

# Elmsted with Hastingleigh Community News

*St James the Great  
Elmsted*



*St Mary the Virgin  
Hastingleigh*

August 2020

40p



# Elmsted and Hastingleigh Community Contacts

Elmsted Parish Council

**Tracey Block** 01233 750415

Hastingleigh Parish Council

**Tracey Block** 01233 750415

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([www.evingtonhall.org.uk](http://www.evingtonhall.org.uk))

**Shelley** 07401 908249  
[bookings@evingtonhall.org.uk](mailto:bookings@evingtonhall.org.uk)

Evington Hall Committee Hon Sec

**Mrs H French** 01233 750483

ECP Hon Sec

**Mrs S Boxall** 01233 750206

Evington Gardeners Hon Sec

**Mrs H Ransley** 01233 750949

Evington Community Choir

**Mrs C Jeffery** 01233 750585

Footpath Walks

**Mr D Harris** 01233 813711

Women's Institute

**Mrs J Bowes** 01233 811875

Parent and Toddler Group

**Mrs L Lawrence** 01233 750987

Neighbourhood Watch Hastingleigh

**Mr G Block** 01233 750415

Neighbourhood Watch Elmsted

**Mr J Argar** 01233 750311



# August

## in Elmsted with Hastingleigh

**A**nd so we reach the summer holidays, which may not be quite as we planned. A number of Thank Yous have been received this month, it is lovely to see the community spirit hasn't been dampened by the current times we find ourselves in. There are more interesting articles on St Mary's Church and it's Stone this month, and Elmsted Baptist Chapel. It was with great sadness that I heard of the passing of Stan Burrage, our condolences go out to Sheila and family. I shall miss our little chats we had whenever I bumped into him on one of his walks. There is a lovely tribute to him on page 14. Our Postie, Pete, has retired after serving our community for 18 years, and a collection is being held for him, see page 24 if you would like to contribute. We are really enjoying all the new content in the magazine, and it seems you, the readers are too, so please do keep sending us any articles, puzzles, photos or recipes you would like to share.

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### Submissions

The *Community News* takes no responsibility for misleading advertising or incorrect editorial supplied to us in good faith.

Please provide any promotional or editorial content in Word format rather than pdf. For length, grammar and style issues the Editor reserves the right to edit it.

**Editorial:** [elmstedwithhastingleighnews@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:elmstedwithhastingleighnews@yahoo.co.uk)

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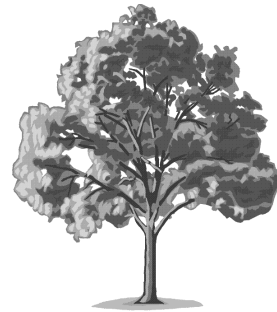
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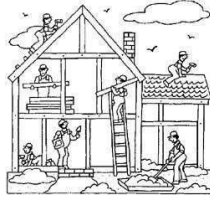
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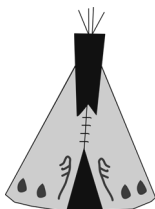
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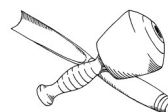
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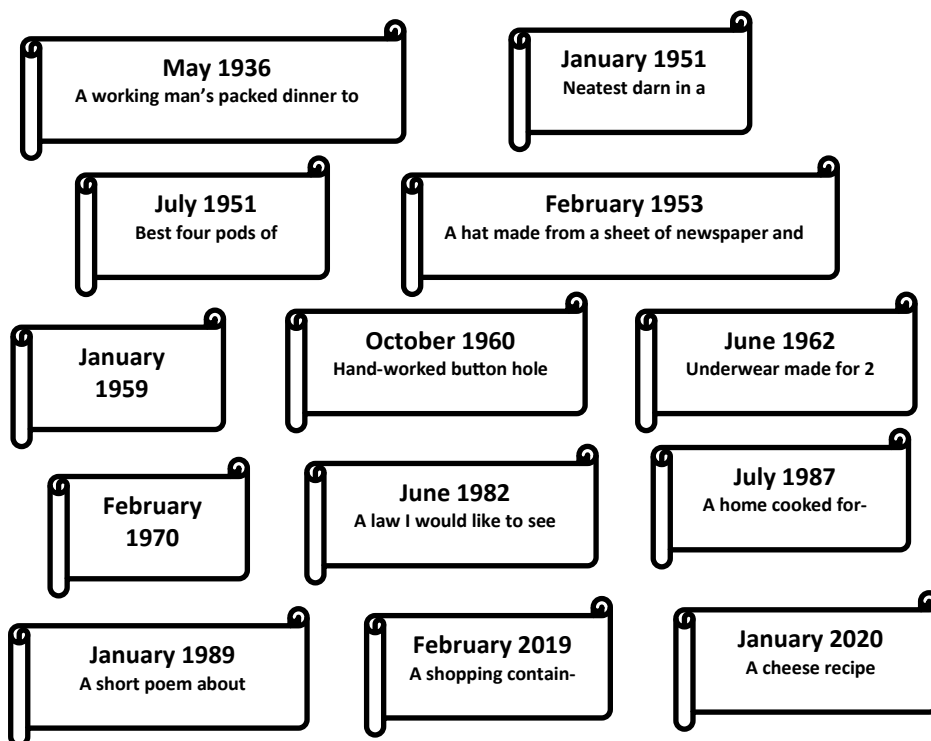


