to disappoint, and they laid on an encore which was performed by *The Boys with the Black Stuff*. They performed for one day only and were a finely tuned team that demonstrated the sort of speed that many quick-change artists would envy – the result being a gleaming new patch of tarmac in a matter of minutes! So now that the inconvenience of *The Hole* is behind us what can we take away from the experience? Well for me, I’ve been wondering if there is a bit of good that could come from it. I played with an idea that may not come to much but I’m hoping something will – I’ve collated everything I’ve written for both the AA Postbox and the Chronicle (plus a bit of new content) into an on-line publication and set up a JustGiving page for Comic Relief. The link details for it can be found there and, of course, donations made if you think it worthy. The JustGiving page is:

[www.justgiving.com/fundraising/trevor-i-hall](http://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/trevor-i-hall)

# Your Emails

Midnight 04/03 woken by lights and 45 ft artic lorry shunting from Moat Lane to The Green. Completely unacceptable. Any suggestions?



**Richard Clarke**

[slc.maplewood@btinternet.com](mailto:slc.maplewood@btinternet.com)

**Hi Pete,**

I must say congratulations on the most recent Chronicle. It is going from strength to strength! Cheers

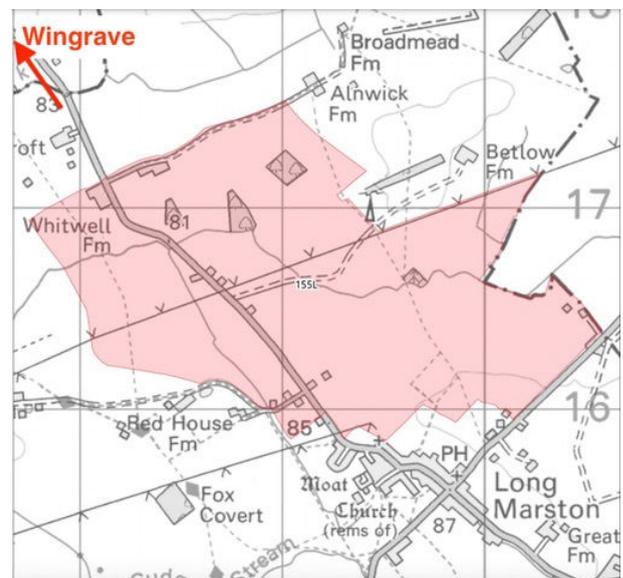
**Kate Curry**

**Dear all**

Were any of us aware of the possibility of a new settlement of up to 3,400 houses between Wingrave and Long Marston? The site would cover all the land between Cheddington Airfield up to Alnwick Drive, to a distance of over half a mile in the direction of Cheddington. Here is a map of the area affected:

This proposed site sits just outside Buckinghamshire and within the

control of Dacorum Borough Council in Hertfordshire. The site **has not been included in the local plan yet** as it is currently one of a number of sites that do not have sufficient merit at this stage to be included. However, it is in the draft local plan, and there is a worrying suggestion that it could be adopted if the Planning Inspector imposes a higher Government Housing Growth figure than Dacorum expects.



Sadly the Consultation on the Dacorum Local Plan closed 28th Feb and so there is no chance to submit an objection if you wanted to. I would be interested to know if anyone has? Comments to the Dacorum BC New Local Plan can be emailed to:

[responses@dacorum.gov.uk](mailto:responses@dacorum.gov.uk).

Thanks.**Rob**

[\(robwyatt5@btinternet.com\)](mailto:robwyatt5@btinternet.com)

**Dear all,** This unattractive picture I found walking my dog this morning just in front of the gate to the kid's play area.



I appreciate the idea that a dog owner may be physically incapable of bending down to retrieve his or her dog's faeces, probably because of his or her age - and this is absolutely understandable.

It has occurred that this is constantly the same poo (oh yes, it's been a recurring event for quite some time. It is reasonably easy to identify the same poo that is appearing on a regular basis on the village streets and grounds). I even doubt whether the owner is reading our emails here. But as a community may be somebody knows that person and can suggest that together we can find a solution not a judgment! Help may be needed for this old person in other ways as well. There is no shame to ask for help.

It would be a shame if this is being done by someone who is absolutely physically capable to do this small

but important job - clear after one's dog. Please get in touch if you need help or you know who is in need.

**Tatiana.** tbutler758@gmail.com

***Dear Editor,***

The Local Elections will go ahead on may 6<sup>th</sup> 2021. For those of you who are, and will still be, self-isolating the government has confirmed that voting by proxy will be permitted.

The website below will take you to valuable information regarding voting in the elections

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-measures-to-allow-proxy-voting-in-local-elections-for-those-self-isolating-with-coronavirus>

***Become a Parish Councilor - Elections 2021***

If you have ever thought about becoming a Parish Councillor now is the time to act. A couple of our longstanding Parish Councillors are retiring this year which leaves the opportunity for you to join us.

Please don't be put off by the Election process, unless there is a huge amount of interest it may well not come to that.

The role is voluntary and is varied, you can often take on projects that are of interest to you and help the community at the same time. The Parish Council at the moment is considering traffic calming, replacement playground equipment,

a Neighbourhood Plan to mention but a few.

Call me for a Nomination pack should you wish to submit one. The **deadline for these is 8th April** and they have to be delivered to Aylesbury in person. If you would like an informal chat with either myself or an existing councillor then please let me know on the email below and I will be happy to arrange something.

Kind regards **Liz van Hullen**

[clerk@astonabbottspc.org](mailto:clerk@astonabbottspc.org)

Clerk & Financial Officer, Parish Council. 01494 758800

**Pete**

The chronicle is and always has been an excellent magazine giving local updates and information including useful telephone numbers. We really like learning about the distant past of the village as well as the not too distant past which some of us remember well. We both agree with Peter Shorrocks and James Henderson on the management of wildlife, whatever the so-called experts say. Thank you Pete keep up good work  
**Margaret and Tony Hinds**

**Pete.** Love the history. Your chronicle is bigger than our communique!!

**James**

I took the attached photograph (on the road to Cublington, in case anyone is unaware) 479 days ago. The mild amusement caused by the misspelling has long since dissipated. Through the medium of the postbox, I would like to ask Netta Glover when the council might decide to do something about it.



***Mike, The misspelt sign will be replaced. It was a replacement for the original one which got damaged.***

***As far as the subsidence is concerned we are waiting on funding so that a reconstruction job can be done on the isolated subsided area on the bend.***

***We cannot make any promises on work being done this year but it is the intention to include the road as a whole once funding becomes available. In the meantime the warning signs will have to stay in place.***

**Netta**

## ***Timeline - Aston Abbotts as it was P3***

**To end this series of 'Aston Abbotts as it was', Colin Higgs BEM provided the following events by date.**

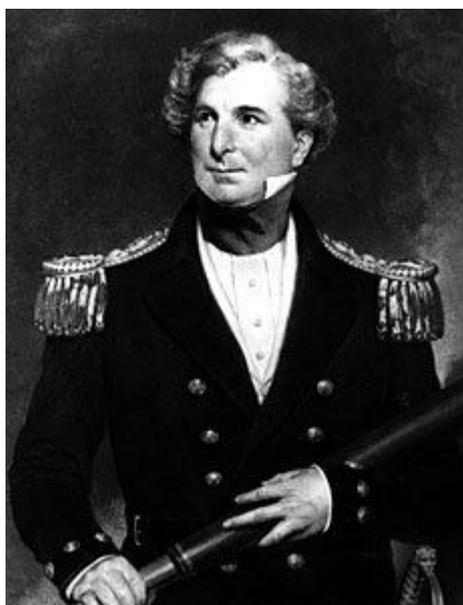
**1897**, it was reported several people felt the shock of an earthquake in the area.

