

Whatlington News

OCTOBER 2025

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Major project under way to avoid rail landslip – villagers offered the chance to see plans

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Save Our Speedwatch

Lack of volunteers threat to road safety campaign

Volunteers are needed to save a group dedicated to making village roads safer.

In two years the Community Speedwatch team has sent to the police details of more than 700 motorists far exceeding the 40mph limits on the A21 and Whatlington Road.

But unless more people come forward the group may have to disband.

Supported by Sussex Police, the team was set up in recognition of the A21's reputation as one of the most dangerous roads in the South East.

But the number of volunteers operating the roadside sessions has dwindled to three. That's not enough to hold the frequency of sessions needed to give Whatlington the

Being a Speedwatch member is an entirely flexible commitment – you choose when to take part and how often.

Find out more at info@whatlington.com

reputation as a village that does not tolerate dangerous driving.

Three people are needed for each one-hour stint, using a radar gun to measure speeds.

Drivers receive a warning letter, escalating to further action for repeat offenders.

Whatlington Co-Ordinator Anne Smith says: "Although

most people in the village would cite speeding as their top concern, and despite previous appeals for volunteers, nobody has stepped up to help.

"We have reached a crossroads as to whether we are able to continue. Before we call time on this much-needed group, we are making this final call to see if we can enrol a few more members."

No return for village spring

Plans to rejuvenate the Whatlington Spring next to the Village Hall have run dry.

It was hoped to back to life the spring, which provided drinking water for the village until 1958, in memory of former Parish Clerk Valerie Bennett who passed away earlier this year and whose pet project it was.

Cllr Simon White told parish councillors that in the 1970s the sole source of its water was diverted to fill a neighbouring pond.

Revitalising it would cost "a huge amount of money" and extensive work, he said.

But a scheme to improve the look of the spring, possibly with fencing and a memorial plaque, will be taken forward by the Village Hall Committee.

PARISH COUNCIL NEWS ROUND-UP

Royal oaks to get protection

Two oak trees outside the village pub could soon be protected by a preservation order.

Both trees mark royal events – the coronation and silver jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II.

The Parish Council is to apply for the preservation orders to protect the trees against any changes to the

area once the pub is under new ownership.

Clerk Tracy Dixon warned councillors such orders can take up to 18 months to be granted.

There is only one other tree preservation order in the village – alongside the A21 close to Hancox.

Campsite needs planning permission

A camp site in Mill Lane has been ordered to apply for retrospective planning permission to continue operating.

It follows a visit by Rother District Council planning officers.

If the owners of the site make an application to regularise the situation Whatlington Parish Council will hold a full meeting to discuss the plan and invite public comments.

MORE VILLAGE NEWS NEXT PAGE

PARISH COUNCIL NEWS ROUND-UP

Flooding freeze fears

The literally long-running saga of blocked gulleys causing flooding outside the Village Hall shows no solution.

An underground inspection of pipes running down Whatlington Road in June revealed they were blocked by tree roots and other debris.

The solution could be to close the road and replace the pipework, but the expense of such a project make it unlikely this will happen.

In the meantime, reported Jane Hendley whose property is one of those affected, the ever-present puddles by the bridge over the River Line remain.

She warned that it would pose a dangerous hazard if it froze over during the winter.

Parish Clerk Tracy Dixon is to contact South East Water, with photos of the floods, to urge it to get the problem sorted.

Bus stop tidy up

The closure of the Royal Oak has meant the area around the nearby bus stop has become completely overgrown.

Even a bench and rubbish bins have been hidden by uncut grass and overhanging hedging, Cllr Sandie Sullivan reported to the parish council.

Members agreed that the council, although not the owners of the land, would pay to have the vegetation cleared in the hope that any new owners of the pub will be in place before it needs cutting again.

Popping up everywhere

The Parish Council is to invest in more plastic poppies to put up around the village for Remembrance Day and will buy a wreath to lay at the memorial in the village church. Previously only the church itself and the Village Hall laid wreaths.

Simple? Don't bank on it

What was hoped to be the simple process of transferring the Parish Council bank account into the new clerk's name has proved to be nothing of the sort.