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# Hastingleigh with Elmsted WI

## Competition Time

**E**very month we have a competition linked to the theme of that evening's talk. We often have a wide variety of entries, and try to keep the competitions fun. Recently our President shared some competitions that she had found whilst looking through old talk programmes, and I thought I would, in turn, share some with readers, as they give insights into the times in which they were set.



Due to the current climate, we are unable to meet at the moment but are holding virtual competitions for Flower of the Month. The Flower of the Month joint winners for July were Sally Morley-Smith (Delosperma), Karen Bain (Aquilegia) and Yvonne Helmer (Clematis). Marie Wenham

# From Wye Surgery

**I** cannot tell you how proud I am of the way that General Practice responded so quickly to the COVID crisis. We are also enormously grateful for the positive feedback we have had throughout this period which has impacted everyone in one way or another.

The staff has been heroic in coming in to the front line at the time of maximum COVID risk, some volunteering to go to the COVID hot site, knowing that almost everyone they saw was at high risk of having active COVID infection.

Special thanks must go to Dr Crouch, our new partner, who stepped up to the plate when Jolyon Miles and I started working from home. Jess has shown herself to be a born leader and has taken advantage of having us out of the way to improve systems further! Helen Goodman, our manager, worked very long hours, initially from home and latterly at the surgery, and proved herself to be enormously flexible and skilled in managing multiple new problems as they quickly arose in the first few weeks and beyond. We are indebted to her. All the clinical and support staff (too many to name but they know who they are) can be proud of keeping the surgery going whilst wearing PPE: checking everyone's temperatures on arrival, frequently cleaning handles and surfaces, and doing everything else that is required to minimise risk to patients and staff. I know there has been genuine fear of contracting the virus in the Surgery, but they pressed on regardless. Thank you all.

The eConsult system, which has been rolled out locally, proved timely as it meant patients could easily contact us and in many cases avoid the need to come in to the practice. The system provides us with rich data before we even respond to a patient and puts us in the best position to deal with a problem, giving us time to ponder the problem before contacting you. Some people have complained about the time it takes to fill in but the questions ARE relevant, even when you think they could not possibly be. Either way, we would need to take up your time asking the same questions if the online questionnaire was not completed. For those who need help, our receptionists are happy to help you fill it in online via our system. Thank you again for the very positive feedback we have received regarding the system, and for adopting it so quickly.

What a strange time it has been! We are not out of the woods yet, and this lull may be the eye of the storm with a worse second wave in the

Autumn or Winter. I suspect the behaviours we have adopted as the 'new normal' will quickly come back into place if risk starts to return to its previous level and I think any shut down will be local and limited in future. I would still urge caution, particularly if you are at high risk. I am only seeing limited numbers of people whom I know have been social-distancing, and then only at the recommended social distance. Until there is evidence of complete eradication in our area, social-distancing or protective masks should remain the norm. It is difficult to establish numbers of new cases in our area as the figures given are for total cases. It is clear, though, that Kent (perhaps because it is a 'commuter county') has had a relatively high number of cases per 100,000 population.

I have just read an update on where we are with vaccines. There are numerous possible candidates, almost all using different virus vectors that have had their DNA adapted to produce Coronavirus proteins. The biggest problem with vectors, i.e. viruses used to carry the COVID code in the vaccine, is that people have immunity to many of them and so a vaccine may not work in many. The producers are getting around this by using gorilla or monkey viruses that we have not met before as vectors. Others are using adenoviruses, which are less common in the community, as vectors. Ironically, the difficulty with the Oxford vaccine was the success of the lockdown. This reduced the number of active cases and made it difficult to prove it works. It is now being used in Brazil where COVID is in full flow.