The 6<sup>th</sup> bell was given to St James Church by WM Hutchinson Putnam in memory of his ancestors who left the village in 1631 for America. (See the Salem witch trial link to Aston Abbotts further in this magazine)

**1839**, Congregational Chapel erected. Now 51 to 53 The Green.

**1862**, Methodist Chapel erected.

Explorer Sir James Clarke Ross died.



His tomb is in the graveyard. I think there should be a statue to him. **(See the Book Club further in this magazine) Ed.**

**1898**, Church room (Village hall) erected.

**1946**, Czech President Benes presented a globe to the Aston Abbotts school as part of his thanks to the village.

Daily bus service introduced by Eastern National.

**1969**, Parish Council formed.

The infamous Roskill proposal for a 3<sup>rd</sup> London Airport in Cublington / Wing was submitted.

**1971**, Vic Scott rescued a starving fox cub and tamed it as a pet. Its mother was probably a victim of the fox hunt.

**1975**, The village school closed after 100 years due to low demand.

**1983**, the first Chronicle was published.

**1984**, the village won its first 'Best kept village' award.

**2003**, the Bull & Butcher pub closed.

**2005**, Osborn's, the village shop, closed.

**2019**, Aston Abbotts won its 2<sup>nd</sup> 'Best kept village' award.

**2020**, three earthquakes in 2 weeks were felt in Aston Abbotts.

# ***The Bierton Murder***

David Kidd Hewitt

Am I wrong to have a favourite murder? I wish no one any harm, let alone a deliberate violent death, but as a criminologist, I encounter the occasional (historic) example that contains a satisfying element of poetic justice – as far as the murderer is concerned – sadly, of course, not for the tragic victim.

Anyway, if such an unlikely question were ever asked of me, i.e. to name my favourite murder case – it would have to be that committed by eighteenth century rat-catcher and occasional chimney-sweep, Edward Corbet who brutally murdered local farmer Richard Holt in the English village of Bierton, in the county of Buckinghamshire, England on June 7th, 1773.

In my defence – crimes of past centuries can be claimed to hold a fascination for the contemporary reader for at least two interesting reasons:

One is how little human nature has changed. Greed, lust and sheer wickedness are, unfortunately, always with us. Most modern crimes have been mirrored in past times, certainly as far as motive is concerned. It seems, however, that we learn little from them, and many victims today are as vulnerable and exploited as they ever were in the past – possibly more so, given the immediacy and penetrative intensity of social media into our lives every minute of every day – some of

which carries dangerous, exploitative and devious motivations.

The other reason for our fascination is to note the many changes that have occurred across the centuries. For example, the public spectacle of a hanging as both entertainment and a deterrent, possibly followed by the display of the executed felon inside a metal gibbet until it is putrid and, finally, just a skeleton, no longer features as part of the criminal justice process in England. I dare say there are still supporters out there who would wish it to be brought back.

There is possibly a third reason in this particular case – Corbet's dog, which really makes a very special contribution to the whole story. Corbet's success as a rat-catcher was due in large part to his hard-working dog, who, on his master's command, would shoot like a rocket into bundles of hay, chasing out the rats which Corbet would catch in a large sack, picking them up with his bare hands as fast as he could. Many more would be killed by his dog in the chase. A good dog with rats was worth a great deal in earning potential.

## **The Act of Murder**

When Corbet was working at Richard Holt's farm, clearing rats from the barns, the farmer's daughter Mary, was seriously ill and died. Holt, who was a widower, sunk into a deep, grieving despondency and left Corbet to his own devices and Corbet decided to take advantage of Holt's vulnerability.

During the night of June 7th, 1773, Corbet crept back to the Bierton farmhouse from his cottage in the nearby village of Tring, and, peering

through the candle-lit window, saw Richard Holt praying before the coffin containing his recently deceased daughter.

Corbet waited until the distraught farmer went to bed and then using his experience as a chimney sweep, climbed onto the farmhouse roof with a nearby ladder and dropped down the chimney into the farmer's bedroom, intent on looking for goods to steal. He was aware that Richard Holt owned a very fine pocket-watch and gold chain.

Rather than creep quietly on past to see what he could find in the cottage – he immediately bludgeoned Richard Holt to death as he slept. A cold-blooded, premeditated murder.

After scouring the farmhouse for valuables and collecting his spoils in his rat-sack, he left by the front door, closing it carefully behind him so no-one would suspect a break-in and went back to his cottage in Tring.

Early the next morning the milk-boy arrived and rather than wake Mr. Holt during this tragic time of his daughter's death, he had a key that had been entrusted to him by the farmer during her illness.

He was surprised to find the door unlocked and even more surprised when a small, very distinctive terrier trotted out and gazed at him. If a dog could be puzzled, this one probably was.

He'd shot inside the cottage as soon as his master had left last night – cleared any rats he could find – only to discover he had been shut in – at last his master had come to let him out.

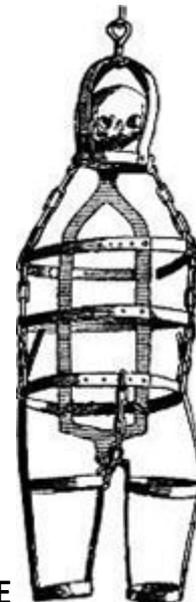
The hastily assembled neighbours soon found a blood trail leading from the front door to Richard Holt's brutally beaten body. They recognised Corbet's dog and encouraging the terrier to 'find your master,' it led them all to Corbet's cottage where the stolen loot was soon discovered in Corbet's possession.

The dog merely wagged its tail, pleased to have provided such a useful service.

Corbet's guilt was a foregone conclusion: The rat-catcher was found guilty and condemned to death on the gallows and then to be hung on a gibbet.

### **The Bierton Gibbet**

The eighteen-foot Bierton gibbet that was erected in the village was large enough to serve as a gallows to execute the prisoner and then function as a gibbet from which an iron cage containing his dead body could be suspended for all to see.



### **A GIBBET CAGE**

The spectacle of an eighteenth century hanging was an excuse for all kinds of merry making, laughter and excitement.

Village executions were pure theatre – the ‘reality television’ of its day. Lots of small market stalls would be set up selling refreshments and snacks such as nuts or meat puddings (known as ‘trotters’) – possibly some sparrow pie and for the kids, candies, lemonade and refreshing peppermint water. People would journey from miles around to witness an execution. The added bonus of a second act to the theatrics with an iron gibbet, made it even more popular.

When Corbet’s gallows death was officially pronounced by the local doctor to shrieks and cheers of approval by the crowd, his body was encased in a tight-fitting iron cage and hung high up on the gibbet’s arm where it could be seen for miles around.

The worst part of this highly symbolic deterrent was yet to come. After the celebrations of the day, the body slowly began to rot and putrefy over the following weeks and months and there was no mistaking the horrific stench for those downwind of the gibbet. This gibbet hanging was in the last week of July and it promised to be a long hot summer in Berton.

