



WE'LL BE GOOD NEIGHBOURS

Battle Abbey School has pledged that its plan to take over Leeford Place Hotel would bring benefits to the community.

Chair of Governors John Kingwell told this month's parish council meeting that:

- school grounds could be available for community use
- there would be a reduction in vehicles visiting the site compared with the current hotel
- the 38 pupils boarding at the site will be accommodated in the existing building with no external alterations envisaged in the near or medium term
- the appearance of the building would be improved
- biodiversity of the site would be enhanced.

He scotched rumours that a sports field would be put in place at the front of the building and said having one boarding site instead of the current three was designed to free up more space at the school, not to increase pupil numbers.

Some neighbouring residents have voiced concerns about increased noise and traffic.

The school's application for change of use of the building is due to be decided by Rother Council planners early in April.

It would take over the building at the end of October and existing wedding bookings would go ahead up to that point.

D-Day for hotel plan: page 5

BUG BITES INTO CHURCH FUNDS

Page 3



FOOD WASTE BINS ON THE WAY

Page 4

STRESS NOT! VICAR'S TIPS FOR SUNDAYS

Page 12

WANTED: YOUR TURKEYS

Page 10



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Beetles bite £18k hole in church funds



Scaffolding filled the inside of the church and, inset, Churchwarden Jeffrey examines the damage to the ancient beam



Whatlington Church reopened just in time for Easter after a four-week closure to treat an infestation of death watch beetle in the roof.

Now the church is left counting the cost of the work – which included full scaffolding inside the building – likely to amount to £18,000.

What was already thought to be a serious problem was found to be even worse than expected when the beam at the juncture of the nave and the chancel, possibly 750 years old, was found to be badly eaten away.

The cost of the new beam alone was more than £6,000.

Churchwarden Jeffrey Bridges says: “We had this beam sprayed to kill death watch beetle in 2022, but it was clearly more serious and deeper in the wood than was thought. It was so bad that it could be quite easily moved in situ and was cracked through at one end.

“While replacement was the obvious and necessary course, we had to gain permission from the church authorities, who manage work on its Listed buildings.”

Treatment has involved covering all of the

roof timbers in a Boron paste.

Jeffrey adds: “The void along the top of the roof has also been treated, along with the steeple and bell frame in the tower.

“This whole process has made a huge dent in our reserves and some serious fund raising is now required to try to replenish this.

“We have only been able to afford this work thanks to being able to use funds from a generous bequest, but it does serve to show just how expensive it is to maintain a Grade II* Listed medieval church building.”

More bad news followed, with the gas boiler in the church having failed and looking set to need expensive repairs!

■ **The first major fund-raising event is a coffee morning and table sale on 27 April – see page 8 for details.**

According to superstition, the tapping sound made by the beetles, actually a mating call, was believed to forecast an approaching death. It was often heard by the people ‘on watch’ with an ill person on the verge of death.



Heart kit stops beating

The village defibrillator, which can be used to revive anybody who has had a cardiac arrest, has reached the end of its life and cannot be resuscitated.

The kit, which is positioned on the wall of the Royal Oak by the bus stop, is more than 10 years old and was damaged beyond repair by rainwater.

The parish council is to order a new one at a cost of £750, plus fitting to the wall and connecting to the pub's electricity supply – estimated at a further £2-300.

The kit has never been used but could be the difference between life or death by applying an electric charge to restore normal heartbeat to somebody suffering a cardiac arrest.

Riccards Lane speed limit plea

The parish council is backing a call for a speed limit on Riccards Lane.

The narrow road currently has a limit of 60mph but new residents in the lane, who have two young children, are seeking the council's help in slowing the traffic.

Parish Clerk Valerie Bennett has contacted

East Sussex County Council, which is responsible for the road, and it has agreed to consider the issue.

A21 safety update set for May

Villagers will have to wait before discovering the latest proposals to improve the safety of roads in the area..

The Highways Authority is due to bring its ideas to a public meeting in the Village Hall at the end of May.

The plans are likely to include improvements to the A21 junction with Whatlington Road and Riccards Lane, as well as a possible pavement from Hoath Lane to the Royal Oak.

Food waste bins on the way

Food waste bins will be introduced across Rother in 2026.

Residents will need to separate food waste into a separate, supplied container.

