

COOMBE BISSETT AND HOMINGTON

EXPRESS

Issue No 255 February/March 2021



A new local resident (with thanks to Keiron Yeo) and



a promise of something better to come

VILLAGE DIARY

LOCKDOWN - Nothing going on!

Please check with the organisers of the group or event or visit the village / clubs website when the restrictions for life following this lockdown are announced.

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Welcome to this edition of the Express. Another day another lockdown! “Reasons to be Cheerful”, there must be some? As we look forward to the emergence from this lockdown who knows what the future will bring. An optimistic view, everything will return to as it was, or, the pessimistic view, things will never be the same and Covid and lockdowns will become part of our society for years to come. More likely it will be somewhere in between. Most people will take something from the experience and for that reason our normal will be different and maybe we will be stronger for it. In the meantime:

- The vaccine roll-out has started, is picking up pace and it seems like every day I hear of someone else I know who has had their first dose.
- The snowdrops and aconites are out and the spring bulbs are showing through the soil, daffodils are nearly out in some places.
- The NHS and related front line workers continue to do a brilliant job under such terrible pressure.
- If we're lucky we wake up every morning and feel as we normally do.....

Two inserts this time:

A gift aid declaration, should you choose to support the Chalke-Cueibet Partnership trust. This is the annual Lent project and full details can be found on page 5.

CB&H Neighborhood Plan 2021-2036 – promoting the results of the on-line survey held last summer and where to find the full information.

Future events are all on hold but we have some of our regular features. Know Your Neighbour, takes a break this time as it wasn't possible for Rachel to get to chat with her chosen candidate. We have the next installment from Ron Shorland and John Bletsoe's regular feature. There are also New Year's goals from some of the children at Coombe Bissett School, which make interesting reading.

Sadly, we have three deaths to report:

- Monica Spears - Monica moved to Coombe Bissett with her husband, “Dagger” in 1970 and took an active part in village life. She will be remembered fondly by all who knew her. A family tribute can be found on pages 8 and 9.
- Jean Gosling – a well-known resident of Thorne Close, moved here from Bishopstone some years ago.
- Raymond Elliot – who lived with his wife Olga, on the Blandford Rd for many years.

Our thoughts are with all three of the families at this time.

We welcome and hope the following new neighbours have settled into their new homes and will enjoy living in Coombe Bissett:

- Dom & Sarah Imms and their children Teddy & Amily who have come to live at Frampton Cottage, Shepherds Close. They have moved from Salisbury. Sarah teaches at South Wilts School & Dom works in Finance.
- Sandy Hammer, who has moved from Salisbury with her lovely dachshund, 'Lucky'. We hope they will be happy at the Brines.

Submissions in **MS word** and advert requests should be sent to the email address below.

Latest submission date for next issue 5pm 20th March 2021

Sue Dyer email: cbandhexpress@outlook.com

Phone: 01722718514



Chalke Valley Benefice



Parish of Coombe Bissett with Homington

Team Rector

Revd Catherine Blundell - 780134

Team Vicar

The Revd Canon Jenny Taylor -
503081

Churchwarden

Mollie Lampard - 718517

Lay Pastoral Assistant

Ruth Morgan - 718557

No doubt as you read this you are hunkering down as we are becoming used to Lockdown as a way of life! I do so hope you are all keeping well. I think the effort everyone is making to keep each other safe is so heart-warming.

One difference with this Lockdown is that Churches are allowed (at the time of writing!) to continue offering public worship which is why there is a service rota in this month's magazine. However, we are judging the situation week by week and services may be cancelled with short notice so please keep an eye on Facebook, the Village Website and various Notice Boards.

When we do hold our services we have completed and reviewed a Risk Assessment and all safety procedures to minimise risk are in place including hand sanitiser, test and trace records, well-spaced seating and no congregating inside or out. We, of course, still do not sing and receive communion in one kind only. We are hoping so much to be able to offer services in Lent and into Easter but, as with everything, we must wait and see.

Dear Jean Gosling died just before Christmas. She had been a well-known resident of Thorne Close for many years and before that had lived with her husband Reg, in Bishopstone. Our love goes to her two sons and all her grandchildren.

As most of you will know we also lost another resident of Coombe Bissett in November, Monica Spears. The Tribute her family wrote can be seen in this copy and our love goes to her son and daughter and two grandsons.

Sadly in January, Olga Elliott's dear Husband Raymond, died in hospital where he had been since before Christmas. We send her all our love and prayers too.

The Church of England has prayed this prayer throughout this pandemic – please make it yours:

Keep us, good Lord, under the shadow of your mercy
in this time of uncertainty and distress.
Sustain and support the anxious and fearful,
and lift up all who are brought low; that we may rejoice in your comfort
knowing that nothing can separate us from your love
in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

Revd Canon Jenny Taylor

Can you stand not sitting?

In 2017, the Chalke Valley villages delivered 40 bicycles to the people of Cueibet, South Sudan to get their pastors on the move. This year, we want your help to keep their children still!



In 2013, Canon David Henley first visited Cueibet. They said they needed a church primary school. Next year there were 4 classes with about 200 children taught in the shade of four large trees. Each week, they borrowed benches from the small cathedral.



Now the school has over 900 pupils taught in two sessions a day in three mud-brick classrooms funded by Chalke Deanery. But, benches are still carried in from the cathedral. Some older children have to bring in their own plastic chairs while younger ones sit on the mud floor.



Can we stand by while they can't sit? With your help, these children can have what ours take for granted. We want to give the school its own chairs and desks.

The total cost for 18 double desks and 69 benches is £6,000

Why not give £120 for a desk, £55 for a bench or £?? for a leg!

We can't join together for our usual fundraising lunch, but there are still ways of giving:

- By online banking: **The Chalke-Cueibet Partnership Trust, Lloyds Bank, Sort Code: 30-90-89 Account Number: 75231860** giving your name as reference
- By cheque payable to **The Chalke-Cueibet Partnership Trust** and sent to: CCPT, c/o 27 Viking Way, Salisbury SP2 8TA

For further details contact: Geoff Taylor: ☎ 01722 503081 ✉ chalkecueibet@gmail.com

Chalke-Cueibet Partnership Trust

Registered Charity Number 1180313



Services in Chalke Valley Benefice - February 2021



BCP = Book of Common Prayer (Traditional Language), CW = Common Worship (Contemporary Language)

Pattern of services during Lockdown restrictions.

Please follow all the safety rules in church. If the Covid 19 situation changes, services may be cancelled at short notice. Churches will normally be open for private prayer.

Please check your church noticeboard and weekly e-bulletin.

7 February 2nd Sunday before Lent	9.30am 9.30am 11.00am 11.00am	Parish Communion (CW) Parish Communion (CW) Family Communion (CW) Family Communion (CW)	Broad Chalke Britford Ebbesbourne Wake Coombe Bissett	Catherine Blundell Jenny Taylor Catherine Blundell Jenny Taylor
14 February Sunday next before Lent	9.30am 11.00am 11.00am 3.00pm	Parish Communion (CW) Parish Communion (CW) All Age Service Evening Prayer (BCP)	Bowerchalke Homington Alvediston Fifield Bavant	Roger Leake Jenny Taylor Biddy Trahair Biddy Trahair
17 February ASH WEDNESDAY	12.15pm 7.00pm	Communion with Ashing (CW) Communion with Ashing (CW)	Broadchalke Coombe Bissett	Catherine Blundell Jenny Taylor
21 February 1st Sunday of Lent	8.00am 9.30am 11.00am 11.00am 11.00am	Holy Communion (BCP) Parish Communion (CW) Parish Communion (CW) Morning Prayer (BCP) Parish Communion (CW)	Bowerchalke Bishopstone Berwick St John Ebbesbourne Wake Homington	Roger Leake Jenny Taylor Roger Leake Biddy Trahair Jenny Taylor
28 February 2nd Sunday of Lent	9.00am 9.30am 11.00am 11.00am 6.00pm	Holy Communion (BCP) Family Communion (CW) Parish Communion (CW) Holy Communion (BCP) Evening Prayer	Berwick St John Broad Chalke Bishopstone Alvediston Bowerchalke	Roger Leake Catherine Blundell Jenny Taylor Roger Leake Lay Led
7 March 3rd Sunday of Lent	9.30am 9.30am 11.00am 11.00am	Parish Communion (CW) Parish Communion (CW) Family Communion (CW) Family Communion (CW)	Broad Chalke Britford Ebbesbourne Wake Coombe Bissett	Catherine Blundell Jenny Taylor Catherine Blundell Jenny Taylor

Ministry Team:

Team Rector ~ The Revd Catherine Blundell: 01722 780134

Team Vicars ~ The Revd Canon Jenny Taylor: 01722 503081, The Revd Dr Anna-Claar Thomasson-Rosingh: 01722 238267

Curate ~ The Revd Roger Leake: 07947149456 Licensed Lay Minister ~ Mr David Blundell: 01722 780134

Team Administrator ~ Mrs Emily Broomhead: 07890 262376

URC Ministers ~ The Revds Ana & Tod Gobledale 01722 330980, The Revd Jackie Lowe: 01722 780008

Assisting Ministers:

The Revd Canon Ann Philp: 01722 555178, The Revd Kate Rosslyn Smith: 01722 780011

Lay Worship Leaders:

Yvonne & Kevin Follett: 01747 828785, Caroline Lamb: 01722 780789, Sally Leaver: 01722 780447,