The other interesting development, one that might explain the relatively low percentage of people testing positive to Coronavirus antibodies, is the work looking at the T-cell response to COVID. Those who wish to read more can read the following article; <https://liberteriandoc.tumblr.com/post/622276660963819520/natural-immunity-against-covid-19>

Clinics are starting to re-open, with our musculoskeletal and cardiology clinics starting next week. We hope microsuction will begin soon, with minor surgery starting in late July or in August if risk remains low. Consultant-led clinics should restart soon as clinicians who were seconded to cover the wards or ICU are released back to their former roles. Ashford was a hotspot for COVID and they will have been fully-employed dealing with COVID 19 cases. We owe our thanks for their brave efforts, too. Thanks must also go to all of you who were in essential roles and carried on at great risk to yourselves and families during the peak of the epidemic. Let us hope we can all get back to some normality as soon as possible  
Kind regards,  
Dr Allan Fox

# Stan Burrage 1937 - 2020

**S**tan was born in Oxford, the youngest of five children, where he spent his childhood and teenage years. In his mid-teens, problems with a hip injury (possibly sustained playing cricket, or possibly a disease of the hip-bone) resulted in him spending several months in hospital with his leg in plaster. This interruption in his education and the fact that he was walking with crutches meant that he did not leave school to work in Morris's factory like his older brother, but returned to school to gain enough O-levels to enter the sixth form to study Maths, Applied Maths and Physics. At about this time he had developed an interest in growing plants (his mother was a keen gardener) and he successfully grafted four different varieties of apple onto one tree. To further his interest in plants, he decided to do A-level Biology, for which he attended the girls Grammar School as these subjects were not available at his school. After A-levels, he applied and was accepted to study Horticulture at Nottingham University, provided he did a year's practical experience at a horticultural establishment and gained an A-level pass in Chemistry. This he did at a smallholding in Evesham, while studying chemistry at evening classes.

In September 1957 he started his first year at Sutton Bonington, the agricultural and horticultural faculty of the University. Three years later, after a lot of work and playing an active role in student life (e.g. in rag week being dressed in a sack and roped to a trailer with other "slaves" to be paraded round Nottingham; playing hockey and cricket; and developing his interest in Photography), he graduated with a First Class degree and became engaged to Sheila, his girlfriend throughout the three years.

His main interest was still in plant pathology, particularly diseases in fruit trees, and he spent the following year studying for a Diploma at Imperial College, at their field station at Silwood Park near Ascot. At the same time Sheila was working as a research assistant to the Professor of Botany at University College and living with a friend in London. During this time Stan made frequent trips on the A4 on his Vespa scooter for visits. Sheila and Stan were married in 1961, and Stan gained a place back at Sutton Bonington to work for a PhD. In addition to his interest in plant diseases, he had also developed an interest in the climate, particularly the microclimate around plants, and this formed the basis of his thesis.

Then followed a post-doctoral year in the Hydrology Department at the University of California in Davis, not far from Sacramento. This furthered his interest in the climate and in water use and conservation. There, Stan and



Sheila made good use of weekends and holidays: they travelled widely in the Western Coast states, making good friends and returning several times over the following years. While in the USA, Stan was offered a lectureship in the Horticultural Department at Wye College and, in January 1966, the couple returned to the UK where they lived in Wye for five years and had three daughters. In 1971, they moved to a larger house - their present home - in Hastingleigh. Actually, Sheila moved with the children, as Stan had been asked to be part of a group lecturing to students in Cuba!

During his time at Wye, Stan continued with his research and supervised many post-graduates, mainly from overseas. His love of travelling continued and each year he spent two or three weeks lecturing or giving advice in many countries e.g. the former Czechoslovakia, Crete, Egypt, Bhutan, Malaysia, as well as in the EU. For his research at Wye he needed instruments that were not suitable or readily available. Ever the problem-solver, he taught himself Electronics and over the years, starting with automatic weather stations, he developed and improved portable instruments for measuring carbon dioxide, oxygen, pH, relative humidity and conductivity. Stan took early retirement and started his own business in partnership with Sheila, who dealt mainly with the finances. His instruments attracted the interest of mushroom-growers and glasshouse nurseries and, for fifteen years, he supplied growers and research institutes all over the world not only with portable analysers but also larger, built-in control systems. These could have presented a problem, as portable instruments could easily be returned for repair or servicing but permanent installations could not. Luckily this never became an issue, apart from one mushroom-grower in Montana USA. Stan and Sheila decided to take a trip to solve the problem and flew to Seattle, hiring a car to drive overland to Montana, where, after thorough checking, Stan's equipment was fine: the grower's electrician had wired the system incorrectly! From then on they had an enjoyable holiday through Montana and Idaho, including a memorable 70-mile jet boat trip up the Snake River, visiting a few National Parks, and eventually arriving to stay with friends in California before returning home to Kent.

The business finished trading in 2015 and not long afterwards Stan was diagnosed with Alzheimer's dementia: his short-term memory was failing him and sadly he could no longer remember the wonderful holidays he had had with the children, nor the trips made after they left home and so many memories of the 50 happy years living in this caring community. He was a gentle, loving and much-loved grandfather, father and husband and will be sadly missed.

# Elmsted Baptist Chapel

**I** came across this item in a copy of a Centenary Service Sheet for Elmsted Mission and I thought it might be of some interest to some of the readers of the Community News.

I found the service sheet in my late parents' belongings. They regularly attended the little chapel until its closure. I remember them giving Mrs White and another lady from Becketts Close a lift in their car to each service.

