

Vernham Dean



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Our village, our passion, our pride.....

Welcome to Vernham Dean. In the coming pages we hope to give you a glimpse of just how special our village is and why we are so proud of our community and what we achieve here.

Quality of life

Vernham Dean is a place where people get involved and take things on for the good of the community. There really is something for everyone here. Whether you are a young mum with a new baby or an elderly widower left alone in life after decades of marriage, there is friendship and support all around you. Vernham Dean's community is inclusive and welcoming, helpful and supportive, innovative and energetic. With villagers of all ages prepared to work on committees and help with setting up and organising events, there is always a healthy flow of new ideas and fresh enthusiasm so even things that have been running for several years never cease to evolve and improve.

"Vernham Dean is a community, not just somewhere to live." Thelma Cobbold

Facilities and activities

Vernham Dean has exceptional facilities for such a small village and the community certainly makes the most of the amenities available.

- The Millennium Hall is a great facility for the village that is used extensively throughout the year for all sorts of gatherings. The village hall was built with funding from the Lottery, Hampshire County Council, Test Valley Borough Council and a considerable sum raised by the Hall Committee and other local organisations. With everything you need (including a liquor licence) for a great party, reception, dinner or meeting, the Millennium Hall is the scene for many a village get together.



A lively scene on stage in the village hall

Here are just some of the many regular happenings at the hall:

- Parish Council meetings
- School assemblies and concerts
- Balls, dances, wedding receptions and parties for all ages
- Charity events
- Monthly film shows
- Women's Institute
- Theatre group meetings, rehearsal and performances
- Keep fit and Pilates classes
- Tiny Toes Group for mums, babies and toddlers
- Sunday School
- Coffee Club (once a month)
- Village Breakfasts
- December Luncheon

The Coffee Club warrants special mention as it plays a very important part in Vernham Dean, particularly for the older villagers, as it brings everyone together for a chat and a catch-up on a regular basis. All ages are welcome and it is great to see young mums popping in with their babies, much to the joy of some of the older residents whose families are living away.



Locals enjoying the Village Breakfast

The Coffee Club is organised by Mary Perry and Jean Borchesen who inspire a willing team of helpers. They also run the village breakfasts, annual charity walk and lunch and the wonderful December luncheon which is provided free of charge to villagers, who enjoy a home-cooked 3 course meal with wine in a jolly, festive atmosphere. The luncheon, funded by the Coffee Club takings and from voluntary contributions, was enjoyed by over 90 guests last December. Funds raised also go towards the upkeep and enhancement of the village hall and this year the Coffee Club paid for a set of new window blinds for the Hall.



Villagers enjoying the December luncheon in the village hall

- Vernham Dean Gillum's Primary School has an excellent reputation, attracting families with young children to settle here. The school actively contributes to village life. This year the pupils made a host of scarecrows for the Jubilee celebrations and iced the wonderful cake that was the centrepiece of our street party lunch. The Friends of Vernham Dean School, run by parents and staff, organise an annual fete as well as a number of social events throughout the year. This year was the 150th anniversary of the school which was celebrated with a "posh frocks" ball in the village hall and an open event for villagers followed by a concert at which the children performed.
- The Little Fingers Pre-School, which operates from the Gospel Hall in the village, serves not only Vernham Dean but also neighbouring villages and is so popular that it is now open 4.5 days a week and has a waiting list. The team from Little Fingers organises fun events for the younger members of our community including a Halloween Party and an Easter Egg Hunt at the village playing fields each year. The committee also organises an annual litter-pick and road sign washing day, both carried out by the children with a lot of help from their mums and dads, to raise funds for equipment.
- The Burydene, our village recreation field, managed by the local Playing Fields Association (PFA), provides an extensive open space for recreational activities. This is widely used by the school throughout the year for a wide variety of sports and games and for their annual sports day. Many of the village youngsters take part in the regular football training and

junior matches that are run on the field and there's a tennis court for public use. There are regular football fixtures during the season and the village has a netball team, the Vernham Vixens. There is a children's playground with a range of play equipment including a skateboard ramp. Especially popular at the end of the school day for mums to chat and children to let of steam!

The Test Valley tour cycling event is hosted annually by the Playing Fields Association. This draws a large number of riders and supporters from all around the area who are able to enjoy a barbecue provided by the PFA and teas provided by the WI.