The hope, says district councillor Kathryn Field, is that it will make it more apparent to householders just how much food they waste, and therefore cut down on the amount they buy.

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D-Day for Leeford plan

Residents' concern over traffic and noise

A decision on Battle Abbey School's proposal to turn Leeford Place Hotel into a boarding facility for students is due early next month.

Rother District Council has been gathering reports on the change of use plan and is due to make a decision on 2 April.

Sussex Ramblers have urged district planners to require the developers to install signs alerting drivers to be mindful of the safety of pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders as Mill Lane is a public bridleway.

Whatlington Parish Council offered no objection to the change of use but recommended there should be no extra outdoor lighting that might spoil the

village's night skies.

Comments submitted by villagers closest to the site include:

■ Nearest neighbour James Tassell who stated: "I believe that there will be a substantial decrease in traffic. Currently on a wedding day there are in excess of 100 vehicles driven by non-locals, who don't necessarily respect the surroundings. I believe the noise level will drop considerably too, as there will not be music playing until midnight followed by the wedding revellers leaving the premises."

■ Yvonne Underhill: "If this application is granted, I would like it contingent on the control

of any future development of the site. Plans have been previously circulated which indicate a large American-style accommodation block in the grounds. This would be wholly unacceptable in our rural village."

■ Chris Gallop: "How can 50 pupils keep amused (and presumably on-site) of an evening/weekend and have no adverse effect on surrounding dwellings, or more dangerously, pupils venturing into the road?"

■ Another said: "The noise pollution the hotel made when it had events, and which travelled up the valley, was unpleasant and an increase in permanent residents when outside would have the same effect."

Buses re-routed until mid May

Virgins Lane is due to remain closed to through traffic until mid May, which means changes to the 1066 bus route remain in place.

The new wastewater pipe line project means that the 1066 service that uses the road will run between Whatlington Road and Battle via Caldbec Hill and Mount Street (and vice versa) rather than Virgins Lane and London Road.

After serving Netherfield Hill/Netherfield Road in the afternoon, the 355 journey from Claverham College will not be able to follow its normal route via Virgins Lane to Whatlington Road but will run north on the A2100 to Johns Cross, then south-east on the A21 to Whatlington before heading back toward Battle.

Thus, it will serve the Mountfield area, Johns Cross, Vinehall Street, Whatlington and Whatlington Road in the opposite order to normal and serving stops on the opposite side of the road as it does so.

The county council is liaising with schools and parents regarding the changes that affect school pupils.

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Crowds flock to Easter Fair

An estimated 150 people packed the Easter Fair last weekend.

The Village Hall was rammed, with people queuing to get in and both car parks full, while a dozen stallholders did brisk business.

With a giant toy stall, home-made food and hand-crafted products, the event – the most ambitious staged so far by the Whatlington Connectors – proved an enormous success.

An Easter Egg Hunt was a popular attraction for younger visitors while cream teas tempted everyone else to stay and chat with neighbours old and new.

Leftover food was distributed to a local charity for homeless people.

The Connectors' Steve Turner said: "It took a massive amount of work by our small committee to stage this event but when people started flocking in, and kept on coming, it made it worthwhile.

"It was heartening to see so many locals there and that many visitors stayed for the entire two hours."



MAYDAY! MAYDAY! TRICKY QUIZ QUESTIONS INCOMING!

The next pub quiz staged at the Royal Oak and organised by the Whatlington Connectors will be themed around **Come What May**. Questions will include historical figures, current celebrities and word puzzles with a loose May connection. It will support Cancer Research UK.

The quiz will take place on Thursday 2 May at 7pm, £10 per table, book in advance at info@whatlington.com

New craft sessions

A new skill is on offer at the popular weekly craft sessions at the Village Hall. Having made coasters, wall plaques and bowls out of glass, the crafters will additionally be offered papier-mâché, under the guidance of professional tutor Lorraine Ashley. Sessions are held on Wednesdays, 10am-midday. To find out more drop in for a chat and a cuppa or go to whatlington.com



Friends gathered at the Royal Oak to say goodbye to Ken Jones, who has moved to Gloucestershire to be closer to his family. A leading figure in the area's Scout movement Ken was also a churchwarden at St Mary Magdalene, playing a key role in overseeing the rebuilding after the fire in 2012. He was also a member of the village boules team and a regular at the Oak.



