



# Elmsted with Hastingleigh Community News

March 2021 40p



# Elmsted and Hastingleigh Community Contacts

Elmsted Parish Council  
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Hastingleigh Parish Council  
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Evington Hall (Bookings)  
([www.evingtonhall.org.uk](http://www.evingtonhall.org.uk))

Evington Hall Committee Hon Sec

ECP Hon Sec

Evington Gardeners Hon Sec

Evington Community Choir

Footpath Walks

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# March

## in Elmsted with Hastingleigh

**W**hat a mixture of weather the last few weeks have been: deep snow, rain and strong winds! Signs of Spring are springing up around us: daffodils starting to bud, crocuses blooming and, hopefully, the promise of warmer weather to come. There are lovely tributes to both Pat Homer and Geoffrey Scott (p16 and p22); what interesting lives they both lived! They will both be missed. Lots of interesting articles this month; please keep them coming. Finally, a reminder that subs are due, and advertising fees, so please do pay as soon as possible. See p20 to pay by BACS.

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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)

Advertising: [advertising.communitynews@gmail.com](mailto:advertising.communitynews@gmail.com)

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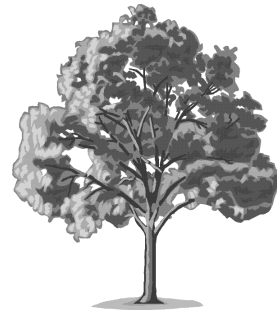
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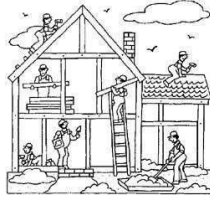
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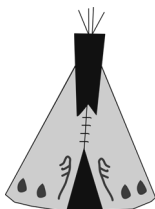
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*References available*

*Also*

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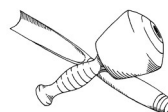
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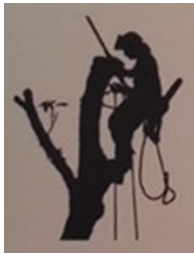
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# Apology

**I**would like to apologise to Kate Harrison and family following an article in last month's magazine. With a photograph replacing the church sketches on the front cover, I said that they were drawn by Arthur Marsh when in fact they were by Andrew Forge (Kate's father). Below is part of Andrew Forge's obituary from the Telegraph.

SB

---

**A**ndrew Forge, who has died aged 78, was an artist, writer, critic and former Dean of Painting at Yale School of Art.

Andrew Murray Forge, the son of a farmer, was born on November 10 1923 at Hastingsleigh, Kent. He attended prep school at the Downs, near Malvern, where W H Auden taught him English.

A more important influence, however, was his art master, Maurice Feild, who was mentor to several young artists; under Feild's tutelage, the 12-year-old Forge was introduced to the Life Room at the Euston Road studios.

He then went on to Leighton Park, near Reading, but had to leave school to run the farm when his father suffered a heart attack.

When his brother subsequently took over the farm after their father's death, Andrew Forge was left free to pursue his life as an artist. In 1947 he enrolled at Camberwell School of Art, and in 1950 became a lecturer at the Slade School of Art. In 1960 he was appointed head of the Fine Arts department at Goldsmith's College, where he remained until 1970.

In 1972, Forge went to America as a visiting professor at Cooper Union School of Art in New York, before moving to Yale University as Dean and Professor of Painting.

He was a prolific author and critic. He produced books on Klee, Vermeer and Rauschenberg, and he collaborated on several others, including Monet at Giverny (1975), Francis Bacon (1985), and Degas (1988).

Forge was a trustee of the Tate Gallery from 1964 to 1971 and from

1972 to 1974. He was a trustee of the National Gallery from 1966 to 1972. He was also, from 1964 to 1971, president of the London Group, founded in 1914 to provide exhibition space for the English avant-garde.

An eloquent and much-liked teacher, Forge was Dean at Yale until 1983 and continued to teach until his retirement in 1994. At the time of his death, on 4th September, he was compiling a collection of his essays.