Cottage windows had to stay shut and the first sight many children saw on a sunny morning when they sat up in bed, would be Corbet rotting inside his gibbet cage. The disgusting smell of Corbet’s maggot-ridden body engulfed the whole village. Not surprisingly, this was the last time a gibbet was used in Buckinghamshire.

The executed Corbet, or rather parts of him, literally hung about in the village of Berton for over twenty years, his

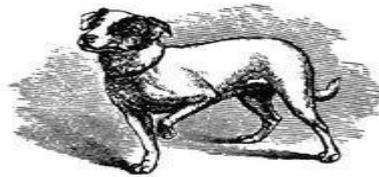
skull even outlasting some of the disintegrating irons that had caged him.

Generations of villagers would pass him every day, even incorporating him into any travel directions they would give to passing strangers:

“You want the Hulcott road you say? Pass the Chalk-house Arms, turn to your left by the horse trough, keep ahead until you see Corbet’s Piece, then turn right and you’ll be on the Hulcott road,”

Villagers eventually created a new footpath that ran from the Chalk House Arms along the back of a distant row of cottages to avoid having to walk past the corner of the field known as Corbet’s Piece. Its name today is Gib Lane but few people living in the splendid modern houses bordering this route would have any inkling about its real pedigree.

And speaking of pedigree, a quick ‘shout out’ to the memory of Corbet’s dog that made sure that not only was his wicked master caught like a rat in a trap, but that he ended up rotting to pieces inside one.



## ***Places in Bucks to visit following lockdown***

### **Marlow:**



The Thames is at its loveliest as it flows through this pleasant Georgian market town, spanned by an elegant suspension bridge built in 1832.

Marlow is without doubt one of the loveliest locations on the River Thames, situated on a broad sweep of the river between Henley and Windsor and within the Chiltern Hills which is designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It has a lively town centre made up of historic streets with small listed buildings and offers an array of shops, restaurants, wine bars and pubs which all add to Marlow's

charm. The town's main landmark is the graceful suspension bridge which spans the Thames joining Buckinghamshire and Berkshire. It was completed in 1832 to designs by William Tierney Clark who also designed the bridge across the Danube in Budapest. The lovely 23 acre Higginson Park has lawns for picnicking, riverside walks, a children's play area and cafe.

In the late 18th and 19th centuries Marlow became a fashionable riverside resort and a variety of famous people were attracted to live in the town. It has a great little independent museum where you can go to discover more about this ever popular destination.

In June, the river is the venue for the Marlow Town Regatta and the Rock Bottom family concert, followed in July by the annual ceremony of 'Swan Upping' when the new crop of cygnets are identified and tagged by the Queen's Swan Marker. September heralds the Marlow Carnival, with a half marathon and Switch on and Shop Christmas event in November.

Marlow was once home to T.S. Eliot and the poet Shelley and his wife Mary who completed her gothic masterpiece 'Frankenstein' whilst living in Marlow.

It's not very easily accessible via train. The only train runs once an hour and has been aptly named 'The Marlow Donkey' by locals.

# ***The Putnam's & Aston Abbotts link with the Salem Witch trials***

John Putnam was born about 1580 and came from Aston Abbotts. He was married to Priscilla Gould from Great Missenden.

They had seven children including Thomas, their eldest son born 7 March 1614. The family moved from Aston Abbotts and settled in Salem, Massachusetts.

Thomas was the father of Thomas Jr and Deacon Putnam, who many historians consider were involved in the Salem witch trials and are the cause for the unjust murders of the innocent women and men killed during the trials.

Putnam himself accused and testified against 43 people while his daughter testified against 62 people. Many historians believe the Putnam family used the witchcraft hysteria in Salem as a way to get revenge against their neighbouring rivals and enemies.

## **Thomas Putnam's Early Life:**

Thomas Putnam Jr was born on January 12, 1652, into the wealthy, third-generation Salem family that owned a substantial amount of land in Salem Village and Essex County.

Putnam was a sergeant in the local militia and had previously fought in King Phillip's war.

In 1678 he married Ann Carr, of Salisbury, who also came from a wealthy family. They had 10 children together, including their eldest child, Ann Putnam, Jr, who was born in 1679.

In January of 1692, Ann Putnam, Jr., and the other "afflicted girls" began displaying strange symptoms: barking like a dog, suffering seizures and complaining of being pinched by invisible spirits.

By the end of February, a local doctor declared them bewitched and the girls named three women responsible for tormenting them: Tituba, Sarah Osborne and Sarah Good.

Since the girls were too young to do so themselves, Thomas Putnam and three other men, Edward Putnam, Thomas Preston and Joseph Hutchinson, filed complaints against the women on the girl's behalf on February 29th.



***Former House of Thomas Putnam & family in Danvers***

The women were arrested the following day and examined before a judge. During Tituba's examination, she confessed to being a witch and claimed there were many others like

her in Salem, thus sparking a massive manhunt for witches in Salem.



After the witch trials began, Thomas Putnam and Ann Putnam Jr, quickly became the main accusers in the trials, according to the book *The Salem Witch Trials Guide*:

Putnam wrote a letter to two of the witch trial judges, John Hathorne and Jonathan Corwin, thanking them for their participation in the trials and offering to assist them in any way.

Soon after, Putnam wrote a second letter to Judge Samuel Sewall complaining that Giles Corey was also bewitching his daughter. In the letter, Putnam carefully reminded Sewall that Corey had beaten one of his farmhands to death years before and suggested Corey should be pressed to death:

Corey was indeed pressed to death when he was tortured by Sheriff Corwin for three days in a field near Howard Street in an attempt to force him to enter a plea for his trial.

This type of torture, although common in England, had never been

used in the colonies before and it appears the idea may have possibly originated from Putnam's letter.

Thomas Putnam himself personally filed complaints and testified against 43 people during the trials. Of these 43 people, 12 were executed, 3 were found guilty but pardoned, 6 were found not guilty, 13 were never charged and 2 died in jail. The rest either evaded arrest or escaped from prison.



The Salem Witch Trials eventually came to an end in 1693 and Thomas Putnam died six years later on May 24 in 1699.

Putnam's wife, Ann, passed away a few weeks later on June 8, leaving young Ann Putnam, Jr, to raise her nine siblings alone. She never married and in 1706, no longer under the influence of her parents, Ann Putnam, Jr., became the only afflicted girl to publicly apologise for her role in the Salem Witch Trials.

# ***I dreamed a dream and now I'm living it***

**I asked Amy Dell of Abbotts View Farm (Alpacas) to tell us what she does on the farm and how she got started. Ed.**

My name is Amy Dell and Abbott's View Livery (AVL) is my passion and my dream and my life.

I started AVL in 2016 when I was just 21, after completing a degree in Animal Behaviour and Welfare, saving up for many years, lots of planning, and all alongside working at a vets, a small local farm and as a freelance.

Unlike lots of my friends who used their savings to go travelling, I decided I wanted to invest it and start my own business.

My dream was to create a place where horses could be horses. That broke the mould of traditional horse keeping and went back to the basics of what horses really need: Freedom, Free Choice, Food/Forage and Friends!

It was scary to break the mould, I had no idea if I would get any interest or whether it would be feasible to build any of the things I dreamed of if there was no demand. All of these things that I now have, through a lot of hard work, money spent and a huge amount of help from my amazing family and friends and of course, my clients!

