

Whatlington News

AUGUST 2026

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Weekend of events

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Outdoor antiques and craft fair: Village Hall 1 August 11am-3pm

Village life in 30s & 40s illustrated talk: Whatlington Church 2 August 3pm



Oak team 'humbled'
by local support
Page 3



Fete is not so hot . . .
thank goodness! Pages 6-8



A21 pavement plan scrapped: page 2

A21 pavement ditched

Hopes for a footway along the A21 have been dashed.

The pedestrian walkway from Hoath Lane to Whatlington Garage has been subject of discussions with National Highways for five years.

But after being asked by the Parish Council for a progress report the agency stated: "I'm sorry for any lack of clarity on footpath plans in this location, but unfortunately we currently have no plans to install a footpath at this location.

"I appreciate this may be frustrating, but we will continue to monitor the area and if there is a need identified we may look to do this in the future."

The footway plan emerged, at the suggestion of National Highways, out of a parish council proposal for a more

Highways agency shock decision

extensive pedestrian route.

This shorter scheme was regarded as a compromise that went some way to improving safe access through the village for people heading to and from

the bus stop, pub and garage.

It was part of the highways authority's A21 Safety Programme and subject to extensive discussions and meetings with the parish council.

Now the authority has abandoned the scheme, although the council has pledged to fight on.

Get your act together!

Parish council chair Roger Fisher voiced dismay at the decision to scrap the footway scheme.

He said: "Surely this would be a small contribution to safety on the A21.

"The majority of what should have been this footpath is now overgrown and has received no attention from the responsible authority . . . yes, National Highways!

"There is illogicality and inconsistency within National Highways, not helped by a continuous change of staff dealing with the council.

"It really does need to get its act together and deliver on this compromise footpath. The council will continue to push for a beneficial outcome to this for residents."

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The new owners of the Royal Oak say they are “humbled” by the support they have received from villagers.

“We want to thank local people because the support has been incredible,” say Aldo, Deborah and Emilia Esposito, who reopened the pub last month.

“Locals want it to work for the sake of the village and they want to support us because they know running a business like this is not easy.”

Reopening the Oak after it had been closed for more than a year did throw up some teething problems, notably the building’s electrical equipment, which struggled to cope with suddenly being brought back into use.

However, demand for the pub’s menu of traditional English and Italian dishes has seen most lunchtime and evening sessions fully booked.

It has been necessary to control advance bookings to leave room for the many ‘walk-ins’.

Word of mouth and regulars from the family’s two eateries in Hastings and St Leonards have helped fuel the boom.

One of the casualties has been plans for an all-day café in the barn, which have been delayed until the pub team is able to cope. It is expected it will open within the next few weeks.

Deborah is delighted that her “dream” of the Oak once again being a place where people meet friends and make new acquaintances is coming true, saying: “We’ve already had couples who said they met or had their first dates here.”

Aldo recognises trade has been boosted by the unusually warm weather but is already planning to build on the Oak’s present popularity during the winter months with a programme of events including music evenings and quizzes.

He says: “With the log fires lit we will create a warm and cosy atmosphere when it’s cold outside.”

Oak owners ‘humbled’ by village support



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Drinkers welcome . . . dogs too

The Whatlington Road end of the bar is to be set aside primarily for those who come in for a drink and not a meal.

“We welcome drinkers just as much as diners,” says Aldo. “And we love dogs and welcome them too!”

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Hall: our committee needs you . . . now!

The Village Hall has launched an appeal for new committee members.

It follows bookings clerk Jane Hendley stepping away from the role while chair Linda Walker has also announced she is leaving the committee to spend more time on personal and family commitments.

It means the committee, guardians of the more than a hundred-years-old hall, needs new volunteers in any capacity.

As well as ensuring the upkeep of the hall for community use the committee currently organises the village fete, twilight serenade and festive supper to help swell the coffers.

Linda says: "Come and join the fun and make a difference in maintaining and developing Whatlington's beloved village hall."

