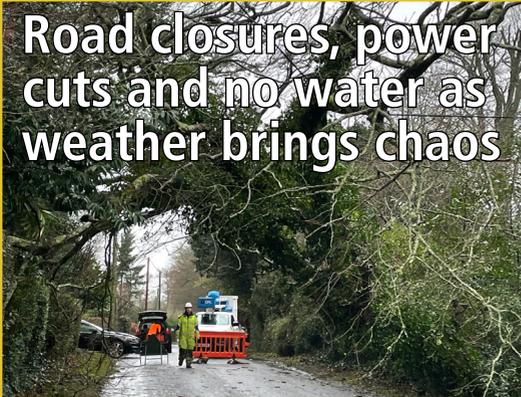


Whatlington News

FEBRUARY 2023

CONTACT: STEVE TURNER 01424 870041

Road closures, power cuts and no water as weather brings chaos



Film Club is back and goes to Paris



A tough start for Oak's new landlord

Council pegs tax as bills rise ■ Fifth round in bid for new vicar

A21 safety – chance to have your say

Proposals to be unveiled at public meeting on 1 March in Village Hall

Villagers will be able to learn about proposals to make the A21 safer through Whatlington at a public meeting.

National Highways will be unveiling its plans for the road, which has seen 61 crashes and 105 casualties between Whatlington and Blackbrooks over five years, with speed being responsible for a quarter of them.

The authority states the meeting will consider proposals to improve road signage, visibility including the need to cut back vegetation, and white lines. There will be a chance to ask questions and put forward other ideas.

In its initial proposals the authority stated it would also be considering a review of speed limits.

The Parish Council has previously suggested installing a pavement alongside the A21 to make it safer for pedestrians and to visibly remind motorists that it is a stretch of road that includes people's homes.

It also suggested introducing roadside 'gates' at entrances to the village to signify it is a residential area with a 40mph limit and two public footpaths either crossing or meeting the road.

These latest proposals are part of a £28m scheme covering Sevenoaks to Hastings, in which there have been 412 accidents in five years, with nearly a third of the 703 people hurt suffering serious or fatal injuries.

■ Villagers can hear more about the proposals on 1 March at 11am in the Village Hall.



The Royal Oak



01424 870 492



info@royaloak
whatlington.co.uk



www.royaloak
whatlington.co.uk



Follow us on
Facebook

A selection from our new menu

STARTERS

- Hummus and Pitta^{VG} £4.95
- Halloumi Fries^V £6.50
- Homemade Soup of the Day^V £7.50

MAINS

- Traditional Fish & Chips £16.95
crispy beer batter, chunky chips, peas
- Plant-based Bangers & Mash^{V VG} £15.95
plant-based sausages, creamy mash, seasonal vegetables, gravy
- Ham, Eggs & Chips £14.95
home-cooked ham, two fried eggs, chunky chips
- Homemade Chilli Con Carne £15.95
spiced beef chilli with rice
- Royal Oak Burger £16.95
6oz beef burger in a bun, bacon, cheese, chunky chips and salad

DESSERTS

- Lemon Tart £7.50
zesty lemon tart, cream or ice cream
- Warm Chocolate Brownie £7.50
rich chocolate brownie with salted caramel and ice cream
- Cheesecake of the Day £7.50

SUNDAY ROASTS

- Sirloin of Beef, Loin of Pork, Honey Roast Ham, Nut Roast £17.95
with crispy roast potatoes, Yorkshire pudding, seasonal veg, gravy

CHILDREN'S MENU (under 12s)

- Fish of the Day £8.95
with chips and peas
- Wholetail Scampi and Chips £8.95
with chips and peas
- Sausage and Mash £8.95
butcher's sausage, creamy mash, peas

See the boards for our daily specials

See our website for full menu including new range of vegan and vegetarian dishes
www.royaloakwhatlington.co.uk

Pay by cash and get

5%

off your food bill

Village council tax frozen as bills rise

Whatlington Parish Council has decided to once again freeze its element of the Council Tax to limit its toll on villagers' household expenses.