Now at 26, looking back on the last 5 years and all that has developed and

all I have learnt, I am immensely proud of what I have achieved.

Picture of me and my boy from Sept 2020, completing one of my life's bucket list experiences of riding bridleless on the beach



I have had my fair share of difficulties, from problems with my health (such as when I fell with my youngster; he landed on and broke my leg in three places in 2017 meaning I was unable to run the yard for 3 months) to failed surfaces, storm devastation and challenging clients. As a result of all this, I have grown hugely as a person and learnt so much more about horses and track systems through so much trial and error, brainstorming, money, hard work, tears and successes!

No longer am I the geeky kid with glasses from school who gets bullied and treated like a doormat, but I am still the girl who absolutely and utterly loves horses, with a huge passion for animal welfare, behaviour and enrichment.

When I started AVL my first track was only 1 acre. I had no shelter, no barn, no horse safe fencing, no round pen, no surfaces, no hacking track, no staff and hardly any horses!

I have a fantastic yard and set up that continues to grow. Our horses are able to live out all year round 24/7 without mud (unless they chose to go in it) and the choice of shelter, their own herd and plenty of forage that never runs out. I have wonderful clients and amazing staff, and wonderful horses who thrive on my system.



Never give up on your dreams and never be afraid to break the mould.

I dream of the day when all horses get to live outside with free choice, forage and friends.

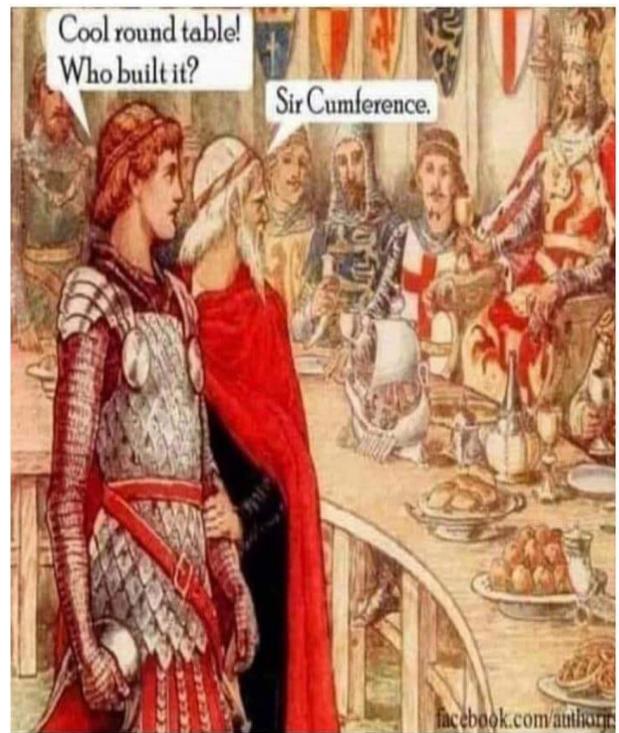
"Find something that you love and do it everyday. Do that for the rest of your life, and eventually the world will change"

**Amy Dell**

[Abbotts View Livery: Barefoot and Back to Nature](#)

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off the mark.com

by Mark Parisi



# ***The James Henderson Column***

There is a very interesting article this month, on the NFU online, regarding the reintroduction of 60 Sea Eagles, also known as the White-Tailed Eagle, into the Ken Hill Estate at Heacham at its rewilding site, near the northwest coast of Norfolk, over a 5-year period. It is a huge bird of prey with a wingspan of up to 2.4 metres, which died out in England in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century.

The Sea Eagle has already been introduced to the east and west coast of Scotland, Isle of Skye and more recently into the Isle of Wight. Some Farmers are concerned about the impact these predators will have on the large numbers of free-range livestock in Norfolk, as well as those in Cambridgeshire, Suffolk and Lincolnshire. These Eastern Counties are home to around half of the country's outdoor reared pigs and poultry and a significant number of grazing sheep. Evidence from Scotland shows that the Sea Eagles take some lambs and afterbirth and is an increased risk of preying on piglets and poultry. Also circling overhead could cause concern in free range stock, and also brown hare and stone curlew. I might also add, most ground nesting birds.

This is a very romantic idea to reintroduce a wonderful predator, absent from our shores for nearly 200 years but is this a good idea? It shall bring together controversy from

different parts of the countryside and as usual conflict from farmers trying to raise livestock in the most environmentally friendly way and conservationists introducing an apex predator, all be it supposedly based on a fish diet.



News just in this morning from NFU British Farmer and Grower that “our members do not feel they have any support should the Sea Eagle cause damage -either through predation or worrying – to farm livestock or species in the wild and therefore they feel they have no choice but to object to the proposals “” Some farmers suggested a compensation scheme should be introduced to cover potential livestock losses, but this idea was rejected by the Estate that intend to release the Eagles.” So, in other words these birds can kill away and carry off lambs and piglets and free-range hens, to the dismay and loss to the Farmers. I don't believe this, sat here trying to get this article finished, when an feature flashes up on Facebook about sea Eagles attacking sheep in The Isles of Skye and sending them over the cliff and a calf being attacked and having its eyes gouged out by their

enormous talons, and on another case where a good healthy lamb was carried off, all on a croft that could ill afford the losses.

A few years ago, we watched Fish Eagles on the mighty Zambezi river for the best part of a day, a close relative of the Sea Eagle, same family slightly smaller, diving for Tiger fish. They were magnificent. I can see the attraction of reintroduction but have reservations, but times have moved on.

The lodge on the banks of the Zambezi, was owned by a Lady from Aston Clinton. Small world!! New figures released from the NFU reveal that farm animals worth an estimated £2.3 million were stolen from UK farms last year, making rustling the costliest crimes from British Farms after vehicle and machinery thieves.

In the midlands fortunately, a sharp fall of 44% in 2020, following a successful prosecution of livestock thieves, which horrified farmers and the public by barbarically slaughtering large numbers of sheep in fields in Northamptonshire and leaving their remains behind. The NFU has regularly received reports of 30-100 sheep being taken in a single raid.

The whole of the Countryside is changing and as shown on Countryfile last week, The Farmer in Wales feeding offal daily to hundreds of Red Kites. This is not right and not good for the kites, who are supposed

to be wild, reintroduced again from foreign stock; I believe from Holland to repopulate this country. These were released not very far away in Oxfordshire.

Please don't get me wrong, we have at least 6 resident Red Kites on the farm and they are wonderful to see, especially explaining to new Glamping residents who have never seen any. What concerns me, is that if local people feed them, they shall never move northwards and repopulate those counties that they have not yet reached. Overbreeding, especially what that Farmer in Wales is encouraging, is a terrible idea and disease and in breeding with close family members spells future problems. His farm is more like a zoo for entertaining tourists, rather than the important job of dispersing the Kites to populate pastures new.

Moving on, The NFU states that Bovine TB eradication strategy has delivered some successful results. The badger cull has helped deliver a drop of 51% in 4 years, in the worst TB cull areas. The badger cull has played an enormous role in that. It is therefore heartening to hear that field trials for a fully authorised cattle vaccine are underway again, a milestone in eradicating this dreadful disease. Kind Regards.