The Sports Pavilion is available for private hire and is the venue for many a children's party, taking advantage of the large, safe open space it commands.



School sports day on the Burydene

The Playing Fields Association organises a number of fund-raising events including a fete or village fun day every year as well as a spectacular fireworks display In November which draws people from miles around. This year a village calendar is planned with monies raised going towards the upkeep of the sports field and pavilion.

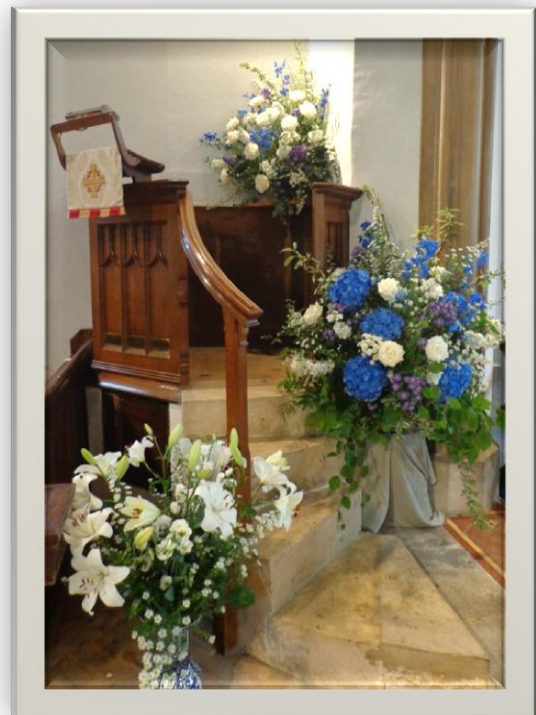
There are now plans to install a "Trim Trail" at the Burydene to help villagers to keep fit. This will be made good use of by the Boot Camp fitness group that can be seen working out at the playing fields every week.

- St. Mary's Church, Vernham Dean. With regular services and a programme of social events throughout the year, our church plays an important role in village life with Rev. David Keighley at the helm. The village choir, children's choir and a number of musically talented villagers are encouraged to take part in services and the village school holds its Christmas, Easter and end of term services in the church, with all the children walking up the hill through the fields together.



St Mary's Church, Vernham Dean

The church was a riot of red, white and blue during the Queen's Jubilee celebrations this year, when it hosted the village flower festival and thanksgiving service as well as a drinks reception which was the start of a wonderful weekend for many villagers.



Just two of the beautiful displays in church for the Queen and Country Flower Festival

The church has forged strong links with The George Inn in Vernham Dean, where there is an annual carol singing evening and harvest auction for charity in conjunction with the church.

A team of talented flower arrangers ensure that the church is always beautifully decorated and the “holy dusters”, a group of volunteers from the village, keep it clean and polished.

- Vernham Dean has a Sewing Group which has been running for many years. Some of the beautiful items that the group has created have been sold to raise funds for local charities.



One of the beautiful quilts made over the years by the Sewing Group

- One of our villagers, Jill Palmer, has written a guide describing walks through Vernham Dean and the houses and farms passed along the way. This is on sale in the pub and proceeds go to village projects. Jill has also written a fascinating book charting the history of the village.
- The Gospel Hall in Vernham Dean also offer services every Sunday and many village children between the ages of 5 and 11 enjoy Friday Club which has been run for over 40 years by David Sullivan, a local farmer, and his wife. Once a year, the Friday Club members are treated to a wonderful tractor ride up to Combe for a picnic. It’s quite a sight to see all the children beaming with excitement seated on straw bales on the trailer under the watchful eye of David and his trusty sheepdog, Bud.



All aboard for the Friday Club outing to Combe

- The Friday Club team also organise an annual family camping weekend at Linkenholt which is thoroughly enjoyed by the children and their parents. This includes a number of activities, such as nature walks and games and often a curry night for the adults.



The Friday Club annual camp in stunning countryside

- Music lessons and a children's choir are run by Sheila Thomas who has been teaching music for over 25 years. The children perform in church, at school concerts, at fetes and at other events in the village, such as the street party held in the village last year to celebrate the Royal Wedding.



Young musicians entertain the village at the Royal Wedding street party

- Many village children learn to horse ride here too, safely riding on the network of tracks that criss-cross the beautiful countryside all around the village.