Forge's first marriage, to Sheila Deane, was dissolved; they had three daughters, of whom two survive. He married secondly, in 1974, Ruth Miller, who survives him.



Andrew Forge at his easel.

Examples of his work will be in next months edition.

# Hastingleigh with Elmsted WI

**I**'ve been going through our meeting record books and thought that readers might be interested in what was happening in our Institute in 1979.

Some things have stayed the same – speakers, raffles, competitions, crafts (the ladies were hoping to take dressmaking classes), and interesting reports were read from members who had attended our East Kent Council Meetings and our national Annual General Meetings. Open meetings were held, and in July 1979 the village was invited to hear about London's Hidden Rivers.

A couple of things jumped out at me from this year. The first was that Mrs. Nancollas had been representing the W.I. on a Radio 2 quiz, and had made it through to the final. The BBC was arranging a coach for our ladies to join the audience. I haven't yet found the name of the quiz or whether she won.

The Institute had a speaker talking to them about 'India Today', and as a result of this they had decided to sponsor a child. The speaker found details of a six year old girl, and it was decided that a special event would be held each year to raise the £20 to provide for Shalma's needs, until she was married or able to provide for herself financially. I wonder what happened to her?

Unfortunately, I have to finish with sad news. We were deeply saddened to hear of the death of two of our members in January. First was our loyal friend Pat Homer, a long standing member, and the second was past President Betty Pearson. I met her at my first meeting when I sat next to her, and she was always up for fun. They will be sorely missed.

Fiona Steward

theWI  
INSPIRING WOMEN



# In The Garden

**I** write this in mid February, at least a fortnight before you will be reading it. After the mild wet winter I commented on in February's article, we are presently in the grip of sub-zero temperatures accompanied by a biting wind from the East and although there is a hint that the next few days will be a bit warmer there is another forecast of more severe weather to come towards the end of February and lasting for a week or more into March.

So how early do you think you might be sowing seeds? As a generality seeds sown under glass – in a greenhouse with heat, say – can be safely sown up to a month before sowing the same crop directly outside. Even so it is only too easy, especially on a fine sunny day, to get itchy fingers and be wanting to get on with the job; after all, sowing seeds into a fine tilth or sweet smelling compost is one of the prime pleasures of gardening.

But, hang on a minute. First of all you need to know when is the best time to sow each vegetable. Some vegetables give of their best from a spring sowing, others do not and they need sowing in summer. The summer solstice, 21st June in the Northern hemisphere, constitutes the dividing line between these groups of vegetables. Those best suited to spring and early summer sowing are broad beans, peas, bulbing onions, calabrese and summer cabbage, spinach, lettuce, potatoes, leeks, carrots, parsnip Brussels sprouts and so forth. After the solstice, endive, chicory, kohlrabi, leaf beet, chard, chervil, coriander and wild rocket, for example are more likely to do well. Although these divisions are not absolute – there are varieties of winter lettuce – it is as well to bear in mind. Rocket sown after the solstice is not prone to flea beetle much due to the timing and, under glass will provide salad greens through the winter.

In the spring temperatures are rising and light intensity increasing and crops sown a little later are very likely to catch up. Seeds sown after the solstice face decreasing light and temperatures and then the timing becomes more and more crucial. A week later then can make all the difference.

Another help in the spring is the use of lightweight fleece as you plant out from a greenhouse or protected cropping. Planting out directly without hardening off is possible and the fleece should be laid immediately on top of the crop with the fleece touching the leaves (not on wire hoops, say), this will retain heat from the soil and from the sun above and is easy to hold down with some bricks or stones.

Otherwise exercise patience and a soil temperature of at least 10°C is a good idea. We will leave aside the old adage that if you are comfortable sitting on the soil with a bare behind then it's warm enough to sow seeds!