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■ **Easter Day – Holy Communion at 10.30, followed by refreshments. The church will be decorated with flowers and lilies and will also be open on Easter Monday for visitors.**

After Easter, church services will resume the established pattern:

- First and third Sundays, 9.15am Holy Communion
- Second Sunday, 10.30am Family Service, followed by refreshments
- Fourth Sunday, 6pm Evensong
- Fifth Sunday, united service alternating between Sedlescombe and Whatlington churches. On Sunday 28 April this service will take place at 10.30am at Whatlington Church.

Enquiries & donations -
John 07788 416903

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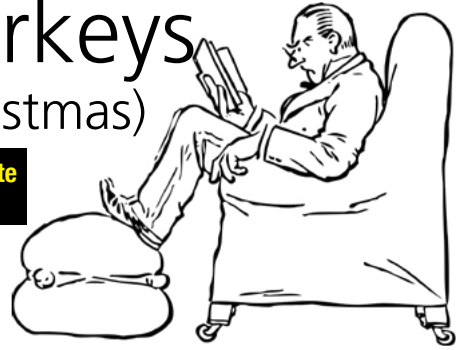
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I want your turkeys (and I know it's not Christmas)



Columnist Martyn Hole invites villagers to nominate the books, films and music that drive them crazy

I was trying to read a biography of the Eagles by Mick Wall, who started writing for Sounds at the grand old age of 19. Sadly his writing style has not progressed.

Indeed, I think it has gone backwards and it reads like the kind of article you would find in a school magazine by a 14-year-old.

I can recall only three books I didn't finish: Alexander Solzhenitsyn's Gulag Archipelago (too depressing), Owen Jones' Chavs (infantile ranting and I am an expert on that) and the tripe mentioned above.

So, folks, another competition which I think should be called *The Whatlington Razzies*. I'd like you to think of the worst artistic endeavours that you have ever experienced in each of four categories:

- Books ■ Films ■ Records ■ TV programmes
- Your answers will go before a hand-picked jury of

experts and the sender of the most nauseous collection of artistic awfulness will win a bottle of fizz. For the record, these are mine:

- Book:** Chavs by Owen Jones
- Film:** Solaris (the original not the remake)
- Record:** Granddad by Clive Dunn
- TV:** Triangle with Kate O'Mara

So, I am sure you can come up with better turkeys than those. And it's only nine months to Christmas.

Send your suggestions to the editor: steveturner807@gmail.com before the end of April.

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WHATLINGTON: A YEAR IN THE LIFE

Edited versions of reports from local organisations presented to the Annual Parish Assembly.

Full versions can be found at www.whatlington.com/agenda&meetingpapers

WHATLINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

Roger Fisher, Chair

■ This report is the first for the new council elected in June 2023. Not only was there an election, one of only 10 per cent of Rother parishes to have one, but also 60 per cent of the councillors were new. I believe this is a positive indicator of a community that is strong and developing.

■ A further indication of this is the inception of Whatlington Connectors, actively promoting community development and engagement. This is in addition to the Village Hall committee, which continues to raise funds for this community asset; the well-read and presented village newsletter and its deliverers that keeps us in touch; plus Speedwatch volunteers helping keep us safe. My thanks to all these for their commitment to the civic wellbeing. A strong community is a healthy community.

■ As ever the A21 dominated parish concerns. There is a £26m road safety improvement scheme in place for the A21 and ensuring Whatlington gets a fair share of the money is being actively pursued.

■ After more than five years of no increase, the council decided that it was necessary to raise the parish precept by five per cent – a decision not taken lightly but essential if we are to continue to deliver positive outcomes on parish matters.

EAST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL

Kathryn Field, Councillor for Whatlington

■ The council's portion of council tax will rise by 4.99 per cent, which includes a 2 per cent precept for Adult Social Care. The Government's view was that any shortfall in the budget should be filled from reserves. This was done (£9m) but this is only a short-term fix.

■ Children's Services has been inspected by Ofsted and been judged Good with Outstanding features including services for Looked After Children

■ Since the last parish assembly a new highway contractor has been appointed: Balfour Beatty. Around 4,000 potholes had been mended

WHATLINGTON VILLAGE HALL

Jane Hendley, Bookings Clerk

■ The past year has been a busy one for hall usage, with increased income generation through hiring fees. In February 2023 there were four regular weekly hirers. This has now increased to seven.