The decision to hold the amount levied for parish activities to around £44 a year for Band D dwellings makes it five years since the last time the village rate rose.

It has meant the parish council having to dip into the contingency fund to cover its own costs that have risen in line with general inflation.

The amount to be collected from village's almost 150 households remains £7,100, which itself represents a reduction of £500 on the 2017/18 level.

The decision comes in the light of likely rises in the pipeline from East Sussex and Rother authorities, that make up the lion's share of council tax bills.

Lack of councillors forces meeting to be scrapped

January's Whatlington Parish Council meeting was cancelled due to a lack of councillors able to attend.

It would have meant any meeting would have been what's known as 'inquate', with too few councillors present to legally make any decisions.

Councillor Jean Scott resigned from the council in December and the decision was taken not to recruit a replacement, with too little time for training before the parish elections in May.

■ Ever thought about serving the village community by becoming a parish councillor?

There will be an opportunity to join Whatlington Parish Council in May and for some general guidance on what the role involves go to: <http://askyourcouncil.uk> and search for 'The role of a local council' or try one of the larger parish websites such as www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk and search for 'Parish councillor role description'.

Find why parish councillors are vital to the future of the village in the April issue of Whatlington News.

THE FLORAL BOUTIQUE Est 1992
 FLOWERS FOR ALL OCCASIONS

Unusual and exotic fresh flowers and plants

Also stocked:
Helium balloons ❀ Ceramic pots
Glass ❀ Olsten candles ❀ Baskets

Agents for dry cleaning and laundry
 Telephone orders welcomed
 Wide delivery area

20 HIGH STREET, ROBERTSBRIDGE
01580 880977
OPEN MONDAY-FRIDAY 9am-5pm
SATURDAY 9am-3pm

Major credit cards accepted

EARTH FRIENDLY

We are Cellophane free and committed to reducing our use of plastic

Tough start for Oak's Hasan

Soaring energy costs, snow, downpours and road closures mean Oak needs local support to survive



Soaring energy bills, road closures, snow, gales, flooding . . . it's been a tough first four months for Hasan Fikret as landlord of the Royal Oak. Throw in power cuts, water supply problems and long-running broadband outages and it seems what COULD have gone wrong for Hasan HAS gone wrong.

And while he is buoyed by the warm welcome from many locals he says villagers need to start using the pub more frequently if he, and the Oak, are to survive.

"I've had lots of help and support from people in the village," he said, "but it would be great to see more local people here and keep the pub as a hub for the community."

He unveiled a new menu last month with wider vegetarian and vegan options as well as the introduction of chef's specials.

The Whatlington Film Club returns this month and Hasan is keen to be involved in other community initiatives.

He said: "We had a good Christmas and word is getting round about our traditional pub food offering. Our Sunday roasts are increasingly popular and we are getting good reviews online.

"But at the moment it is the utility bills that are the major obstacle to making the pub a success. I understand that with the cost of living

rising people will cut back on spending like visits to the pub so I'm hoping the situation is going to improve and that more Whatlington people come along and see what we have to offer."

PAY CASH – SAVE 5% ON FOOD BILL

Pay cash for your meal at the pub and get a five per cent discount – that's the new offer at the Royal Oak. Landlord Hasan says: "Credit card companies charge a five per cent fee on all transactions so instead I'd rather customers get that five per cent as a saving on their food bill by paying cash."

Free walking guides

With Spring not too far away you may be thinking about getting out to walk in the countryside again.

Walking in Sussex www.walkinginengland.co.uk/sussex has lots of walks to download and print, free. It also has books of walks and details of all the walking groups in the county.

John Harris, who maintains the website, says: "There is so much walking information on the web but Walking in Sussex (part of the Walking in England website) brings it together in one place."



