

Whatlington News

FEBRUARY 2024



A last look at our village Christmas

School plan for hotel

Pupil boarding bid for Leeford

Plans have been submitted to convert Leeford Place Hotel into boarding accommodation for Battle Abbey School pupils.

The independent school is seeking change-of-use permission that will see the conversion of the hotel's existing 17 bedrooms, according to plans submitted to Rother District Council last week.

Initially no external changes to the building are planned.

At a meeting with villagers living closest to the site, school representatives stated 35-50 pupils would be accommodated at the building, says parish council chair Roger Fisher.

Continues page 3

A21 pavement views wanted

The latest step to improving safety on the A21 takes place next month.

Parish councillors are to have an online meeting with National Highways officials to discuss potential work under the A21 Safety Package.

The meeting on 8 February will focus on the plan for a pavement along the A21 and the upkeep of verges.

Villagers who have views or questions they would like putting forward at the meeting should send them to parish clerk Valerie Bennett by email at clerk@whatlingtonparishcouncil.com or leave a message on 07923 408569 as soon as possible.

A public meeting on the measures is to be arranged.

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School plan for hotel



From page 1

And at last week's meeting of the parish council Roger said concerns had been expressed about increased traffic in Mill Lane and possible light pollution.

The application states that while the site would be used for summer schools, overall there would be a "significant reduction in traffic" compared with hotel use as students and teaching staff would travel by mini bus twice a day.

Footpath warden Bev Marks said a previous planning application for tourist accommodation in Mill Lane was objected to by the Ramblers Association on the grounds of increased traffic as it was a bridleway. He believed there could be similar opposition to the school's plan.

It was agreed a representative from the school should be invited to the annual parish meeting on 21 March to explain more about its proposals.

■ Full details of the plan can be seen at www.rother.gov.uk and click on Planning & Building Control

Leeford Place future 'not viable' as hotel

Leeford Place, which exists principally as a wedding venue, was put on the market in August 2021 at £2.1m, reduced to just under £2m a year later.

According to property agents Christie & Co, more than 18,000 emails were sent out, marketing the property to potential buyers.

Three offers were received of which only the school's was realistic.

The planning application states that "the current use of the hotel as a wedding venue is not viable in the long term".

It explains: "There are other competing venues and changes in legislation are likely to reinforce the current downward trend in sales.

"There has been no substantial investment in 20 years. It would require significant sums to re-position itself as a specialist or boutique hotel."

The school operates three boarding sites which, it says, is costly to manage.

Buying the hotel site provided an opportunity to start centralising the boarding element and, as a result, free up space for new classrooms.

Parish council tax to rise by 5%

A five per cent rise in the Whatlington Parish Council element of villagers' local authority tax bills is on the way.

Parish councillors agreed the increase – the first in six years – at their meeting last week.

Chair Roger Fisher said there was a danger than unless a small rise was agreed now, a much bigger increase might be required in the future as inflation continued to affect council spending.

The parish precept is the smallest element of household council tax bills after county and district councils and 999 services.

It will see the parish element rise to just over £46 a year for Band D dwellings.



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Cake  decorating Wreath  making Mosaics 

Now craft class turns to glass

A new year means a new skill for Whatlington's increasingly-popular craft sessions.

Organised by Whatlington Connectors, 2024 saw 16 crafters turn their attention to fused glass.

Craft teacher Lorraine Ashley, having shared her mosaics skills, is now holding weekly sessions in the art of making objects such as suncatchers, bowls, coasters and jewellery.

The Village Hall classes are designed to be fun and informal and no previous experience is necessary.

It's pay-as-you-go and each session will cost between £5-



10 depending upon the number taking part, plus the cost of materials.

You can find more details on the community website www.whatlington.com

Why not give it a go?
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H₂O! Water bill is a shock

Keep a close eye on your water bills, a resident has warned, after seeing his latest soar by 200 per cent.

Mike Tapsfield's bill from South East Water and Southern Water for June to December was £465, compared to £196 for the same period last year.

It showed water consumption of 101 cubic metres – a period that included a hosepipe ban – compared to 41 cubic metres for the previous year.

Mike says: "South East Water say that its meter is correct and that we must have had a leak.

