

Elmsted with Hastingleigh Community News

*St James the Great
Elmsted*



*St Mary the Virgin
Hastingleigh*

April 2018

40p



Elmsted and Hastingleigh Community Contacts

Elmsted Parish Council

Tracey Block 01233 750415

Hastingleigh Parish Council

Tracey Block 01233 750415

Evington Hall (Bookings)

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bookings@evingtonhall.org.uk

Evington Hall Committee Hon Sec

Mrs N Phipps 01233 750221

ECP Hon Sec

Mrs S Boxall 01233 750206

Evington Gardeners Hon Sec

Mrs H Ransley 01233 720152

Evington Community Choir

Mrs C Jeffery 01233 750585

Art Group

Mrs V Kerry 01227 700843

Footpath Walks

Mr D Harris 01233 813711

Women's Institute

Mrs J Bowes 01233 811875

Parent and Toddler Group

Mrs N Phipps 01233 750221

Neighbourhood Watch Hastingleigh

Mr G Block 01233 750415

Neighbourhood Watch Elmsted

Mr J Argar 01233 750311



April

in Elmsted with Hastingleigh

Despite the snow, signs of Spring are slowly emerging, lambs can be seen in the fields, birds are singing again and the daffodils are coming into bloom. There are a number of events to look forward to in the coming months. The annual Spring Fair is on its way and prizes for the tombola are being requested, page 18. The WI are planning a 3-course supper for all villagers to be held in Evington Hall, page 3. There will be an art competition for all ages at the Elmsted Lunches and Teas, page 22. I was amazed to read that an average of 350 cars pass through the Poplar Avenue per day, and interested in the replacement of the poplars with hornbeams, page 27. Here's hoping that better weather is on its way and as always, any comments, letters or submissions are most welcome.

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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

Advertising: shepandali@hotmail.com

Secretary: secretary.communitynews@gmail.com

Or write to: The Secretary, 1 Bowl Field, Hastingleigh, TN25 5HT.

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small projects - large projects - emergencies

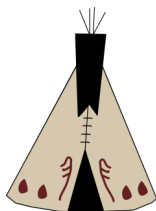
Most aspects of Household and Garden Maintenance

References available

Also

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Hastingleigh with Elmsted Women's Institute

Hastingleigh with Elmsted W.I. had to cancel their meeting on Thursday the 1st of March 2018 at the Evington Hall, due to the inclement weather.

Our next meeting will be on Thursday the 5th April at 7.30 p.m., in the Evington Hall, where we will be having a talk on Irving Berlin. Any new members will be made most welcome. MW

Come and join us for a three-course supper

There will be a raffle to raise money for the charity

Look Good Feel Better

(facing cancer with confidence)

Friday, 18th May 2018



7.00 for 7.30 pm



In the Evington Hall

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(Coffee and Tea will be provided - Please bring your own alcohol)

Please let us know if you can come

by Friday, 11th May

by contacting:

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Mrs Jean Bowes	01233 811875
Mrs Yvonne Helmer	01233 750236

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Ramblings from the village walkers

After an unpromising forecast and start with heavy showers, by 2pm the day had turned into a beautiful sunny spring afternoon with blue sky and a light easterly breeze. We set off from Staple Lees Farm to Cold Blow. A single primrose spared by the snowplough was blooming in the muddy pot-holed lane. At the farm there were cattle chewing the cud in the barn then as we struck off west along the North Downs Way the two llamas added an exotic touch. Lovely springy turf under foot and bird song in the air - all was well.

At the Devil's Kneading Trough we spoke to a family from Sittingbourne on their first visit who with their two little girls and small dog had just climbed up through the valley and made the steep ascent. Such was their enthusiasm they were raring to come again. We kept to the Way and entered the small copse by a gate, hazel trees

laden with catkins, a grey squirrel scuttling to safety. We crossed over the road to Wye and the drive to Coombe Manor to continue along to the Crown and the Orientation stone. We met a photographer gingerly negotiating the mud whilst clutching his camera at the ready. A slight mist hung over the lowlands but he liked the mystical effect. A muddy descent to the road up to Downs Farm, another conversation (a young Polish couple with fluent English) then down the byway, the dog leg back to descend to Pett Farm and Hassell Street. The bridleway through Hurst Wood carpeted with dog's mercury and with a magnificent patch of hartstongue fern takes us to Coombe Manor pasture. Whilst in the wood we hear a great clap of thunder and looking back north we see a great black cloud which briefly hastens our pace. From there to Zig Zag past two friendly sheep although one was wary of having a bramble removed from its fleece, by the ponies and back to Staple Lees Farm.