TV aerial and TV wall mounting WiFi - CCTV - Networks

RESIDENTIAL AND COMMERCIAL INSTALLATIONS

Follow us on



Visit us at
www.appleaerials.co.uk

Registered Digital Installer

Find us on

Checkatrade.com

Checkatrade

Getmedigital.com

digital TV

Full Public
Liability
Insurance

Call us today for a **FREE SURVEY and QUOTE**

01424 234 792 or 07962 204 284

You can also contact us by **Text or WhatsApp**

White Cottage, Woodmans Green Road, Whatlington TN33 0NL



Floods, gales and freezing temperatures

If you thought mid December's snow – when a relatively brief fall paralysed much of the district – was the worst winter had to throw at us, then you were mistaken.

From Christmas Day to 12 January there wasn't a single day without rain – 142mm (5.5ins) drenched the village. After a brief respite on the 13th 20mm fell on Saturday the 14th and a further 32mm on the 16th, which if it had fallen as the forecast snow it might have been a couple of feet deep.

The River Line breached its banks in several places, flooding fields and contributing to the closure of the A21 near Marley Lane.

In the village Mill Lane was flooded along with the fields either side of the Village Hall.

The wet weather forced some hasty rethinking by organisers of the annual village pageant, forcing it to be held entirely indoors at the church for the first time.

Strong winds brought down a tree in

Continues next page



Floods, gales and freezing temperatures

From previous page

Whatlington Road, closing the road and leaving homes without power for most of the day.

A member of the UK Power Networks team at the scene said the trunk of the tree was rotten and suggested all trees close to power and telephone lines ought to be examined regularly and felled or cut back if there was a danger of them coming down.

Whatlington Road was also closed when a water main burst just beyond the rail bridge (heading towards Battle), leaving residents from that point to Woodmans Oak Road without water.

Another power cut due to an overhead cable fault saw many homes, and the Royal Oak, without power all afternoon.

A further January hazard was freezing temperatures, with seven nights of sub zero readings, hitting a low of minus 3.8C on 18 January.

Roads still running with water from the earlier rainfall resembled ice rinks and demand for logs left many suppliers struggling to meet orders.

■ Floods reveal how village might have looked 2000 years ago: next page



Flooding in Mill Lane and, inset, on the A21 near Marley Lane



Icicle curtain on the A2100

Watery echoes of the past



The extensive floods that surrounded the Village Hall and stretched down the valley, across the A21 and as far as Sedlescombe created a scene reminiscent of that which would have been commonplace in Roman Whatlington.

Local historian John Shepperd has calculated, using average depths by which silt accumulates, that the land by the River Line bridge and the field where the village fete is held could have been 200ft lower 2,000 years ago than it is today.

He says: "It would mean sea water would certainly have reached the car park by the village hall. There is firm evidence that Sedlescombe was used as a port in Roman times, with Whatlington sitting at the head of a creek.

"The word 'Leeford' means ford in a wooded valley and the Bronze Age barrow in Petley Wood was on a peninsular where the rivers Line and Brede joined and where there is evidence a tribe lived at the time."

Jules Decorators

**Interior & exterior
decorating services**
Renovation & repair work
Specialist paint effects



References & portfolio available



Phone: 01424 870172 or 07930 318510

Email: julian.chandler@hotmail.co.uk

Home: The Cottage, Park Lane, Whatlington TN33 0NZ

Web: www.julesdecorators.co.uk



Film club returns with an uplifting trip to Paris

Whatlington Film Club returns this month after a Covid-enforced absence of nearly three years.

And kicking off the 2023 season is the delightful Mrs Harris Goes To Paris starring the eminently watchable, Brighton-born Lesley Manville.

She plays a widowed cleaning lady who falls in love . . . with a beautiful couture Dior dress owned by one of the ladies for whom she 'does'.

Mrs Harris simply must have it, or at least one like it from the famous Parisian fashion house.

She works, saves and even gambles in order to raise the cash, eventually finding herself among the French capital's style snobs.

Funny and poignant, it's a movie to lift the

**Eat while you watch
– meals in a basket**

The Royal Oak is offering cinema-friendly meals in a basket to watch during movies. Chicken, scampi and sausages – all served with chips – will be available at £10 per head and must be ordered in advance by emailing [info@royaloakwhatlington.co.uk](mailto:royaloakwhatlington.co.uk) or call 01424 870492.

spirits in the gloomiest month of the year in the gloomiest year of the 2020s.