Naomi Martin: 07713031774, Don Morgan: 01722 718557, Richard Morgan: 01722 338868, Adrian Taylor: 01722 325862, Gill Riley: 01722 780538,

Janet Roe: 01725 519242, Biddy Trahair: 01722 780666, Rhoderick Voremberg: 07785 304142, James Wardroper: 01722 718152



Services in Chalke Valley Benefice - March 2021

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14 March MOTHERING SUNDAY	9.30am 11.00am 11.00am 11.00am 3.00pm	Parish Communion (CW) Family Communion (CW) All Age Service Mothering Sunday Service Evening Prayer (BCP)	Bowerchalke Coombe Bissett Alvediston Berwick St John Fifield Bavant	Catherine Blundell Jenny Taylor Biddy Trahair Roger Leake Biddy Trahair
21 March 5th Sunday of Lent	8.00am 9.30am 11.00am 11.00am 11.00am	Holy Communion (BCP) Parish Communion (CW) Parish Communion (CW) Morning Prayer (BCP) Parish Communion (CW)	Bowerchalke Bishopstone Berwick St John Ebbesbourne Wake Homington	Catherine Blundell Jenny Taylor Roger Leake Biddy Trahair Jenny Taylor
28 MARCH PALM SUNDAY Clocks go forward	9.00am 9.30am 11.00am 11.00am 11.00am 6.00pm	Holy Communion (BCP) Family Communion (CW) Parish Communion (CW) Holy Communion (BCP) Family Communion (CW) Evening Prayer (BCP)	Berwick St John Broad Chalke Bishopstone Alvediston Coombe Bissett Bowerchalke	Roger Leake Catherine Blundell Catherine Blundell Roger Leake Jenny Taylor Lay Led
1 April MAUNDY THURSDAY	4.00pm 7.30pm	Short Communion (CW) Short Communion (CW)	Broad Chalke Bishopstone	Catherine Blundell Jenny Taylor
2 April GOOD FRIDAY	11.00am 12 noon 1.00pm	Passion Reading & Music Devotional Service Devotional Service	Alvediston Bishopstone Bowerchalke	Lay Led Jenny Taylor C Blundell / R Leake
3 April EASTER EVE	6.00pm 8.00pm	Easter Fire Service Easter Fire Service	Homington Fifield Bavant	Jenny Taylor Roger Leake
4 April EASTER DAY 	9.30am 9.30am 9.30am 9.30am 11.00am 11.00am 11.00am 11.00am	Holy Communion (BCP) Family Communion (CW) Parish Communion (CW) Parish Communion (CW) Parish Communion (CW) Family Communion (CW) Parish Communion (CW) Family Communion (CW)	Alvediston Broad Chalke Bowerchalke Britford Bishopstone Coombe Bissett Berwick St John Ebbesbourne Wake	Roger Leake Catherine Blundell K R Smith / D Blundell Jenny Taylor Archdeacon of Sarum Jenny Taylor Catherine Blundell Roger Leake

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Family Tribute to Monica Spears

Born in Wallington Surrey in February 1924, Monica was eldest of 3 children. She had a very happy childhood with loving parents and grandparents. Summer holidays were happily spent on the Isle of Wight when the whole family, including aunts and uncles, would take a house at Shanklin. At this time, she was the only child, and doted on. Her grandfather called her Bonnie, and this remained her name within the family for generations to come. She always spoke very fondly of this time and had such lovely memories.

Monica was very aware of her responsibilities in life. Being the elder sister to mischievous Pat she undertook her duties to look after Pat with diligence. When she was 11 the longed for boy was born. Monica loved looking after baby brother Michael and reading Winnie the Pooh to him every night. When War broke out, she took care of both young children, helping them evacuate to the safety of the air raid shelter in the garden. Her father was a volunteer air raid warden so it was important for Monica to help her mother, and as always, she was so capable and dependable.

After leaving school Monica joined the WRAAF as a Plotter and thoroughly enjoyed the experience. She had especially fond memories of being posted to RAF Tangmere Chichester and billeted in Bishop Otter College. This was an exciting time and no doubt character forming as she was not only living away from home for the first time, but also meeting girls from all walks of life. We are so proud that she undertook such a vital and responsible role during the War.

Monica married RAF pilot "Dagger" Spears in 1948 (the RAF love nicknames) and so, as a devoted wife, Monica began married life in the services, with frequent postings in the UK and abroad.

The happy memories of their posting to Boscombe Down and living in Harnham in 1952, led to Monica and Dagger deciding to later "retire" to the Salisbury area.

Moving to Ceylon in 1955 was the first time Monica had travelled beyond the Isle of Wight. It was a huge wrench for her to be away from her mother and father for at least 2 years, and with communication only by letter or taped messages. Six weeks on a troop ship via the Suez Canal with two children under 5 must have been challenging for her. With her forte at keeping children entertained and happy, I remember her pointing out a camel train in the desert just yards away as we sailed through the Suez Canal. Also hiding me under her deckchair so that I could stay with her on deck, children were meant to stay down in the nursery. As always, she accomplished her new challenges beautifully and transitioned into managing the cook, houseboy and nanny and two house moves during the 2 years in Ceylon. Typically, she seized the opportunity for new experiences too; family trips upcountry to visit friends in their tea plantation, visiting cultural places like Kandy and even going to Singapore. Firm friends were established at this time, and despite the regular postings in the RAF, all couples kept in contact and celebrated the Ruby and Golden weddings together in later years.

The family returned to the UK in 1957 and enjoyed the chance to be in Surrey, near to family and familiar places once again. This was followed every 2-3 years with more house moves and Monica would carefully pack up and recreate our lovely home wherever we were sent; Northern Ireland, North Africa, Oxfordshire and then Wiltshire.

The request to move back to Wiltshire prior to retirement from RAF was granted with a posting to Upavon. During this time Monica took the opportunity to set up a nursery school in Netheravon.

She was always interested in children and enjoyed nurturing their development. After much house hunting in preparation for retiring from the RAF, a visit to the Fox and Goose in Coombe Bissett resulted in hearing that Mike Lawrence was moving and also selling his mother's bungalow.

Monica and Dagger were delighted to move to Coombe Bissett in 1970. They both loved being part of the Coombe Bissett community. They enthusiastically planned the renovation of High Toby and Monica spent many happy hours creating the garden. This led to her joining the Coombe Bissett Gardening Club and discovering new plants with the generosity of lovely new friends including Doreen Hartgill and Dorothy Gullick. With typical enthusiasm Monica decided to plant a copper beech tree in memory of her mother. Apparently, the roots had to be kept damp before being planted but the tree was too large for a bucket. The only solution was to have it in the bath with the branches extended across the hall. A solution could always be found.

Monica was very keen to be involved with a number of groups in the village including the Drama group, the Phoenix Club and the Flower Club. She looked forward to her weekly visits to Salisbury with her dear friend Peggy Counter then meeting up with Sheila, Ursula and John for coffee at Marks and Spencers. Saturdays could be spent with Peggy and dear Chris Burton all enjoying a chat over a nice pub lunch. She very much enjoyed getting together with friends arranging flowers in the Church, supporting flower shows along the Valley and exhibiting at the Village show. Her favourite class of exhibit was a miniature arrangement. Her attention to detail was memorable and the result so beautifully delicate.

The Coombe Bissett playgroup was dear to her heart and it gave her much pleasure to be involved. Once again so keen to support the development of children.

Monica loved having the family around her, and thoughtfully arranged events that would bring us all together. During this time the family extended with the birth of her much loved grandsons and in later life she became a proud great grandmother.

One of her passions was to collect on behalf of the British Legion Poppy appeal. The charity was important to her and even when she was unable to go out to collect, she continued, with some help, to carefully place the wooden crosses beneath the war memorial.

In later years with help from friends she was able to enjoy the Golden lunch club even though, as eating was difficult, it was necessary for her to have soup. Her medical condition was a challenge for much of her life, but by being organised and taking a rest in the afternoon she managed to do all the things she loved. She was always so brave and determined to keep going.

Expert care from Salisbury hospital and Dr Willis were vital to her in the last 20 years as her health became more challenging. Braemar Lodge have been wonderful with the care they have given to help her cope with the last two years.

We have been so blessed to have her for so many years and we miss her so much.



COOMBE BISSETT C of E PRIMARY SCHOOL

*Together we can...
 "Soar on wings like eagles,
 Run and not grow weary,
 Walk and not be faint." Isaiah 40:31*

A Happy New Year to all our friends and neighbours, from all of us at Coombe Bissett Primary School. We returned to school for Term 3 on 4th January 2021 and after 1 day back we all went into the national lockdown. We continue to provide school learning for those children who are entitled to a place, with the majority of our children now learning at home. These are challenging times for us all and our six school values remain an important framework through which to live our lives both at home and in school. The Care, the Commitment and the Creativity shown by our staff and parents remains resolute, and the Belief, the Bravery and the Brilliance shown by our children has been exemplary.

Term 3 always starts with our Going for Goals theme, in the belief that we truly all can soar like eagles and there is no limit to our dreams and hopes for the future. We have asked the children to share their ideas for their goals, hopes and resolutions for 2021 and we hope you enjoy reading them.