Just over 5 miles in about 3 hours. An excellent afternoon. Leader Barbara George

Next walk led by Helen from Bonnington. Meet at Evington Hall at 2pm for 2.15pm at Helen's.
H.P.



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Gardeners' Society

Nature in the garden

At the February meeting, Stan introduced Ken Stroud, a self-confessed artist and naturalist, who in the 1970s produced a leaflet on wildlife gardening, only to be told he was 10 years too early.

Ken showed us a series of photographs taken, all bar one, in his garden, mostly of birds and insects, interspersed with interesting facts, tips and anecdotes. He started with the decline in numbers of birds and insects over the last few years due to the loss of habitat, changing farming techniques and pollution. If all the gardens in Britain were put together they would amount to an area the size of Kent, putting the important role of gardeners into perspective. In providing the basic needs of food, shelter and water to attract wildlife, whilst avoiding the use of chemicals,

the diminishing numbers of birds and bees could, in time, be reversed. By planting semi wild species of plant, including nettles, together with nectar-rich species, e.g. buddleia, sedum and valerian, butterflies, bees and moths will be encouraged into the garden.

As the presentation progressed, we were given a balanced view on the “give and take” aspects of gardening with wildlife; such as the usefulness of wasps. By filming a wasp nest, Ken has established that, in one day, wasps move 2kg of soil and that they actually cut the grass near the entrance to the nest. The less desirable aspects of magpies and herons were mentioned, although rabbits and squirrels did not feature! An interesting and informative evening providing a fascinating insight into the lives of the creatures who share our gardens.

Helen Ransley



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Parish upon the Hills

Well, according to the calendar and the media, it's officially spring! However, as I write this, there is snow forecast again for the weekend with minus temperatures to boot! Those poor little lambs must be really chilly. Hopefully by the time you read this, spring will have sprung and you will all have had a good Easter, with lots of opportunity for seeing family and friends, and consuming just a 'little' chocolate. I am definitely someone who prefers summer to winter, although I did enjoy the snow, and so spring brings with it the promise of long sunny days, time in the garden and thoughts of holidays and fun.

This week, in my role as priest and School governor, I visited Bodsham in a formal capacity to carry out an inspection with a governing colleague. Going into the school is one of the real delights of my job, as children have such incredible insight into life, faith, the world we live in and fairness. For a change I watched an assembly instead of taking it. The children were asked to consider fairness? Or rather, unfairness! They have very clear ideas about injustice which many

of us could do with considering.

I think the person leading the assembly was expecting examples such as; "my mum favours my sibling over me" or, "my friend gets better marks than me, even though my work is just as good." You know the sort of thing! Well to all our surprise, what came out were statements about how unfair it is that some people are so rich they don't know what to do with all their money, while others are so poor that they don't have enough food, or even a home to live in. Innocent people who are stuck in war zones when it's not even their war. Children in families when we throw food in the bin. Their reactions to these kind of injustices were strong, and well placed. Their solutions, to teach people how to respect each other, how to share and most importantly, how and why we should care.

If it's so obvious to them, why are the rest of us so reluctant to see it.

How can we all accept so passively that in 21st century Britain, it has become acceptable to have food banks and people living in squalor, or worse, on the street?

When did we become so immune to the suffering of others that we became able to walk past the homeless without offering to buy them a coffee and a sandwich? When did we decide that if we bought something to put in the yellow food bank bin, we have "done our bit?"

Shouldn't we be asking why the

Parish upon the hills cont.

welfare state no longer works, or better still, offering to help a local charity or good cause?

Don't get me wrong, I'm not getting on a soap box, or bashing the rich, I'm just questioning at what point, between childhood and adulthood, we

stop saying, "that's not fair"? Surely a sense of injustice is part of being a complete adult and not just for church goers? Meanwhile, for all of us lucky enough to be looking out at the new spring lambs and greening countryside, looking forward to better days, and summer treats, maybe we could consider what little thing we could personally do, to make life fairer for at least one person or cause this year.