■ There have been several weekend children's

parties, although feedback is that the venue is rather on the small side, which could be affecting take up for this type of event.

■ The hall has been used for a wake, fundraising, family gatherings, elections, church events, Parish Council meetings, a Valentines Night quiz and weekly craft sessions.

■ The committee's aim for the year is to increase the number of community events for villagers.

WHATLINGTON CHURCH

Jeffrey Bridges and John Crouch, Wardens

■ Having advertised in the Church Times for a parish priest with no applications thought worth further consideration, the diocese decided to change the post to that of Rector. It brought greater security of tenure and allowed applicants to live in their own home and not in the Rectory. As a result Rev John Hawkins applied and was appointed.

■ Although at a national level the Church of England may seem to have plenty of money, the powers that be do not let any of this filter down to help maintain the country's heritage of Listed ancient church buildings. That task is left to the Rector, Churchwardens and Parochial Church Council to manage as best we can.

■ Next year will mark the 750th anniversary of the present church in Whatlington and we strive to ensure that it remains well cared for during our period as custodians.

ROTHER DISTRICT COUNCIL

Sue Burton, Councillor for Whatlington

■ The council introduced a trial closure of public toilets over the winter months in Battle, Bexhill, Pett Level, Sedlescombe and Rye as it faced a £3.8 million budget shortfall.

■ A budget consultation received more than 700 responses. The resulting budget saw £15m for services and a 2.99 per cent council tax rise.

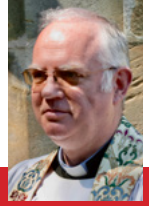
■ In the latest round of community grants £66,000 was awarded for projects in Bexhill, Crowhurst, Icklesham and Three Oaks.

WHATLINGTON SPEEDWATCH

Anne Smith, Co-ordinator

■ After eight months without roadside speed check sessions due to the unsuitability of the group's radar device, Sussex Police recognised the importance of the group to road safety in the village with the promise of the latest detector, free of charge initially with a contribution of £500 to be sought later.

My tips to make the most of the Sabbath



By Rev John Hawkins, Rector, Whatlington Church

Easter! A festival. A holiday. But is it truly restful? So many of us lead busy lives and even bank holidays get filled up with chores we want to catch up with. There's the garden and the DIY project and entertaining the kids.

Unless we have the luxury of going away to stay where we are looked after, we'll probably be busy. It may be fun entertaining the family for a few days, but when they go home we collapse exhausted with all the extra work.

The story is told that a large pot had been in the possession of a family for more time than they could remember. It had served many purposes and currently was being used as an umbrella stand. When a TV roadshow was in the area doing valuations one of the children persuaded the parents – just for fun – to take the pot along. It proved to be a very rare vase, worth a small fortune.

The Sabbath is a bit like that. We all have it, it's been around for ages, we have put it to all sorts of uses, but most of us have only the haziest idea what it is meant for. And we do not realise what a treasure it is!

In our cash-rich, time-poor society we need more than ever to rediscover the balance of life that God created. As we celebrate new life at Easter here are some thoughts to encourage you:

■ Sabbath is a gift more than a demand. It's the gift of a break from the routines of life and a means of refreshing us.

■ Sabbath is a door opening a new dimension – taking us beyond the necessary, the urgent and the everyday. Not so much a day for not doing things (despite what the Pharisees or the Victorians might say!) but rather a day for doing the really important things: giving and receiving rather than buying and selling; enjoying the goodness and reality of God's presence and the beauty of God's world.

■ Sabbath is an attitude not just a day.

It invites us to take its principles of resting, thanksgiving, justice and generosity into the whole of life – reducing the stress and rush and enlarging our vision.

■ Sabbath is a surprise! The story of Creation in Genesis tells us that for seven days God creates spaces, habitats and living creatures. On the last day God rests, and makes holy, Sabbath time. We talk of 'finding time', 'spending time', 'catching up' and 'chasing our tails'. What we do not talk about is receiving time as gift or valuing it as holy.

May we each discover the gift of Sabbath this Eastertide.

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