

Horror find 'Heartbreaking' discovery of dead puppies in sack

Police are investigating the discovery of a sack full of dead puppies in Whatlington.

Sussex Police found the bag on Sunday 22 February. It had been dumped in Whatlington Road.

A police spokesperson told Whatlington News: "Local enquiries were carried out. However, at this time no one has been identified in connection with the report.

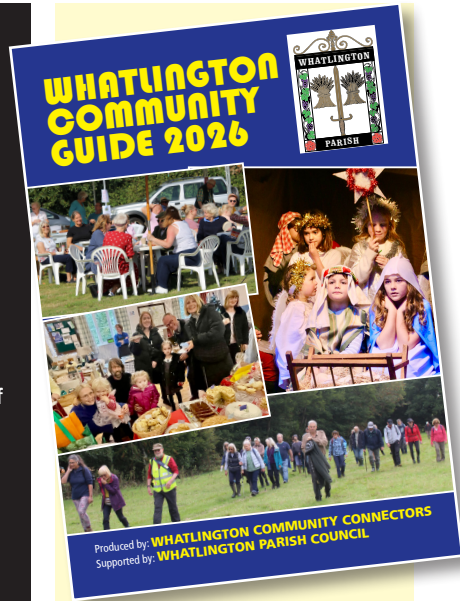
"The incident was also reported to Rother District Council."

Anyone with information is asked to report online or call 101, quoting serial 376 of 22/2.

A spokesperson for the RSPCA said: "It is heartbreaking to hear about this incident and our thoughts are with those who found these puppies.

"While we don't know if the puppies were already dead when they were left at the side of the road it does appear suspicious and we would ask anyone who has first-hand information about this to contact the RSPCA on 0300 1234 999."

■ More information on what the public can do to help animals in need is available on the RSPCA website.



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Residents reveal fears over campsite plan

Plans to extend the use of a camp site in Mill Lane have drawn objections from neighbouring residents and the parish council.

Owners of the adult only naturist site at Mill Farm want to increase its use for tents, caravans and motorhomes from the present 60 days a year to seven months.

The use of the site will be “low key with no permanent structures or buildings erected”, state the land owners, who live nearby.

They go on: “Mill Lane has served the hotel, now converted to school boarding accommodation, for many years as well as the camp site held at Mill Farm over the last two years without incident.

“Whilst it is narrow, this results in very low vehicle speeds and therefore unlikely to cause conflict between road users and persons

Parish council states proposal ‘out of keeping’ with the area

using the bridleway.”

However, Whatlington Parish Council has lodged an objection, along with several neighbouring property owners. The authority objected to the “noise, scale and extent of the proposed development”.

It added: “There is no identified local need for the tourism facilities of the kind offered by this enterprise.

“Both the scale and location of the proposed development are entirely out of keeping with the rural character of the countryside.”

The application is due to be discussed by Rother planning committee on 16 April.

■ Concern at traffic and noise but welcomed by naturists ■

Guy Selmon

“We have very strong concerns about the condition of Mill Lane, which is totally unsuited to a significant increase in traffic, particularly large caravans and other recreational vehicles.”

Katie Hawes

“Leeford Place Hotel use to hold several weddings and other events a with more than 100 guests at times. If Mill Lane was capable of dealing with this traffic it should be more than adequate for the campsite traffic.”

Sarah Speller

“With increased traffic it will inevitably lead to increased rubbish in the hedgerows, effluent running along the track, noise, and disturbance of the

COMMENTS ON THE APPLICATION

countryside. It is a feature of Mill Lane that you can walk along it without hearing surrounding noise save for birdsong.”

Hugh Apthorp

“We live in a quiet close-knit rural community and feel that approving this application would adversely change the character of our village. We also feel it would put off much needed prospective newcomers to the village.”

Jeremy Johnson

“I have visited, with my wife, on a couple of occasions last year. We found the site to be of great benefit to us as naturists and members of the National Trust.”

Edward Henderson

“With the conversion of Leeford Place Hotel into a student residence of Battle Abbey School, and the closure of the Royal Oak pub, Whatlington now has no pub/restaurant or even a shop. The occupants of the proposed holiday accommodation must therefore travel to Sedlescombe or Battle to reach amenities. The traffic-density implication for such a small lane, which is used daily by residents, visiting pedestrians and horse riders, should be obvious.”