Lorraine

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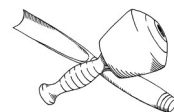
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Evington Community Project AGM

Chairman's Report for 2017
The ECP has now completed twelve years of service to the communities of Elmsted and Hastingleigh.

We held another successful Spring Fair on the 1st May 2017 which boosted our funds by just under £1,200. The turnout was again very good, in spite of the poor weather on the day.

Our 100 Club Raffle, which is now in its 3rd year, continues to be very popular and we would like to thank all of you who support this venture. In 2017, the 100 Club gave away £600 in prize money and made £500 profit for ECP, enabling us to continue to achieve our aims of arranging sporting and leisure events that are either free or subsidised and by offering financial or in-kind support to village organisations.

During 2017, our Film Shows were enjoyed by over 170 people. In October we ran a Pottery

Painting Workshop in the Evington Hall in association with Kippys and in December we arranged a village coach trip to London. We continue to assist financially with the maintenance of the Playing Field. Our annual Seasonal Thanks morning was held in December and combined with £100 worth of bonus draws of our 100 Club.

I should like to take this opportunity, once again, to thank the Evington Community Project committee. I should also like to thank, on behalf of ECP, The Powell Family for allowing the use of their field; Sarah Pell for checking our accounts; Elmsted and Hastingleigh Parish Councils and all of you who have generously supported and assisted with our events throughout the year.

Robin Helmer

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Dr Fox

Time for men to check

Steven Fry hit the headlines this week with a moving and informative podcast about his recent experiences (<http://www.stephenfry.com/2018/02/mischievous/>) .

Stephen was recently diagnosed with a Gleason score 8 prostate cancer, subsequently upgraded to Gleason score 9 after his prostate was removed. Gleason scoring adds together two scores, the commonest grading in the tissue and the most aggressive grading in the tissue. The grading goes from 1-5 and so grades can be 2-10 in total.

Gleason scoring ranges from 2 to 10 for prostate cancer, 2 is a mild form which may never progress to aggressive metastatic cancer, 10 is very likely to metastasise and kill the patient if left untreated. I am very fond of Stephen Fry and hope his cancer is cured and that he has many happy and productive years ahead of him.

It has again raised the profile of prostate cancer screening, something we include in our Well Man Check, where we combine it with a prostate gland examination.

The question is '*Does screening reduce mortality*'?

The evidence is confusing. We can look at individual cases such as Stephen Fry, who would undoubtedly develop metastatic cancer within a fairly short time. Surely without screening, his case would have been hopeless? We do not of course yet know if he will develop a recurrence of his cancer further down the line.

On the face of it, large studies suggest that more cancers are detected by screening. But 27 additional cases of cancer would need to be treated to prevent one death. These results, from a large European study, suggest a lot of screening needs to be performed in order to save one life. If you happen to be that one person, you may feel it was all worthwhile.

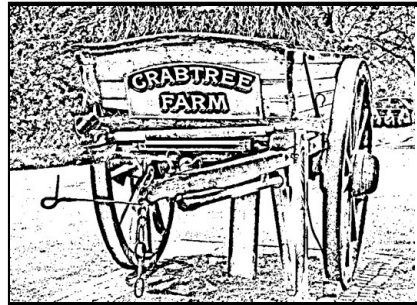
However, is more focused screening likely to improve these figures? We do not yet know.

There are two types of PSA in the blood. Free PSA is associated with benign enlargement of the prostate (normal in men as they

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Dr Fox

Cont.

age). Bound PSA is associated with malignancy. A low ratio of free to bound < 25% may be indicative of cancer. The ratio of free/bound PSA is not currently provided by most NHS laboratories but is available privately.

A fascinating study, The Malmo Preventative project, took 21000 men and stored their blood between the ages of 27 and 52. They found that a higher PSA concentration in this group correlated with the risk of prostate cancer metastases up to 30 years later! At age 45-49 they found that a PSA in the highest 10% of the cohort (>1.61ug/L) contributed almost 50% of the deaths from prostate cancer over the next 25-30 years. So, we can now identify a high risk group who should be regularly screened.