I particularly like the piece saying about Hastingleigh being a "dark place", and young people engaging in unseemly sports!

Chris Willis

## ELMSTED BAPTIST CHAPEL 1870-1970

This Chapel, often called the "Cathedral in the Woods", is away from the hubbub of life, nestled in the arms of nature. As such it can be unnoticed by "passers-by", its only approach being a carttrack.

No records relating to its inception are available, although by a "Jubilee" Magazine, we may scan a few details.

The pioneer was Mr. Marchant. Evidently for some years prior, the village was thought of as a dark place, the places of interest being the Public House, and the village green, where young people engaged in unseemly sports.

There being only one service at the Parish Church, and no Sunday School, a Member of Brabourne Baptist Church, who moved to Hastingleigh, felt stirred regarding the lack of thought toward God.

Discussing this with Rev. Wright of Brabourne, led to an open air meeting on June 26th 1867, on the Village Green. The sermon, based on John 3 v.16, was well received, and the people requested regular Services on Sundays, which were conducted by the Minister and Members of Brabourne Church.

During winter, these continued in cottages, and Cottage Prayer Meetings also began. In spite of opposition, the work began to prosper.

On July 21st 1869, consideration was given to erecting a Chapel. The site where the Chapel still stands was purchased, and building started.

Due to much assistance, the building was completed for £90. It was often too small for the crowds who came, and the Sunday School also was well attended.

Little else is known of those early days, except the marked difference between attendance then and now. Although there is a promising Sunday School, the Sunday Service is poorly attended, and except for a few faithful ones, notably Mrs. White, it would have to be closed for lack of support.

In spite of this, we look forward to a wonderful centenary, and with confidence to the future, which is in God's hands.

# ELMSTED BAPTIST MISSION



## Centenary Services

**Sunday, July 12th at 2.45 p.m.**

**Continued on Monday 13th — Tea 5.30 p.m.**

Evening Meeting 7.15 p.m.

*Guest Speaker:* Rev. V. C. Evans  
SOUTHERN AREA SUPERINTENDENT

*Soloist:* Mrs. Margaret Ritchie  
OF FOLKESTONE

— *Everyone Welcome* —

# St Mary's Church

**H**ave you been down to St. Mary's lately? There is a new guide to the church.

Our village church is a historic building. We are delighted that Trevor Wye has written a new guide to the church with some colourful photographs. Do pick one up when you visit (£2).

How lucky we are that our church doesn't look like this picture from 1800 by Henry Petrie, with only three windows on the south side of the chancel (now there are five), and the roof in a bad way!



In 1293, the first recorded worship tells us that the incumbent was absent.

In 1458, the Archdeacon of Canterbury made a visitation and the church was not in good order. "They lack the look of the new feasts; the breviary is illegible, and the nave of the church requires re-shingling."

In 1539, the church and the villagers were so poor they could not pay for the new bible – every parson was required to have a Bible in English in the church. The parson reported that "the repairs to his house have been great and the chancel sore in decay."

By 1552, an inventory revealed that the church was quite poor and in the 1557 visitation, the Archdeacon commanded "curtains of silk" for the high altar. The vicar was also Parson of Brabourne and

Bircholt, and “was not resident nor keepeth no hospitality and there has been no sermon for ten years.”

In 1617, the churchwardens, who were responsible for the poor, asked for a cottage on Evington Leeze to be designated for the poor. There were only 13 households in the village, 5 being poor widows and only 8 paying to the Poor Rates.

By 1706, conditions in the Parish seem to have improved. In 1714, the walls of the church had been whitened and “some sentences of scripture written on them.”

In 1833, the Revd. Gostwyk Prideaux took over the Rectory with its Tithe Barn (tithes were abolished in 1841), and it was he who organised the whole refurbishment of the church at the end of his life. According to Arthur AG Colpays, Architect from Hastings, the church had looked “utterly miserable”. The rood screen was blocked up with boards, the floor was rotted, the high oak pews dilapidated, the windows filled in and the wall-plaster crumbling.

However, in the 1890s, the old high pews were removed; the floor was completely dug out, levelled and concreted, and a wooden floor overlaid; pitch-pine pews replaced the old ones; the font was rebuilt in a Victorian design using the original lead bowl; the rood screen was cleaned; the musicians’ gallery was removed and a harmonium installed; and eight of the windows in the chancel were opened up.

Since then, so many beautiful additions have been made to the church. Information can be found in two booklets: the new “Church Guide” and “Gifts and Patrons 1993”, both of which can be found on the Visitors’ Table on the right as you enter the church.

RB July 2020

**T**he Evington Community Project are aware that their 100 Club draws have not been taking place whilst the pandemic has swept the nation. However, we would like to be able to hold these draws again as soon as possible. So we thought we would bring you live broadcast draws via the ECP Facebook page.

The backdated draws for April, May, June, July and August will take place on Saturday 1st August at 11am.