<p>"I hope that coronavirus will stop and that I can get back to school. This year I would like to travel back to Denmark to the cool campsite we went to a few years ago! I am going to try to get better at piano and learn more songs fluently." Ted Pendlenton Age 8 Fir Class</p>	<p>"This year I would really like to go school trips and I would also like to go swimming with the school again. This year I would like to get better at reading." Darcie Morrison Age 8 Fir Class</p>	<p>"I would like all my friends to return to school this year." Douglas Dew Age 6 Elm Class</p>	<p>"This year I would like to spend more time with my family, go to friend's houses and go on a holiday. I would like to play hockey and have hockey lessons." Josiah Richter Age 8 Fir Class</p>
<p>"I hope that this year Covid will go away and I can't wait to go and have a sleepover at my grandparents house and go camping with my friends." Jude Socorro Age 9 Fir Class</p>	<p>"I hope that when the germs go away I can go on a plane to New Zealand to meet my grandpa Robin." Marcus Hunter Age 5 Oak Class</p>	<p>"This year I would like to spend more time with my family, go to friend's houses and go on a holiday. I would like to play hockey and have hockey lessons." Josiah Richter Age 8 Fir Class</p>	<p>"This year I cannot wait to go to my dad's more often. If I could do one thing this year....I would stop Covid." Kurtis Winder Age 8 Fir Class</p>
<p>"My goal is to ride a horse." Ecaterina Czul Age 5 Oak Class</p>	<p>"My goal is to have my very own fruit and vegetable garden." Freddie Fatcher Age 5 Oak Class</p>	<p>"I hope I will stay well and happy and excited in 2021." Leo Wooller Age 6 Elm Class</p>	<p>"My goal is to be able to read a book by myself." Danica Wolf Age 5 Oak Class</p>

<p>"I hope my teddy, called Zoomer, comes to life." Charlie Norton Age 4 Oak Class</p>	<p>"I will try and help others and learn to jump and gallop in my horse riding." Jessica Judd Age 10 Ash Class</p>	<p>"I would like to be a good friend, be more organised and learn to skateboard." Amelia Cripps Age 9 Ash Class</p>	<p>"I would like to pick some flowers for my mummy." Abigail Russell Age 5 Oak Class</p>
<p>"This year I would like to learn more tricks on my scooter and go to my dad's house." Ayden Stewart Age 8+ Fir Class</p>	<p>"This year I would really like to stop corona virus and get better at my times tables and tidying my room. Maybe I will be able to go camping with my sister and mum and dad." Charlotte Lewis Age 8 Fir Class</p>	<p>"I will try and be more patient and wait for people who may be confused. I would like to learn basketball and skating this year. I hope Covid will go away this year." Clara Stewart Age 7 Fir Class</p>	<p>"I would like the virus to stop, so I can see all my friends and family. I hope my friends all stay well." Rose Socorro Age 6 Elm Class</p>
<p>"This year I would really like to go and see my cousins and visit Legoland." Mattias Wolf Age 8 Fir Class</p>	<p>"My goal is to ride my bike without stabilisers." Lilia Socorro Age 4 Oak Class</p>	<p>"My new year's resolution is to be more organised, to care for others and to use a greater range of football skills." Zach Taylor Age 11 Ash Class</p>	<p>"My goal is to go to London again." Edward Sartin Age 6 Oak Class</p>
<p>"This year I would really like the Covid 19 to stop and everyone who has Covid to stop having the corona virus. I would really like to watch The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe film this year. If possible I would like to stop eating sweets and get better at going to bed early." Robin Dew Age 8 Fir Class</p>			

Mr Basinger-Adams Headteacher

Coombe Bissett School is compliant with the General Data Protection Regulation, which means we have sought your specific consent to use the data within this form for the purposes as detailed within the Privacy Policy on the school website.



Introducing Oliver Davies: Wiltshire Wildlife Trust's newest member of the National Lottery Heritage Fund project at Coombe Bissett Down nature reserve.

As Community Engagement Assistant, I will be supporting the delivery of outdoor learning activities and – particularly in the current circumstances – the production of digital resources. Having lived in Coombe Bissett for my entire life, with exception to a few years of freedom at university, the landscape that surrounds Salisbury is both very familiar and very special to me. Coombe Bissett Down is an incredible space to experience wildlife, and as someone who is still working on becoming David Attenborough's apprentice, it has served as a valuable source of inspiration: last year, I took a closer look at our local nature reserve's mammals, using trail cameras that I positioned on deer tracks and mouse burrows. I have yet to decide whether I scared more pheasants or passers-by as I rummaged around in the undergrowth, but nonetheless, the results were incredibly rewarding. I am fortunate enough to have worked with aquarists, falconers, reserve managers, and ecologists, and I have studied a vast range of exotic animals, but nothing is quite as satisfying as uncovering the wildlife that lives right on my doorstep. I look forward to spending time with those who also use Coombe Bissett Down, and I hope that we can soon work together to help protect our surrounding countryside.

See his article about the Mammals of Coombe Bissett Down on page 32 (taken from the WWL Jan 2021 Newsletter).

CHAV

Gerald Bundy

Following the last CHAV report not a great deal is happening. What with the changeable weather (we need a reasonably long dry spell to complete the wood preservative work) and the current Covid 19 lockdown very little to report. The new replacement bench seat which the Parish Council have purchased for the Cemetery in Pennings Drove, is currently in safe storage at my home waiting to be put together. My DIY skills are very limited and keeping a safe distance from another CHAV is simply not possible. If any of you are walking around our two villages at present because of the lockdown situation I still have some gloves available for litter picking. Even with lockdown I could deliver them to your front door.

CHALKE VALLEY LINK SCHEME



The CVLS provides good neighbour support with transport and practical help for residents.

**For Transport Requests Phone: 718780
(Roger Brown, Anna Mynott or Debby Underhill in rotation)**

For Care and Support Phone: 421270 Debby Underhill

There is no set charge, but you are invited to make a donation towards our administrative costs.

Our co-ordinators and drivers are all volunteers and there may be times when you will be asked to leave a message which will be answered as soon as possible. Please give our co-ordinators as much notice as you can.

Queen's Award for Voluntary Service

Registered Charity No 1076335

Week Ending	TEMPERATURES			Average Mean Deg C	RAINFALL Total Inches
	Average Daily Maximum Deg C	Average Nightly Minimum Deg C			
Nov	1	14.0	9.4	11.7	1.33
	8	11.1	4.7	7.9	0.67
	15	12.8	9.9	11.4	1.78
	22	11.9	8.3	10.1	0.13
	29	9.6	5.7	7.7	0.21
Dec	6	6.6	2.9	4.8	1.61
	13	7.1	2.6	4.9	0.48
	20	10.4	7.5	9.0	1.75
	27	8.6	5.1	6.9	1.58
Jan	3	3.2	<u>-0.8</u>	1.2	0.48

Monthly Figures

January	8.7	5.3	7.0	4.94
February	9.7	5.3	7.5	6.98
March	10.5	3.9	7.2	2.33
April	16.6	6.5	11.6	3.34
May	19.2	8.0	13.6	Trace
June	20.5	11.9	16.2	2.61
July	21.9	13.0	17.5	1.21
August	22.6	15.2	18.9	4.77
September	19.0	10.7	14.9	1.18
October	13.9	9.0	11.5	6.93
November	11.4	7.1	9.3	2.94
December	7.5	3.9	5.7	<u>5.85</u>

Total rainfall for 2020 43.08 inches

November

November began with a couple of very mild days. The temperature on 1st reached 15.4C (60F). High pressure moved in on 3rd until 7th and gave us a run of five days with very sunny skies and overnight frosts. Milder air soon returned to give predominantly cloudy skies which remained, with the odd exception, for the rest of the month. Rainfall was less than the November average with 2.94 inches from the fifteen days which had measurable quantities. It was on the whole a dull month, particularly so in the nineteen days from 7th to 25th, when my rough estimate of sunshine hours gave us just 15 hours in total or less than one hour per day on average.

November was the fifth warmest in my records with a mean temperature of 9.3C compared with an average since 1987 of 7.6C. Rainfall of 2.94 inches was 25% below the normal level of 4.1 inches. My estimate for sunshine hours was 56 and this compares with an average for November of 89. I have only estimated two Novembers with less sun than this November.

December

December began with a ten day cold spell. Daytime maxima in this period ranged from 1.3C to 7.8C and averaged 5.5C. There were ground frosts on the first nine nights of the month. There was a very wet and cold day on 5th with rainfall totalling 1.18 inches. Milder weather returned on 11th and lasted until 23rd. Daytime maxima in this period ranged from 8.3C to 12.8C and averaged 11C. Winter temperatures returned just in time for Christmas.

The temperature on Christmas Eve only reached 5C and on Christmas Day itself just 3C. Both days were fully sunny after overnight frosts giving us a seasonal feel to the weather over the Christmas period. Temperatures rose on Boxing day to 9C when Storm Bella rushed through overnight to give us strong winds and heavy rainfall. The milder weather was short lived, as the Christmas/New year period was very cold and often sunny.

New Year's Eve was particularly wintry with the daytime maximum temperature only just creeping above freezing point. After a foggy start, the day provided full sunshine to go with the cold temperatures. Frost stayed on the ground in sheltered spots throughout the day. Although it was very cold, the absence of wind that day made for a very pleasant end to 2020.

One noteworthy point in terms of air pressure occurred when Storm Bella moved across us. The air pressure changed in twenty four hours from 988 mbs to 1,030!

December's mean temperature of 5.7C was only slightly above the average of 5.4C. December's rainfall of 5.85 inches was nearly 50% above normal and it was the eighth wettest December I have recorded.