On the other hand a single PSA test result <1ug/l, when performed in men in their 60s, confers a life time risk of prostate cancer death of only 0.2%. So we can strongly reassure this group that their risk of death from pros-

tate cancer is extremely small.

So, what would I do? Well, I did. I had a PSA at age 50 and had my prostate removed at age 54 with a Gleason grade 7 tumour. Five years on, with an undetectable PSA, I feel it was a very good decision. I hope Stephen is as lucky.

I believe a test at 45-49 will identify the high-risk group that should be screened regularly, my test would have firmly placed me in this group and I would have been more vigilant than I was. Conversely, if you are in your 60s, a single test with PSA <1 ug/l will reassure you that your risk of dying from prostate cancer is exceptionally low.

Dr Allan Fox
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‘So they do say...!’

What was the interior of the church like in the past? It seems that bringing animals in would not have been uncommon, so much so that steps had to be taken to prevent them from accessing the more sensitive areas. Communion rails came into use for a very practical purpose, not just of supporting elbows, but of keeping dogs and other stray animals away from the altar area.

In 1636, the Bishop of Norwich ordered that an altar rail be installed in all churches, stretching from the North to South walls, one yard in height and (quote) ‘...with many pillars so that dogges could not gett in’

The present communion rail in St Mary’s is an earlier one, first removed and then found when the church underwent restoration in the 19th c. and replaced in its present position.

Following the fourth Lateran Council of 1215, clergy were required to ensure that the blessed

sacrament be kept protected from irreverent access or abuse and accordingly the area of the church used by the congregation was to be screened off from that used by the clergy. Apart from the congregation, pet dogs were often taken to church and a dog-proof barrier was needed. Barriers demarcating the chancel, such as the rood screen, became increasingly elaborate, but were largely swept away after both the Protestant Reformation and the Counter-Reformation who wished for the congregation to have a good view of what was happening in the chancel.



Altar rail:
‘...so that dogges could not gett in’

TW



Club Draw

The latest winning numbers for the Evington Community Project 100 club March draw are:

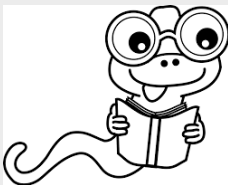
1st Prize: No. 45

2nd Prize: No: 33

3rd Prize: No: 57

Library Van

The Library van will be parked in the village hall carpark on Tuesday 3rd and Tuesday 17th April 09.45 - 10.15.



Tombola Prizes

Tombola prizes are required for the Spring Fair to be held on Bank Holiday Monday.

Please give any prizes to either Sue Boxall (Quackers, The Street), Tracey Block (The Briars) or to the village coffee morning before **Friday 4th May**.

Prizes can be any new gifts, food or drink but please ensure any food or drink is in date.

Many thanks from the ECP Committee.

Magazine Articles

Please ensure that all articles for the magazine are submitted by the **15th** of the month.

EVINGTON COMMUNITY PROJECT



SPRING FAIR

Monday 7th May, 2018

From 12.30pm on the Football Field,
Hastingleigh

Raffle - Tombola - BBQ
Beer Tent - Teas - Cakes
Evington Gardeners' Plant Stall
Coconut Shy - Face Painting
Maypole Dancing
Art Exhibition in Evington Village Hall
Evington Community Choir
Traditional Sideshows

and many more attractions



Sponsored by the local Parish Council

Church services in the Parish Upon The Hills		
1/4	Easter Sunday	10.00—Elmsted—Group service for all churches
8/4	Second Sunday	08.00—Waltham – BCP Communion, 11.00—Petham – Communion Note - Bodsham School– No Messy church due to holidays
15/4	Third Sunday	09:30—Waltham Communion 11:00—Hastingleigh Communion 18.00—Elmsted Choral Evensong
22/4	Fourth Sunday	09:30—Elmsted Communion 11:00—Hastingleigh Communion 11:00—Petham Family Communion
29/4	Fifth Sunday	10.30—Elmsted - Benefice service for all Wye Benefice churches