"However, they are unable to explain how the meter has suddenly corrected itself and, if there was an underground leak, how it was repaired as nobody has entered our property and we have had no internal leaks, dripping taps, leaking loos etc.

"It is all very strange and South East Water is being particularly unhelpful saying: pay up or else.

"I will keep fighting this even if it goes to court and my advice to other residents with water meters is to take a monthly note of their usage in case this happens to them."

AMSTERDAM CYCLE RIDE CHALLENGE

Fancy going to Amsterdam this June? Don't want to drive or fly? Then why not try cycling?

St Michael's Hospice and St Wilfrid's Hospice in Eastbourne are teaming up for a biking challenge to the Dutch capital.

Riders will raise money for the hospices and you can find out more at www.hospicestoholland.co.uk or by emailing fundraising@stmichaelshospice.com or call 01424 456396.

JO BRAND CHARITY SHOW

Hastings-born comedian Jo Brand is to stage a charity comedy night at the White Rock Theatre on Sunday 21 April in aid of St Michael's Hospice. Tickets for An Evening with Jo Brand and Friends are now on sale from the White Rock box office or visit www.whiterocktheatre.org.uk

ROAD CLOSURE

Whatlington Road will be closed for the day on 4 February between Riccards Lane and Oakhurst Road for highways work.

ELECTION EXPENSE

The bill for the village's parish council election last year has amounted to £2,244.18p.

About St Michael's Hospice

St Michael's Hospice Hastings and Rother supports and enables people with advanced, serious, life-limiting illness to live as fully as possible until they die.

The Hospice's vision is for a kind, resilient and empowered local community that is ready, willing, capable and confident to support people living with dying, death and loss.

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For more information visit stmichaelshospice.com or call 01424 445177



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Valentine's Night Quiz



14 February 7-9pm Village Hall

KIDS GO FREE

Put your Valentine knowledge to the test with a fun quiz for family and friends

£5 per person to include glass of wine and table snacks

Supporting British Heart Foundation

For more details see the flyer in this issue or go to www.whatlington.com

Easter Fair

23 March 2-4pm Village Hall

Craft, gift and local produce stalls Raffle

Cream teas and cakes

Easter egg hunt

FREE ENTRY



Supporting Demelza children's hospices

SPRING FAIR AND COFFEE MORNING

Whatlington Church is holding a Spring Fair and Coffee Morning in the Village Hall and there are tables available to hire at £10 for anyone with things to sell. It's on Saturday 27 April from 10am-12.30pm. To book or for more information email grouchycrouch@hotmail.co.uk or call 07788 416903.



Watch Caine's last movie

Wednesday 21 February, 7pm, Royal Oak

The Great Escaper – the true-life story of an 89-year-old Royal Navy veteran who slipped out of his care home to join the D-Day 70th anniversary commemorations in France – will be this year's first film at the Royal Oak. Bernard Jordan became a celebrity for his 'great escape', travelling to Normandy wearing his war medals beneath his coat. Michael Caine takes on the role of the veteran in what is reputedly his last film. The movie was shot largely at Camber Sands and in Hastings to minimise the Covid risk of the largely older cast.

■ To find out more about the Oak's movie nights contact Steve Turner on 07941 669678 or email steveturner807@gmail.com

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A village Christmas



Find local events at
www.whatlington.com



Above, wreath makers at the village church and, below, at the Village Hall

Front doors across the village looked more festive than ever after two Christmas wreath-making lessons.

One was held in the Village Hall and organised by the Whatlington Connectors and the other was in the church organised by Fran Crouch. Both were led by Sandie Madge from the Floral Boutique in Robertsbridge who provided expertise and a range of foliage.





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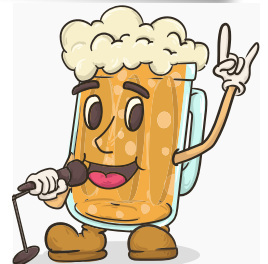
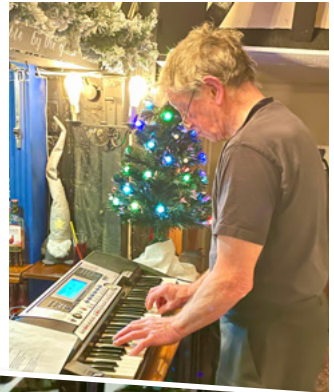


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The Royal Oak was packed for the return of Carols Round the Bar. Organised by the Whatlington Connectors, the evening saw the return of this popular event since before the Covid lockdowns. It began in wonderfully tuneful style with a selection of Christmas songs by a choir from Pheeb's Sing School. The musicality of the event took a more downward journey when the crowded bar was given the chance to sing several traditional carols led, or sometimes followed, by maestro of the organ John Shepperd. The Connectors' Steve 'Tone Deaf' Turner said afterwards: "What a fantastic evening – it was heartening to see so many villagers there and bodes well for events we are planning in 2024."

