

Whatlington News

SEPTEMBER 2022

GET IN TOUCH: STEVE TURNER 01424 870041



JUNE



AUGUST

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WHAT A DIFFERENCE A HAY MAKES! Village drought in numbers

Buses are leaving our school kids stranded

Village school children are being left stranded by the area's unreliable bus service, a parish councillor has warned.

Andrew Ratcliffe said the Stagecoach bus service to Claverham College misses out Whatlington if it gets delayed earlier in its journey.

He said around eight children wait at the bus stop by the Royal Oak during term time mornings.

But, he added, in the past year he has had to come to his own children's rescue and drive them to school up to 15 times.

He told parish councillors: "Often parents are not told about it until 9.30am, although it must be obvious earlier in the journey that the bus is not going to call at the stop."

East Sussex County Councillor for Whatlington Kathryn Field said she would take up the case with transport chiefs.

Cut fire risk A21 verges council demands



Overgrown verges pose a risk to pedestrians forced to walk along the dangerous A21, parish councillors have said. In addition the 3ft high undergrowth is a fire risk in current tinder-dry conditions. They have renewed their demands to the county council to get the verges cut.

Royal Oak will stay open as search for new landlords goes on, vows brewery Page 3

River path improved for walkers

Walkers along the popular Whatlington 10 footpath – which runs alongside the River Line – will find the going easier following improvement work.

The path, from the A2100 to Whatlington Road, had become overgrown in places and included a tricky bridge where rotting timber made it difficult to cross.

That bridge has now been renewed by East Sussex County Council's Rights of Way team Rangers.

But Local Footpath Warden Bev Marks said walkers faced other hazards. Following a recce of the route he reports: "The overgrowth around the stile by the River Line road bridge opposite the Village Hall needed a lot of cutting back to reveal the finger post.

"I then followed the route east through a very marshy area where, despite having been a very dry

summer, the bog plant growth was voluminous!

"Crossing the bridge in the corner of the field was not hazardous but again some cutting back was needed.

"The next two fields had high grass but were easily passable, though showed little sign of regular use, presumably due to the failed bridge further on that has now been replaced."

■ **Retracing the old roads of Whatlington: page 6**



Get off the couch and start running

If you're a bit of a couch potato but fancy getting more active then a new running group could be just the thing. Walk2Run aims to take you from the couch to running 5kms in 14 weeks. It is organised by Nick Brown of Hastings Runners and welcomes participants of any age or ability, even if you have never run before. The sessions are based in Sedlescombe and although started at the beginning of September are still open if you want to take part. To find out more contact Nick on 07918 907265 or email nickbrownrunning@gmail.com

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Cattle, plants and businesses suffer in long hot summer

Hot, dry and record breaking – summer 2022 has been extraordinary, according to a Whatlington weather watcher.

There was only one day of rain in July – and that was just 3.5mm – which took the January to July total to 234mm, compared with 560mm last year.

The summer has seen 12 days of temperatures in the 30s and on 19 July it hit 39.8C (103.6F) the highest temperature ever recorded here. Last year the highest temperature was 31.4.

The scorching heat and drought has brought difficulties for farmers with reduced milk production in dairy herds, poor conditions for ewes which has left lambs struggling to survive, and silage, hay and grain earmarked for the winter months having to be fed to animals now as grazing land is decimated.

Among local businesses to suffer is Springfield wholesale nursery, whose Tracy French said: “We have two 8,000 gallon tanks that collect water to reuse but when these have been empty we have had to use mains water, which costs money. The tomatoes need watering at least once a week – it

would be twice if we were using tank water.”

Amateur growers also face challenges. Gardeners bidding for prizes at the Sedlescombe and District Gardening Society Autumn Show (see page 8) are struggling, said the society’s Plant Market Organiser Tom Schollar.

“The heat and lack of rain have made it a struggle to grow plants to exhibition standards. For example, hydrangea blooms are small, plums have come and gone, runner beans struggle with high overnight temperatures and flowers and fruit of all sorts are undersized and fade quickly.”

Julian Chandler of Jules Decorators reported: “It has been very uncomfortable on a scaffold in the sun. We have tried to find any shade and breeze available, but that is not always possible.”

Ben Clarkson, of Clarkson Construction, added: “At least the good weather meant we could carry on with outside projects without the normal English weather interruptions, although when it was at its peak in the high 30s painting work was difficult with paint drying too quickly.”

Health check for defibrillator

The village defibrillator, on the outside of the Royal Oak, is to get an overhaul after its effectiveness was questioned as a result of a flashing red light, signalling a potential problem. The battery and pads that deliver the electric jolt have been replaced but parish councillors decided to bring in an expert to ensure the lifesaving kit is working fully.