This month's church flowers and cleaning volunteers:		
	St Mary's	St James'
Mar 31st Apr 7th	Mrs Bowes Mrs Helmer Mrs Green	Mrs Healy Mrs Denny Mrs Pearce
Apr 14th Apr 21st	Mrs Young Mrs Courtney Mrs Jerrom	Mrs Fox Mrs Leutner
Apr 28th May 5th	Mrs Bacon Mrs Geering Mrs Sharp Mrs Hill	Mrs Green Mrs Calcutt

Diary Dates - April

Wed	4th	Coffee Morning	10.30 - 11.30
		Evington Community Choir	19.00 - 21.00
Thurs	5th	Bop Shop	13.45 - 14.30
		W.I. Meeting	19.30 - 22.00
Sun	8th	Footpath Group	14.00
Tues	10th	Hastingleigh P.C Meeting	19.45
Thurs	12th	Art Group	09.30 - 12.00
Fri	13th	Whist Drive	19.00 - 22.00
Sat	14th	ECP Film Night	16.00 - 23.00
Tues	17th	Toddler Group	09.30 - 12.00
		Evington Gardeners'	19.30 - 21.30
Wed	18th	Evington Community Choir	19.00 - 21.00
Thurs	19th	Art Group	09.30 - 12.00
		Bop Shop	13.45 - 14.30
Tues	24th	Toddler Group	09.30 - 12.00
		Evington Hall Committee AGM	19.30 - 21.30
Wed	25th	Evington Community Choir	19.00 - 21.00
Thurs	26th	Art Group	09.30 - 12.00
		Bop Shop	13.45 - 14.30
		The Guild for the Deaf AGM	19.00

All events at the village hall unless otherwise stated

Library van at the hall carpark on Tuesday 3rd and 17th April

Priest-in-charge: The Rev Ravi Holy: The Vicarage, Wye 01233 812450 ra-vi.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 lorraine_lawrence@btinternet.com. **Churchwardens:** Mrs Bacon 01233 750327, Mrs Ten Hove 01227 700460. **United Wye Benefice** 01233 813793 www.wyebenefice.org.uk



Elmsted Lunches and Teas.
Sunday 27th May.
Family Art Competition.



At this years event we are
having an

Art Competition open to all.

Your entry can be made and entered in advance,
(Hand it in to the School office and we will
collect.)

or made or brought on the day.

Please make sure your name and phone number
are on the back!

🌻MAKE A COLLAGE.🌻

The title is "🌻A country Scene🌻", entries must
be no smaller than A4, no bigger than A3, and
no thicker than 3cm.

Made from any materials/mediums you like,
Make sure they're well glued.

5 classes, Pre School, Key Stage 1,
Key Stage 2, 11-16yrs, Adult.

A Prize for each age group.

Judging at 3.00pm.



ELMSTED CHURCH

LUNCHES & TEAS



SUNDAY 27TH MAY, 2018

NOON - 4PM

There will be delicious home cooked lunches and an array of home baked cakes and deserts.

We will have a plant stall with strong, healthy perennials and vegetable plants for sale to cheer up your garden.

Live music by Leon Hastwell



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Easter Sunday 1st April
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Easter Monday 2nd April
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Tuesday 3rd April
Closed

Wednesday 4th April
Open from 5pm

Wye PPG

Ask My GP

If you have a non urgent problem or a question that is bothering you, you can now email the surgery. A doctor's appointment is not always necessary. Sometimes you might want to get reliable information at home on a health matter, have a question for the administration team or receive some guidance from your GP on how to cope. In which case, you can use askmyGP, a new service now available for patients of Wye surgery. This is in addition to Patient Access, where you can book appointments and order repeat prescriptions on line and of course you can still phone the surgery if you don't use the Internet.

The surgery says :- " askmyGP is a secure e-mail service – it's the quickest and easiest way to get help from the GPs at Wye Surgery:

- Use askmyGP anytime - 24/7
- We respond 8am to 6.30pm, Mon to Fri (except bank holidays)
- In working hours, you should expect a response within one working day.
- Registered patients can use the service as well as family members/parents or carers on their behalf.

- You can choose any of the named GPs working that day, this is not a guarantee but we will do or best.
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To use the askmyGP service, go to the Wye surgery website (www.wyesurgery.co.uk) and askmyGP is on the front page. The first time you use it you have to enter your name, date of birth, gender and phone number. Parents and carers can use the service for children and family members. There are boxes for you to write your question and to say what help you would like. You will receive a confirmation email once you have sent your request and you should receive an answer within a working day.