Mark Lawrence

“As naturists, we are extremely restricted as to where we can be our true selves and meet our friends without causing offence to others and this can feel discriminatory at times.”



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Long journey to open gates to slower life



A red tape maze will need to be negotiated if a proposal to install 'gateways' on road entrances to the village is to make any progress.

The aim is for the gates to be placed on the A21, Whatlington Road and Park Lane. It is one of the road safety proposals arising from the scrapping of the Whatlington Speedwatch Group following lack of village volunteers.

At the time the idea was suggested by Speedwatch Co-ordinator Anne Smith, Whatlington Parish Council chair Roger Fisher warned that the move from the free volunteer scheme to roadside signs of some sort would need to be recouped through household council tax.

An initial investigation by Parish Clerk Tracy Dixon via East Sussex County Council revealed

that a six-point process would be required before licences to install the gates could be issued.

Initial costs would be around £565 per gateway, with the structures themselves costing from £400 each before council contractors were engaged to install them.

The gateways are proven to reduce traffic speeds by proving to motorists they are entering a built-up area.

Councillors resolved the clerk should make the first application to see if highways authorities would allow gateways and research prices ahead of a final decision.

Lorry increase could boost Valerie legacy

Villagers have noticed more big lorries trying to turn left from the A21 onto Whatlington Road.

The turn is sharp, resulting in damage to the green by the pub.

Parish Clerk Tracy Dixon is to try to find out if the vehicles are involved in the latest rail trackside repairs opposite the church, or if there is a general increase in heavy vehicle traffic.

National Highways will be

contacted to see if this can be stopped or controlled.

■ One benefit of the British Rail contractor vehicles using the Village Hall car park during the work is that they have offered to do repairs to the car park and work on the Village Hall in return.

The firm may also agree to partly fund the memorial planned outside the hall to mark the service to Whatlington of former Parish Clerk Valerie Bennett.

Knitting the village red

Ten keen knitters have answered the call to form an army of poppy makers to provide a spectacular Remembrance commemoration display

Parish Councillor Sandie Sullivan came up with the idea and so far all the poppy-making troops are happy to provide their own materials.

She estimates 144 poppies are needed for a square metre net with sites earmarked all around the village.

■ There's still time to get involved: contact Sandie by calling her on 07939 025828 or emailing ssullivan1904@btinternet.com

Woodyard set to become house

The site of Robert Fuller's former timber business in Whatlington Road could become a one-bedroomed house.

The Old Woodyard has been vacant since Robert passed away in 2022 and a planning application in principle envisages a house, driveway and garden.

The current building was erected as a temporary haulage yard in the 1940s.

STORY BEHIND WAR MEMORIAL NAME

Airman's tragic death weeks after wedding

A recently restored headstone in Whatlington churchyard bears a family name once well known in the village . . . one that is repeated on the War Memorial inside the church.

The headstone is that of John George and Jessie Isabel Cundy and it's their son Anthony who is honoured on the plaque following his death in an aircraft accident off the coast of Africa in September 1942.

He was one of ten Cundy children – five girls and five boys – who lived at Leeford Lodge, the family home from 1917 to shortly after World War II.

Anthony was a pilot for BOAC, flying supplies during the war to neutral and Commonwealth countries, as well as occupied territories.

He had delivered a plane to Australia and was a passenger returning home to the UK via Lisbon in the seaplane Clare when it caught fire north west of Dakar, having stopped in West Africa to refuel.

The pilot attempted to return to land, but the plane ditched in the sea and all 15 people onboard died.

While some bodies eventually washed up onshore, Anthony's was never found. The names of 12 of the victims, including Anthony, are recorded on the Malta Memorial.

Tragically Anthony had married Lilian just three



weeks before he died and his niece Nicky Marks told Whatlington News: "The family was devastated. He was the only one of the ten who died during the war and, apart from a brother who died from TB, all the rest of the siblings lived to an old age."

It was in 1946 that the church agreed to erect a memorial to commemorate those who had fallen during the war.