Tax rise if Valerie retires?

The possible future retirement of Village Clerk Valerie Bennett could mean a rise in council tax payments for residents. Valerie has been doing the job for more than 40 years but when she decides to quit the post a replacement may demand a higher salary of £1,000 a year plus pension payments. Such a sum would stretch the council’s finances and lead to its tax demand on village households having to increase.

Probe into low-flying planes

The Civil Aviation Authority has been urged to probe two incidents of aircraft from the Spilstead airstrip flying low over the village.

Oak will remain open, pledges brewery

The search for a new landlord for the Royal Oak goes on but owners Shepherd Neame have pledged to keep the pub open while replacements are found for outgoing Maria and Neil Smallwood.

The couple are quitting the Oak, which they took on in 2014, to concentrate on the three other pubs they run and in the light of difficulties recruiting staff.

A spokesperson for the brewers said there had been a lot of interest in the Oak tenancy but no decision yet on who will be next behind the bar of the more than 700-year-old hostelry.

She said: “There is nothing for the residents to worry about. Our plan is certainly not to close the pub because it’s such a special place and we want to make sure we’ve got the right candidates.

“It is a real community hub and we are just trying to work out who is going to be best to look after it. Our pub team is very particular about this particular little pub.”

The brewery will make sure the Oak remains open in the meantime, she added.

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

In these troubled times come and see what we're all about

With the news full of the cost of living crisis, NHS shortages, the war in Ukraine, climate change and a myriad of other problems, there remains one constant feature in our village, *writes Jeffrey Bridges*.

In these days when all manner of pressures are brought to bear on us and when people's mental health is much talked about, we should consider this from the Bible (Philippians 4):

"The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

Our Parish Church has stood as a beacon of faith for 800 years, so it must stand to reason it has something positive to offer.

And so our invitation is to come and join us

FORTHCOMING SERVICES

September

Sunday 11th 10.30 – **Family Service**

Sunday 18th 9.15 – **Holy Communion**

Sunday 25th 6pm – **Harvest Festival** followed by a Harvest Buffet in the church. We ask for gifts of basic non-perishable foodstuffs at this service, which are taken to the Seaview Project in St Leonards to help those less fortunate.

If you plan on coming please let us know in advance so that we can work out the catering.

October

Sunday 2nd 9.15 – **Holy Communion**

Sunday 9th 10.30 – **Songs of Praise service**

Sunday 16th 9.15 – **Holy Communion**

Sunday 23rd 4pm – **Service of Thanksgiving for Departed Loved Ones**. An opportunity to remember those we have loved and lost, whose names will be read out during the service. To add names please contact the wardens.

Sunday 30th 10.30 – **United Parish Communion** at Whatlington, joined by the congregation from Sedlescombe.

for one of our services to see what we are all about – and why we meet each week.

We have some more special services and events coming up, too.

The church is taking part in the national Heritage Open Days programme, where heritage buildings are open more widely than is usual.

This provides an opportunity to come and see inside the church, to enjoy the peace and tranquillity and perhaps to quietly say a prayer.

The church is regularly open on Wednesdays and Sundays, but will be open additionally on Friday 9, Saturday 10 and Saturday 17 of September, 10am-5pm.

The church can also be opened by prior arrangement with the wardens.

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Why do so few villagers come to our services?

By John Crouch
Churchwarden

☪ A few weeks ago we said farewell to village stalwart, Rob Fuller. His funeral followed the Patronal Festival weekend at the church when a small, dedicated group of ladies decorated the church with flowers.

For the funeral the church was overflowing with more than 180 people, and for the festival weekend there was a steady flow of locals and visitors.

However, on the Sundays before and after these events our regular congregation rarely exceeds 20.

So what is that keeps people away? And what are the consequences?

Over the Jubilee weekend more than 120 attended the party: who were they and where did they come from? I believe there are around 320 residents living here, but when I look at the congregation at our popular All Age Service around half are from outside the parish.

We have managed with the retirement of our minister Kevin, thanks to support from loyal retirees and lay readers. But our adverts for a new priest, at considerable expense, have drawn little interest.

And like everyone we have been hit by the cost of living rises and some fairly major expenses. We need to find:

- our Parish Share – our contribution towards the costs of our minister, insurance and the running of the Diocese – approx £8000
- the replacement of a disease riddled beam in the church roof – approx £7000
- the replacement of the eastern boundary fence – approx £3000.

And of course increased electric and gas bills for keeping the church a welcoming place.