These are the Stats for the Calendar Year 2020

	2020	Average annual figures since 1987	Ranking out of 34 years	Warmer/Wetter years
Maximum temperature	15.1C	14.2C	1st	
Minimum temperature	8.3C	7.3C	2 nd Warmest	2014
Mean temperature	11.7C	10.7C	2 nd Warmest	2014 *
Rainfall	43.08 inches	36.09 inches	5 th Wettest	(2000/2002/2012/2014)
Estimated sun hours	1579	1632	22 nd Sunniest	

*The mean temperature in 2014 was only 0.05C warmer than in 2020 and this is too close to differentiate them. To all intents and purposes 2020 was the joint warmest year in my 34 years of records. The last 10 years have produced the 8 warmest years in those 34 years.

History on our doorstep **Rockbourne Roman Villa** or “What have the Romans ever done for us?”

Here in our villages, we lead a pretty sheltered life and always have done for thousands of years. The ancient Britons, various tribes of Celts, migrated and traded across the Channel and along the Atlantic coast. They had evolved from the Neolithic people, who began to build Stonehenge, through the bronze age to the iron age, with their hill forts and villages, including ours on the downs. The Romans needed lead, tin and silver from Cornwall and the Mendips, and gold from Wales, as well as wool and hides, and corn for their Empire. By the first century Caesar decided to occupy the country. Although some tribes put up a bit of a fight, southern and eastern England was soon mostly happy to accept the protection of law and order, especially from other invading people - and the opportunity to earn money. The Romans got on with building their roads and towns, farms and villas and the legions pressed on west and north..



Few Roman villas have yet been found near here. One is at Moot Lane (Downton) but the largest so far is at Rockbourne, just five miles from our own village. In 1942 a farmer's terrier dug up oyster shells which Morley Hewitt, a local surveyor and antiquarian, recognised as evidence of Roman occupation. He bought the field as a retirement project and excavated it every summer from 1956 to 1978. In the mid-1960s, having recently come to Salisbury, I was one of the band of volunteers who joined him at weekends on occasion, armed with a pointing trowel. I was never an archaeologist but, as an architect, the experience here and elsewhere was helpful to me in later years, in Hampshire and at English Heritage, when my interest was more in historic towns and buildings.

The villa (complete with bathhouses as it grew) originated in the early second century and was built on the site of an iron age farmstead. As many homeowners do today, the occupants continued to enlarge and improve it to become a three-sided villa and farm with barns and workshops around an open courtyard. Roads to the north west lead to the main Roman road to Old Sarum, including one opposite through Rockbourne and Coombe Bissett. The villa was continuously occupied until the late fourth or early fifth centuries when the Romans left. The buildings eventually collapsed and, as is usually the case, local people helped themselves to the building materials. Today one can see the foundations, including remains of a hypocaust (underfloor heating system) and the mosaic floor in the dining room. Coin hoards have been found on site, buried and never recovered, as well as nearly 600 individual coins. Examples of New Forest Ware (a coarse everyday local pottery) and the finer red Samian Ware from Gaul were also excavated. Apart from sheep, cattle, and other animals, food included oysters, shellfish, and fish. Other remains revealed pots of beans, porridge, cereal, and grains. There are also many interesting artefacts of glass, bone, silver, bronze, lead and iron, illustrating rural and domestic life.



The villa was finally abandoned by the time the Roman army left in 409. By then we were a Romano-British people, apart from the Cornish and Welsh who proudly maintained more of their Celtic roots, and still do. The legacy of Roman government, law, language, construction skills, and a stable currency was not lost, but formed the foundation of a Christian society. We abandoned our primitive farms and huts on the downs and built new villages, with their churches, in the valleys, where they are now - but that's another story.

Since the villa was first excavated, there have been more modern scientific studies, including most recently a geo-physics survey showing potential new discoveries waiting to be unearthed. There is a museum on the site, and other items can be seen at museums in Winchester and Salisbury. The villa is scheduled as an Ancient Monument (though its special interest lies more in its context and the story of our life than in itself) owned by the Hampshire Cultural Trust.

Mike Pearce

**MINUTES OF COOMBE BISSETT PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD VIRTUALLY ON
TUESDAY 12 JANUARY 2021 (unconfirmed)**

Present: Councillors: D Rattue, D Hobson, P Crosthwaite, C Chelu, S Gledhill, A Bird and G Bundy.
N Heron (Clerk). Wiltshire Cllr. R Clewer. Members of the public: D & K Shinn, C Churchill

- 68** Apologies for absence – none
- 69** Public Question Time – D & S Shinn requested involvement in discussion concerning Planning Application No. 20/10975/FUL. D Rattue and D Hobson agreed to move this item to the top of the Agenda.
- 70** Minutes of the last meeting – the minutes were proposed by G Bundy, seconded by P Crosthwaite and accepted by all as a true record.
- 71** Declaration of interest – G Bundy declared an interest in the Neighbourhood Development Plan and C Chelu declared an interest in the two applications at Penvale, Stratford Tony Road. They will therefore not take part in any Parish Council considerations. G Bundy stated his wish to make a comment concerning the NDP. There were no additional declarations of interest in items on the agenda.

72 Matters arising:

Planning Application at Churchill Place, Old Blandford Road: D Rattue thanked D Shinn for sending the Clerk a copy of his objection to Planning Application No. 20/10975/FUL and advised D&S Shinn that the PC's comments regarding the application will be available to view on Wiltshire Council's website at the end of the consultation period (18 January 2021). S Gledhill has prepared draft comments and it was proposed by C Chelu and seconded by P Crosthwaite that these comments are submitted to Wiltshire Council by the Clerk on 16 January 2021. R Clewer confirmed that he has called the application in to committee should officers recommend the application for approval.

2021/2022 Budget: D Rattue and the Clerk have produced a draft budget for the 2021-22 financial year for the Council to consider. C Chelu put forward a case to include a leg press in the budget at a cost of approximately £1500 and D Rattue proposed we put this in the draft budget for consideration at the March meeting. D Rattue confirmed funds will be required for a new Defibrillator scheme. S Gledhill suggested amending the draft budget to allow for extra NDP costs. The Clerk will make the necessary amendments and the draft budget will be put forward for approval at the next meeting.

Neighbourhood Development Plan: G Bundy expressed concern regarding an email he had received from the NDP steering group with the online survey results and subsequent findings about which sites are to be put forward. D Rattue explained that we have a continuous link between the Parish Council and the NDP Committee and that our recommendations are based on community consultation and on things Wiltshire Council have advised us to consider. D Rattue acknowledged G Bundy's comments but reminded G Bundy that he can have no involvement in this matter. S Gledhill reported that the draft NDP is not yet finished but it will soon be ready to be submitted to Wiltshire Council who will decide if a strategic environmental survey is required.

Gates across bridleway: – G Bundy has agreed with Alex Howson from Wiltshire Council that the folding down bollards will be installed and has requested that the bollards are delivered to the depot at Wilton so they can be installed as soon as possible. A Howson has not responded to 2 emails and G Bundy will keep chasing

Donkey Field: G Bundy has consulted with P Lumber and they have agreed that the fence cannot be installed until the total flooding of the Donkey Field, possibly from a leak in a waterpipe, is fixed. C Chelu is liaising with Wessex Water and will report new information when available.

Speed indicator device on the A 354 : Community Speed Watch has been postponed and work to the Homington site has not been done yet. The SID is currently situated on the Stratford Tony Road and A Turnbull's report is on the village website. The PC's intention is to move the SID every two weeks and R Clewer confirmed that evidence proves impact does decline after a two week period. A Turnbull reported to C Chelu prior to the meeting confirming we are behind with moving the SID due to Covid and the requirement for a new battery for the device.

Website – webmaster position: There were no applications for the Webmaster position and C Chelu has taken this on. A Bird reported that feedback from social media about the website is positive and D Rattue thanked C Chelu for his efforts.

Defibrillator scheme: The current scheme is due to end at the end of February and a new SWAST scheme offering 3 fully supported and maintained Defibrillators over a 4 year contract at a cost of £3800 plus VAT was

discussed and proposed as acceptable by G Bundy and seconded by C Chelu. The Clerk will make arrangements for the new machines to be installed.

Playground repairs: A Bird has obtained two quotations for providing and laying new bark but expressed shock at prices of £2760 ex vat from usual supplier and in excess of £6000 from another supplier. A Bird will investigate further and enquire if the cheaper quote includes digging out the old bark and will also look into the option of purchasing the bark and topping it up ourselves.

NatWest bank update: The Clerk reported that the bank requires her prove her identity and has agreed to the branch with her passport when the current lockdown has ended.

73 Parking on Recreation Field: none

74 Parking on Donkey Field: none

75 Notices on Donkey Field/beech tree: none

76 Correspondence received:

1. Email from the cricket club with fixtures list.
2. Email from D & K Shinn regarding planning application 20/10975/FUL

77 Planning

Planning received:

Application Ref: 20/10621/CLE - Cert of Lawfulness - Exist Use

Proposal:- Use of land to the rear of Penvale as a domestic garden for a period greater than 10 years (application for a Certificate of Lawfulness).

At: Penvale, Stratford Tony Road, Coombe Bissett, SP5 4JZ

Application Ref: 20/10975/FUL

Proposal:- Stabilisation of existing quarry embankment utilising piling system to part of site. Retaining of existing quarry embankment with Geocell system and anchoring system to part of site. Excavation and removal of made ground. Remediation works to existing soil structures. Erection of: 3 x residential structures (forming 6 x units), associated parking, associated landscaping. Erection of: 3 rammed-earth artificial hills between units.