Missing account details, lost paperwork, unanswered emails all proved stumbling blocks topped off by Barclays Bank refusing to recognise Chair of the council Roger Fisher's signature . . . in comparison with the specimen version he provided 40 years ago.

Recently the Parish Clerk received a message that she had been accepted for online banking . . . but still isn't able to access the bank statements.

Info directory to return

The Whatlington Directory, distributed to all households and containing useful information and contact details for local services, is to be updated for the first time in more than 10 years.

The project is to be undertaken by the Whatlington Connectors on behalf of the parish council and will be distributed next spring. The aim is to keep it updated annually.

Stop crime? No thanks

The Neighbourhood Watch scheme that kept villagers on alert for possible criminal activity has lapsed due to lack of interest.

There have been two schemes in the past, Cllr Simon White told the Parish Council, the most recent being set up 10 years ago but it had "withered on the vine". The only groups still active are in Virgins Lane and Footland Wood.

Anybody interested in revitalising the scheme would have to join as an individual at www.ourwatch.org.uk/joinNW and then set up a group.

Oak could become restaurant and pub

Negotiations for the sale of the Royal Oak were continuing as Whatlington News went to press.

The pub, on the market for a reduced price of £395,000 + VAT, is currently under offer.

Agents Christie & Co say the potential

buyer is looking to run the premises as a restaurant and pub. Local rumour suggests it could reopen around Christmas.

The Grade II Listed building, being sold by Kent brewers Shepherd Neame. It has been closed since April.

Emergency rail work under way to avoid landslip

Emergency work to stabilise the railway embankment in Whatlington has begun.

Following signs of movement on the Tonbridge to Hastings line Network Rail has started emergency stabilisation work.

The embankment suffered a major landslip in 2014, resulting in a three-week closure of the line.

Monitoring equipment installed at the site has now detected significant movement on the other side of the track, requiring engineers to declare an emergency response.

A Network Rail engineering spokesman told Whatlington News: "This embankment is at a high risk of failure. The slope is steep, built on weak soils, and further

Hall drop-in session to explain project

Network Rail will host a drop-in session at Whatlington Village Hall on Thursday 17 October. Residents can meet the project team, ask questions and learn more about the works.

compromised by water infiltration and animal burrowing. The risk to the railway and its users is considerable. Doing nothing is not an option."

Following geotechnical assessments, soil nailing has been selected as the preferred stabilisation method. This involves inserting steel rods into the embankment to reinforce the slope. Compared to traditional piling, soil nailing reduces noise and disruption for nearby residents.

Full-scale stabilisation begins this month. A 500-metre temporary roadway has been installed to allow machinery to access the site in Whatlington Road, opposite the church. The aim is to minimise disruption for residents.

Network Rail has engaged ecological consultants to advise on habitat protection. Restoration work will ensure the area's biodiversity is protected and enhanced.



ANNETTE WILLIAMS: 25 April 1939-25 August 2025

Formidable community activist and socialite

Annette Williams, who passed away in August, made a significant difference to the village community after moving to Whatlington from Manchester in 2013.

She came with a long history of voluntary work having spent 30 years as a member of the welfare service organisation Inner Wheel, latterly as its president.

She moved to the village with her then

husband Albert McBride, who died in 2018, and led the team credited with helping to save the Village Hall in 2013 after the resignation of the previous committee had left the future of the building in doubt.

Annette was elected as the Chair of the committee, a position she held for many years until poor health saw her step away from day-to-day involvement, becoming its first President instead.

Under her guidance the hall regained financial stability, was refurbished and introduced new fund-raising events including the Twilight Serenade and Festive Supper.

She also oversaw the continuation of the Village Fete – the biggest event on the Whatlington Calendar.

Annette was born on the Wirral in Merseyside and went to Upton Convent School where she married Donald Gilroy in 1962 and the couple had a son Nigel.

She worked as the Bursar of Birkenhead Park High School in Heswall and also at

Continues next page

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From previous page

Martins Bank in London as well as at Teddington School. She had also spent time as a Registrar in Chester.

She had two other marriages before Albert and following his death wed neighbour Charles Williams.

Throughout her life she was a committed supporter of local communities.

Not just getting involved herself, but getting others involved too: "Saying 'no' wasn't an option when she asked you to do something," says Nigel.