To view the draws, please see:

[www.facebook.com/evington.communityproject](https://www.facebook.com/evington.communityproject)



Club



## Thank You

**I**'m sure many others like me would like to thank the Evington Community Project and the Parish Council for arranging for the delivery of veg boxes from Perry Court during the lockdown; and also thanks to the volunteers who collected prescriptions and did shopping for those of us who are vulnerable or shielding.

On a personal note, my family and I would like to thank all of my friends and neighbours for their concern and kind messages of sympathy on the death of Stan. They have been a great comfort in these difficult times and very much appreciated.

Sheila

## Thank You

**T**hank you to all my friends in Elmsted and Hastingleigh who kindly sent cards and good wishes on my recent 90th birthday. It was great to be remembered by so many!

Thanks, June Browning

## Wellingtonia Trees

**I** very much enjoyed The Rose Robus article about Wellingtonia trees.

A giant sequoia was carefully imported, in its 12 cm plastic tube, from Muir Woods California In September 2004. It lived in assorted sized pots until September 2007 when it was planted out, approximately 50 cm tall, in the field next to Maxted Street. It is growing roughly 2 m a year, and is a perfect specimen now approaching 15 m in height.

It is easily seen from the road at the gate to the bridle path. In a few decades it should be visible from the Elmsted Church gate.

Kindest regards,

Anne Burton

## South Porch Stone

**I**'ll add a few comments on Mr Merriman's article, which I had not previously read:

1. I have led several geological fieldtrips in Kent and in Wiltshire looking specifically at sarsen stones and sadly there is nothing about your south porch stone to suggest it is a sarsen. A side point only: sarsen stones were not deposited by glaciers (they are silica-cemented sandstones formed in situ) and glaciers did not reach either Marlborough Downs (the probable source for Avebury and Stonehenge) or Kent.
2. Many church doorways have been blocked over the years and I know of no example where a single stone has been used to block a doorway. One cannot rule it out, but on the balance of probability it seems unlikely that this stone was ever used to block the doorway. And once again it begs the question why the stone was brought all the way to Hastingleigh (it is not a local stone) for such a purpose when the present infill of stones does an equal job so much more easily and inexpensively. If the stone was once in a wall is there any evidence of mortar along the four sides?
3. Permission could be obtained from the necessary authority to lift the stone and look at the other side. Assuming it is not too badly weathered from lying in its current position, is there any evidence of writing to suggest a ledger stone (or something else)? Or perhaps consecration crosses to indicate a mensa? Or any other clues as to its original function?

Geoff Downer

## Thank You

Hastingleigh Parish Council would like to thank all of the helpers who volunteered their services in the initial stages of the pandemic. Your help was invaluable to those who were self-isolating/shielding in our community.

## Church Services

<u>Date</u>		
02/08	First Sunday	9:30 – Elmsted– Communion
09/08	Second Sunday	9:30 – Hastingleigh – Communion
16/08	Third Sunday	9:30 – Petham -Communion
23/08	Fourth Sunday	9:30 – Waltham – Communion
30/08	Fifth Sunday	9:30 – Elmsted– Communion
Please do not attend if you are at all unwell		

## From The Vicarage

**H**i Everyone!

To those of you in Hastingleigh and Elmsted, it's great to be writing to you all again; to those in Petham and Waltham, welcome back!

My heart goes out to anyone who has lost somebody during lockdown, and my prayers are with you, along with my thanksgiving on behalf of those who have remained safe. For those who have had the infection themselves, I hope that you are now fully recovered, or well on the way to recovery.

Well, here we are, all finally allowed to cautiously venture out again. So, we start the long road back to the 'new normal'. As part of this journey, I'm delighted to say that, as from August 2nd, we are recommencing our church services. For the time being, all four of the churches under my care will be worshipping and working together to deliver the best Covid-aware service they can. This means that, even when the service is not in your village, we would really encourage you to join us at the church where it is happening.



At the moment, we are fortunate to have very low infection numbers within our villages, and one of the ways we can help to keep it that way is to stick together within our four buildings, all supporting each other and creating a congregation that feels united against the adversities of these times we find ourselves in.

What this means in practical terms is that there will be one service a week in one church, then the next week in the next church, etc., and we really want to encourage people to move around with us. To make working out where we are easier, we will go in alphabetical order. So on August 2nd it will be Elmsted, 9th Hastingleigh, 16th Petham, 23rd Waltham, then back to Elmsted again the following week.

Our main concern is to keep everyone safe whilst providing the best worship we can deliver. To this end, we will be giving everyone a squirt of hand-sanitiser on the way in, and asking people only to sit where there are service booklets. If you are not living together, or are in a bubble together, then please make sure you are two metres away from everyone else.

When you leave, please leave the booklet on the seat where you found it. It won't be touched again for the next four weeks, meaning it will be quite safe to use again the next time.