The church council wrote to Anthony's father with the idea of adding his name to the plaque, as well as that Mrs Masters of Cripps Corner, who lost her two youngest sons.

Niece Nicky and nephew Christopher Anthony travelled to Whatlington Church for November's Remembrance Service, and placed a wreath in memory of their uncle.

Nicky said: "My father Paul, Anthony's brother, had always wanted his parents' granite headstone restored and so after his death we have done that in his memory.

"We had wanted for a long time to lay a wreath, we don't know when this might have happened last, and I am so glad we did."

The doomed flying boat in which Anthony died



REVEALS FAMILY'S HISTORIC VILLAGE ROLE

Down from London with 10 kids and six COWS

It was in 1917 that the Cundy family moved to Leeford Lodge – John George Cundy deciding the country life would be better for his large family than their home in East Ham.

The comfortably-off Cundys employed a large household including a housekeeper, maids, nannies, a governess and three garden staff.

Nicky Marks, whose father Paul was one of 10 siblings, recalls: “My father told me that he disliked being indoors with the governess and would sneak off to spend time with the gardeners.

“He loved being outdoors and soon knew the Latin names of all the plants.”

The house, festooned in Virginia Creeper, had extensive grounds in which all the vegetables for the family were grown. There were also six Jersey cows, providing milk and butter.

“The children loved being there,” said Nicky, “with all that space in which to run wild.”

Leeford became known locally as The Cundy House and was the scene of many parties.

On the night World War II ended Paul's wife Cynthia walked up to the Royal Oak with the family to join the village celebrations. Paul was



The Cundys take tea in the meadow at Leeford Lodge

serving with the Royal Engineers in Italy.

Soon after the war ended the Cundys left Leeford and moved to a large house in St Helen's Park Road in Hastings.

Their home eventually became Leeford Place Hotel and Nicky said: “When my father reached 80 we held his birthday party there. He said it was like going home.

“The room in which he stayed was his parents’ bedroom where he was born. Three rooms had built-in wardrobes he remembered from his childhood, and one still had his nursery wallpaper.

“He said the bannisters were worn and polished from years of children sliding down them.

“We were sad that the hotel closed and we could no longer go back there, but now it has become Leeford Lodge again for Battle Abbey School boarders, it's nice to think that there are young people once more enjoying the fresh air and the open space.”



Left, the family in the garden of Leeford (pictured above)

Young voices return to Leeford – next page



Villagers take a look at Leeford's new life

Villagers got a glimpse inside the newly-refurbished former Leeford Place Hotel – renamed Leeford Lodge as the boarding house for Battle Abbey School pupils.

Former guest rooms have been adapted into modern boarding accommodation, with shared spaces including a hub complete with pool and table-top football and large TV screens.

The extensive grounds, once enjoyed by hotel guests, now offer a backdrop for study and outdoor activity.

The opening ceremony brought together residents, community leaders, staff and invited guests.

The official ribbon-cutting ceremony was by Andrew Blackman, Lord-Lieutenant of East Sussex, who lauded the project for its “sensitive redevelopment, high standard of facilities and contribution to the area”.

The event also saw recognition for School Governor and Chair of Governors Ian Mercer for 30 years of service to the school. The entertainment and social hub was dedicated in his name.



Everyone was a winner when local traders sold antique and vintage items from wind-up tin plate toys and delicate linens to handbags, jewellery, ceramics and recycled garden products.

It was the latest Antiques and Collectors Fair organised by the Whatlington Connectors with almost a hundred customers coming through the door on a Sunday morning.

Traders once again praised the friendly ambience of the event, the organisation, the charm of the Village Hall and the commercial success.

But the most welcome outcome was for the Willow Tree Children's Support charity, which was given a more than £120 from raffle proceeds and donations.

The money will go towards its vital work with children in rural Rother facing life affected by the terminal illness or death of a family member.

A small but new charity it relies largely on local authority, volunteer and lottery funding but future support is uncertain.

It provides in-school arts and craft activities and opportunities for children and young people to explore their emotions in a safe and supportive space.



Willow Tree CEO Jenny Eldridge attended the market and was delighted not just with the money raised but the publicity generated by advertising

for the event.