She loved boating, with Henley Regatta one of the highlights of her year.

Nigel adds: "She was always getting involved in whatever was going on locally, which manifested itself in her time in Inner Wheel when she was forever organising functions and events.

"She was a consummate party host and a great socialite."

As well as Nigel and Charles, Annette leaves a granddaughter Josie.

I miss her terribly

Annette married Charles Williams, who lived less than 400 yards from her Woodmans Green Road home, two years ago.

"She was the sort of wife any man could want and I miss her terribly," Charles told Whatlington News. "She could be a formidable woman and took no prisoners but she was a brave lady who rarely let her poor health prevent her from getting on with things.

"She was a cracking wife."

She brought a spark to the village

Roger Fisher, Chair, Whatlington Parish Council

"Annette was a committed community activist and while she considered a role as a parish councillor here in Whatlington she decided to concentrate her efforts on the Village Hall.

"Through her positive personality she was able to resurrect a moribund committee.

"Her arrival in Whatlington brought a spark to the parish, a spark that will continue to glow in her legacy of the community events she organised and the ongoing financial stability of the committee and the physical structure of the hall."



Queen of Whatlington

Linda Walker, Chair, Whatlington Village Hall Committee

"I first met Annette at a neighbour's house not long after we moved to Whatlington. Annette introduced herself with the warmest of Cheshire lass's smiles. Annette's love and passion for the community in Whatlington and for the Village Hall was unparalleled.

"Annette was difficult to resist. That evening she welcomed my husband Chris and I to the village and then promptly signed us up to help with the Village Hall Committee.

"Deservedly and fondly, she earned the title 'Queen of Whatlington'. We, as a Village Hall Committee and as a community, cannot thank you enough Annette.

"We miss you and commit to doing you proud."



**Ready for the off:
walkers at the start
of the trek**

Walkers take the sloe route for a taste of village countryside

More than thirty walkers took advantage of a rare break in the mid-September rainfall to get up close and personal with the beautiful countryside surrounding the village.

The walk, guided by Bev Marks, Local Footpath Warden for Whatlington, started alongside the River Line and made the most of the views of the landscape around Vinehall.

It was part of the High Weald Walking Festival and took just over three hours, covering 2.5 miles including six stiles.

Bev said: "The High Weald countryside views were great but at times we were walking in Victorian inspired parkland with many now mature non-native exotic trees.

"We met the superb huge Wellingtonia in Vinehall park, which is believed to have been planted around 1857. It inspired a group tree hug!"

Foragers picked parasol mushrooms and sloe berries for later consumption.



**Canopy mushrooms
make for a tasty treat**



Big hug for historic tree



**Crossing
the River
Line at
Maddoms
Wood**



Mooving along past curious cattle



Fete boosted by special guest . . . the sun!

A rare break from early September's torrential downfalls resulted in a great turnout for the village fete and a much-improved sum of money raised compared with last year.

The fun dog show judged by Helen of Helen's Hounds proved one of the highlights of the event attracting dogs of all ages, sizes and breeds. Congratulations to everyone who entered and especially to Ace – crowned Best in Show with owner Mia – and Reserve Best in Show Tzar and his owner Lyndsey.

Visitors looking to test their skills, strength or luck entered the raffle, hoopla, wine or water challenge, crockery smashing, creating paper flying machines, egg and spoon races, and tugs of war...one for the children and one for the grown-ups.

For the produce competition Neil amazed all with his huge mangelwurzel.

Food on the day included savoury bakes to take

home and teas, coffees and home-made cakes courtesy of the village church raising funds for the upkeep of the building. For something a little stronger Parish Council Chair Roger Fisher ran the bar which included beer from Battle Brewery thanks to their support of the event; the BBQ was busy with burgers and hot dogs.



Chair of the Village Hall Committee Linda Walker said: "Our thanks to the stall holders who joined us including the Whatlington Community Connectors whose gazebo was brimming with bric-a-brac, craft and information about the work they do in the village, plus others selling their wares including delicious local preserves, honey and handbags.

"A huge thanks also to everyone for coming and to all from the village, the church, the Connectors, Parish Council and the hall committee who worked so hard in planning, preparing and putting on this special day in our village calendar."