We will be celebrating Communion together, but remaining in our seats for the whole time. Please bring your own small piece of bread, or a wafer, with you; and a sip of wine or grape juice, if you wish. Then we can all consume together without anyone touching anyone else's bread.

Unfortunately, regulations say that there cannot be any singing during the service and this is likely to be the case for some time. We will try and play recorded music at the beginning and the end, however.

We really hope that you will come and join us at our services, as we would love to see you there! The only limit on numbers is social-distancing so, as long as there is room, with correct spacing we will welcome all who attend.

I look forward to starting to see you all again. (At a safe distance, of course!)

Revd. Lorraine Lawrence

# Pete The Postie

**T**he more observant of you may have noticed that our regular postman Pete has been missing!

After visiting us up on the hills for around 18 years he has decided to retire. In a community such as ours, a regular postie is a fantastic asset as they notice so much and can look out for us all.

If like us you feel he is going to be really missed, we would like to hold a collection for him and present a gift to him at one of our community coffee mornings when they re-commence.

Pete and his wife are a great lovers of the theatre and it would be lovely to be able to buy him some vouchers for the Marlowe Theatre as a thank you from us all.

If you would like to donate, please put some money in an envelope with your name and pop it through our door at Quackers. We will get a card and either put names in it or you can sign yourselves.

Sue & Paul Boxall

## ‘So they do Say.!

**D**uring the 1960’s and 70’s, sixty million elm trees died, said to be the result of an elm bark fungus spread by a beetle which got at them before maturity. Edward Heath’s government had a slogan, ‘Plant a tree in ‘73’ and ‘Plant more in ‘74’.

The ash is now as vulnerable: dieback was under way before it was spotted in 2012 and the fatality rate is likely to be between 70-90 per cent. In parts of Europe it is 95 per cent.

As for the larch, a ‘pathogen’ (an infectious agent) is killing many, and the horse chestnut is prey to a fungus which turns the leaves brown. The oak too is suffering from a decline due to the interaction of a bacteria and a beetle. The sycamore is a tough and a fast-growing tree, though its leaves too often shrivel with chocolate spot disease.

At the last election, the Labour Party declared, ‘We will plant two billion trees by 2040’: a curious claim, as any calculator will show that to be 250,000 each day! TW

# The Building Stones of St Mary's Church

**I** visited Hastingleigh Church on a hot summer's day in June and, while walking the outer walls widdershins, I was engaged in conversation by a resident from the neighbouring house on the subject of the geology of the building stones in the church fabric. Following our conversation, I was asked to contribute an article to this magazine. I agreed to consider the invitation and some time later 'put pen to paper'. The following account is from a brief inspection only made that afternoon and I'm sure it is not the final word on the subject. Hopefully the information will be of interest to local residents and perhaps may encourage someone from the community to follow up these notes with a much fuller account and one that links the stones seen in the fabric with the different phases of building.

First, it is important to note the location of the church. It has a very rural setting, some distance from the village centre of Hastingleigh and sited on chalk downland. This means that transportation of heavy, bulky stone will be an important consideration when sourcing a stone quarry and the local chalk is unlikely to provide a durable building material for external carved stone. That said, the soft and easy to cut chalk has provided some dressing stones such as the north chancel windows and those of the interior north nave door. There may perhaps be more chalk blocks elsewhere hidden from view, for example beneath interior renders. The south-facing chancel windows may have once been of chalk, but being on the more exposed side of the church they have been replaced in the nineteenth century. Chalk tends not to weather well when exposed to the elements; it is highly porous and will hold water that is subject to freeze-thaw weathering. It is, however, often a reliable building stone for interior work and occasionally on the exterior, but only if protected from wind and rain. That the north chancel windows have survived as long as they have suggests the

mason made use of a particularly durable bed of chalk. It should not be forgotten that these same quarries would have supplied chalk to make a lime mortar, an essential ingredient in any medieval stone building.

The chalk also provided the principal building material: flint. Found in the younger chalk beds, flint is extremely durable and, while the chalk landscape is eroded away over long periods of time, the flint hangs around on the landscape surface seemingly forever. The local fields, I'm sure, are covered in numerous flints, some of which have been bleached with age and others coated with iron to provide a rusty-looking exterior; both typical responses to weathering conditions. The nearby fields have then been hand-picked of a supply of flints to be carted the short distance to the church to provide much of the rubble walling.

Because flints are irregular in shape and are both hard and brittle, they are not suitable for carved stonework and it is usually necessary to introduce stones from further afield with which to build the corner stones (quoins) and the carved doorways and window dressings. The principle stone used at St Mary's is Kentish Ragstone, a limestone from the Hythe Formation that outcrops in a belt that runs from Hythe to Maidstone and beyond. Kentish Ragstone is rarely a uniform building material. A dark green-grey rag for instance can be seen on the northern buttresses. Internally much of the squared stone is a paler grey rag. Different stone beds have different qualities and the south aisle columns can be seen to be a lighter coloured variety of Kentish Ragstone than the stone of the east pier and of that seen in the chancel arch.