The Connectors' Anne Smith said: "This event typifies what we are trying to do.

"Firstly to give villagers new and different



Collectors and Connectors prove a vintage combination

reasons for coming together, then to support our own efforts to create more activities in the face of rising costs and finally to help worthwhile charities from the immediate area in their work to enrich the lives of hardest-to-reach communities."





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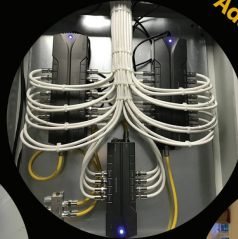
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White Chapel home plan thrown out



Plans to turn the landmark White Chapel into a family home have been turned down by Rother Council.

The proposal envisaged minor changes to the exterior of the listed building – including being repainted white – while inside a mezzanine level was to be created with two new windows at the rear, together with a sliding door.

The Victorian Gothic style building dates from 1872 but closed as a place of worship around 1936 when it became an antique shop, estate agency and, from 19897 to 2020, a fireplace showroom run by the Waghorn family.

But the plan has fallen foul of Rother rules regarding lack of walkable access to local services and public transport.

It would mean, said the authority, future occupiers being ‘primarily reliant on private car use, the least sustainable mode of transport’.

Rother’s objections also include:

■ the site previously had an employment use and the application was not accompanied by evidence it is incapable or unviable for continued such use

■ the development would involve the insertion of a significant level of glazing, introducing an unacceptable level of light transmission harming the dark night skies and local ecology in the area.

In the original planning application chapel owner Andy Chan of London stated: “Rather than leaving the chapel empty or at risk, this proposal actively restores and maintains it – keeping the structure in beneficial use, preserving visual identity in the landscape, and securing a future for the building as a familiar and cared-for part of Whatlington’s built heritage.”

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Watch duos sing it out for £3000 prize

Founded by international mezzo-soprano Louise Winter the Ashburnham English Song Awards Final is an opportunity for young singers and pianists to compete in a professional competition while exploring the repertoire of English Song.

Preliminary auditions have whittled down the competitors to eight duos, who will each hope to win the first prize of £3,000 for both the singer and the pianist.

Judges include baritone Sir Thomas Allen and leading lyric soprano Sophie Bevan.

This year sees a new venue – the Abbot's Hall at Battle Abbey School.

It promises to be a fantastic evening with the opportunity to vote for the Audience Prize for Best Singer.

Tickets are £18 (£10 for under-18s) available cash only from Rother Books, High Street, Battle or from TryBooking, or £20/£10 at the door on the night.

Join hospice band to lift mood

A new community band is tuning up at St Michael's Hospice.

Set up in partnership with The Music Well it's open to anyone who enjoys making music, regardless of experience.

A spokesperson for the charity said: "Music has a unique way of reaching us when words feel too hard to find.

"Singing or playing an instrument can help release tension, calm the nervous system and lift mood, even if only briefly."

The band is in a pilot phase, so it's a great time to join and help shape its future.

If you don't play an instrument how about the Community Choir? It's been meeting for more than a year and is always open to new members.

No auditions, no need to read music – just a willingness to sing (or give it a try).

To find out more

email commvolunteering@stmichaelsghospice.com or call 01424 445177.

Repair bills mount as Government scraps support scheme

Whatlington Church faces an uphill struggle to meet rising maintenance costs after the Government scrapped a financial support scheme.

An arboriculture survey for the churchyard has identified work needing to be carried out on the trees.

This ranges from cutting away ivy to more extensive – and expensive – tree surgery.

The church is also working to complete the most pressing of the repairs needed on the building.

The church's Jeffrey Bridges says: "It is unfortunate the Government has chosen to end the established Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme.

"This allowed churches to claim back the VAT on building work where the church is a Listed building and Whatlington is Grade II".

"In place of the former scheme funds will be

made available as grants, but these have to be applied for, likely with much form filling, and the monies will be given out on a competitive basis.

"From what one reads, these funds will not apply to routine and 'minor' maintenance work.

"This all means that our parish church and Parochial Church Council have to find the funds to pay for all this work, with absolutely no funding coming either from the diocese or centrally from the Church of England.