REMEMBERING ANNETTE

A special tribute was paid to Whatlington Village Hall President, Annette Williams who passed away in August.

Village Hall Chair Linda Walker said: "Annette would have loved to have seen all the fun on the field. Those of us on

the committee miss her terribly and will be forever grateful for all she did for the Village Hall, the community and everyone she knew and loved. We are grateful to Annette's husband Charles, son Nigel and his partner Lisa for coming along today." Visitors raised a glass in Annette's honour.



Pooch parade: dogs and proud owners line up with their rosettes









Churchyard gets a haircut

The objective in the village churchyard is to keep it tidy and accessible – an enjoyable place to visit while encouraging bio-diversity.

In spring the churchyard has swathes of daffodils and snowdrops. Six weeks after the flowers have died, early June, the grass in parts (spring meadow) is cut and cleared.

The remainder (summer meadow) is left uncut until the end of August/early September for the benefit of wild flowers such as the Ox-eye Daisy and a range of pollinating insects. Some areas of rough grass are deliberately left over winter.

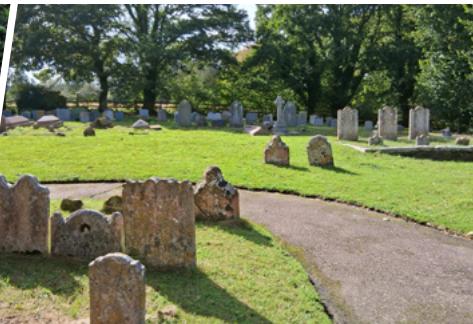
For various reasons the early cut was only partly done this year so the whole churchyard was cut and the grass removed in August by contractor Stuart Taylor. Grass cutting is funded

through a Parish Council grant.

Throughout the year two members of the congregation cut paths through the grass and ensure the Garden of Remembrance is kept tidy, hedges are trimmed, some areas of long grass cut and paths swept.

There is a Churchyard Management Plan based on guidance from the charity Caring for Gods Acre (caringforgodsacre.org.uk) a copy can be found on the hymn book cabinet in the Church. This plan forms part of our ECOChurch aims (ecochurch.arocha.org).

■ Could you help with tasks such as sweeping leaves from the paths in autumn and winter or clearing cut grass? Contact whatlingtonparishchurch@gmail.com



English Song awards final

The Junior Ashburnham English Song Awards final takes place at the Abbot's Hall, Battle Abbey at 7pm on 15 October.

The awards were founded in 2023 by the renowned mezzo-soprano Louise Winter to facilitate the study and performance of English Song through masterclasses, competitions and recitals. Past winners are now performing on the international stage.

In the historic Abbot's Hall junior finalists from senior schools across Kent and East Sussex will perform a selection of English song in front of a panel of judges.

Tickets £10 from www.trybooking.com/uk/

Visit www.ashburnhamenglishsongawards.co.uk for more information.



Bargain hunters flock to fair

Bargain hunters flocked to the village's second antiques and collectors' fair.

More than 120 visitors browsed 11 stalls selling items ranging from wind-up tin plate toys more than a hundred years old to cigarette cards, silver jewellery, kitchenware, ceramics, watches and paintings.

Local stallholders reported takings in excess of the first fair, also organised by the Whatlington Connectors, and all asked to return for the next one, scheduled for spring.

Over four hours visitors also enjoyed refreshments including cakes and rolls made by committee members, sitting on the hall's stage converted to a mini-tearoom for the day.

The 50p entry fee, which included a ticket for the raffle, together with donations and a portion of the Connectors takings resulted in a £150 donation to Macmillan Cancer Support.





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Plaque marks John's century

Village centenarian John Tunstall has been presented with a hand-made ceramic plaque to mark his 100th birthday earlier this year.

The plaque was funded by the Parish Council and presented by its Chair Roger Fisher.

It was made by local ceramicist Amanda Westbury to a design that includes the village crest and various plants to mark John's lifelong dedication to agricultural science.

His daughter Mary, on a visit from Australia attended the presentation.

She said: "It was a really lovely gesture and dad was quite overwhelmed. It now has pride of place in his home."