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The Poplar Avenue

Many of you passing along the road between Hastingleigh and Elmsted will have noticed that some of the Poplars have been cut down near the pottery where a commercial drive is being laid.

We did this with much reluctance, but in order to create a safer commercial drive from the pottery, we approached Shepway Council and the Highways Dept., they were in favour of our proposal, on condition we had a tree survey report carried out, and also a Traffic monitor counter to ascertain the safety of the proposed new drive.

The Traffic counter concluded that approximately 350 cars pass daily at an average speed of 28 mph., with this information, we needed visibility splay lines of 28 metres either side, which required the removal of 19 poplars. The tree report found that, the 19 Aspen Poplars that form part of the avenue (150) in total are considered to be in overall structural and physiological decline. They were all planted in the early 1960s, as with all even aged tree stocks, whilst they all mature and grow at roughly the same rate, they also decline at roughly the

same rate, and sadly many of which can be observed in the whole avenue.

Poplars having a naturally short life span 65 years, are now considered unsuitable for urban and roadside planting and as they do not die gracefully but their lightweight weak and brittle wood shatters easily, makes them extremely hazardous to roadside users.

Our plan is to replace, set back further from the existing line with Hornbeam (Fran's Fontaine) a native deciduous broadleaved species, this will mitigate the loss of the 19 Poplars and will ensure not only the continuity of the avenue feature but will also introduce much younger and long lived trees that will inevitably out live the current stock of Poplars.

The Hornbeam variety we have planted grows particularly tall and slender, they are of significant value to wildlife, providing plant food for caterpillars and a number of moth species, including the nut tree tussock, small birds and mammals.

Having a life expectancy of 300 years we hope these Hornbeam will become a rather beautiful replacement for what was there, and enjoyed by many generations to come.

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In The Garden

The fine weather we had between the snow provided an opportunity to clear away all the leaves and dead shoots from the perennial borders. Shred any branches and shoots and add them to the compost heap. Add a high nitrogen fertilizer like chicken manure to the compost and cover with an old carpet. This will help the compost heap to warm up and will speed up the composting process.

I have had a nice show of bulbs this year. Before the leaves die down divide up some of the larger groups and plant where there are gaps. This is often referred to as "planting in the green" and is commonly carried out for snowdrops. Where possible develop a swathe of bulbs. This gives a greater impact and reduces the problem in the border where you lose sight of where they are when their leaves have died down. An alternative is to plant in areas of grass where mowing can be left to later in the season. This has been a good year for Cyclamen. They grow readily in my garden, self seed and provide a colourful display. They are useful in that they will grow well in partial shade.

If you have not already pruned shrubs like Roses and Hydrangeas,

this needs to be done taking great care not to damage the emerging shoots. Thin out old wood and cut back to an outward facing bud. Leave an open structure so light can penetrate into the plant. Pruning will stimulate the plant to produce fresh growth, you need to add fertilizer to encourage this. I generally find people tend to prune too little and the plant becomes congested. Most plants are quite robust and you should cut to produce the shape of plant you require.

For the glasshouse I generally buy plug plants from the garden centre. The high cost of seed and the need to get plants in early I find these are cost effective. It is important however to get strong growing plants not stretched by being kept in the low light of a shop. Water them well and pot them on into larger pots or a sectional tray. Use general purpose compost and add grit (25%) for drainage and a small amount of slow release fertilizer. These plants will have an early start and grow more quickly when planted out.

There is still time to divide perennial plants. When you do this, add plenty of compost. This will stimulate stronger growth in plants.

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Villagers' Recipes

Past & Present



Whilst sorting out some books, I found a recipe book produced by villagers to raise funds for both **Hastingleigh and Elmsted churches in the late 70's/early 80's.**

Where there is space I will include some along with a few lines about the person and their connection to the village.

This month I have I have continued along the Bodsham school theme and have included a Gipsy Tart recipe submitted by Mrs Joyce Martin, who worked in the school kitchen for 13 years, 10 years as cook.