At: Churchill Place, Old Blandford Road, Coombe Bissett, Salisbury

Application Ref: 20/09874/FUL

Proposal:- Proposed detached garage and store

At: Pennings Farm, Pennings Drove, Coombe Bissett, SP5 4NB

Application Ref: 20/10352/TCA – work to trees in conservation area

Proposal:- Cherry and Norway maple (G1) - reduce crowns by up to 3 metres, to previous pruning points and/or suitable growth points.

At: Martins, Stratford Tony Road, Coombe Bissett, SP5 4LE

Application Ref: 20/09371/FUL

Proposal:- To build a garage/hobby room in the garden.

At: Greenacres Farm, Hardy House, Rockbourne Road, Coombe Bissett, Salisbury, Wiltshire, SP5 4LP

Application Ref: 20/09748/FUL

Proposal:- Erection of rear single-storey extension (Part-retrospective)

At: Penvale, Stratford Tony Road, Coombe Bissett, SP5 4JZ

Application Ref: 20/09816/FUL

Proposal:- Single storey hardwood conservatory to rear elevation.

At: Shepherds Cottage, Barbers Lane, Homington, SP5 4NG

Planning approved:

Application Ref: 20/09834/TCA – work to trees in a conservation area

Proposal: Fell Horse Chestnut

At: Hawthorne Rise, Homington Road, Coombe Bissett, SP5 4LR

Application Ref: 20/08856/FUL - Application for full planning

Proposal:- Proposed two storey rear extension and alterations

At: Deegan House, Blandford Road, Coombe Bissett, Salisbury, Wiltshire, SP5 4LH

78 Reports from representatives

Highways Warden – C Chelu reported that the work done by Wessex Water on the Stratford Tony Road has been improved and that half the concrete has been removed and replaced with soil. C Chelu further reported that the wall at Martins on the Stratford Tony Road has been hit by a vehicle, the landlord is aware and repairs will be made and additionally a fence at the Old Manor House on the Stratford Tony Road has blown over and is leaning against the water measuring device and could lead to damage, the property owners have been made aware.

Flood Warden – P Crosthwaite reported that the river and ground water levels are rising but all is working well. P Crosthwaite hopes that if Wiltshire Council are called upon to clear the drains at Homington Road they will do so as necessary.

Cemetery Warden – G Bundy reported that he will provide updated Cemetery Regulations and Fees for approval at the next PC meeting. He further reported that the new bench purchased by the Clerk to replace the rotten bench will be put together and installed as soon as possible.

79 Finance

CBCP Outgoings 09.11.20 to 07.01.21

24/11/2020	Bawden	Grass October	£133.42
24/11/2020	A Burnett	NDP Fees	£ 862.13
08/12/2020	SLCC	Membership	£ 83.00
11/12/2020	Hayes Garden	Cemetery bench	£ 369.99
11/12/2020	Bawden	Grass Nov	£ 133.42
03/01/2021	Bawden	Grass Dec	£133.42
03/01/2021	Village Hall	Defib electricity	£70.00
03/01/2021	Office Expenses		£598.20

CBPC Income 09.11.20 to 07.01.21

27/11/2020	G Rushforth	Plot A8 double	£180.00
29/11/2020	Nat West	Interest	£0.27
02/12/2020	J Challis	Memorial fee	£60.00
29/12/2020	Nat West	Interest	£0.27

Balance on Accounts as at 07/01/21

Current £15,929.62

Reserve £32,141.47

Total £48,071.09 (of which £2622.65 is NDP balance)

80 Date of next meeting: 09 March 2021

81 The meeting closed at: 8.40pm

Tennis Club Report

Janet Finnis 718346

We were lucky to be able to play tennis during December but unfortunately the courts are once again closed due to the present lockdown. Hopefully it will not be for too long and we can all look forward to playing again.

News from the Village Show Committee.....

Let's get you Garden Ready!

By Caroline Welfare, Coombe Bissett Blooms

For me, these next 2 months are very busy in the garden. So much to do and with the added pressure of homeschooling my three children, so little time to do it! It may still be cold and frosty, but the signs of spring are all around us with snowdrops, crocus and primula already in flower. In the vegetable garden its time to pick the last of the leeks and winter brassicas and the anticipated arrival of purple sprouting (yummy!).



Things to do in February

Sowing begins with all hardy annual seed varieties, leave on a warm windowsill or frost-free greenhouse to germinate. Do not over water any seed trays as cold wet soil can kill young plants and will reduce germination rates. Watch out for 'damping off', a fungus that attacks the stem/root junction and kills seedlings. Use tap rather than rain water and provide good ventilation should reduce the occurrence. Chit seed potatoes in egg boxes and leave in a warm well lite place.

This is the best month to dig in a top dressing of good compost or well-rotted manure on sunny days. This will enrich the soil, add structure and help with moisture retention. Growing beds should be weeded ready for planting out next month. Are you thinking about growing runner beans this year? Its too early to sow these as they are very tender, but your bean trench should be prepared. Dig a long trench about a spade depth and fill the bottom with really rich compost, some people add a layer of newspaper or cardboard underneath the compost to help water retention.

I like to have my onions sets in by now, planted just under the soil, but watch out for those naughty birds they have a habit of pulling them up. Garlic should have been planted last year but get them in quick this month and although they might be smaller, you can still have a good crop by July/August.

March to-do list

Start planting out hardy seedlings on warm days, you can heat up the soil with black fleece in February to give them a head start. Sow cornflowers, larkspur antirrhinum direct this month into good weed free soil. Enrich with fertiliser if needed. Last sowing of sweet peas for picking in July/August if it's not too hot during the summer, but late sowings are best planted in a shady spot to protect against the harsh sun.

This is a good month for lifting and dividing perennial plants such as Astartia, Phlox, Geraniums, grasses, etc. Start taking softwood cuttings from roses and shrubs when you see the new leaves popping out. It's time to get the dahlias started in pots and leave somewhere warm. The tubers will need potting up in good compost and lightly watered, keep in a frost-free place and they'll soon be sprouting. Cuttings can be taken from the new growth at the point where new growth meets the tuber. By the next year you'll have a good-sized plant.

Chitted potatoes can be planted in deep rows, leave enough space between the rows to 'earth up' for a bigger harvest. Frost will harm the tender early shots, but don't worry, there is plenty of growth beneath the surface. If we are expecting a really cold snap, best to cover with fleece or black plastic.

There is always plenty more to do, but I hope this has given you a bit of encouragement to get out there and get growing! With gardening comes the feeling of hope. Hope for success and the year to come. I think we could all do with a bit of that!

Memories of my Life by Ron Shorland (Part 2) - The Perfect Gentleman

We had a short stay at Simonstown and then began the long journey home, refuelling at sea several times. In the Channel we did a one hour trial to see what speed she would reach, 34 knots a bit under our designed speed. One last thing before we could go to Chatham was to unload all our explosives, gun ammunition, and torpedo war heads and squid bombs, at Upnor on the Medway River. We docked at Chatham later that day. We had a visit from some Customs Officers who advised us if we had bought anything of value whilst abroad to declare it. None of us had, we had been paid a month's pay before we left England, which got us through as we never stayed anywhere long enough to spend much. On small ships we didn't carry our own ledgers. In Navy jargon we were "tenders" to our home port Chatham, who when we were accessible sent us a book with all the crews names and what to pay them. On joining a ship you were given a ships book number and this was the order the company queued in on pay day, by this time officers generally had their money paid into their bank. The routine was quite simple, an officer and myself put up the money in numbered envelopes, the crew lined up, I called the number and name, the rating put his hat on the table and the officer put his money in it. No coin just notes.

To go back, before all the previous story we spent time in the Mediterranean we had bases then at Gibraltar, Malta, Cyprus and Alexandria. The United Nations was preceded by the League of Nations and in their wisdom made us the administrators of Palestine. The Jewish people wished to establish a country here that they regarded as their homeland since biblical times. They had purchased large tracts of land and many Jewish people had come to the country. The League had decided how many could come each year and our country was given the job of enforcing the quota.

This job fell on the Navy to enforce this, as most came by sea to Haifa the main port. The Navy patrolled off Haifa to regulate this. Many who came were survivors of the Nazi death camps and it was awful to delay them after all they had been through. Two Jewish groups were active in trying to accelerate the process. The Stern Gang named after its founder and Irgun, short for, Irgun Svai Leumi, which translated, National Military Society. Both these groups did their best to antagonize the Arab population. Some worked at the King David Hotel in Jerusalem; over a period they smuggled in explosives and eventually detonated a bomb which killed 92 people. Soon after we gave up the Administration.

Back to civilization we spent our time practising what would be our job if there was another war. This was after we were back from South Africa. Not boring because I loved being at sea. One nice episode was when we went to Rosyth to have our bottom scraped, not mine, the ships you understand. Up the Firth of Forth under that fabulous railway bridge, what a piece of engineering, and into dry dock. We had time to relax and visit Edinburgh, a beautiful city, the Venice of the North. We were fortunate while we were there the annual Military Tattoo was taking place the picture of all those kilted bagpipers and Snare drummers is still imprinted in my memory.