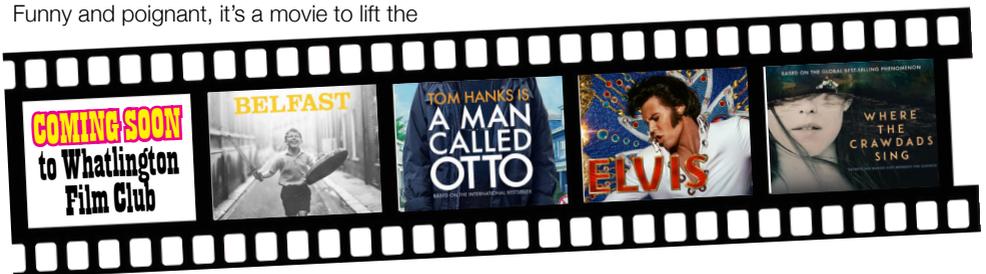
Film Club screenings take place at the Royal Oak, usually on the third Wednesday of the month at 7pm.

It's members' only but the good news is that membership costs just £12 a year to watch mainly current movies, with the occasional classic thrown in.

SIGN ME UP!

To find out more and to join contact Steve Turner by email on steveturner807@gmail.com or

call 01424 870041. Subscriptions can be paid at your first screening by cash or cheque (if you still have any of those).



Hall appeals for new volunteer bookings clerk

Could you play a key role in keeping the Village Hall thriving as a community facility?

The hall committee is seeking a volunteer bookings clerk.

The role involves taking bookings, arranging bank transfer payments and liaising with hirers on access to the building and car park via a keysafe and the facilities available in the building.

There are currently around four bookings a week and no cleaning duties are required.

If you could help, contact Annette Williams on 01424 871629 or 07484 638253.

Hydra Cleaning Services

Commercial and Domestic

Fully insured

Window Cleaning ~ Interior & Exterior,
Hard to reach Windows, Gutters,
Fascias & Soffits, Weatherboarding
and Solar Panels all cleaned

Unique Pure *HOT* Water System

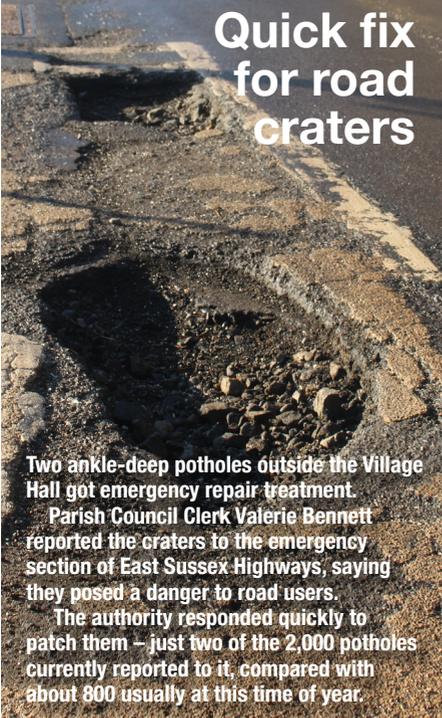
The very latest technology
for an unbeatable finish

Call James for a free quote

07515460008

hydracleaning@mail.com

Quick fix for road craters



Two ankle-deep potholes outside the Village Hall got emergency repair treatment.

Parish Council Clerk Valerie Bennett reported the craters to the emergency section of East Sussex Highways, saying they posed a danger to road users.

The authority responded quickly to patch them – just two of the 2,000 potholes currently reported to it, compared with about 800 usually at this time of year.

Clarkson Construction

Extensions

General Building

Property Maintenance

Kitchens & Bathrooms

Plumbing

FREE ESTIMATES

Call: Ben on 07771 535680

Email:

ben.clarkson1@gmail.com

Morrells, Park Lane, Whatlington
TN33 0NY

ST MARY MAGDALENE CHURCH

Churchwardens: Jeffrey Bridges 01424 772535/07446 903239 and John Crouch 07788 416903

Email: whatlingtonparishchurch@gmail.com Web: www.achurchnearyou.com/church/5226

Search for new vicar – at fifth time of asking

The fifth round of advertising for a new minister to cover Whatlington and Sedlescombe is now under way.