If you are interested and want to know more call Charlotte Moore on 07717 014848.

Jane: extraordinary energy and ideas

Jane Hendley is stepping down as hall bookings clerk after more than three and a half years.

During that time she has transformed the bookings system, bringing it online, and has been instrumental in updating all aspects of the hall's management and facilities, including new kitchen equipment, introducing Wi-Fi and remote heating management.

Committee Chair Linda Walker says: "Jane's extraordinary energy, commitment, ideas and professionalism have led to an increase in both ad hoc and regular bookings, securing the financial stability of the hall."

"On behalf of all local residents the Village Hall Committee I would like to say a huge thanks for the incredible amount of work, both seen and unseen, she has done for the hall."

Linda: a hard act to follow

When, due to ill health, the late Annette Williams stepped down as chair of the Hall Committee, Linda Walker was unanimously chosen to replace her.

Committee member Charlotte Moore says: "Ever since, Linda has carried out her many duties with energy, tact and charm. From organising events such as the fete, twilight serenade and festive supper, to overseeing renovations to the Village Hall, to helping other committee members with their tasks, Linda has worked tirelessly, ably supported by her husband Chris.

"She has done her best to ensure that the hall is a friendly, practical space for villagers and for outside hirers alike.

"She'll be a hard act to follow . . . but we're looking for a replacement."





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Cor! Not a scorcher! Cooler day is a bonus for fete

It is unusual to have been hoping for cooler days when it comes to the annual village fete, but this year we were blessed with a slight break in the intensity of the heatwave.

It meant everyone could appreciate an afternoon of food and fun while raising funds for the village hall and the church.

Locals gathered in the sunshine or settled under the shade of the trees to relish sweet delights, teas and coffees courtesy of the church, a sizzling treat from the BBQ, a savoury special, cooling ice-pops or a bevy from the bar.

The Oak and Olive and Lakedown Brewery had kindly contributed their Kicking Donkey best

By **Linda Walker**, Chair Whatlington Village Hall

bitter as a thank you to the village for the warm welcome and support shown as they launch their new business.

Alongside the refreshments, visitors enjoyed the challenge of the hoopla, egg and spoon races, the disguised wine or water bottles, tugs of war for both little and large – adjudicated by Richard Maidment and the latter being led by team captains James Tassell

and Tom Parr – and the dog show.

Judge Helen of Helen's Hounds picked the dog show winners and Scooby with his handler Doug were crowned as Best in Show.

Continued next page



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From previous page

Together with the raffle, craft, books and produce stalls from local sellers, and the chance to capture the occasion with Kasey's KJC Pop Up Photography, the event was a happy, relaxing, summer success.

I want to extend a massive thanks to all the committee members and their families for their time, efforts and gazebo raising muscles in planning, preparing and delivering the day.

Thanks also go to members of the church for their baking and refreshments, to Roger Fisher for running the bar and the raffle, to the stall holders, the volunteers running the hoopla and competitions, to Steve Turner for the photography, to Mark Hendley for the sound system and to everyone who came along and whose contributions will go to the upkeep of our beautiful village hall.

Thank you.



The Parish Church Refreshment Team would like to express their thanks to those of the wider community of the village who rallied round and gave their support at the Fete.

We had put out a plea for cakes etc and were delighted with the range we had to offer. Also, several members of the community, including the Whatlington Connectors, came and helped run the busy stall, easing the burden on the small number from church.

Thanks to your support we were able to raise a little shy of £200 towards much needed church funds.



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Buried bones to be buried again



During the restoration of the church after the 2010 fire, archaeologists supervising the work uncovered human bones beneath the church floor. These were carefully removed for examination and have now been returned for reburial.

As they were buried within the church itself, it is likely that they belonged to people of some importance in the community, although I have not yet been able to discover their identities.