We have been fortunate and grateful to receive some generous legacies, which mean we can meet our increasing costs at present. However, we will only be able to demonstrate our viability if we can secure regular support.

We know the appointment of a minister will help in the longer term but we desperately want to maintain the ability to be open at the current level of weekly services.

Without an increase in regular support, we will find it difficult to meet the demands of staying open at the level we currently enjoy.

So what happens then? We could be a risk of becoming a satellite – part of a wider ministry, with

services possibly once a month.

So to return to my original question: I have outlined above the possible consequences, however I am not sure of the reasons we don't attract more support on a regular basis.

I am aware that we are not alone with this concern. Perhaps it is a sign of the digital era, but I don't believe so. As a human race we need each other – we are social animals, a community-driven people. We need our pub, our village hall, our church, each other. But if we don't use what we have, then we risk them not being there for much longer.

If you believe that the church is an integral part of our small community, please give it a bit of support.

If you feel we are getting something wrong, or you want to understand more, please get in touch.

St Mary Magdalene Church has been part of this community for almost 800 years. Please help it get it through a few more.



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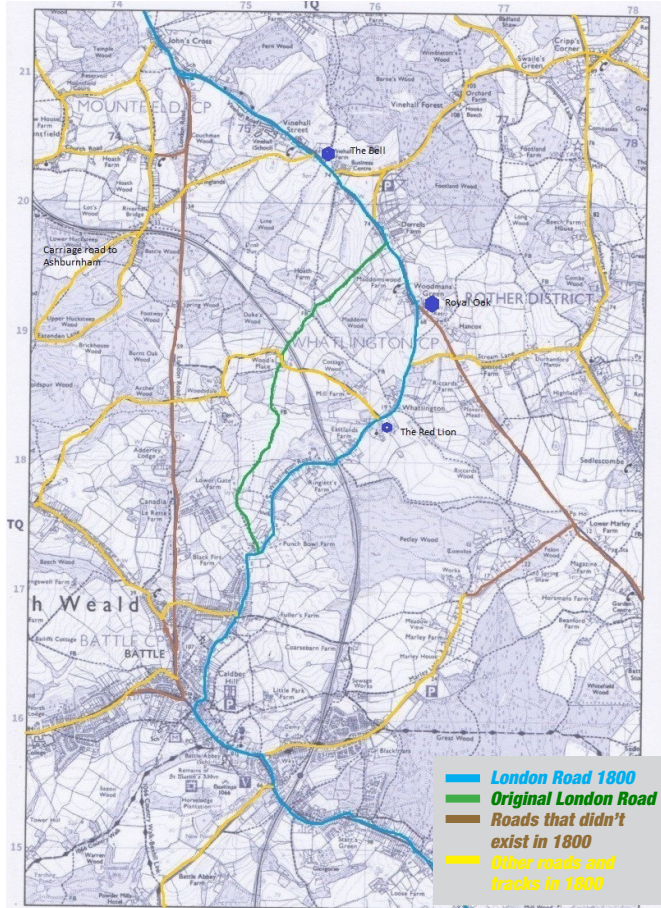
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Before the coming of the railways and in the heyday of turnpikes and mail coaches, there was only one way out of Hastings towards London and it wasn't what is now the A21.

Why travellers went out of their way to avoid Whatlington on route to London

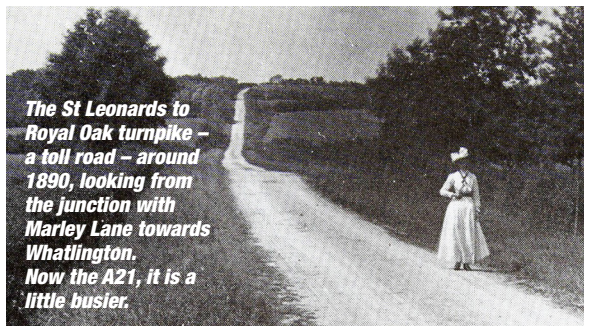
Walkers Terry and Brenda Milford look at the history of local roads. If you are interested in walking locally call 07305 618670 or 07757 103563 and they can put you in touch with Battle Ramblers.



In 1800 the route from Hasting to London left the Old Town (or indeed, just the town, there being nothing else – the population of Hastings was 3175) along the High Street beside the Bourne river, which has now been covered over.

It climbed to Ore village to join The Ridge and along via Baldslow and Telham to Battle. In Battle it turned right up Mount Street, passing the windmill and the Old Kings Head next to it, on Caldbec Hill.