I hope you have been able to buy the flower and vegetable seeds you need this year. Supplies seem quite variable with some merchants apparently having good stock. The organic growers specialising in open pollinated seeds have been so over-whelmed with orders that they have only been able to cope by periodically closing their check outs in order to catch up. I have been able to get what I want by shopping around more than one supplier.

We are harvesting now an old variety of carrot - Manchester Table Carrot - that after some year's careful work was saved from extinction. Excellent flavour and a good orange colour right through; shall be growing that again. Also have some flower seed to sow for the Poached Egg Plant (not edible!) to try for the first time.

'How pleased I am that I can experience the simple joy of a person who serves a cabbage at his table which he has grown himself; not only do I enjoy the cabbage but in this instant all the good days as well – the beautiful morning when it was planted, the lovely evenings when it was watered and when I watched its progress with pleasure.'

Goethe

Fred



# Pat Homer 1932 – 2021

**P**at lived in Hastingleigh for 45 years and had become a part of the fixtures and fittings of the village. She kept a sharp eye on what was going on and was always willing to help in any way she could.

Pat was well informed and astute, she always held very firm opinions on current events. Television was a taboo word, in fact most technology seemed to have passed her by. When her ancient phone packed up and her great friend Barbara offered her a spare phone, Pat would have none of it saying “I don’t want to receive all your calls thank you very much”. The exception was Radio 4, from waking up in the morning to going to bed at night often on two or three radios, all in different rooms, coming through at slightly different times, it was very confusing for visitors but not for her. She read the Times every day and The Observer on Sundays, she had strong views on most things.

Pat and Ken moved to Hastingleigh in 1975 and immediately felt comfortable here. They noticed how many different birds visited their garden. They took up bird-watching! They decided to see the world through binoculars! They visited North America, Europe, Asia, the Caribbean, the Middle East, the Far East and most of the countries in Africa. They would come home with hundreds and hundreds of slides which they would inflict on poor unsuspecting visitors.

Ken got sick in 2002 and Pat nursed him lovingly through a long illness. After Ken died Pat then devoted herself to tending to their beloved Boundary Cottage and to helping with everything to do with Hastingleigh although if you ever said she lived in Hastingleigh she would stamp her foot and say “ELMSTED, that’s why it is called Boundary Cottage”. She loved the village hall and spent many happy evenings there but her great treat of the week was the trip to the Bowl. Half a sandwich and half a bitter. A bit of banter with the usual suspects stood at the bar then chatting to neighbours at nearby tables and up until the year before last a healthy verbal sparing with

Ron who could swear at her as loudly and crudely as he liked because she absolutely adored him, luckily Annie didn't seem to mind.

This last year has been very difficult for Pat with few visitors from outside the village and only distant conversations with neighbours at the front door but she kept going with help from her close neighbours who would shop and generally keep a watchful eye on her. She would still love to see children walk past and give and receive a cheery wave.

She will be sadly missed by those who loved her but her final resting place will be with Ken in this beautiful churchyard in her beloved Hastingleigh Village.

Jayne & Jon Homer



## Virtual Coffee Mornings

**I**f you would like to join the Virtual Coffee Mornings but are not familiar with using Zoom then please email Robin Helmer on [robin.helmer@btinternet.com](mailto:robin.helmer@btinternet.com).

The dates are the **2nd & 4th Wednesday** of each month, commencing at **10.30 am**.

The login details are:

Meeting ID: **872 286 0605**

Passcode: **BR8JzH**



# Memories of Jean Ratcliffe (96) of WWII, who lived in Folkestone and came to Elmsted

**I** was 14 when school was evacuated to Merthyr Tydfil. Our train was shunted into a siding at Reading and opposite was a train full of soldiers who had just been rescued from the beaches of Dunkirk. Tables of food were on the platform for them, and one or two came across and gave us French coins (imagine the girls giggling).

I left the school in Wales when I was due to leave school and returned to Folkestone. An aunt showed me an ad in a newspaper asking for women land workers. This was for the Women's Farm and Garden Association, which had formed in the First World War.