A right Royal singalong







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Pageant – the gift that keeps on giving

More than sixty people gathered for the historic Whatlington Pageant when the nativity story was retold with village children laying all the main parts.

Led by newly-appointed Rector the Rev John Hawkins, and starting in the church, the procession moved outside to pause by the shepherds' bonfire.

Following the visit of the angels they returned via the outdoor inn, where there proved to be no room, before arriving at the 'stable' – the chancel of the church.

Carols were accompanied by the church organ inside and members of Cranbrook Band outside while mulled wine and soup rounded off the evening.



Churchwarden John Crouch said: "This event has taken place for more than 70 years and, given the enthusiasm of those present, is likely to continue for many years yet.

"Seating in the church was moved making use of its flexibility. It felt really busy, especially during the refreshments afterwards, with the children playing and adults socialising. It was a great atmosphere."



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A village Christmas

A super supper



More than fifty people packed the Village Hall for the annual festive supper. Amid festive decorations the guests tucked into a hot meal before tackling a testing quiz and crossing their fingers in the hope of winning a raffle prize. The event raised around £500 towards the upkeep of the building. Annette Williams thanked her hall committee for their hard work in cooking the meal, putting up decorations and for doing the dishes.



New rector gets keys to the church: page 15



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

By John Crouch
Churchwarden

On a wet and windy evening members of the congregations of Sedlescombe and Whatlington joined with local ministers to witness John Hawkins being licensed by the Bishop of Lewes and the Archdeacon of Hastings.

Sadly a combination of the lateness of the service at Sedlescombe Church coupled with poor weather meant several people were unable to attend.

However, those who could make it witnessed an important step in the history of the churches. The ceremony is steeped in history; this includes the acceptance of the key to the church, ringing the tenor bell to signify his appointment, and the swearing of oaths of allegiance.

Bishop Will delivered a sermon developing the significance of the 'shepherd leading a flock'



Back row from left, churchwardens John Crouch, Jane Wallis, Jeffrey Bridges; front, long-serving Sedlescombe Church member Malcolm Tegg, Bishop of Lewes Will Hazlewood, new Rector John Hawkins

John gets the keys to the church

which featured throughout in the readings and hymns.

The ceremony was followed by refreshments and plenty of time for everyone to meet John.

We would like to thank everyone who was able to

support the evening.

John will now be preaching regularly in both churches, which started with the Christmas Eve services.

Please do come and get to know our 'new' Rector.

Hoping for a brighter year ahead

Dear friends

As we begin our journey together this year no doubt we have all sorts of hopes and expectations. I hope to see the church grow. Many of you may have hopes for what the rector will or will not do. So I thought we might consider what we mean by hope.

Hope is one of the most powerful influences in human life. It seems to be a general necessity for us all, even if there are no rational grounds for it.

Hope often helps us to get through the most difficult situations. Regrettably it is often a rather negative wish. We say things like, 'I hope it doesn't rain today' (which means it probably will); or 'I hope she turns up' (meaning she probably won't).

Many have been left saying 'I hope it's going to be alright,' when really feeling quite desperate.

The Bible sometimes uses the word in its conventional sense: the hope of harvest sweetens

By Rev John Hawkins

the farmers' hard work. But generally the Bible has a quite different view of hope.

Hope in the Bible is a strong, positive word. It means being assured, confident.

"And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us."

It is not a wish or a dream but a confident expectation.

As we embark on another new year I hope that we will have opportunities to explore together something of Christian Hope and gain a fresh vision for a renewed church serving God and the community.

And in a world full of darkness I pray that each of us will find fresh hope for a brighter future.