Youngsters learning to ride on Jack

Celebrating in Style

No major event is allowed to slip past without a celebration in Vernham Dean. The Royal Wedding last year was a perfect example of how strong the community spirit is in our village. As soon as the wedding day was announced, a committee of willing volunteers was formed and what a party they organised!



Flags, street entertainers and good cheer on the Royal Wedding day



Enjoying the Jubilee street party in the village

The road was closed for the day and a long table decked in red, white and blue was set up in the middle of the street from the pub to the village hall. Families brought their picnics, drinks and flags, there were children's entertainers, live music in the pub car park, including a few numbers from an impromptu village band featuring musicians of all ages and dancing in the pub in the evening. A large screen was erected in the village hall so that those who didn't want to watch the wedding at home on their own could enjoy it with friends.



The community coming together outside the George Inn for the street party

A commemorative photograph (shown on the front cover) was taken of all the villagers in front of the pub and a copy was sent to the royal couple as a gift from Vernham Dean, where Kate Middleton's grandparents lived for 35 years. It was a simply wonderful day. This year's Diamond Jubilee celebration followed a similar format and was even better!

Services

Being ten miles from the nearest town, the community of Vernham Dean works hard to ensure that nobody feels isolated or needy. With support from the villagers, a number of services are now provided locally.

- Doctor's Surgery. Dr Ballard sets up a surgery once a week in the village hall. Prescriptions can be ordered and collected from this surgery, a service which is manned by a team of volunteers from the village. This saves the 14 mile round trip to the nearest general practice for non-urgent cases. The doctor generally drops into The George for a pint and a chat with locals on his way home afterwards too.
- Outreach Post Office. This is open 2 mornings a week in the village hall, saving villagers the 8 mile round trip to the nearest village post office.
- Oil syndicate. With no gas supply to the village, most houses have oil-fired heating. With over 80 homes now part of the syndicate, the number of tankers driving into the village has been reduced and the costs kept as low as possible for everyone.
- Mobile Library. Hampshire County Council provides a monthly library service right to the centre of the village.
- Cango Bus Service. There is a bus service to and from Andover on Tuesday and Thursday. This includes regular stops and bookable stops, giving extra flexibility and convenience.
- The Parish Council is in the process of purchasing a defibrillator for the village for use in case of emergency.
- Two old drinking fountains have been restored to their former glory in the village by a retired resident. One is outside the church, the other opposite the pub.



The old drinking fountain opposite the pub in the village centre

Wild Flower Meadow Community Project

The villagers of Vernham Dean have a new project this year – the creation of a wild flower meadow for everyone to enjoy. This is a true village project with working parties organised on Sunday mornings to clear intrusive blackthorn, cut back hedgerows, plant new hedging and remove derelict buildings. The site is almost ready for planting and an Oak tree has been planted to commemorate the Diamond Jubilee.



A working party of villagers at the Wild Flower Meadow

The plans include the planting of wild flower seeds native to this part of England, the construction of a pond and wetland area and ultimately the cutting of a network of paths so that villagers, school children and visitors can enjoy the natural environment without destroying it. Disabled access has already been installed so that everyone can benefit from this project.

Communication

With so much going on, the village needs a good communication network. Vernham Dean has an informative website <http://www.vernhamdean.com/> which is also the place to look for photos of recent events in the village. The website is regularly updated and a good source of information for people inside and outside the village. Vernham Dean also has a Facebook page which helps us reach the younger generation. However, the most powerful means of communication in our village is Focus, our parish magazine. EVERYTHING is in Focus! Forthcoming events, church services, news from the local farm, a monthly letter from the doctor, advertisements for local businesses and much, much more. Focus is compiled and delivered by volunteers and pops through almost every front door in the village at the beginning of each month. It's what we all reach for when we need an answer, unless we pop down to the pub, of course!

In conclusion

Vernham Dean is, quite simply, a wonderful place to live. There is always something going on and whatever you choose to do, you can be assured of a warm welcome, great friendship, fun and support.

“Why would I want to live anywhere else? Vernham Dean is fantastic for all ages.” Martin Price



The unusual sight of sheep grazing on the village pond

The George Inn – putting the heart back into the village

Background

The George Inn is a grade II listed building dating back to the sixteenth century. It has inglenook fireplaces, oak beams and an attractive beer garden. Its very distinctive feature is the eyebrow roof.