Then the inevitable happened I had been on Jutland for two years when I was relieved. Back in Barracks I was in the Ledger office somewhat different from being at sea. Trying to remember what I had learnt in training. Ledgers were kept in duplicate one fair copy, the other a working copy, one person one side of a table another on the other side. By that time I was a Leading Writer so I kept the fair one. Opposite was a Wren, a female member of the Navy. Some dolls, some dragons and boy did they let you know when you made a mistake. Every six months the fair ledger went to and Admiralty Audit Centre and a new ledger was started.

I began pestering the Port Index Office who took the decision where you were employed and god bless them I got a job in the Reserve Fleet. These were ships that served in the war – many 'Moth Balled', when a plastic coating was sprayed over the important parts on the upper deck. Not seagoing but at least back on a ship. My favourite one was the light cruiser Cleopatra, an anti-aircraft armed convoy escort, with a good war record, beautiful to the eye and built pre-war. I could have cried when she was sold to a foreign Navy. Another one had the awful name, 'Slinger', she was an American built tank transporter which they didn't want back, I don't blame them. She had one redeeming feature with no tanks on board their space was big enough to play football in. She eventually sold for scrap. One more I remember was Abercrombie a monitor, a class no longer used. She had a good war record used in the landings in Italy at Salerno and Anzio and again on D Day in Normandy. Notable for two fifteen inch guns the largest in the Navy which could hurl a shell weighing a ton nearly twenty miles. The guns had been removed, unfortunately nobody wanted to buy her, and she went for scrap all eight thousand six hundred tons of her.

After more pestering of the Port Index Office I was given two choices, Royal Arthur ashore somewhere in West England or Royal Prince in Germany, this intrigued me, what the dickens was the Royal Navy doing in Germany? Only one way to find out, so I opted to go there. I boarded a ship at Harwich which brought soldiers on leave from the continent and took them back to the Hook of Holland when they returned, which was where I disembarked. There was an office that directed

soldiers what tram to catch to return to their units and they had been told Royal Navy personnel would be arriving, so I was put on a train to Munchen Gladback. The journey took several hours crossing part of the southern part of Holland and into Germany.

At Muchen I was met by a German driver in a Volkswagen we shook hands and he in German asked, "bist du nach Uerdingen?" I used my one word I knew and answered, "Ja". The trip was not too far and I was pleased to get to what was to be my base for another two years.

The base was two dumb barges, so called because they had no engines and if in their former role would have been towed by a tug. One was used for offices the other our sleeping quarters, a cookhouse, and dining hall. They were well converted, no complaints there. Also on the upper deck of the big one was the wireless office for our communications to anywhere.

The base was in an artificially created small harbour and cut into the west bank of the Rhine pre-war to serve a flour mill and a soap factory. The water level was constant and didn't vary very much. Things soon began to develop, first the arrival of four former German air-sea rescue launches and the crews from the U.K. to man them. Then four tank landing craft, which you would have seen in the film of the Normandy Landings on D Day and crews to man them. Several large huts were constructed on land alongside the barges. Ultimately my office was moved to one of them. I was insignificant but the arrival of a four ring Royal Navy Captain in part of my hut wasn't, this rank roughly equated to a Brigadier in the Army, so I thought things were getting serious. Shortly after a Royal Marine Special Boat Section arrived things began to fit together. They were all trained frogmen and some explosive experts, magnificent physical specimens who you would never fall out with.

A conference was held in a compartment of my office with our Captain, the Colonel in charge of Marines and some French Officers, one of whom name was Jaujard, who we nicknamed Jamjar. I was reminded about the Official Secrets Act. As the conference progressed sheets of the details were brought out to me and I had to type with double line spacing. I can say now because that was so many years ago, the plans were that if the Russians tried to dominate West Europe as they had East Europe, they would have been opposed. The bridges over the rivers were to be destroyed and if they reached the Rhine our craft would bring the Army's tanks, lorries and heavy equipment across, it looked easy on paper but you can't imagine what it would have been like if it happened. At this time there was a tragic accident and two of our seamen were killed. They were buried at a small War Grave burial ground at Cologne. We sent a dozen of their comrades to the funerals and to meet members of their families. We understood later their bodies were exhumed and re interred in England.

An ironic thing at Uerdingen was a bridge over the river when erected was called the Adolph Hitler Bruke, it was blown up the German army when they retreated in the war, and the rebuilding of the bridge had not been completed when I left Germany. That happened soon after; I had good memories of my time there those Royal Marines thank goodness they are on our side, my working and personal relationship with Thea, my translator, meeting Alf Ramsey with Tottenham Hotspur when they toured in 1951. He won the World Cup for England in 1966. Playing in our base football team when we won the league and cup in a league that was all Army until we arrived, no doubt many other good things which age has dimmed, but I still see in mind's eye after 70 years.

Back in lovely Chatham I was only in the Barracks two days when I was back in the Reserve Fleet. The P.L.O. had brought me back and knew I would soon be pestering them for a move. The accommodation ship was Duncansby Head, an American built liberty ship, plenty of room on her. The routine and the job was the same only less ships. Not many sold but plenty going for scrap. One nice thing happened, I got a promotion to Petty Officer because there wasn't one available to fill a vacancy, and the full title was P.O. Temporary Acting it lasted a few months so I had a nice pay rise and neat rum instead of grog, liquid dynamite. I was long out of the service when the issue of rum was abolished in 1976.

I was there for the rest of my active service. My engagement when I signed on was 12 years, 7 active and the option then of another 5 active or 5 on the paid reserve. I chose the latter because a good portion of the five active would have been in Chatham. I got 6 pounds 10 shillings a quarter but that didn't last. When Reginald Maudling was Chancellor of the Exchequer and we were in one of our periodic bankruptcies, he abolished the Royal Fleet Reserve which paid me; I bet he didn't ask the Queen even though we were ROYAL!

I started on looking for some work as the four weeks' pay the Navy gave me on leaving I had given to Mum as I was still at home. I had some savings but I was lucky to bump into a man who I had known before I joined up, he said come and work for me till you get fixed up. He had a small gardening and landscaping business and that suited me, one of the things I missed most in the service. I did this for about a year and then enquired to the Post Office for employment. They liked

employing ex-service people, one thing we all had in common was discipline and good timekeeping. The Post Office had the monopoly of all mail business at that time and we were Civil Servants. I started as a postman but before they took me on I had to pass an intelligence test, it wasn't difficult and I passed easily. You don't just deliver mail, at the Sorting Office you also handle all the mail posted in your area, at Mill Hill there were about 20 red pillar boxes and two or three crown Post Offices, at that time business was conducted by mail, computers had not taken over.

Before starting at my office I did a three week course on the 48 Box Sorting Frame which had a box for every county in the U.K. You had hundreds of cards with towns and city names on the front without the county. The object was to put the card in the right box, if you didn't know where to put it, the answer was on the back of the card. Sorting the cards day after day you gradually, by repetition, eliminated having to look on the back of the card. On the last day a final test when you had a person standing behind you to see how many times you had to look at the reverse. The limits at which you passed were set, and most of us passed, no one was perfect and two had to do the course and test again.

Back at the office it was bewildering, the various things to get acquainted with seemed endless, on the reverse of the big frame was another frame with a box to sort the incoming letters for the individual streets postmen delivered to. A group of these streets was called a walk and the constitution had been put together by testers to decide how much a postman could deliver to.

Changes with new building some walks were re-assessed. One change I suggested that in some streets all the houses were named it took ages to get the letters in the right order. Make them have a number evens on the right and odds on the left, which saved sometime on such deliveries. In a sorting office there was a gallery above the floor with long slatted windows with one way glass to observe what went on below, and some light fingered postmen were apprehended in this way.

I enjoyed the open air part of the job, but things changed at Christmas. The volume of mail increased tenfold. So we employed Christmas temporaries some to deliver the walks, some to help with the sorting, others to help with the facing, that was getting the stamp in the top right hand corner of the letter so the stamp would get cancelled when it went through the franking machine which also counted how many had been dealt with. Packets were hand cancelled with a rubber stamp and sorted on a metal frame with hanging mail bags.

It was at such a time that I met my wife to be. She was sorting several places away from me when I saw this blonde person, a bit older than me but so attractive. I asked the woman sorting next to me who she was and she told me, Ruth but her marriage is on the rocks. So next day I made sure I was next to Ruth and on several following days, with patience I heard those magic words, "Why don't you pop down for a cup of coffee when you are not busy." Our friendship blossomed and we set up home together in a residential caravan at Arkley just outside Barnet, about four miles from the office, I had a small motorcycle so it didn't upset my getting to work on time. This style of life suited us, Ruth had a job up the road at Boreham Wood, nicknamed locally as Borethem Stiff. She worked in a clean air laboratory making printed circuits for computers. We had two very harsh winters and I was looking for a different job within the Post Office. If any were going they were on our notice board and one I saw a took my notice an open competition to become a P and T.O. which was fancy for counter clerk or Postal and Telegraph Officer. The word open meant it was open to Post Office staff and anyone who fancied their chances.

The office where the exam was held was in Saville Row in central London and run by the Civil Service Exam board. It lasted all day with time off for lunch. I didn't find it very taxing, it was mainly on topical subjects, I always read my daily newspaper and so kept up with that was going on in the world. I got the results about a week later and my name and another one were top of the list of those that had passed. Barnet was on the list where there was a vacancy which I opted for, had an interview with the Head Postmaster and was accepted. I went back to the sorting office as I was starting at Barnet on the following Monday but the Boss congratulated me. I asked what I could do, he said go home – change your clothes and then return your postman's gear, he said it with a smile; you won't be needing it any more.