John

Service marks rise from the ashes

In February we mark the tenth anniversary of the official re-opening of our Parish Church following the devastating fire in the summer of 2010.

By Jeffrey Bridges
Churchwarden

and a two-year interregnum, following Kevin Mephams' retirement in 2021.

The service to mark the re-opening was led by the Bishop of Chichester, the Rt Rev Martin Warner, when the church was absolutely packed out, with 120 people.

On 11 February this year we will be marking the anniversary with a special service at 3pm, in place of the usual 10.30 Family Service. It will take the form of a Songs of Praise and will be led by our new Rector John Hawkins.

Final details are to be decided but we will look back to the fire and the restoration, the last 10 years and to the future of our ancient church.

These years have included Covid restrictions

Also in that period we have lost some faithful members, who now lie in the churchyard, but we have also attracted a number of new and in some cases returning people, so that our numbers remain fairly constant – but there's always room for more and no previous experience is required!

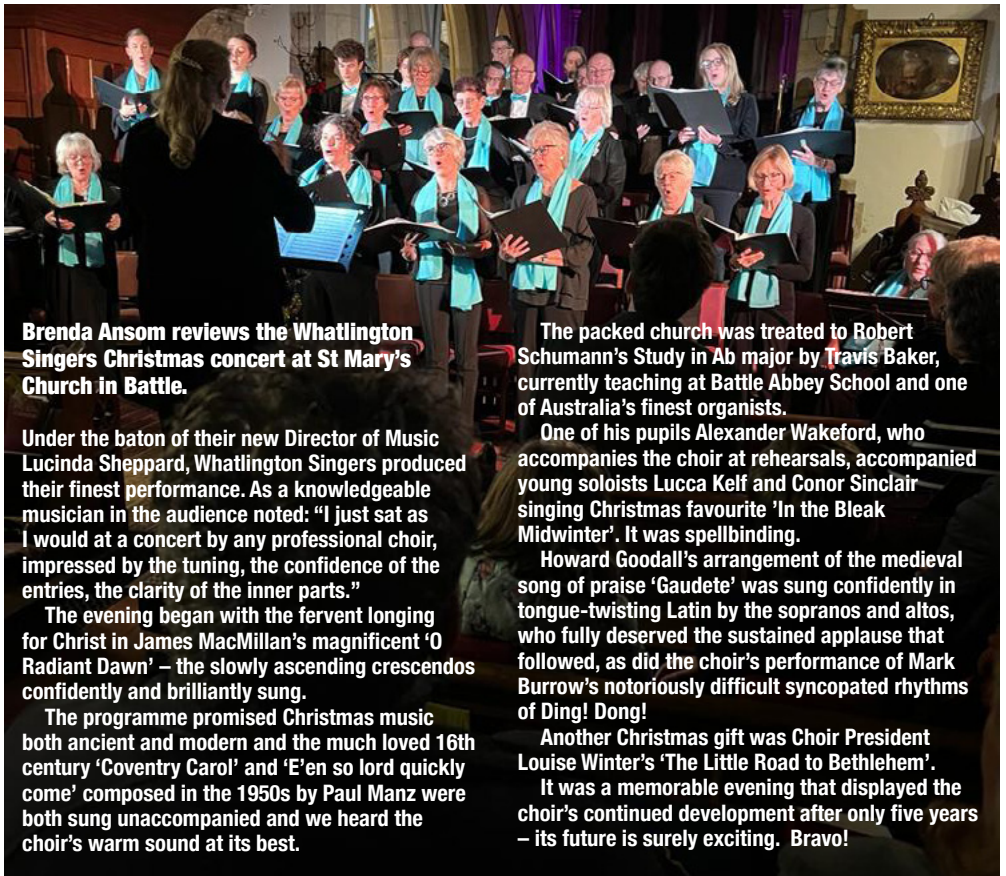
UPCOMING SERVICES

First and third Sundays: 9.15am Holy Communion

Second Sunday: 10.am Family Service

Fourth Sunday: 4pm, Evensong (6pm from April)

■ Mothering Sunday falls on 10 March, so our 10.30am service that day will be themed for that.



Brenda Ansom reviews the Whatlington Singers Christmas concert at St Mary's Church in Battle.