My first appointment was for a small holding at Elmsted, owned by a single lady, Miss Shedda. My father came with me to the interview – we cycled up from Folkestone to Parsonage Farm. Terms were agreed and I found lodgings in a house a field away, named Elchin Lodge, perched on a steep hillside with a well inside the kitchen.

My next surprise was seeing inside the large barn opposite the house. In the centre was a little old fashioned topless car, then to the left a grand piano on a stage with standard lamps. On the right was a cluster of piglets and a large duck sitting on a nest of eggs!

The market garden was not as I imagined and I found the work of wheeling large wheelbarrows very hard (Jean is a slight 5'). So, I found work in an office on the 'Leas'. I met my future husband at a party. He was in "540 Coast Regiment".

Jean writes "Dover defences ended the war in a blaze of glory with RADAR on the last night of the German evacuation of Boulogne. They sank 11 ships out of 18 at a range of 20 miles, without seeing any of them."

Verse of a poem Jean wrote,

*“When one door closes, another always opens”  
A dear friend of mine was fond of saying.  
It was her philosophy of life and living  
To always look for a new beginning.*

Jean has moved from her home in Wye to Brambles. Let us try to live with her philosophy.



## The Daffodil

**T**he daffodil, along with the less romantic leek, is the national symbol of Wales. The pair are worn by loyal Welshmen on St David's Day, 1st March. A charming Welsh tradition concerns the first bloom of the season - whoever is lucky enough to find it, so legend has it, be blessed with more gold than silver. In other parts of Britain the first daffodil is thought to bring luck, but misfortune awaits those who would pluck a single bloom and bring it into the house.

On a more sombre note, the daffodil is credited with being the flower that carpeted the Elysian Fields - the legendary Field of the Dead - which may explain why the daffodil is so often seen decorating graves.

The daffodil is a trumpet narcissus and modern methods of cultivation have ensured that the blooms can be enjoyed from Christmas to the end of May. They bring a splash of welcome colour when planted between shrubs and in borders.

# Subscription Reminder

**H**opefully you were given an envelope with your Community News last month. The annual subscription has once again stayed at £4 for the year.

Can I please ask you to put your subscription money into the envelope, write your name on the front and return it to your distributor as soon as possible.

If you would prefer to pay by BACS you will still need to return your envelope to your distributor but write on it 'Paid by BACS' and include your name.

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AC: 74345451

Please put your surname & address as a reference.

Thank you to all of those who have already paid.

Treasurer - Community News



# Front Cover Pictures

Calling all photographers and artists.



**W**e would love to receive photographs, paintings and sketches of our villages. Capture the wonderful scenery, wildlife and work in our community and email it to the magazine address

**elmstedwithhastingleighcommunitynews@yahoo.co.uk**

Please include where the picture was taken/drawn and your name if you would like to be credited.

Pictures would look better if presented in portrait and be relevant to the month in which it's going to be published.

The **March** cover photograph was taken by Amelia Honey at 'Daffodil Corner' on the way into Hastingleigh by Vigo Farm.



# Hastingleigh Wombles

**T**he weather was against wombling too much in the last month but we did creep out and get some done.

We covered another mile of our lanes and collected 4 black sacks of litter including 59 cans, 26 plastic bottles, 9 glass bottles, 17 takeaway items and 12 tobacco/cigarette packets.

For those of you concerned about our wellbeing, like all good wombles we wear gloves, use a litter picker and have a hoop at the top of the black sacks to avoid any contamination. We have noticed a few other people have been out wombling too so the figures of items collected is higher.

## **Running Totals - 1.5miles covered**

Cans 91

Plastic bottles 56

Glass bottles 18

Takeaways 37

Tobacco/cigarette packs 20



Hopefully the weather will improve and we can cover some more ground in the next month.