Churchwarden John Crouch says: "We are so relieved that we bought in to a rolling advertisement package in the Church Times. At the time it seemed expensive, but now has turned out to be good value!

"We are also exploring other avenues in the search for a replacement to Rev Kevin Mephram who retired more than a year ago.

"Timing is all important and it is a matter of the right person seeing the advert at the right time!"

The post is unpaid on a 'house for duty basis' with accommodation at the spacious rectory in Sedlescombe.

John added: "We are hugely grateful to the retired ministers and lay readers who have

CHURCH SERVICES

1st Sunday of each month, 9.15am: Holy Communion

2nd Sunday, 10.30am: Family Service for all ages

3rd Sunday, 9.15am: Holy Communion

4th Sunday, 4pm: Evensong

Special services

Sunday 12 March, 10.30: Songs of Praise, led by the Churchwardens

enabled a continuity of all services, even if the rare one has fallen to being covered by the wardens. Our particular thanks go to John Hawkins."

■ You can view the advertisement on the Chichester Diocese website here: www.chichester.anglican.org/vacancies

We need a treasurer too!

The combined parish is also on the look-out for a volunteer treasurer.

Jane Wallis, who has looked

after the accounts for the two churches since the merger of the parishes, is also warden at Sedlescombe and is looking to concentrate on that role following the resignation of her fellow warden.

If you would like to get involved contact either of the wardens listed at the top of this page.

Got something to sell? Try our April table sale

On 22 April there will be a table sale in the Village Hall (full details nearer the time).

Other individuals and groups are welcome to have a table, in particular for the sale of plants, arts and handicrafts.

If you can't manage a table but would like to contribute, your support would be much

appreciated.

For further information, or to book a table please contact John Crouch (see top of page).

LEARN HOW TO MAKE A CHRISTMAS WREATH

In December a Christmas wreath making session is to be held in the church. The

session will be led by Sandie Madge from The Floral Boutique in Robertsbridge, who provides all the materials and expert advice.

For further information and to reserve a place, again please contact John. Please note there is a limit on numbers and several places have already been booked.

Get the Whatlington News direct to your inbox

Email steveturner807@gmail.com to get on the distribution list

GARDENING

Tom Schollar

A good month for galanthophiles

It's still cold, dark and wet . . . but February will bring displays that get galanthophiles (snowdrop lovers) all over the country out and about and with huge smiles on their faces.

There are two ways to enjoy snowdrops.

In the great snowdrop gardens, where carpets of snowdrops (usually *G. Nivalis*, the common single snowdrop) extend as far as the eye can see, are an unforgettable sight.

Or you could seek out the unusual and rare cultivars. Snowdrops bulk-up by producing offsets but also by self-seeding and when they do this, the resulting seedling is sometimes significantly different from the parent. Thus you can get snowdrops with yellow flowers, snowdrops with green inner and/or outer petals and unusual shaped flowers.

If that doesn't sound very interesting, look out for 'Grumpy', which has a pair of



sad eyes and an upturned mouth on each inner petal. 'Diggory' is shaped like a bell and 'Wasp' has long petals like wings.

Some of the best snowdrop gardens are a fair way from us: Anglesea Abbey and Chippenham

Park near Cambridge; Painswick Rococo Garden and Colesbourne Park in Gloucestershire; Welford Park near Newberry; Bennington Lordship Gardens near Stevenage.

See www.greatbritishgardens.co.uk/seasonal/snowdrops or look on the National Gardens Scheme website to find a garden nearer home.

Many of the gardens also have a mini snowdrop fair, where you can see and buy some of the more unusual snowdrops.

Be warned, while the more common snowdrops are not expensive, the special ones can significantly damage your bank account.