It is a family run pub with James doing the cooking; Nicky his wife doing whatever is needed at that moment: cooking, greeting, book-keeping, pulling pints and Chris their son running the bar, being front of house and making everyone welcome. James has a more personal association with the pub and village as he grew up here when his parents were landlords of The George Inn.



Landlord James in the kitchen at the George and son, Chris, manning the barbecue

The current owners came in to run the pub for one month, at the time the pub was failing and close to closure. Four years later we are delighted and thankful that they are still here, having bought the pub, and now have planning permission to build letting rooms (much needed by the village), extend the kitchen and create a function room. The planning applications received 67 letters of support from customers and villagers, and no letters of objection. The planning officer said this was unprecedented and certainly helped the applications get approval, but also proves how well the pub and the village are integrated.

The expansion plans are needed as the pub is now thriving and needs more space. The reasons for the success are the warm and friendly welcome and service that customers are given, the real ale from mainly local breweries, the good wines and the delicious food. All the food uses quality ingredients and dishes are made to order. It is pub food, but excellent pub food that offers real value for money. The pub has deservedly won the Hampshire Hospitality Award two years running.

“The George Inn is the social centre of the village and one of the friendliest environments I have ever been in.”, Mark Bastable

One of the best things about how the pub is run, and why it is so integral to the village, is that it is an inclusive pub where everyone is welcome and there is always someone to talk to: children are welcome; dogs are welcome (and usually given some meat by the chef); people feel relaxed enough to come in on their own, particularly women or single elderly, often widowed, people who come for the warmth, friendliness and company; people have made friends in the pub from all age ranges and backgrounds.



A typically convivial scene in the village pub

The George Inn runs a number of events that are typical for a pub, but nonetheless provide entertainment for the village: monthly quizzes, the popular music nights, the beer and music festival, the New Year's Eve party and Sunday meat raffle to name a few.

But in addition the pub provides so much more for our village – and it has put the heart back into the community, making it a vibrant place to live, a place and a pub we are proud of.

Meeting Place

The pub is vital to the village as a meeting place. It is a great venue with a relaxed atmosphere which encourages other people to join in and help with the organisation of events such as the Family Fun Day.

The pub is used for meetings by many of the village organisations: Playing Fields Committee, Book Club, Theatre Group, Little Fingers, School, Cricket Club, Gentlemen's dinner and the newly formed Vernham Dean Parish Small Business Group.

Helping other businesses and organisations

The pub uses local suppliers where possible, which helps their businesses. It also provides sponsorship and raffle prizes for the local organisations. It acts as a booking office for the village cinema and sales office for the local organisations by selling Little Fingers poetry book and a book of walks put together by a villager.

Even villagers who do not themselves use the pub benefit from The George – several houses have been sold only after the buyers checked out the pub.

The pub is used by local business to host events such as shooting lunches, racing lunches, deer stalking dinners. On one occasion the local free range chicken farm asked James to cook one of the chickens as part of a sales meeting to a London chain of restaurants, who were so impressed they now use Locks Drove Farm chickens.

The pub arranged and hosted a Help the Heroes Auction that raised over £10,000.



Produce for the Harvest Festival Auction held in The George

Linking with the Church

The pub and the Church work closely together to create a community spirit: the Carol Singing is such a popular start to Christmas that it is definitely standing room only; the Harvest Festival Auction raising money for the local hospice and the church meetings held to discuss village issues.



The George is packed to the rafters for the annual carol singing led by the village choir

Involving the village

As part of the Jubilee celebrations the pub created and ran a scarecrow competition with a whole series of workshops for the village teenagers to get them involved and to give them something to do. They created a big installation on the Playing Fields called the Calamity Games, loosely based on the Olympic Games with scarecrows doing pole vaults, show jumping, synchronised swimming, weight lifting, javelin, show jumping etc.



Two of the scarecrows that featured in the Calamity Games tableau for the Jubilee celebrations

The scarecrow competition was a huge success, with around 140 scarecrows showing just how Vernham Dean gets involved. Families worked together to create the scarecrows and went around the village together to view them. It was great fun for everyone.