Madame Cholet & Uncle Bulgaria

# Archived Copies Now On Website

**A** huge thank you to Mark Bowles for compressing all the PDF files of the magazine already scanned.

The website is now live and can be accessed using the address

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

There are still plenty of old magazines to scan and so new files will be added to the website as they are completed.

# Geoffrey Ronald Scott

1st February 1931 - 24th January 2021

**G**eoff was a part of Hastingleigh life for over 60 years, many people in the village may not even have known him or met him, but everyone will have seen his magnificent flower displays as they drove past 16 Becketts Close, but here are some of the bits you may not know about him.

Geoff worked on a farm milking cows before he went to school in the morning, bottling up in the pub, and then milking again in the evening. He left school at 13 to work on the farm, all to contribute to the household income and put food on the table. He continued with farm work and worked for Lord Brabourne until he joined the RAF on December 12th, 1951.

He married Amy on 2nd June 1954, aged 23 and was stationed at various barracks both in England and Germany. The travelling was tough on Amy so they got the house in Hastingleigh in 1960, which was to be their home for the rest of their respective lives. He left the RAF on the 21st June 1963 when Amy needed him to help her. After leaving the RAF he worked for Wonderloaf – a job both of his sons, Ron and Tim loved him having because he always brought cakes and pastries home at the end of the day. That was short lived and, with a couple of friends, he set up a company called Window Wise, which then became Window Wise and Chimney Wise. They also had a brief spell growing mushrooms. Geoff decided he liked the chimney sweeping side and he branched out on his own as a sweep, which he did until he retired.

When he was 38 he had 2 heart attacks and the doctors said he would never go back to chimney sweeping, but just a year later he was back at work. He retired from chimney sweeping in his late 60's. After his spell in hospital he also started doing his own printing of business cards, having bought a small printing machine. It soon started to become a small business which extended to printing business cards, wedding invitations, Christmas cards, cricket fixture

lists, WI programmes and events for the year, and many other things. This was something that he carried on doing into his early 70s.

During these years, the family started going to speedway, originally at Canterbury and then onto other teams such as Eastbourne, Crayford, Rayleigh. Some weeks they went nearly every night. At this point he also got involved in starting up a cycle speedway team, including building the track. It was a way of getting the youngsters from Wye/Hastingleigh and Ashford interested in racing and keeping them out of trouble. It was great fun. Tim was the youngster of the team. Ron raced at Earls Court. Again we travelled miles for race meetings.

Another great interest was Country Music. Geoff and Amy used to go to live music events regularly, seeing many of their favourite stars and were members of several country music clubs locally. This inspired Geoff to put on country music dances in both Hastingleigh and Wye, which were incredibly well attended and profits went to local charities such as Demelza House.

When Amy started to become less mobile and unable to get out much, all she could do was look out the window at the birds. So at this time Geoff took up growing the most amazing flowers for Amy to look at. There were hanging baskets and tubs and the garden became a colourful picture. So much so that people would stop their cars and come into his garden to take pictures of them. It became a big part of the village. After Amy died, Geoff thought that there wasn't any point in continuing with the flowers, but everyone admired them so much he carried on. It has to be said his garden was an inspiration right up to the end.

His other love was sea fishing and he tried to go as often as he could, originally fishing off the beach and later on, when walking with his gear became difficult, off the pier in Dover, right up until the pier became developed and fishing prohibited. He said that is was the thing he missed more than anything else.

Geoff's family have received many condolence cards from people in the village just reminding us of the many things he did for people over the years. Sweeping their chimneys, printing their programmes, their invitations, and for many years the parish magazines, his

marvellous flower displays every summer and the gifts from his vegetable garden, he always grew so much more than he would ever need.

Despite all of his many health problems over the years, which included 2 heart attacks, three different bouts of Cancer, a dodgy heart and failed kidneys, he has been a force of nature and fought back against all of his illnesses so many times. He lived a full life helping and supporting people throughout.

If you would like to add your thoughts and memories of Geoff, please go to the site below. Any donations to Macmillan would be grateful.