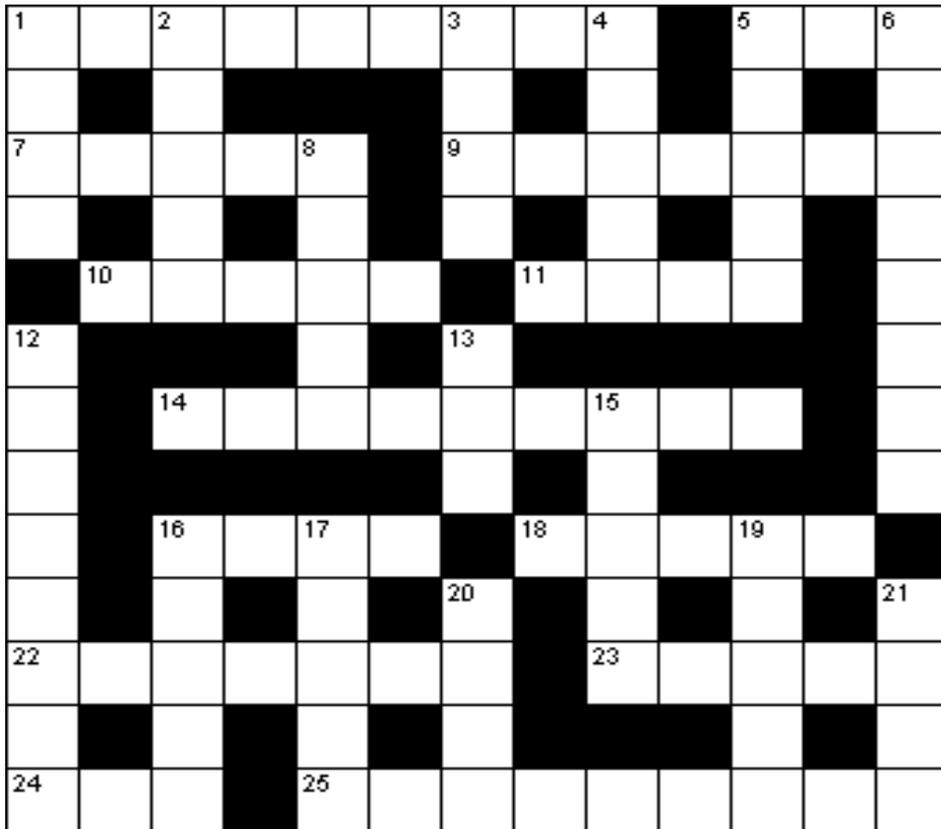
James Henderson.

01296688423/07802737765

[www.wingburybusinessvillage.co.uk](http://www.wingburybusinessvillage.co.uk)

[James@wingburycourtyard.co.uk](mailto:James@wingburycourtyard.co.uk)

## Catchwords



**Across**

- 1. A little \_\_\_ is a dangerous thing (9)
- 5. Like two peas in a \_\_\_ (3)
- 7. Left on the \_\_\_ (5)
- 9. \_\_\_ and spills (7)
- 10. A hole \_\_\_ (2,3)
- 11. The best things in life are \_\_\_ (4)
- 14. Out of the \_\_\_ into the fire (6,3)
- 16. \_\_\_ of the bunch (4)
- 18. Adam's \_\_\_ (5)
- 22. A tight \_\_\_ (7)
- 23. On the \_\_\_ (5)
- 24. \_\_\_ or no (3)
- 25. A \_\_\_ in a pear tree (9)

**Down**

- 1. \_\_\_ and tell (4)
- 2. A drop in the \_\_\_ (5)
- 3. Blind \_\_\_ (4)
- 4. Trial and \_\_\_ (5)
- 5. Keep a finger on the \_\_\_ (5)
- 6. One good turn \_\_\_ another (8)
- 8. \_\_\_ dress (5)
- 12. A \_\_\_ of justice (8)
- 13. All good things must come to an \_\_\_ (3)
- 15. \_\_\_ over the cracks (5)
- 16. It never rains but it \_\_\_ (5)
- 17. Talk is \_\_\_ (5)
- 19. Straight \_\_\_ (5)
- 20. \_\_\_ and tear (4)
- 21. Ireland, the Emerald \_\_\_ (4)

## ALLOTMENT DIARY



Just as lizards gradually come to life as the sun warms them up, so throughout the allotments, now the warm weather is here, allotmenters are stirring themselves, and are busily doing things. Most allotments have been, or are being dug over: and having manure spread on them, thanks to Simon Guy's negotiations with a local set of stables, which has produced an abundance of the stuff for all to use. More competent allotmenters than me have already started planting.

We are all experiencing the pleasure of pouring over seed and vegetable catalogues in hopeful anticipation that the seeds/vegetables we buy and plant will resemble the perfection shown in the pictures, and will not be attacked by slugs, beetles, birds, caterpillars and other pests that we know are likely to arrive on the scene; and that they will not be adversely affected by weeds, too much rain or too little rain. A triumph, as always, of hope over experience!

My son Adam has been working away from home recently, but by the time you read this I hope he will have spent long enough at home to

have rotavated my patch, so that I can begin my first lot of planting. The seeds and vegetables are beginning to arrive from my seed merchant, and I am anxious to start.

We had quite a long spell in early February when the temperature at night kept dropping below freezing; and Simon and I hope that this will have had the effect of killing off some of the eggs that have been present near the top of the soil, which produce many of the bugs that spoil our vegetables. We are particularly optimistic that these frosts will have killed the eggs of the alium leaf miner fly, about which I have written in recent articles, so that this wretched pest will not infest this year's crop of leeks or onions.



My allotment neighbour, Brian, and I are waiting to see whether his determined attempt using weed-killer to kill off the bane of my allotment life, the weed called the gallant soldier, has been successful. We will not know until the middle of the summer, since this is when the plant starts flourishing.

I recently read an article about the never-ending battle between gardeners and slugs. This concerned a project by a charity called "Garden

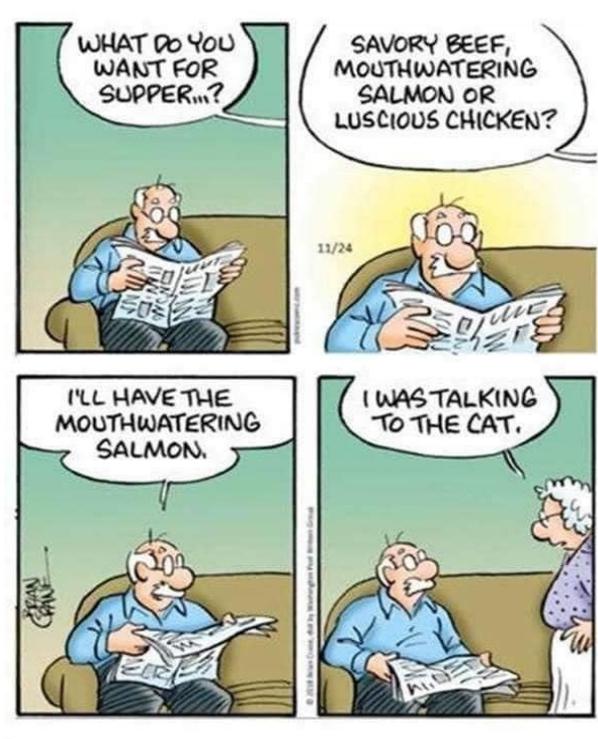
Organic”, which they called “Slug Pub”. There were only 166 participants in the project, which is a rather small number from which to reach any firm conclusions; but if the results are to be believed, lager is the drink of choice for gardeners wanting to trap slugs! Participants were asked to sink 3 glasses of liquid just below the surface of the soil, alongside a crop which slugs liked to eat. Each glass was filled with lager, bitter and water. Twice a week the number of slugs caught in each glass was recorded. The average number of slugs caught was 6.4 with lager; 5.3 with bitter and 0.1 with water. The strength or quality of the lager was immaterial.