I spent one week at Banet standing behind one of the clerks performing what I would be doing ultimately. Then I started my learning curve at the Post Office school at Euston Road opposite the main line railway station, the course lasted 4 weeks, the number of things we did was bewildering anything that needed a licence we did, those round discs you stuck on your windscreen, your TV licence, shotgun licences to name but a few your National Insurance was paid by your employer and stuck on a card we sold the stamps. I could go on. We also ran the telegram service, always busy on Saturdays when many weddings took place, for a few extra bob you could have it sent on a decorated card. One exciting event was when the Hawker Harrier aircraft, a revolutionary plane for its time was going on a sales tour of the U.S.A. it was taking off from

Euston goods yard. It could take off without any forward movement and likewise when landing straight down it was a great success and the Yanks bought many of them.

And so, to Barnett, with some trepidation, to take over a till which someone else had used, to make sure that it contained everything that was listed and that person's figures were correct. I went an hour before opening time for this and was ready to serve when the doors opened. An experienced clerk was with me and there was always a queue on opening and his good advice was try to work at a speed that suits you, if you try to rush you will make mistakes. As with any job after a while you got more akin with the transactions you carried out many were routine such as paying pensions and renewing car tax but some were a bit complicated the worst were overseas money orders which were a bit complicated, we first checked with the Post Office Guide that the overseas country accepted them as always there was a form, this one in three parts, one was the actual money order which the person sending gave us the answers to the questions we asked, second was a receipt to the customer for the amount he wanted to send. The money was paid to us and included a fee for the service. The third was an acknowledgement to go in my till and when I balanced my till at the end of the week explained where the cash had come from.

The word balance was the sheet which listed the transactions you had arrived out, pension payments for example showed as one figure you had a counterfoil for each pension paid. Without trying to explain in detail how the system worked on a balance sheet once a week you stayed behind to reconcile what you had received in the way of cash and replacements for the stock items which had a monetary value, for example renewal of a television licence, the validation stamps were six pounds and postal orders which had a value and a poundage charge which you collected. Main items were a cash intake of upward of 20,000 pounds which was mainly expended in pension payments.

On the balance sheet you had all the ins and on the other side all the outs. Described briefly, when you sold an item you lost that in your stock valuation on the other had you had a cash intake to compensate. This is a simple explanation but on balancing, if the two figures were the same, joy everlasting. There was an allowance of up to five pounds for discrepancies. I usually found if I was up one week I would be down the next week it was usually slight inaccuracies in the value of stamps held. I was asked if I would accompany the person in the TV records office when he made evening visits to people who not renewed their licences. This job was always done by two people because if prosecution followed the form had to be verified by a witness. The guy I went with never prosecuted anyone he was near retirement and told me quite frankly; the paperwork wasn't worth the effort. After a few nights he asked me if I would do the questioning which I agreed to, I went ahead and the licence avoidance was so blatant I went ahead and prosecuted. There was a short course to tell you how to do the job but as I had already prosecuted someone, I was excused this. A nice break from work I went to Old Street Magistrates Court to see the procedure when you presented your case. This first case was not pursued it was thought not to be worth the time and money it cost to go to court. The aforementioned retired, I got his job, but I kept my till in case in emergency I was required to serve. We covered a wide area we were a head office and dealt with Potters Bar, Hatfield, Welwyn and Welwyn Garden City home of Welgar Shredded Wheat. The main problem was the number of outstanding visits. I tried daytime visits but it was futile people were never home. So my boss decided it had to be evenings. We decided to blitz one area at a time get a dozen or more cases and put them in court at the same time it was a good idea. On the first time we did this, we got a report in the local newspaper, and a surge in the area of new licences taken out.

One call in Barnett I had to make was to the McWhirter family, Ross and Norris who owned and ran the Guinness Book of Records, if I could have avoided the call I could have. The two were twins and one had been murdered by the I.R.A. after he castigated them in a TV panel show. But there was a simple answer to the query, one of the business secretary's had put the business address on his licence instead of the home address. I did no more visits that evening it so upset me. On a lighter note I had to visit Bruce Forsyth, a young lady opened the door and she said he owns the house but he doesn't live here, end of story, she was gorgeous.

I didn't have a full driving licence so it was thought it was a good idea for me to get one. I had a condensed course of lessons lasting one week. I started on a Monday and took the test the following Monday and I surprised everyone by passing. The idea was I would have either a Post Office vehicle or a telephone section vehicle they were part of us at that time, but they were always reluctant to supply one for me. So we carried on as before there were plenty of comrades willing to be my number two, they got overtime at an enhanced rate and a mileage allowance for the use of their car.

To be continued.....

The bats of Coombe Bissett Down, Wiltshire Wildlife Trust Reserve

In 2019, Simon Smart and I were busy surveying the Chalke Valley for bats, as part of a project with the [Chalke Valley Farmer Cluster](#); Ashley White, Wiltshire Wildlife Trust, invited us to survey Coombe Bissett Down too. Wiltshire supports 17 species of bats. Bats are important indicators of a healthy environment, requiring secure roosting sites, high quality foraging areas, and a well-connected landscape linking these features together.

Surveys at Coombe Bissett Down were undertaken using bat detectors to record the echolocation calls of bats which can be analysed to enable identification of the different species; the number of files of each species can be used to describe the activity levels of each species. A walked transect was undertaken and we also deployed bat detectors for a period of a week.

During the walked transect we observed bats commuting along hedgerows from the direction of nearby villages (where they roost) in order to forage on the reserve, showing the importance of the hedgerow network and wider landscape, as well as the foraging habitat available here.



The static detectors were left in place for 8 nights and recorded 3392 sound files. Around 80% of these related to the common pipistrelle, one of our most widespread and abundant species. Nearly 8% (265 sound files) related to Barbastelle bat – a remarkable level of activity for a species with a restricted distribution.

The remaining 12% of activity related to species such as Daubenton's bat, Natterer's bat, Noctule bat, Leisler's bat, long-eared bats and perhaps most excitingly, the Greater Horseshoe bat.

What does this tell us?

Barbastelle bat © Gareth Harris

This work, and the work we undertook across the wider Chalke Valley, demonstrates that this area supports a remarkable 12 species of bat, including rarer species such as the greater horseshoe bat and Barbastelle bat.

Some of these species, such as greater horseshoe, serotine, noctule and Leisler's bat (which often forage on dung beetles) and Barbastelle bat (foraging on micromoths and small flies) are often considered specialists of pastures and meadows.

How can you help?

Do you have bats roosting in your house? Do let us know – we'd love to include them in our study.

Some people have raised concerns about bats in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic – bats are not to blame for this, and its not proven that the virus causing this came from bats. The excellent [Don't Blame the Bats Campaign](#) was launched earlier this year and their excellent campaign video may be seen here: <https://youtu.be/gilj-fd77Ew>

Gareth Harris, Wiltshire Bat Group wiltsbatrecords@gmail.com

Further information

The Wiltshire Mammal Portal: <https://wiltshiremammals.wordpress.com/> and the free-to-download guide, [Mammals in Wiltshire, 2nd Edition](#).

The Chalke Valley Farmer Cluster <https://www.chalkevalleyfarmercluster.org/>



Greater Horseshoe bat (C) Daniel Hargreaves



COOMBE BISSETT AND HOMINGTON VILLAGE HALL

February and March 2021

It's As You Were!

Unfortunately there is no very positive news at the moment regarding activities at the Village Hall. While the epidemic is so rampant it is not possible for the Management Committee of the Village Hall to accept bookings for events for the immediate future. Hopefully with ongoing progress being made on vaccinating us all, we will get back to something approaching normality in the not too distant future.

For many years Rachel Coombes has been the booking secretary at the Village Hall but she has recently felt it necessary to resign from that position because of the many calls upon her time. We are all extremely grateful to Rachel for her outstanding contribution to the life of the villages and want to express our sincere thanks for all she has done. Rose Hawkins from Homington has generously agreed to take up the role, initially on a trial period with assistance from Simon Scutt. The online contact details for the Village Hall will remain unchanged.

When we are able to open the Village Hall again for bookings, the Management Committee is planning some maintenance works around the building which we hope will refresh the appearance. More details to follow.

Don Morgan Chair of the Village Hall Management Committee.

VILLAGE CINEMA

WE ARE HOPING TO RETURN WHEN CONDITIONS PERMIT WITH A WONDERFUL SELECTION OF FILMS FOR YOU TO ENJOY, SO DON'T FORGET US , WE WILL BE BACK LATER IN THE YEAR.

Remember ,

If you would like to book the hall, check our rates on www.coombebissett.com where you can also find a booking request form. Email bookings and enquiries to Rose Hawkins on hall@coombebissett.com

Regular events at the Hall :

Painting classes

Drama Club

Parkinson's Short Mat Bowls Club

Badminton Club

These will resume when restrictions allow.

Coombe Bissett and Homington Neighbourhood Plan 2021 - 2036



The results have been independently analysed and the information passed to the Parish Council for consideration. Since then we have worked on the Draft Plan which was sent to Wiltshire Council for their initial comment prior to a screening to decide whether a Strategic Environment Assessment (SEA) is required.

Having now received initial comment from Wiltshire Council we are communicating the summary results of the survey to the community, together with the two sites the Parish Council are supporting to go forward in the Draft Plan. Please visit the Coombe Bissett and Homington website or request a printed copy via the Coombe Bissett Village Stores.