Tim Scott



<https://geoffreyscott.muchloved.com>



## ‘So They Do Say’

*‘I always think you can tell a gentleman by the way he honks his horn’ (Hyacinth Bucket).*

*‘I spent a year in Prestatyn one Sunday’ (Chris Locke)*

*‘Ever wondered about those people who spend £2.00 on a bottle of Evian water? Try spelling it backwards’ (Jon Stewart)*

*‘My grandmother used to take my mother to the circus to see the fat lady and the tattooed man. Now they are everywhere.’ Joan Collins.*

*“The best time to take cuttings is when no one is looking.” (Bob Flowerdew)*

TW

### This month's church flowers and cleaning volunteers:

	St Mary's	St James
Feb 27 <sup>th</sup> Mar 6 <sup>th</sup>	Dr & Mrs Lawson Mrs Day	Mrs London, Ms FlitneyMrs Francesconi
Mar 13 <sup>th</sup> Mar 20 <sup>st</sup>	Mrs Bacon, Mrs Geering Mrs Sharp, Mrs Hill	Mrs Green Mrs Calcutt
Mar 27 <sup>th</sup> Apr 3 <sup>th</sup> Easter 4th	Mrs Bowes Mrs Helmer	Mrs Jeffrey



*St Mary the Virgin  
Hastingleigh*



*St James the  
Great  
Elmsted*

Priest-in-charge: The Rev Ravi Holy: The Vicarage, Wye 01233 812450  
ravi.holy@wyebenefice.org.uk Associate priest: The Rev Lorraine Lawrence  
(with special responsibility for Hastingleigh, Elmsted, Petham, Waltham):  
The Vicarage, Hastingleigh, 01233 750987 or 07894 034409  
mailto:revlorrainelawrence@icloud.com. Churchwardens: Roz Bacon  
01233 750327, Chris Cox 01227 700378. United Wye Benefice 01233  
813793 [www.wyebenefice.org.uk](http://www.wyebenefice.org.uk)



## Library Van

The mobile library van is now  
due to come on **Tuesday**  
**16th March** 9.45 to 10.15 at  
Hall. Books have to be  
pre-ordered and returned in a  
plastic bag.

# History Enthusiast

## **More items of interest from Elmsted Parish Council meetings 1946-1960**

**F**rom 1946 to date the meetings sprang into life and more and more items were discussed particularly to do with the aftermath of the war. This activity was no doubt due to senior army officers being demobbed after war service who were elected to the parish council.

### **Matters of interest discussed up to 1960**

V Day not to be celebrated on 9 June 1946

Housing shortage

Electricity supply might be available within two years

Site for War Memorial Hall

Seaside outing for children

Telephone wires damaged by trees

Population now over 250

Extensions of the water supply from Whatsole Street to Lymbridge Green

Bodsham cesspool drains noisome

Possible school bus service

Postbox erected at bottom of Dean Hill

Maj Hopkinsons offered to have Elmsted Parish Council sign-written on noticeboards

There was a gate across the road to Kingsmill by the telephone exchange

Mobile films

Meetings held at the Vicarage and the Malt House

Chief Billeting Officer advised that this area not suitable for reception of evacuees

But Mrs Forge was elected local Billeting Officer and canvassing for billeting places commenced

Later Mrs Massie and Col Atkinson took over

Delay in getting water to Maxted street caused by Mr Hamlett refusing access over his land

Public meeting about Festival of Britain

Coronation discussed

Village warden still in place

Collett Close agreed as name for new houses at Bodsham  
There were caravans at Little Gain but 12 additional ones were refused.  
Billet canvassing in 1955 was still taking place  
Land and 40/50 properties opposite Thorn Lane at Stone Street transferred to Stelling Minnis.  
Road department thanked for keeping roads clear during three weeks of snow.  
Established that no [Elmsted] parishioners were killed during WWII.  
Way-leave given in 1958 for electricity pole over land near school.  
Snow fences located from Elchin Hill to school so that childrens' taxi could get through  
Mr Francesconi asked in 1960 if he would maintain a well for assessing the quality and level of water.  
Overflowing of Bodsham cesspool to be overcome by more frequent clearances.  
Much discussion from 1946 to 1960 about noticeboards. Who would make them, fix them, their location, maintenance. First locations were changed and some fell down.