"Added to this, when work is done on an ancient building we have to use specialist and suitably skilled contractors.

"Our parish churches are an important part of our nation's history and it is sad that they face an uncertain future in a changing world. That said we do our best to look after our village church and always welcome help and support!"

Community care . . . with sticks

By Rev John Hawkins, Rector, Whatlington Church

F At our recent parish assembly, someone asked about the custom known as Beating the Bounds. It's a tradition that goes back many centuries, and although it's mostly ceremonial is simply the practice of walking the full boundary of a parish.

Years ago, before maps were common, this was how people made sure everyone knew exactly where the parish borders lay.

Villagers—especially the younger ones—were taken on the walk so they would remember the route for the rest of their lives. To help fix the boundaries in people's minds, participants used willow or birch branches to strike boundary markers such as trees or walls.

The walk was originally a religious event – a procession to pray for blessings on the land and crops. The custom is linked with

Rogationtide—the days leading up to Ascension Day—when communities prayed for good harvests and parish wellbeing.

This year, Rogation Sunday falls on 10 May, with the following three weekdays also counted as Rogation Days. Ascension Day is on Thursday 14 May, which was another traditional time for Beating the Bounds. Rogation comes from the Latin *rogare*, meaning 'to ask', reflecting the prayers for blessing and protection.

It's a lovely reminder of how our communities once cared for the land, the harvest and each other.

We may not be able to safely go around the whole boundary anymore but I hope we can manage to organise a walk over some of the footpaths and stop to bless our land. If any rambles are up for this, do let me know.

SERVICE CHANGES

Lighter evenings mean Evening Prayer on the fourth Sunday of the month changes to a 6pm start. This service uses the 1662 Book of Common Prayer and so is traditional. As with all services there are four hymns with organ accompaniment.

The Holy Communion services on the first and third Sundays remain unchanged at 9.15am. In a change to the 10.30am service on the second Sunday of the month, new service sheets and a new name – Morning Worship. After many years of using the old Family Worship sheets the change has been well received by the congregation.

A YEAR IN THE LIFE OF OUR VILLAGE

WHATLINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

Roger Fisher, Chair

This year has been one of significant arrivals as well as departures.

A welcome arrival was the opening of Leeford Lodge, the Battle Abbey School boarding house. I look forward to the residents' engagement with our community and the further opportunities offered by this facility for parishioners.

A significant departure was the closure of The Royal Oak. An integral part of our community, it was up for sale in the summer. Presently it is under offer, so it is to be hoped that it will become a further significant arrival in the coming year.

Another departure was that of Speedwatch. Lack of support meant it was unable to sustain its presence. Given the continuing concerns being expressed at our meetings about speeding this is an unfortunate loss.

As for council business, A21 and C293 traffic, drainage and repair issues, planning applications, new council policies, continuing pressure for delivery of the planned footpath on the A21 and finance featured significantly.

It is unfortunate that the precept was raised, but

this was to ensure we could continue to deliver our services and grants while replenishing our reserves for anticipated future demands. The current proposals for local government reform in this area only adds to this concern.

WHATLINGTON COMMUNITY CONNECTORS

Steve Turner, Chair

Now into its third year – still a newcomer alongside established village organisations – the Connectors have organised events aimed at appealing to a cross-section of villagers, particularly those residents who only infrequently attend other activities.

There is still work to be done but we have achieved some success towards that goal through 10 well-attended events such as antiques, craft and seasonal fairs, history talks, and quizzes, including a unique and nerve-shredding speed quiz that packed the Village Hall. We also had a stall at the village fete.

In addition to one-off special events local creatives have been sharing their skills to eager learners at craft sessions most Wednesdays.

Continues next page

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ST MARY MAGDALENE CHURCH

Rev John Hawkins, Rector

We have been celebrating around 750 years of the present church building. After the restoration following the fire in 2010, it felt like a good moment to reflect on the church's long history and welcome people into the building.

We held events including talks on the history of the church and parish, a poetry and music evening, and an art workshop and exhibition. These brought many people into the church and made good use of the more flexible space created during the refurbishment.

Like many rural churches our regular congregation is quite small and our future as an active part of village life depends on the continued support of the community and availability of clergy.