Roger presents John with the plaque watched by parish councillor Sandie Sullivan

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NATIVITY STARTS NOW!

Christmas seems a long way off but the village church is already starting to prepare for the Village Pageant, on Sunday 21 December at 3pm.

If you have children or other young relatives who would like to be involved, either as characters of the story or to read parts, get in touch by contacting john.crouch56@outlook.com

Meanwhile, put the date in your diary for the historical highlight of the village Christmas.



Classrooms in the sky

Children discuss going back to school after summer hols

Young people from the village related their experiences of returning to their schools after the summer break at an Education Sunday event at the church.

They also discussed how they coped during and after Covid and, in some cases, life in schools abroad.

Older members of the community spoke of their time as teachers, both in this country and abroad.

Churches across the globe held similar events on 14 September and churchwarden John Crouch said: "It was wonderful to have such a mix of young and not so young joining together to talk about education.

"It was amazing to hear about classrooms with a view of the sea, schooling at The Abbey, and being taught in a skyscraper, where sports lessons were on the beach.

"We may only be a small community, but it was great to bring together such an eclectic mix of experiences, which everyone was willing to share.

"We wonder what other hidden gems/life stories may be hidden in the community and if



these could be woven into a future 'Family Service' or for an evening event.

"Get in touch at whatlingtonparishchurch@gmail.com if you have any ideas or suggestions. The church is one of the few hubs we have in the village and lends itself to a wider use."

OCTOBER SERVICES

5 October 9.15am Holy Communion
 12 October 10.30am Family Service
 19 October 9.15am Holy Communion

26 October 4pm Service of Memories
 Note: Evening Services held on the fourth Sunday are now at 4pm

Enduring doubts over 1066 and all that

G The anniversary of the Battle of Hastings (or as it should be called the Battle of Senlac) is nearly upon us. This is not a particularly significant anniversary as it's 959 years or 1110111111 in binary.

The date is recorded not only on the Bayeux Tapestry but also in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicles (based on the Julian not the Gregorian calendar).

Also, the Tapestry shows Halley's Comet (see below) which appears every 75 years and reached perihelion in March 1066 and would have still been visible in October.

But some facts are still disputed. Is the man shown with an arrow in his eye really King Harold? How many soldiers were involved and how many casualties? And there is debate about whether the designated site is the actual one.

The dispute about the battle site stems from the complete absence of archeological evidence. No bones, weapons or clothing have been found apart from some which lack provenance.

However, there are possible reasons for this.

After a battle, survivors or scavengers would collect booty from the fallen. After all, chainmail, weapons and shields were valuable, and arrows could be re-used.

In addition, the soil is acidic and chain mail and, more importantly, arrow heads made of steel not flint in the 11th century, would rust, and of course clothing and shields rotted away.

The absence of bones is also plausible

The appearance of Halley's comet was first recorded by Chinese astronomers in 240BC and appears in written record from places including Babylon, Israel (in the Talmud), Turkey and Ireland (in

Martyn Hole casts a critical over the myths and legends of the 'Battle of Senlac'



despite the death toll of around 6,000 people, two thirds of whom were Saxons. There would be animal scavengers and surely the relatives of the slain Saxons would have taken them away for a Christian burial.

The Normans were descended from the Vikings and kept many of their customs. Apart from high status people, most were cremated.

The topology fits: the Saxons were at the top of the slope and the Normans at the bottom. The ground was soft and it was difficult for heavily laden cavalry and infantry to advance.

After the first attack, the Normans retreated. Was this a deliberate ploy to lure the Saxons to break ranks or a tactical retreat to regroup? Despite orders from Harold, the Saxon line broke and rushed down the hill. At this point, the Normans turned around and mayhem ensued.

The Saxons had just won the Battle of Stamford Bridge and forced to march to and from Yorkshire (about 470 miles), which could have exhausted the infantry.

In fact, Harold's army was newly formed by men from London and the Midlands so they were fresh but had practically no military training, hence little discipline. So the outcome was a Saxon defeat and the rest, as they say, is history.

the Annals of Ulster). In many cases, it was seen as a portent of doom foretelling the deaths of Marcus Agrippa and Attila the Hun, the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem and of course 1066.



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