### **Changes to Parish Council members up to 1960**

Chairmen following T Nickolls: D Milton, Col G Youard, Mrs Forge, Col Massie, [Maj] W Enderby

Clerks following S Hopkins: Miss Cooke of Little Gain, Miss Hamlett, Mrs Price, Mr Tarriss, G. Secrett, H Nancollas

Counsellors: Of the counsellors in 1931 viz. D Argar, C. Bramley, A Ashley and W Twynham, only D Argar remained as a counsellor in 1960. Meanwhile the comings and goings of other counsellors elected were, Rev A Stevens, Mrs Bramley (as well as C Bramley an existing counsellor), Rev R Hill, Col G Youard, Mrs Tarriss, Col Shepherd, Mr Milton, Mrs Milton, Mr Wood, Mr Marsh, Col Massie, [Maj] W Enderby, Mrs Forge, Rev A Prior, G Secrett, D Campbell, Rev G Finch.

The council in 1960 comprised, Chairman, [Maj] W Enderby; Clerk H Nancollas; Counsellors, D Campbell, D Argar, Mrs Forge, Rev A Prior and G Secrett.

History Enthusiast



## Wye PPG - Communication is key

**I**n the last year we have experienced two extreme culture shocks. The first has been the shock and anxiety of the pandemic and the way that it has touched and changed all our lives. The second is the resulting very rapid escalation in the use of online rather than face to face communication. This time last year, very few people had heard of Zoom or Teams or any of the other on line systems that have now become our principal means of communication, not only with friends and family, but also with GP and other health-related services.

This has not been an easy transition to make. We have all been on a steep learning curve as both patients and medical staff have been precipitated into an arms length method of functioning which doesn't come naturally to anybody and which can sometimes be frustrating. The system is efficient and effective in that it frees up clinical time, fast tracks urgent and high risk cases and alerts Drs to the health issues concerned. It has allowed the surgery staff to keep going at a time of unprecedented clinical need and to concentrate on the challenging logistics involved in vaccinating the whole population. However, at a time when we have all become painfully aware of our vulnerability and dependence on the NHS, we have necessarily had to accustom ourselves to a much more distanced model of service delivery and to navigating and receiving largely virtual, rather than face to face services.

In the past year the PPG has held its meetings online, received welcome updates from the surgery manager and Dr Fox and concentrated on acting as a conduit of communication between the community and the surgery at a time of maximum anxiety and stress for both. In the coming year a key task for the PPG will be to explore additional ways of facilitating communication. Online consultation can feel one dimensional and transactional and not everybody uses Facebook or Twitter. It is important that people feel connected and do not feel isolated and increasingly distanced from access to primary care services.

This year life has been stripped back to its essentials. Hopefully

next year will be about reinstating direct contacts and reassessing what is most valuable to us and as the pandemic has taught us, communication is key.

Judith Timms

Chair, Wye Surgery PPG.

# Farming Notebook

**I**t is certainly not the feast of Stephen which is 26th December. However, Good King Wenceslas would have felt very much at home over the last week or so with the snow lying about all deep and crisp and even. The “Beast from the East II” certainly brought in some cold weather and plenty of the white stuff. The sun shone and the skies were blue. It made such a change from rain, grey skies and lack of sunshine.

When we straw down the cattle barns we let cows and calves out into the yard. The calves have never seen snow and went tearing around chasing each other, very excited to play. The cows ate silage.... (There seem to be a lot of similarities with humans!!)