What route would the Ragstone have taken from the quarry? Depending on the location of the quarry, and much Ragstone quarrying was centred around Hythe and Lympne, the stone could have been brought by the most direct route overland, that is northwards on Stone Street turning west across country or alternatively via the entrepôt of Canterbury (via its port at Fordwich) and south down Stone Street. Whatever the route, the overland journey, especially the last few miles, would have been arduous and added much expense to the cost of stone extraction.

Caen Stone from Normandy in France was also used for quality carving and also had to make an overland journey to Hastingleigh, having first been offloaded from a seagoing vessel crossing the English Channel. Caen Stone is another limestone with pale honey colours and can be seen in the west doorway and northwest quoins of the nave.

Then there is a coarse gritty stone that appears in small irregular blocks between the flint rubble. This is a sandstone sourced from the Folkestone Formation, probably quarried somewhere along the outcrop close to Ashford. It grades from medium to very coarse grain in size with much iron giving it a colour palette ranging from orange through to dark red and on to deep purple.

The last building stone introduced was probably during the Victorian restorations during the 1870s-80s. By this time the railways were in a position to transport large bulky items the length and breadth of Britain. It is therefore not unusual to find stone from distant parts of the country in Victorian building works, although even at this late date those last few miles from the railway station (Wye?) would have been challenging. Here we have an oolitic (an oolith is a rounded grain of calcium carbonate) limestone sourced from somewhere along the Jurassic limestone belt, in this case probably from the Bath area. This more orange-coloured stone is mostly composed of broken marine shells and ooliths. Where the ooliths have fallen out, the semicircular holes preserved in the natural carbonate cement can be seen looking much like a bite taken from an Aero chocolate bar. I wonder how much of the replaced stone was originally the local chalk?

Finally, my attention was drawn to the large stone slab in the entranceway to the south door of the nave, which I was told had been subject to much recent speculation following an article in the June 2020 edition of this publication. It seems unlikely to weigh “10 or 12 tuns” (unless much reduced in size) and therefore not the stone described in the fifth paragraph of that article. We can of course not see the underside of the stone which may hold some clues as to its origin. However, the stone is geologically a greensand containing numerous tiny grains of the green iron mineral glauconite. From a

cursory inspection it looks as though it came from the Hythe Formation (therefore Kentish Ragstone). I would like to propose two alternative theories as to why the stone is there. But first it is important to note that the stone is very large. It has been brought some distance (a matter of several miles) and presumably some time ago and before the age of the motor vehicle. The journey it took by land would have been arduous and costly. Therefore to bring such a large stone to Hastingleigh meant there had to be a specific purpose in mind; it was not a random act. To lay a single large paving stone where it currently is situated, I would suggest, was not the original purpose. You could pave the ground before a porch with several smaller stones as most country churches do with much greater facility. I therefore conjecture the stone had a previous function and probably one associated with the church. Firstly it could have been a ledger stone, now much weathered by being placed outside the church for whatever reason. Several large ledger stones can be seen in the church of varying sizes. A more controversial reason is that it may have been the original mensa or altar slab in the chancel and was replaced at some time in the past when the altar was 'upgraded'. You only have to travel to St Mary's, Brook, to see an example of a medieval altar stone that is still in use today, carved from the Ragstone of the Hythe Formation. The Brook altar stone, I believe, has been demonstrated to be medieval in origin and was removed at the Reformation and reinstated to the chancel when it came to notice, lying within the churchyard.

I hope this short article has given some food for thought and a subject matter for local history detectives to further investigate St Mary's Church. Happy detecting.

Geoff Downer, Canterbury  
carolegeoff@btinternet.com



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# Farming Notebook

**W**ishing and hoping and thinking and planning and waiting, and dreaming....” These words from the Dusty Springfield song pretty much sum up my feelings at the moment.

The weather has turned a little unsettled, but we are hoping that the forecast for improvement is correct. We have yet to start harvest, but it is imminent. Our grass seed will be the first crop to be harvested and all being well we should be able to make a start over the weekend or early next week. We share our stripper header with another farmer who has earlier land. He has just completed his grass seed and the header will be making its way up the hill to us in the next day or so. Perfect timing.

The stripper header, as its name suggests, literally strips the seed from the stem of the grass. The seeds go through the combine and are cleaned; the stems remain firmly fixed to the ground. The major advantage of this system is that we minimise the amount of green material passing through the harvester. When I started farming - a long, long time ago - the first question asked when we wanted to part-exchange a combine was “Has it done any grass seed or peas?” as both crops are very hard on the machinery. The stripper header negates the problem and puts no strain on the combine. The one possible drawback is that we have to follow the combine with a mower to cut the grass to make our “thrashed hay”. Although not particularly nutritious, the hay is a useful dry forage for cattle either outside in late autumn, or once the animals are all housed for the winter.