Simon made an interesting discovery on his patch recently. He had dug over an area of his allotment near to his greenhouse, and the following day he noticed the soil was flattened. He assumed he had mistakenly walked on the land after digging it over; and turned it over again. The following day, the soil was flattened again! To make sure he was not mistaken, he turned the soil over a third time; and sure enough the following day the earth was flattened again! Quite clearly some large animal was lying on the patch of soil during the night – either a fox or a badger. We suspect the former. But why a fox should come and lie down in the same spot every night is a mystery. There is no sign of rabbit activity on the allotments, and we can’t think of any other reason why

the fox should rest in this same spot every night.

When I first took my allotment, Vic Scott had one of the neighbouring allotments, and I noticed that while he came and worked on his allotment frequently, he never seemed to spend more than an hour or so there. I put this down to the fact that he was a superior gardener to me, and clearly much more efficient. However, having now moved into my 80s, I realise that while both of these things were undoubtedly true, there was a third reason, which is that when you move into your 80s, after two hours gardening, you have had enough! Gone are the days when I would work on the allotment for several hours in the morning, and then return for more in the afternoon!

### **Peter Shorrock**





**That's a load off your mind!**

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# VILLAGE FETE 2021



## Summer Fete

I am starting to plan the Aston Abbotts Fete for 2021 to be held on Saturday 24th July although there is no certainty that we will be allowed to hold it, or if we do, whether people will be confident enough to come!

However, I have had an exchange of emails with the Bagman to the Aldbury Morris Men and the secretary to the Great Horwood Band and, although neither of these groups have been able to practice together for a year, they have nevertheless pencilled us into their schedule.

Normally at this time of the year I would hold a short meeting to get participants together and ensure that I know who has undertaken to do what and when! As this is not possible, I would like to hear from regular contributors and anyone who would like to help during the preparations in July or on the day so that I am confident that I have the necessary support again this year should we be able to proceed.

If you are willing to participate (regulations permitting) please drop me an email to [ukdavidgray@gmail.com](mailto:ukdavidgray@gmail.com) (or telephone 681952) and at least put Fete day in your diaries so that this year's event will be a success.

**David Gray**

P.S. Having spent lockdown doing all those sorting out jobs you have been putting off, I hope you have put aside all those unwanted presents, bottles of drink, books, CDs, bric-a-brac, etc which we can collect and sell at the Fete.

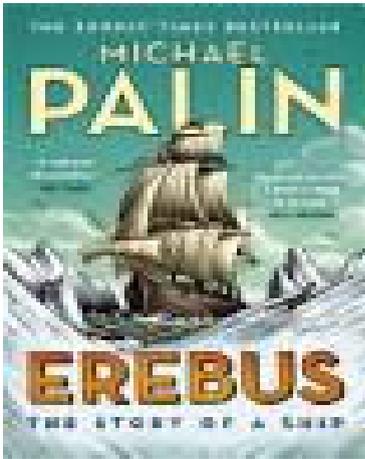
Volunteers  
needed!!



*"How could you just walk out on me like this?  
And, by the way, 'nit-picking' has a hyphen."*

## Book Club

### Erebus, The Story of a Ship, by Michael Palin



Book Club met on 24<sup>th</sup> March to discuss Kate's choice, 'Erebus, the Story of a Ship' by Michael Palin.

I chose this book mainly because of its local connection. Everyone in the village knows (don't we?) that Sir James Clark Ross, chiefly known for determining the position of the magnetic North Pole in 1831, lived out his days in the Abbey with his wife Anne, and that both are buried in our Churchyard. Of course, we all also know that the two islands in the Abbey Lake are named Erebus and Terror after his two ships. This book tells the story of those ships, and in particular Erebus, from her original launch as a warship in 1826 to the discovery of her wreck in 2014 off the coast of Canada, at which point she had been lost for almost 170 years.

Converted from a warship to an ice ship, and under the command of the dashing Captain Sir James Clark Ross ('the handsomest man in the Navy'), the crew of the Erebus spent four years exploring Antarctica, voyaging further

south than anyone had ever been before. Erebus and Terror were the first sailing ships to break through the ice pack and the first to discover that an Antarctic continent existed. They didn't make their goal of the south magnetic pole but, writes Palin, "never again, in the annals of the sea, would a ship, under sail alone, come close to matching what Erebus and Terror had achieved".

In 1845 Erebus and Terror set off from London on another mission. This time, captained by the middle aged, podgy and balding Sir John Franklin, the aim was to find the fabled Northwest Passage in the Arctic. They never returned; both ships and all hands were lost, and to this day we do not know what happened to them, despite many rescue missions sent to search for them for several years after they had failed to return.

We had a good discussion about Erebus, and members of the Book Club were split roughly 50/50 between loving it and hating it. It is indeed quite a 'technical' read, but for the faint hearted it is now available on YouTube being read by Michael Palin himself – maybe a gentler way to approach it.

Many features in the Antarctic are named after Sir James Clark Ross, such as the Ross Ice Shelf, Ross Sea, Ross Island and Mount Erebus (a volcano). But the one name which stands out for me is that in Port Stanley there is a Ross Road, the same name as a certain street in Aston Abbots, and guess what? Yes, named after the same person – how amazing is that!



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## ***Letter from the Rector.***



“We know the price of everything and the value of nothing”. I was reminded of that phrase by an advert in a recent edition of *Classic Car Weekly* for a 1978 Daimler Sovereign. The car is immaculate, but then it should be because in forty three years, the Daimler has covered only 400 miles. The seller is asking £42,000. The car raises a very interesting question about the relationship between value, price and worth.

The *value* of a late seventies Daimler in excellent condition is significant, but the *price* of this one is significantly higher than usual because of its mileage. But the *worth*? Such a low mileage means that to use the car would mean major recommissioning, but then would you want to use it and increase the mileage? But if the car remains unused, what’s the point of having it? Some (many?) would say that the car is not *worth* having.

The relationship between value, price and worth is something we live with daily and we apply it to

everything we do, sometimes even towards other people. And our selective valuing can be conscious or not. Day by day for us all therefore, thinking about how we view others and how we judge accordingly is an important exercise.

The Gospel of Christ meets head on the question of value, price and worth. All are valuable as created beings in the sight of God; all are worth the effort of relationship with Christ and Christ paid the ultimate price to demonstrate this. Throughout the Easter story, Christ neither remonstrates with nor avoids the accusations or ridicule from others; he simply allows their (our?) values to play out and thus be seen for what they are.

At Easter we are confronted by Christ’s valuing of us all; for Christ rose again and every Primary school child I have ever asked knows Jesus did not rise again to “zap” those who nailed him up. Jesus’ absolute valuing of us all is amply shown by the invitation to follow him in his risen life because we are worth it. Easter chocolate is yummy and Easter bunnies are cute, but neither help with the question “how much am I worth?”. The Gospel of Christ replies *You* are worth everything.