With the snow and the freezing temperatures came the problem of frozen pipes and water troughs. Initially things were fine and the water kept flowing. But as soon as the wind got up the chill factor was sufficient to cause pipes to ice up. We kept the animals watered with a hosepipe which we kept inside under a heat lamp when not in use. As it looked as though the thaw was about to start then we ran backwards and forwards with kettles of hot water to get the pipes flowing again. Only one fitting had split and needed replacing.

The Oilseed Rape has grown very well this year. Well established in the autumn and good growth since has given complete ground cover. This has helped keep the pigeons at bay. With the snow the pigeons arrived with a vengeance. Hundreds of birds settled on the snow and ate any leaves that were visible. It has been a very time consuming job keeping the blighters off. Every morning I venture out with rope bangers and hang them strategically in the hedgerows. I supplement these with a few bangs from the twelve bore a couple of times a day. It would be such a shame to lose the crop now, when in a few weeks it will be growing like stink and needing its first dose of fertiliser.

Much time has been spent in the office (It is nice and warm and dry in there!) with various on line courses which keep us up to date and ensure that we have met our training requirements. Also we, or should I say, Elizabeth has been transferring all the records required for our various farm assurance schemes on line. Covid has meant that inspections are now virtual, with the inspectors checking all the records remotely, and assessing the grain stores etc with a video recording on our smart phones. Although it involves a lot of work, once complete, it will be much easier to keep up to date which things like waste disposal certificates and grain store records. In the long run it will save time... It will eliminate the real annoyance of not knowing which order the inspector needs to see records. Now the portal is very structured and it is easy to attach the correct document to the correct section. No more scurrying about looking for a specific document buried in a pile of paperwork.

Potato grading continues, although nothing moves with temperatures at or below freezing. The tubers are a living thing and exposure to frost will kill them. The cold store is kept at 3°C , and lately the grading shed, although insulated, is not much warmer. We dare not load a lorry until the milder weather returns. As we have seen with our water pipes, it is not just the temperature which is important but the wind chill too.

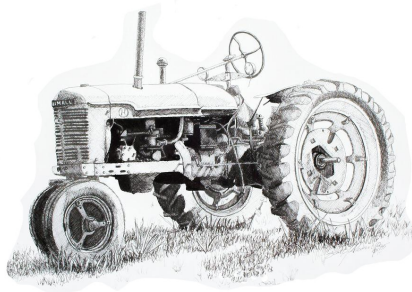
It is hard to believe, but very soon we will be out on the land and have plenty to do. Spraying, fertiliser spreading and drilling will all be jobs needing to be done. To that end we are busy cleaning and servicing the tractors and implements so that we are ready to go...

On the cattle front; we are preparing for the main herd to start calving. We have guide dates from the earlier PD that was done by the vet before Christmas. But they are only a guide and we are keeping a close eye on all the girls to spot the first signs. Also, we are getting prepared to AI (Artificially inseminate) the cows which calved a Christmas time. AI allows us to select a top-grade bull which will help to improve the herd. In this case we have chosen a prize-winning Simmental to put onto the Sussex cows. This makes a really good cross for a suckler cow. Not too big, with good milk supply, and excellent conformation. The added bonus is that we

know exactly when they will calve. Tschuggen and Harald will be there later in the summer to cover anything that has not got in-calf.

In looking up the carol for Good King Wenceslas it was interesting that the tune was originally from another carol. Tempus adest floridum. The words for which are quite apt:

*Spring has now unwrapped the flowers,  
Day is fast reviving,  
Life in all her growing powers,  
Towards the light is stiving.  
Gone the iron touch of cold,  
Winter time and frost time.  
Seedlings working through the mould,  
Now make up for lost time.*



## Gardening Folklore

**W**hen lifting and splitting clumps of snowdrops before replanting, it is important to reassure them that you are doing it for their own good, otherwise they will not thrive.

Sweet peas sown on St Patrick's Day are said to produce larger more fragrant blooms.

The pious prune their roses on St Patrick's day, the worldly on Grand National Day.

A windy March foretells a fine May.



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