After many years, it seems only right that these

**By Rev John Hawkins,
Rector, Whatlington Church**

remains should finally be laid to rest. This will take place following the United Benefice Service on Sunday

30 August, which begins at 10.30am and will include members of the congregation from Sedlescombe.

Refreshments will be served after the service, and at around midday we will hold a simple and respectful burial, most likely at the east end of the church, where rectors and other notable members of the parish have traditionally been buried.

Everyone is warmly invited to join us for this occasion as we honour and finally lay to rest some of the ancestors of our village community.

A MEMORABLE TIME

After the fire, while the church was being repaired, our services were held in the Village Hall.

It was a memorable time when the church and the wider community came together to support one another.

It was wonderful to see that same community spirit on display again at this year's Summer Fête, with so many people helping to provide refreshments.

It was also especially pleasing to see the newly reopened Oak supporting the beer tent.

SERVICE TIMES

2 August 9.15am
Holy Communion

9 August 10.30am
Family Service

16 August 9.15 am
Holy Communion

23 August 6pm
Evening Service

30 August 10.30am
United Communion Service

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"Attendance during the days of the Patronal Flower Festival was down on previous years, possibly influenced by the un-announced road closures during the week," says churchwarden John Crouch. "However, those that did make it were once again able to view our little church in floral splendour, thanks to our growing flower team. Some even took on the challenge of working out which displays represented which saint. More were able to attend the Songs of Praise service to close the weekend, making good work of clearing the cakes that remained."



Wet and dry

The saying 'We don't have a climate, we just have weather' is demonstrably true, writes the Whatlington News weather watcher.

The average monthly rainfall for the 27 years we've been recording shows only that our weather is immensely variable.

Our monthly rainfall so far this year (with the average in brackets) is: January 191.5mm (97mm); February 148mm (77mm); March 24mm (53mm); April 2.5mm (43mm); May 29mm (55mm); June 49mm (45mm); July at the time of writing (17th) 0mm (45mm). The driest month we've ever had was April 2007 with 0mm.

The wettest month ever was November 2009 with a spectacular 267.5mm (that's just over 10½ inches).



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Much to see on a walk to the pub (including my favourite fungus!)

I am pleased that the Royal Oak has reopened, but it isn't just that I'm enjoying: the walk to and from my home to pub is wonderful in many ways. Firstly, the exercise. Moving my 12 stone body up a half mile road with a 1 in 16 slope uses about 37,500 Joules of energy, the same as 1gm of fat. So I only need to go to the pub 455 times and bingo, I've lost a pound !

Some among you will point out that this means me drinking about 1,000 pints or more than 140,000 calories but that is irrelevant. Beer helps my hydration AND is one of my five a day.

The main reason for my enjoyment though is what I see along the road.

An amazing variety of plants, yes, even the stinging nettles (*Urtica dioica*) are beautiful.

The way their stings work is fascinating. The hairs on the leaves have tips made of silica and if you brush past a nettle, these will break off and the tubes then act as hypodermic needles and release painful chemicals like histamine.

While many will use a dock leaf to ease the pain, that is probably just a placebo effect.

I think, *pictured right*, is Giant Hogweed

Martyn Hole is a fun guy, as the findings from his regular walks to the Royal Oak clearly demonstrate.



Above: my favourite fungus
Below, beware the hogweed



(*Heracleum mantegazzianum*) with its deeply incised leaves but please let me know if this is wrong.

And DON'T touch them!

They have chemicals that photosensitise the skin and any UVA exposure from the sun will give you a MUCH worse burn than from nettles.

My favourite fungus is Dryad's Saddle (*Polyporus squamosus*) although this is from further up the road near the late Robert Fuller's place. It's not poisonous but unless very young, tough as old boots.

The trees are fascinating too. Along the edge of the road you find many seed varieties.

Near the Village Hall, pine cones; further along, catkins and acorns, and when I return from the pub mid-afternoon, the dappling effect of the sunlight through the branches is beautiful. And I find some of the trees a bit spooky, especially in the evening.