The pub has also helped set up the Vernham Dean Small Business Club, which holds its meetings in the pub, to help village businesses help each other, either by generating leads, improving marketing, giving technical or supplier advice or simply meeting others to feel less isolated.

The pub has introduced the annual sloe gin competition. This is a hotly contested event with a huge number of entries with secret ingredients, with the winner getting the glory and a certificate.



Entries for the hotly contested annual sloe gin competition

Notice Board

Our pub is brilliant as the local notice board if you need a tradesman, need a job (not necessarily in the pub), lost or found a dog, need volunteers for an event, need to know the date of a funeral – just go in and ask at the pub and the word will get around and your problem solved.

*“We both feel the focal point of a great village is a well-run pub, so we do have a great village!”
Tony Vincent, born in Vernham Dean in 1932, married here in 1954, living with his wife in the same house 58 years on.*

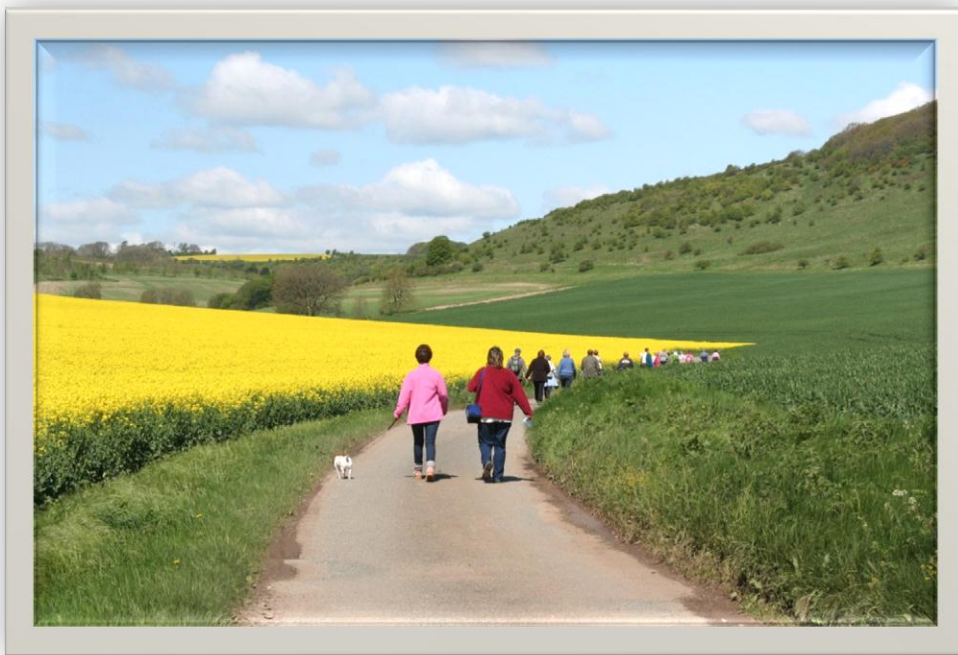
Employment

As we all know the recession has hit employment and although the village has a bus service into Andover, this is only a limited service two days a week. This means that village youngsters can only get jobs outside the village if they have cars or their parents are willing chauffeurs.

It is therefore wonderful that the pub is thriving so that the local people can have employment. Four years ago there was one part-time girl in the kitchen, now the pub employs 12 part-time youngsters from the village or nearby. And this number will grow when the building works are completed. Incidentally the building work will be done by builders who live in the village – because the pub believes in helping local people.

Tourism

Vernham Dean is a beautiful village in an area of outstanding natural beauty. The pub attracts walkers, cyclists and day trippers as they know they can go to a brilliant pub and have excellent food.



Walkers enjoying the beautiful countryside around Vernham Dean

In conclusion

How to describe our pub? The village would definitely be a poorer place without it!

The pub is passionate about the village and the village is proud of its pub.

The Diamond Jubilee and Olympic Games 2012

Celebrating the Queen's Diamond Jubilee

Along with thousands of other communities throughout the country, Vernham Dean marked the Queen's Diamond Jubilee with an extensive programme of events. In the weeks leading up to the celebrations, a special programme was produced, with proceeds from sales and advertising going towards village funds.

The Parish Council contributed an amount of money to the celebrations, from which Jubilee bookmarks were bought and presented to the village children as a memento.