Under the baton of their new Director of Music Lucinda Sheppard, Whatlington Singers produced their finest performance. As a knowledgeable musician in the audience noted: "I just sat as I would at a concert by any professional choir, impressed by the tuning, the confidence of the entries, the clarity of the inner parts."

The evening began with the fervent longing for Christ in James MacMillan's magnificent 'O Radiant Dawn' – the slowly ascending crescendos confidently and brilliantly sung.

The programme promised Christmas music both ancient and modern and the much loved 16th century 'Coventry Carol' and 'E'en so lord quickly come' composed in the 1950s by Paul Manz were both sung unaccompanied and we heard the choir's warm sound at its best.

The packed church was treated to Robert Schumann's Study in Ab major by Travis Baker, currently teaching at Battle Abbey School and one of Australia's finest organists.

One of his pupils Alexander Wakeford, who accompanies the choir at rehearsals, accompanied young soloists Lucca Kelf and Conor Sinclair singing Christmas favourite 'In the Bleak Midwinter'. It was spellbinding.

Howard Goodall's arrangement of the medieval song of praise 'Gaudete' was sung confidently in tongue-twisting Latin by the sopranos and altos, who fully deserved the sustained applause that followed, as did the choir's performance of Mark Burrow's notoriously difficult syncopated rhythms of Ding! Dong!

Another Christmas gift was Choir President Louise Winter's 'The Little Road to Bethlehem'.

It was a memorable evening that displayed the choir's continued development after only five years – its future is surely exciting. Bravo!

Litter louts leave clues for future finders



Martyn Hole scours village verges for gifts to the Garbage Gods

LIn my view, in archeology, too much attention is focused on burial sites and what objects have been left in the tombs of the unfortunate occupants.

Unlike King Charles III, I don't have a degree in Arch & Anth, but it seems to me that the objects found in these sites reflect what was thought to be useful in the afterlife – weapons, food, money, jewellery and so forth – so it was stuff that they wanted to keep.

To me, it is the stuff that older societies threw away that's more revealing about day-to-day life rather than the ceremonial objects placed in a grave. This can give important insights into what people ate, how it was cooked, what implements and ceramics they used and so on (see *Rathje & Murphy: Rubbish: the Archeology of Garbage*).

On my frequent walks up Whatlington Road to visit the Royal Oak, I find it fascinating (and depressing) how much rubbish lies by the side of the road. I believe that the people responsible are different from us. Indeed, I would go as far as calling them a separate tribe. Who are the members of this mysterious tribe who lob so much stuff out of their vehicles' windows? Are they giving offerings to their gods? I think the study of these gifts can

give insights into how this tribe lives.

On diet, it appears to be mainly fast food and I don't think that many are vegetarians. Also, they do not seem to eat fruit (I have never seen an apple core or orange peel). On beverages,



my ranking would be lager, Red Bull, water and take-away coffee. The occasional cider but never an ale.

Smoking seems an important ritual but cigarettes, not roll-ups, cigars or pipe tobacco. This combination of behaviour suggests a fairly short lifespan.

In terms of transport, many detached hub caps can be found, perhaps a combination of a badly pot-holed road and poor car maintenance. Also, the hubcaps are almost exclusively the sporty 'boy racer' types.

So what should we call this tribe? I think Ian Dury hit the nail on the head with his song *Blockheads* from the album *New Boots & Panties*, which begins:

You must have seen parties of Blockheads

With blotched and lathered skin

Blockheads with food particles in their teeth

What a horrible state they're in.

You can find the full lyrics (be prepared for some fruity language) at: <https://genius.com/ian-dury-blockheads-lyrics>



Eurovision Toad Contest: over to you Katie for the results



In the last issue I asked readers to suggest a name for the toad who has taken up long-term residence in my cellar. Now, channelling Katie Boyle in her Eurovision Song Contest days, here are the results in reverse order:
 4th: avec nul points, keine punkte, no points – **Sausage** (Roger Fisher)
 3rd: avec dix points, zehn punkte, 10 points – **Toad in the Holes'**

(Steve Turner)

2nd: avec vingt points, zvanzig punkte, 20 points – **Gollum** (Richard Scott)

1st: la gagnante, das siegerin, the winner avec cent points, hundert pluker, 100 hundred points – **Warty Slider** (Pauline Lyon).
Well done Pauline, a bottle of bubbly is on its way to you.