We are grateful to Rev Stephanie Prosser who leads services when I am not available. My current contract as rector comes to an end in November and what happens after that depends on the parish and the bishop (and my wife!).

WHATLINGTON VILLAGE HALL

Linda Walker, Committee Chair

We have seen new regular hirers such as fitness classes and dog training. These have joined existing users including yoga groups, Pilates, weavers, craft groups and the Guides.

The hall has also been used for celebrations such as Christmas, Hallowe'en, birthdays, baby showers and engagements, as well as being the venue for Whatlington Community Connectors events.

We are grateful to all our hirers. Hiring the facility contributes to the upkeep of this 142-year-old community asset.

Hall developments have included wi-fi, a large projector screen, and an online hall and car park booking system.

WHATLINGTON SPEEDWATCH

Anne Smith Co-ordinator

Although there was an increasing need for new members, and efforts were made to encourage others to join, no one took up the opportunity. As a result the group has now disbanded, so there will no longer be a presence on our roads to deter motorists from speeding or engaging in anti-social behaviour.

LOCAL FOOTPATH WARDEN

Bev Marks

With one of the driest summers on record, the

familiar Wealden mud dried out and walking conditions were excellent. However, the downside was that overgrowth flourished so some paths needed considerable cutting back.

The High Weald Walking Festival proved popular. This year's event will be between 12-20 September with plans to offer a walk in Barnes Wood.

ROTHER DISTRICT COUNCIL

Councillor Sue Burton

For tourism and employment Rother has developed the Rother Wine Triangle, opened the Camber Welcome Centre and supported significant redevelopment of the De la Warr Pavilion.

The Community Grant scheme has been relaunched.

Active Rother has provided a Stroke Reconditioning Scheme. More than £1 million of Disabled Facilities Grants has been awarded to residents for adaptations to their homes.

Around 200 homes, of which 130 are affordable, are being constructed at Blackfriars in Battle.

On climate the council has launched an online tool called Homewise for residents to research their home efficiency and how to reduce bills.



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The king is dead . . . or is it the bloke next door?

F At a recent conclave of oldish, older and frankly ancient locals at a nearby pub, we discussed the true location of the Hastings battlefield.

There is a minority view that it was near Sedlescombe, not at the site that most accept.

Many books have been written about the battle including one by Whatlington's very own Colonel Charles Lemmon who authored 'The Field of Hastings'.

There's a kneeler in the village church in memory of him and he used to live at Home Place. Furthermore, I have a book published in 1966 that includes a chapter by him and contributions from four other historians. Ask me if you'd like to borrow either book.

So who are the doubters?

Step forward Momentous Britain who, in a book published in 2018 'The Battle of Hastings at Sedlescombe', argue that the consensus view on the battlefield site is wrong and it was actually three miles away at our neighbouring village.

Initially, I was sceptical about this band of four brothers and thought they were of the Erich Von Daniken type of historian. Erich, and I'm ashamed to say I fell for some of his bogus ideas, believed that ancient civilisations could not have built the pyramids, for example, without the help of aliens.

Now the Erich example is a tad extreme but

Martyn Hole sides with the 1066 battlefield doubters



lots of wacky, alternative ideas have been mooted about 1066.

Did Harold die on the battlefield or did he survive as a monk into old age?

Does the man with an arrow in his eye on the tapestry represent

Harold or is he the fallen figure nearby? Some say both.

After all, the tapestry is essentially a cartoon strip and the text above 'Harold Rex Interfectus Est', or 'King Harold is killed', spans both of the mortally wounded men . . . although their leggings are different.

But having exchanged numerous emails with one of Momentous Britain's members, I think they are thoughtful and sincere. New ideas from enthusiastic amateurs have often made a difference.

An example is Nicholas Christofilos. Born in Boston to Greek parents, he worked in the family restaurant. Self-educating himself in physics, he finished his career at Livermore leading the team working on controlled nuclear fusion. Not bad for a kebab cook!

But if you'd like to hear both sides, local historian Charlotte Moore tells me there is to be a debate in Winchelsea on the Battlefield location in October and Momentous Britain book author Jonathan Starkey will be speaking at the event.