Joyce moved to Hastingleigh in 1955 when she married Ron. They lived in a caravan opposite Vigo Farm for a short while before moving into Black Cottage opposite the village hall. In 1958 they moved into Becketts Close where they lived for 43 years before moving to Wye where Joyce is still a resident.

Before Joyce went to work at Bodsham school she worked in Hastingleigh Stores and in her spare time made clothes including a wedding dress for Yvonne Helmer.

GIPSY TART

Pastry

8oz self-raising flour
2oz lard
2oz margarine
1 fl oz water

Filling

13oz moist brown sugar
1 small tin evaporated milk
1/4 of a lemon (juice only)

Make the pastry and bake blind. Whip the evaporated milk and lemon juice until thick and fluffy. Add the sugar and fold in carefully.

Place mixture in pastry case and cook in a low oven for 30 mins until set.

Enough for 2 x 8" sponge tins.

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Farming Notebook

I am sitting pondering the content of this article looking out the window at the rain. Nature is definitely compensating for a dry 2017!

Over the last few weeks we have seen every type of weather. Some sunshine, a lot of rain, wind, heavy snow and freezing temperatures.

It was the bitter cold during the snow which caused us the most trouble. Every day was spent thawing out frozen pipes and troughs to ensure that all the animals had access to water. It was finger numbing work. Each cow drinks several gallons of water each day. They become thirsty quite quickly when the troughs freeze up. Once they hear running water they all want to drink at the same time and before you know it the water troughs have been knocked over and chaos reigns... The ball valves had frozen solid and would take some time to thaw out. So, in an effort to get water quickly, we went back to the stop cock in the floor, disconnected the troughs and attached a piece of pipe. This we used like a hose and just filled as many containers as pos-

sible. This allowed the cattle to slake their thirst and gave us time to thaw things out. Each ball valve was removed from its trough and soaked in hot water, dismantled, cleaned, reassembled and finally connected back to the mains. It was mid-afternoon by the time everything was working again. Fingers were very cold and wet! Already the temperatures were dropping again and we just knew we would have to do it all again the next day...

There is a degree of irony in as much as the frosty weather allowed us to clear out the yards. A job that we had wanted to do for some time. But the deep dung would have protected the pipes and made the job of keeping the water flowing much easier. All this is now behind us and we have clean yards and running water.

In an effort to make a bit more room we have sold ten of last years' steers in the first major store sale at Ashford. I think we are now ready for calving. The first calf, a nice heifer, was born last night.

Yesterday was a nice day. It allowed us to complete the first round of fertiliser spreading. Oilseed Rape, winter barley, second year wheat and the herbage seed crop had 250Kg/Ha of ammonium sulphate a few weeks ago. This left

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Farming Notebook cont.

us all the first year wheats which we have now done. Despite the cold it is quite obvious that the crops have already responded to the nitrogen. One of the few things I remember from school is that snow is a good way of providing nitrogen. It absorbs N, the most abundant element in our atmosphere, as it forms and falls and then releases it into the soil. So that is a small bonus... We are beginning to fall behind the calendar. This time last year we had completed drilling the spring crops. This year we have not started. It will be a late spring... However, the signs are there. Lighter mornings and evenings as the days draw out, primroses in bloom in the hedgerows and temperatures slowly rising. It is easy to get itchy feet, but the soil conditions, not the date, are most important in good crop establishment. Apart from the potatoes which we would normally plant from mid-April onwards, we have spring beans and spring oats, both as seed crops, to plant. We will be ready when the time

is right.

During the wet days we are lucky that we can take refuge in the potato grading shed. We still have orders to fulfil. The work is in the dry and it is relatively warm! Soon we will take delivery of our input seed for planting in April. This arrives in 1.25t bags and we empty these into our tonne boxes for inspection and storage. The ware market is still very depressed and therefore growers are sticking with tried and tested varieties to grow for next year. They are reluctant to try anything new in an effort to minimise their risk. The result is that we will also only plant established varieties to, hopefully, guarantee a market for our seed next year

All the beans that we grew for seed last year have now been collected. We now only have oats and barley left to sell.

It is still raining, and the weather bulletin is forecasting snow at the weekend... Looking on the bright side, that will mean more free nitrogen!

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