SEDLSCOMBE AND DISTRICT GARDEN SOCIETY

www.sedlescombegarden.society.org.uk

Help to combat climate change

Our aim: to promote to residents of Sedlescombe,



Whatlington and surrounding areas an interest in all aspects of gardening and the garden environment, including maintaining the rich diversity of garden plants to help combat the effects of climate change.

How we do it: two shows a year, speakers, trips and social events, regular newsletter.

How to join: Contact Secretary Brenda Page on 01424 870455 or email sdgs.secretary@gmail.com

What it costs: £9 per person per year or £12 for joint membership.

COMING EVENTS

(all at Sedlescombe Village Hall)

Wednesday 8 Feb 7pm
Vegetable Growing: A forum led by members of the committee. Come along for inspiration and to share ideas and tips.

Monday 6 March 7pm
Stephen Harmer (who gave us a fascinating talk about the plant hunters last November) will talk about Sissinghurst

Saturday 25 March
8.30am staging, 2pm open Spring show

For entry details see our website (above).



An unforgettable sight: Welford Park's carpet of snowdrops. Inset: the Jade cultivar

Jeffrey Bridges explains the duties of the ancient role of churchwarden

It's a simple job! At least, that's what they told me . . .

I was told initially it was a simple job, but nobody foresaw the fire of 2010 and all that it entailed. Time has also moved on and like so many voluntary jobs, the level of bureaucracy has increased tenfold and it is such a plus that we now have two wardens again.

We have a wide range of responsibilities:

- to support the priest-in-charge, in both the pastoral and administrative life of the church
- to look after the church building, maintaining the fabric and caring for the contents and to have responsibility for the churchyard
- arrange for people to read and generally facilitate all that needs doing for services
- keep a detailed inventory of all the church contents. When I became warden and was handed the inventory folder it consisted of blank pages, so some work was required!

The Church of England has Ecclesiastical Exemption from most national planning laws, instead managing its own planning control.

A diocesan committee reviews all applications, making recommendations that are submitted to the Chancellor of the Diocese for legal approval.

When one is dealing with a Grade II* Listed building such as Whatlington Church other heritage bodies have to be consulted. These may include Historic England, the Society for the Preservation of Historic Buildings and the Victorian Society.

After the fire the wardens had to work with the architect at each stage of the restoration and liaise



WHY I BECAME A CHURCHWARDEN

Jeffrey Bridges: "I took the role on the assurance that it was quite simple and not very demanding – I already had quite a demanding job. I felt it was something worthwhile and that I had at least some skills which may be relevant. It can be both rewarding and sometimes challenging. Ultimately the job is driven by one's faith, coupled with a determination to maintain the presence and relevance of the parish church in the life of the village.

John Crouch: I have connection with the church going back a couple of generations. My paternal grandparents, my parents, and both my father's brothers and their wives are all buried in the churchyard. I was baptised in the church in the 50s, and sang in the choir when one uncle was the organist and another a warden. So I suppose it was rather inevitable, still living in the area, that I would at some point return. The odd thing is I have only ever lived in the village for about four months, while I was still at junior school!

with these heritage bodies.

When a church has a clerical vacancy, or interregnum as it is known, responsibility for the day-to day running of the church falls to the wardens. This includes arranging for clergy cover to take services, as well as for weddings, funerals and Baptisms.

Anyone living in the parish has the right to get married in the church, while parents of children can have them Baptised there, and we always welcome this.

Those living in the parish also have the right to be buried in the churchyard.

At a small church such as Whatlington the wardens will look after a wider range of duties than may be the case at, say, St Mary's in Battle, where there are more people.

So it is that we set out the Altar for Holy Communion, open and shut the safe, manage collections, put out the hymn books and Bible reading sheets, manage

the service register, arrange the furniture, ring the bells at times and even provide the music when the organists are away (usually by using the digital organ to play recordings).

Wardens also do some of the weekly cleaning, not to mention completing training sessions mostly on Zoom.

Oh, and if we do not have a priest to take a service we can do this, though without communion or a sermon!

In short we are a mix of facilities managers and general factotums!