With every blessing,

***Rev’d Howard Robson.***

## ***Church Open for Easter Service***



All the local Churches are opening again on Easter Sunday (4<sup>th</sup> April) with social distancing measures in place. Note that our vicar Howard Robson is conducting a series of services on Easter Sunday and we are first on his list with a 9am service. After that we resume our normal schedule with Communion on the second and fourth Sundays and a Lay led service on the third Sunday of the month. Any changes will be notified on the Village Postbox and the Church noticeboard outside the gate.

Although there was no service on Mothering Sunday this year Ann Goodman and Caroline Abel Smith continued our tradition by making and delivering 16 posies around the village.

The Church can always be opened for anyone who wishes to enter for Private Prayer by making an appointment with Caroline Lane by phoning 681373 or email [carolinelane@btinternet.com](mailto:carolinelane@btinternet.com)

Stay Safe. ***David Gray.***

PCC Aston Abbotts

## LILIES AT EASTER



If anyone would like to purchase a lily in remembrance of a loved one for the Altar arrangement on Easter Sunday, please could you let me know as soon as possible. Either leave £2.50 per lily with the name/s to be remembered, in the Old Vicarage letterbox on the pillar inside the gate, or give me a call on 681001. Names of all those to be remembered will be read at the Service here at 9am.

As you will have read elsewhere, St James' Church will be reopening at Easter for the first time since our Christmas Day service. In order that we can maintain the necessary social distancing measures in church it would be very helpful if you could let me know if you hope to attend. Thank you.

***Caroline Abel Smith, Churchwarden***

# Services at Saint James Church Aston Abbotts

**April 2021**

Programme subject to change to meet any future COVID restrictions.

Look out for further announcements on the  
village POSTBOX or the Church Noticeboard at the gate.

4 <sup>th</sup> April	9.00am	Easter Sunday, Communion
11 <sup>th</sup> April	10.30am	Parish Communion
18 <sup>th</sup> April	10.00am	Lay led, informal service
25 <sup>th</sup> April	10.30am	Parish Communion
2 <sup>nd</sup> May	6.00pm	Evening Prayer

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# ***Police & Crime Commissioner To Support Rural Communities***

The Police & Crime Commissioner is to allocate funding from the 2021/22 budget towards protecting rural communities from crime. Many people in these rural communities can often feel marginalised and vulnerable to crime so the funding will ensure that they feel thoroughly supported and protected. We have some excellent rural neighbourhood officers which are highly valued by the rural community.

Matthew Barber, Deputy Police & Crime Commissioner for Thames Valley, said:

“We must respond to the needs of our communities, and in rural areas that response needs to be different from in our towns and cities. We look forward to updating you in the coming months on how we plan to approach this”.

## ***15,000 hacked email & social media accounts reported in one year.***

If a hacker got into your email or social media account, what would they find? Health and banking information? Names and contact details for your friends and family? Private photos and messages? For most people, it's at least one of those.

Your email and social media accounts contain a wealth of personal information about you, which makes them a lucrative target for cyber criminals. Between February 2020 and February 2021, Action Fraud received 15,214 reports about email and social media account hacking. The majority of

reports (88%) were made by individuals, with 12% of reports being made by businesses. Analysis of the crime reports revealed that Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat were the most affected social media accounts, with phishing messages being the most common tactic used by cyber criminals to lure unsuspecting victims.

The motivation behind the hacks are varied and can range from financial gain, to revenge or personal amusement. Some victims are extorted for money, whilst others have their accounts used to send malicious links to their contacts. One victim who had multiple email and social media accounts hacked paid over £2,000 to regain access to them. Another victim reported that her hacked Facebook account was used to trick her friends into sending money into a PayPal account they thought belonged to her.

Secure your email and social media accounts in just a few minutes.

- 1: Use a strong and separate password for your email, as well as other important accounts.
- 2: Enable two-factor authentication (2FA). It will help to stop hackers from getting into your online accounts, even if they have your password.
- 3: If you can't access your account, search the company's online support or help pages. You'll find information about how to recover your account.

For detailed instructions on how to reset your password or enable 2FA on your accounts, visit:  
<https://www.actionfraud.police.uk/secureyouraccounts>

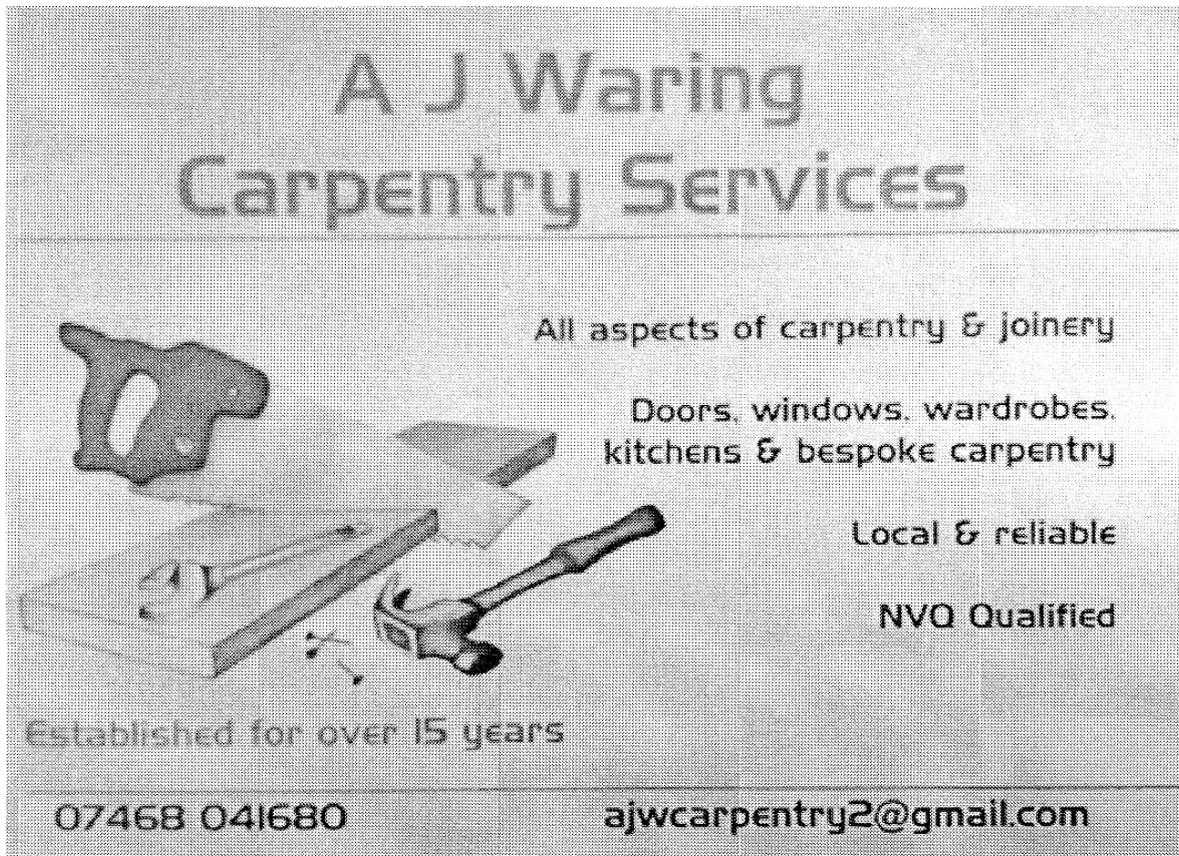
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**Libraries are currently closed, but, Covid-19 rules permitting,  
Wing Library will re-open on Tuesday 13 April**