Where the present road does a Z bend, at the end of Whatlington levels near Punch Bowl Farm, the original route went straight ahead by Lower Gate farm to descend the valley and cross the River Line. It then climbed to the summit, where the railway was subsequently cut through, before descending



The St Leonards to Royal Oak turnpike – a toll road – around 1890, looking from the junction with Marley Lane towards Whatlington. Now the A21, it is a little busier.

the next valley and crossing a tributary that rises near Vine Hall and joins the Line just before the bridge in Whatlington. Climbing again, it joined the newer route via Whatlington village by Maddoms Wood, near the turn for Rye.

Continues next page

Never mind the robbers – two pubs made it popular with coach firms



The Bell Inn at Vinehall

From previous page

Though this route required the fording of two streams, it was favoured by most travellers as the crossings were easier than the ford at Whatlington, after the two streams had merged, and the ground was much less marshy.

The terrain was also much more open and avoided Whatlington, which was a notorious haunt of highwaymen. This route is now footpaths.

However, Whatlington was also a thriving village with a busy mill and diverse facilities so the coach companies insisted that their drivers

used the more dangerous route through the village, which became the present road.

This also gave trade to two hostleries, the Red Lion which was by the mill near where the Village Hall is now, and the still trading Royal Oak. The old route had to make do with The Bell, which was on the right approaching Vinehall. Bell cottage can still be seen.

Several of our major roads did not exist in 1800 (see map) and of course, there were other tracks than the London Road in the Battle area, some of which developed into our present roads and some of which reverted to footpaths. Marley Lane only went as far as Marley Farm. Powdermill Lane, unsurprisingly served the powder mills.

North Trade Road had existed since pre-Roman times to bring salt from Pevensey marshes, serve the small port below Boreham Street and connect with the ancient settlement of Northeye. By 1800 it was mainly a drovers' road for Battle livestock market.

However, it entered Battle along Chain Lane passing the Watch Oak. The section of North Trade Road from the west end of Chain Lane to what is now the roundabout at the top of town did not exist.

Similarly, there was a road to Netherfield but, as what is now the A2100 did not exist, there was no top part of Netherfield Road joining it. The route from Battle went up Calbec Hill, down Virgins Lane and proceeded via Wattles Wish to join the present Netherfield Road. This was because, before the new main road was cut through it, the Mountjoy/Watch Oak hill was too steep for wheeled traffic and driven animals so everything went around it.



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GARDENING

John Tunstall

The plight of the bumblebee

Gardeners have vital role in saving threatened species

The National Trust and English Nature have alerted us to the decline of our native bumblebees, believed to be the result intensive agricultural practices and a decrease in number of insect pollinated crops.

Gardens are becoming increasingly valuable as refuges for these insect pollinators and gardeners have a vital role in providing the right habitat.

Bumblebees are important pollinators of flowers, fruits and crops such as runner beans.

They are able to pollinate at lower temperatures than other insects but, unlike the honey bee, bumblebee colonies store only a few days' worth of energy reserves and thus are vulnerable to food shortages when flowers become scarce. A constant source of nectar-rich flowers is necessary throughout spring, summer and autumn.

Not all garden plants bear flowers beneficial to bees, as many of the modern hybrids are sterile and lack pollen and nectar vital for the insect's survival.

Some of the most useful for bumblebees are often white, blue, purple or yellow on account of the bee's sensitivity to ultra-violet light. Try planting bluebells, bugle, rosemary, dead-nettle, geraniums, foxglove, honeysuckle and monkshood.

English Nature is encouraging people to 'get more buzz from their garden' by managing more sensitively for wildlife such as the bumblebee. Further information is available at www.english-nature.org.uk



SEDLSCOMBE AND DISTRICT GARDEN SOCIETY

www.sedlescombegardensociety.org.uk

You don't need to live in Sedlescombe!

Our aim: to promote to residents of Sedlescombe, Whatlington and surrounding areas an interest in all aspects of gardening and the garden environment, including maintaining the rich diversity of garden plants to help combat the effects of climate change.

How we do it: two shows a year, speakers, trips and social events, regular newsletter.

How to join: Contact Secretary Brenda Page on 01424 870455 or email sdgs.secretary@gmail.com

What it costs: £9 per person per year or £12 for joint membership.

Come along to our Autumn Show

■ Saturday 17 September, Sedlescombe Village Hall, 2pm, entry free

■ Entry of exhibits is free, for members and non-members.

■ Along with displays of autumn flowers and vegetables, baking and crafts, there will be a raffle and refreshments with homemade cake.

■ For show schedules:

visit – www.sedlescombegardensociety.org.uk

call – 01424 870455

email – sdgs.secretary@gmail.com