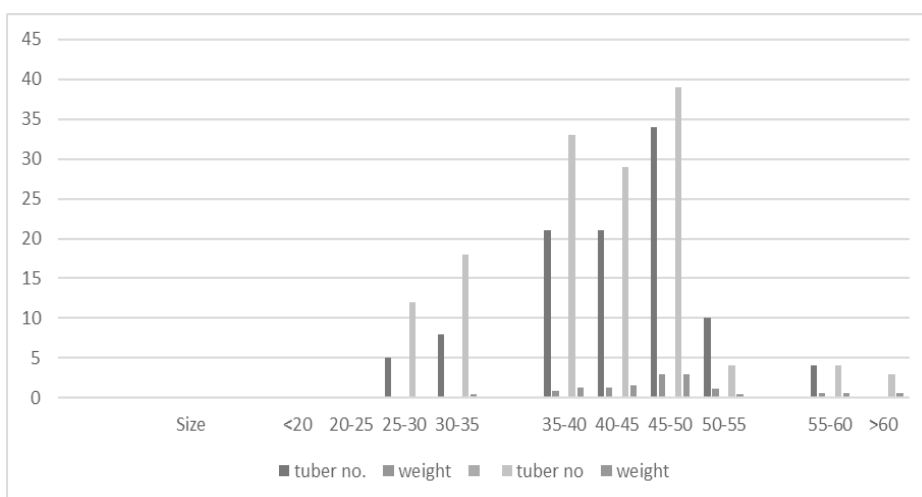
Once the grass is done we will have quite a wait for the next crops to ripen. I intend to desiccate the oilseed rape tomorrow, which means it will be at least a fortnight (the beginning of August) before that is ready. I think the wheats will be ripe at much the same time. Everything will come at once....

All the stores are spotlessly clean, tractors fuelled and ready, and trailers washed. I have even had time to spend the day giving the seed drill a thorough service. How organised is that?



The seed potatoes are all at a critical stage. Despite the prolonged period with little or no rainfall, the tubers are growing and progressing towards “burn off”. In reality we now physically flail off the foliage rather than use a chemical desiccant.

Timing is critical. Only by doing test digs, now every three to four days, do we know how the crop is developing. We dig two two-metre rows for each variety and collect every tuber into a bag or bucket. The sample is put through a stack of sieves: 60mm for the top sieve, and reducing by 5mm increments down to 30mm. Our required seed fraction has to be between 35mm and 55mm. The number of tubers and their weight is measured for each size bracket and the results tabulated.



As can be seen from the table, the bulk of the crop is sized between 30mm and 50mm. We want to wait until all the tubers have grown a little bit more to get the 30x35mm fraction into the seed class but without losing anything out at the top end. Every tuber going oversize at the top weighs so much more than the tubers coming in at the bottom, which adds to the conundrum.

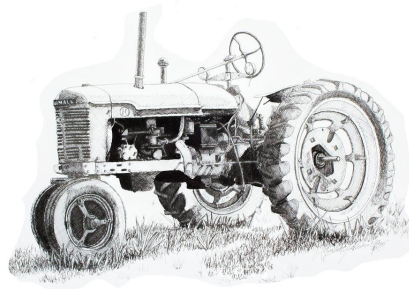
I fully expect tomorrow’s digs to show that the sizes and numbers will have moved to the right and the crop will need to be flailed off before the weekend. There is plenty of “wishing and hoping and thinking and planning and waiting..” going on here, I assure you!

Our wheat trials day was cancelled this year, which was a pity because there was much to see and learn. How the varieties have stood up to disease pressures and the effects of the prolonged drought was very interesting. We were lucky enough to get a private socially-distanced tour. However, like so many events this summer, farmers were given the benefit of a virtual tour of the site on the internet. Drone footage, close-ups and voice-overs allowed the trials to be shared with everyone. It really was a close second to actually seeing the plots on the ground. The biggest drawback was no hog roast and bottle of beer!

The cattle are doing well and the calves are growing rapidly. We have creep-feeders full of rolled oats and sugar beet nuts, which only the calves can access. They help themselves as and when they feel like it. This supplementary feed really does bring them on. Once they have the taste for the feed it is amazing how much they get through. The two bulls are still running with the cows. I have not noticed any activity lately, so I think their job is done. We will take them away for a well-earned rest in the next week or two so that calving in the spring is not too spread out. Any cow not "in-calf" will either be given a run with the bull again with the Minnis cattle in January, or be culled. Usually, having run with the bull for three cycles, the cows are all in calf.

Well, here is hoping and wishing for a good, easy harvest. I'm thinking it may be better than we dared hope for earlier in the year, as the incessant rain lashed across the country. (Who would have thought that it would be followed by dusty Spring fields!)

W Wilson-Haffenden



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