**Loans have been extended to the end of April  
No fines will be charged**

**Reservations will be possible from Saturday 10 April**

**Because Wing Hall is being used as a Vaccination Centre we will  
be unable to open on Friday afternoons.**

**Our plan is to open at these revised times until further notice:**

**Tuesday 1400 - 1600**

**Wednesday 1000 - 1200**

**Saturday 1000 - 1200**

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Church Warden	Carolyn Abel-Smith	01296 681001
Church Secretary	Caroline Lane	01296 681373
Book Club	Sally Palmer	01296 681152
Village Hall Hire	Nigel & Sally Palmer	01296 681152
Men's 630 Club	Andy Bystra	01296 681690
Women's Gnomes Club	Carol Spooner	01296 681544
Post office & shop Wingrave	Deva	01296 682964
Baby & Toddler Group	Kim Gayler	01296 681123
Royal Oak Pub & Restaurant	Teri Moulton	07809395463
100 Club Treasurer	David Gray	01296 681952
Bingo	Pam Dixon	01296 681626
Rambling Club & Whist Drive	Colin Higgs	01296 681343

# *Community Services*

NHS Direct 24hr Advice	111
Doctor Out of hours Surgeries	01296 331511
Stoke Mandeville Hospital	01296 315000
Police Non-Emergency	101
Buckinghamshire Council	01296 395000
Citizens Advice	08701264056
MP Greg Smith (Con)	01296 714 240
Anglian Water	01296 385995
Pre School Wingrave	01296 681127
Wingrave School	01296 681436
Cottesloe School Wing	01296 688264

## *Catchwords Solution*

K	N	O	W	L	E	D	G	E		P	O	D
I		C				A		R		U		E
S	H	E	L	F		T	H	R	I	L	L	S
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	I	N	O	N	E		F	R	E	E		R
T				C		E						V
R		F	R	Y	I	N	G	P	A	N		E
A						D		A				S
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T		R		A		A			E			L
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## ***Older Drivers Forum Webinars***

We are working in partnership with The Older Drivers Forum to run two free webinars which are aimed at helping and advising older drivers, as well as their families and friends, on using the roads safely in order to drive safer for longer.

We know that older motorists have a wealth of experience, confidence and tolerance. However, sight, hearing, reaction time and judgement of speed and distance may not be as sharp as it once was. The Older Drivers Forum is about keeping mature motorists on the road safely for longer.

The webinars are:

Thursday 18th March – 10.30am to 12.00pm – ‘Driver Awareness 60 +’

Thursday 25th March – 10.30am to 12pm – ‘Advice and Support to Older Drivers’ (Open to all)

The chair and founder of the Older Drivers Forum, Rob Heard, said: “In these difficult times we wanted to be able to still communicate with the mature motorists and help them, especially when getting back to driving after the lockdown, so they can carry on driving safely for longer.

“We can all become complacent about our driving and often pick up bad habits, which if not addressed can increase our risk of an incident on the roads.

“These two webinars will help give advice on a number of subjects from confidence building appraisals to safe driving tips like dealing with roundabouts and night driving.

The webinars are FREE and have expert speakers as well as participants being able to ask questions. People will need to register their place for each webinar and this can be done by visiting

<https://olderdriversforum.com/webinars/>

We have increased the number of places available this time, so should be able to accommodate anyone who wishes to register.



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# ***Aston Abbotts Redwood Tree***



***Giant Redwood (aka Wellingtonia, Sequoiadendron giganteum, Giant Sequoia)***

The Redwood trees are recognised as being the most massive of all trees. Not quite the tallest but certainly the heaviest. Although they were already known by the native inhabitants for many centuries, Europeans discovered them growing in the Sierra Nevada, their only known remaining habitat, in the early 1850's. They can live for more than three thousand years, and can reach a height of over 100 metres. The trunk of these trees is very stout, usually forming a single straight column, and with a marvellous tapering effect at the base. They are covered with a beautiful soft, spongy bark - so soft in fact that one can punch them quite hard and feel no pain.

This bark can be pretty thick, well over two feet thick in the more mature examples. This gives the older trees a certain amount of protection from insects, but the main benefit is its fire retarding properties. Whereas a forest fire is pretty much a disaster for the majority of trees, it seems that the Giant Redwood will not just shrug off such events, they actually need them in order to prosper. Moderate fires will clear the ground of debris and competing plant life, and the rising heat dries and opens the ripe cones, shortly afterwards releasing many thousands of seeds onto the well-prepared ground below. The crowns of the mature tree will, in a forest environment, be a long way from the ground, thus protecting the branches and foliage from destruction in the fire.

Ironically, man's intervention in this respect caused considerable damage in the early 20th century. Forest fires in the Redwood groves were often extinguished before they took hold, but over time this allowed too much flammable debris to build up so that in instances where the fire could not be controlled it became so intense that crown fires developed, with devastating results.

For such an immense and hardy tree, its seedlings are remarkably less resilient than one would expect. They seem to need just the right conditions, and are quite slow to develop in their first six months or so.

# *Sightings of the Northern Lights in Buckinghamshire*



Northern Lights taken on February 27, 2014 from just outside Newport Pagnell. Courtesy of Brian Tomlinson

**by Neil Rees.** The Northern Lights are also known by the Latin term *aurora borealis*. The aurora happens when electrically charged particles from the sun enter the atmosphere and collide with gas atoms. It appears as colourful dancing lights which illuminate the sky. The most common colour is green, created by oxygen molecules, but other colours are seen too. When it is red it has been mistaken for a large fire. The light-show typically lasts for about two hours in the late evening.

The northern lights are mainly seen in the Arctic region, but occasionally elsewhere. To see the northern lights you need a dark but clear night, and an unobstructed view of the northern horizon.

They are seldom seen in Bucks, however a great aurora was seen here in 1732 and then one in 1803. The next occasion was in 1827 and then in 1830 it was seen on Christmas Day. Through the 1830s it was seen almost annually. On December 18, 1835 in Aylesbury it was "the most extraordinary Aurora Borealis that has been seen in this vicinity since 1732 ... at nine p.m. the whole of the sky... was brilliantly illuminated by a bright yellow light; a little above the horizon were two elliptic arches from which came red beams." This visual show lasted strongly for about 2 hours,

then faded, but a bright light continued until 5 a.m the next morning. In October 1836, it was again seen across Bucks and down to London. On October 18, 1837 it was seen around Aylesbury, which many took to be a large fire. On November 12 and 16, 1837 it was seen at Aylesbury and Wycombe, where red rays shot up from the north west, and on this occasion it was also seen as far as London and Paris. After this the Northern Lights became less common being seen every few years in 1843, 1845, 1847, 1849, 1852, 1859, 1865 and 1869.

The Northern Lights were seen around Aylesbury on July 1, 1908. In Haddenham, Henry Redhead was caught riding his bicycle in the evening without lights. P.C. Wright approached him and in court "the defendant informed the Bench that it was extremely light and he did not realise it was so late". Once the chairman of the court realised that it was the same evening as the Northern Lights were seen, the case was dismissed.

In recent years the northern lights have been seen again. On February 27, 2014 the northern lights were seen around Milton Keynes. On March 6, 2016 and on Sunday February 7, 2020 the northern lights were seen in Oxfordshire.