The weekend commenced with the Queen and Country Flower Festival at St Mary's Church. A preview party was held for villagers to admire the beautiful arrangements and enjoy refreshments kindly laid on by the church. Everyone remarked, and rightly so, that the church had never looked so lovely, and the setting was enjoyed once more on the Sunday when the church was packed for a special Jubilee Service. The church was open to the public throughout the weekend to enjoy the Jubilee themed displays.

"It was a great way to begin the Jubilee celebrations, and I was uplifted on my journey by the fantastic scarecrows in the village!" Sir George Young, MP

Based on the success in 2011 of the village's Royal Wedding celebrations and the Golden Jubilee party ten years ago, hundreds of people took advantage of the good weather and the country's upbeat mood on the Monday to enjoy a street party.



The Jubilee street party in full swing

A section of the road was closed in front of the pub and families staked early places at the Union Jack-bedecked tables, laid out their picnics and settled down to chat with neighbours and friends.

Children played happily and safely on the village green, whilst Mums and Dads raised glasses to Her Majesty and soaked up the carnival atmosphere.



Party time for villagers, friends and families at Vernham Dean's Jubilee Celebrations

In the week before the street party, the village children had been invited to participate in a treasure hunt to locate the whereabouts of 15 'Crowns', and the winners' names were announced during the party.

Also announced were the long-awaited results of the scarecrow competition, which had gripped the village for weeks leading up to the event. Individual scarecrows covering many topics appeared including the younger members of the village with their Olympic themed 'Calamity Games' taking place on the recreational field!

Revellers were entertained throughout the afternoon by a young singer-guitarist, and were encouraged to view the Jubilee Cake, on display at the Village Hall. The cake, more than five feet long, depicted Buckingham Palace and The Mall, and had been beautifully decorated by pupils of the village school.

For those without picnics the pub laid on a BBQ, and provided yet more live music in the evening which, thanks to the continuing good weather, was able to be enjoyed outside with the car park packed with dancing villagers.



Buckingham Palace at the end of the huge cake baked by villagers and iced by children at the school



Walking along the ramparts of the Iron Age fort above Vernham Dean to light the beacon.

The day was to draw to a close with the lighting of a beacon, and at 9 pm nearly 100 people gathered at the pub to begin the long walk to the Iron Age fort on the hill high above the village.

On a beautiful evening, with spectacular views from the fort's ramparts, other beacons could clearly be seen and after a rousing rendition of the National Anthem the onlookers returned to the village, many to continue celebrating at the pub.

This was a typical Vernham Dean celebration, with many people contributing their time and expertise to ensure that the Diamond Jubilee will long be remembered.

2012 Olympic Games

2012 is to be a momentous year for the nation, as the Olympic Games are also at the forefront of many people's imaginations, none more so than in Vernham Dean.

The Playing Fields Association is arranging a Family Fun Day which will be held on August 18th on The Burydene, the village's recreation field, and part-funded by a grant from Sports Hampshire. The event is also registered with 'Join In', a national charity set up to capture the enthusiasm generated by the Olympics and encourage sporting events. This will help with the organisation and marketing to make the Fun Day a success.



In true Olympic tradition, a lavish Opening Ceremony is planned with celebrities not being flown in from all over the world!

The emphasis, naturally, will be on sport, but more importantly on families being together and enjoying themselves. As this will be an occasion to be enjoyed by the entire village, from the youngest to the oldest, the events will include egg catching, welly wanging, sack races and a tug-of-war, as well as more genteel sports such as croquet and boules, with certificates being awarded to all 'podium places'.

A dog show will also be held with categories such as 'Prettiest Bitch' and 'Waggiest Tail'. This competition is sure to be keenly fought, as Vernham Dean has almost as many dogs as inhabitants!

Conclusion

We hope this gives you a taste of life in Vernham Dean. We pride ourselves on the quality of life we enjoy and sustain here. It has been the work of generations, but the community's energy and passion is unstinting and with The George at its heart, Vernham Dean is a friendly, vibrant place to be.

As always, plenty more events are being planned for coming months, some new, some familiar, but all designed to bring people together doing things they like to do.

Vernham Dean is a village where people aspire to live, where some people are happy to be all their lives and to which many return after time away. There's no place like it and we love it.



A selection of the 140+ scarecrows that appeared in Vernham Dean for the Jubilee weekend



... our village of the year, every year!