Once the proposed sites have been environmentally screened the Draft Plan will go to the **Reg 14 consultation stage which will enable all those in our community to comment on the content of the Plan.**

If you provided your email address for contact when completing the online survey you will be emailed a copy of the summary results.

Email: cbandhnp@gmail.com or go to the parish website www.coombebissett.com/neighbourhood-plan





The Fox and Goose Blandford Road Coombe Bissett
Salisbury SP5 4LE Tel: 01722 718437
Email: foxandgoose@coombebissett.com
www: foxandgoose-coombebissett.co.uk

So, we have been in lock down again since December 30th and there is no sight of getting out of it in the short term.

If a year ago someone had said that within a month, a pandemic virus would shut down World economies and imprison so many people by isolating for over a year, you would have probably been laughed at and put in an institute.

Tragically thousands of people have passed away from this terrible virus and that fact should not be ignored. This is still a problem for all of us, the Government and the NHS. Hopefully the vaccines will prove to be the life saver to us all and we can soon get back to some sort of “normality”, although I don’t think all of our lives will get back to the type of life styles, we once took for granted.

I have copied and pasted some of my words from last year’s February newsletter below,

“It is **Valentine’s Day** on **Friday 14th February** and we are taking bookings now for this day. The popular “**Open Music**” Nights on the third Thursday, are **February 20th** and **March 19th**. Which will be an Irish Theme as it is close to **St Patricks’ Day**. These events start approx. 8.30 pm
The **Fox and Goose Golf Society** starts again on **Tuesday 11th February**. The first game is at Test Valley GC. With the second event at Upavon GC on **Thursday 12th March**.
Please contact Gerald Bundy if you would like to join us on these days.
Gerald can be contacted by email to gbundy@sky.com or telephone 718396.
Other dates and events for your diaries:
Mothering Sunday, Sunday 22nd March. This is one of the busiest days in the year and early booking is advisable.
Easter Sunday 12th April”

All these events will probably not be happening this year. Events that we would take for granted and enjoyed have been lost. It really brings a reality check to the way we live.

We ourselves, have gone from a successful and normal business before March 20th 2020, when we had to close for the first lock down, to a business like so many others, struggling to survive.

Due to us being in lockdown, there isn’t a lot of news to let you know what’s happening at the pub. We are still offering Take Aways on Friday and Saturday evenings from 5.30pm until 8pm.

We would like to thank everyone for their support during lock down and hope you all keep well.

Very best regards

Keith and Sue

Edenmore 23.7.71-23.8.71

Time was getting short before the birth of Simon and Tim. Eileen drove home from Falmouth and within a few days was laying up in hospital awaiting the boys' arrival. Her mother Mary moved in to look after Mark and I was just hoping our trip to load was not down to South America otherwise I would miss the birth, as I had missed Mark's. I cannot remember the trip, but I left the Edenmore on the 23rd August, ten days before the boys' arrival.

Both had a difficult first few weeks with Simon the eldest being transfused once and Tim needed two transfusions. They were all looked after wonderfully well at Odstock and after a week or so, were allowed to come home to Laverstock.

With quite a lot of leave and one or two quick relief standbys in port, I did not have to return until December, when I had to return to travel to foreign parts.

Orotava Bridge 7.12.71-9.5.72

I joined the Orotava in Hamburg. 'Bridge' was a consortium of bulk carriers all with minimum tonnage of 35,000 deadweight tons. It was said the company was started by a few young graduates. The Orotava was just over 50,000 tons deadweight. As I had not been Mate or in fact any rank on such a large ship I was entitled as Extra Chief Officer in my discharge book. In other words, Second Mate. The vessel although not very old was not in good condition. She had been on a lot of short trade trips and been badly knocked about by badly driven grabs. Such damage to the watertight bulkheads, hatch comings and tank tops, (decks in the lower hold), was unnecessary carelessness. The vessel never really recovered and for the remainder of her time was a real headache, trying to get the hatch covers watertight when carrying dry cargo such as grain and fertilisers.

All the vessels I had sailed on before had a carpenter. However, this one had a 'handyman'. He was either an Able seaman or Efficient Deckhand. The one on my time of joining was not trustworthy. Number 3 hold was a floodable hold and needed to be filled with 7,000 tons of ballast water when sailing light, (without cargo). After discharging her previous cargo, the hold was flooded. Before arriving at her load port, the ballast valve was opened and the hold pumped dry, but he did not close the ballast valve.

I joined at Dunkirk and there was quite a lot of commotion on board. With the vessel nearly halfway discharged and Number 3 hold nearly empty it needed to be flooded. Water was pouring into the open ballast valve and into the hold. A bulldozer was down on the tank top scraping up the remains of iron ore and water swirling around the yelling driver. The mixture of manganese, ore and water makes quite a mess and very difficult to pick up with a grab. The mess delayed our sailing but not as much as the next incident.

As the ballasting progressed, the Mate told the handyman to fill the forepeak tank. Earlier in the day the tank had been surveyed by a Lloyds Surveyor. The entrance to the fore peak tank was through a w/t manhole plate in the fore peak store. The Mate told the Handyman to replace the inspection door and bolt it down before commencing to ballast the fore peak tank,

Really the mate should have checked the w/t plate himself instead of trusting this fellow to do as he was told. The fore peak tank filled and overflowed into the fore peak which also housed two large alternators used to drive the windlass and the docking winches. Water poured over the port alternator, badly damaging it before the ballast pump was stopped.

Two alternators were needed in the focsle so two holes were cut in the focsle deck and one in the afterdeck. The port focsle alternator was lifted by crane and taken away for repair. The afterport alternator was lifted from the steering flat and transported by crane to the focsle. Both the plates welded back in place and off we went to Brazil. We were to return to Dunkirk in a month where the situation would be revised. Definitely an unlucky ship, we were sailing outward bound when the main engine packed up and we had to anchor for 24 hours whilst the engine had a cylinder changed. Pleasant anchorage off Old Harry Rocks and Swanage.

I stayed on the Orotava for five months. By the time I returned the twins were seven months old. I left the ship in Hamburg and arranged to meet Eileen in London. Eileen's mum volunteered to look after the boys for a couple of days whilst we stayed with her brother in Stepney. I always had a crew cut but in five months had not had a chance to get to a barber. I waited at Waterloo as people piled off the Salisbury train, picking her out easily amongst the crowd. Her eyes crossed my path with no recognition. Then I saw that lovely smile as she recognised her suitcase I had borrowed for the trip.

Leaving the Orotava was my last discharge in my first discharge book having started it on 12.3.57 and finished on 9.5.72. There were still spaces to fill by the Board of Trade, but they had decided to change format. My next trip was back to the Sagamore returning to the UK in about ten or twenty days. Eileen would drive up to the ship and spend a couple of days with me, and the boys really loved these times together.

A few months previously all sea staff on leave had been instructed to attend a meeting at Furness House, 22 Leadenhall Street. There was a very large reception room which was packed with sea staff. I sat next to Gerry, an old friend, who had two loves. Firstly, the ships running to the Mediterranean and Barkley's Blue Can Beer. The mood was sombre as rumour had it that a lot of ships were to be sold and redundancies feared. Henry, an excellent Marine Superintendent, took the meeting. He was exceedingly knowledgeable on ships maintenance and sea faring in general. Although there was a Chief Marine Superintendent boss, Henry was the driving force regarding maintenance and preparations for surveys throughout the fleet, promotions and discipline also came in his range of duties.

This was Henry's last job and he saved loads of redundancies by insisting that companies take officers from other companies in their employ. These companies included Furness, Withy, Shaw Saville, Royal Mail, Furness Bermuda Line, PSNC (Pacific Steam Navigation Company), Johnson Warren Line and Houlder Brothers. Henry's working days were over, his last task, to safeguard the jobs of a large number of men who would have been released. Many left of their own accord and were extremely successful elsewhere. My friend John, from Ocean Monarch days, went to a cross Channel company and was rewarded with a command at a very young age, Henry was awarded a CBE.

While I was on the Sagamore I was accepted into Houlder Lines with quite a nice pay rise to go with it. John Holder was the Chairman of the company and quite an entrepreneur. He left school at sixteen and started in an engineering works. By the end of his career he was an engineering professor. He learned to fly as a young man and at nineteen owned a small airfield in Essex. The first time I met him he was well into his eighties and still flying his aeroplane. The authority tried to take his licence away by giving him night-flying and instrument tests only, but he always passed them easily. Eventually they insisted he had to have a co-pilot, to which he agreed; neglecting to tell them his co-pilot was only nineteen years younger! Well, they finally told him because of his age they were going to cancel his licence. He wrote in reply 'how old

do I need to be to reapply?' With the nationalisation of the Steel companies (BSCo.) he offered to build two 10,000 deadweight ore carriers if BSCo., would charter them for fifteen years.

The second ship in my new discharge book was one of the eight 10,000 deadweight ore carriers laid up on the River Fal for almost three years. She had been transferred from Houlders Ore Carriers to Houlders Off-Shore. The ship Oeregis was to be converted in Newcastle to a diving support ship.

Her time on the Fal had left her in a pretty sorry state with thick rust everywhere. We prepared her as best we could and toddled off up the Channel to Newcastle. I was having my afternoon nap when the engines stopped. Silence usually awakens us at sea. On going to the Bridge, the captain told me the ship had anchored herself. There was so much marine life attached to the hull that we could just about make 5knots headway. So much rust and metal fatigue, coupled with the vibration of a ship in ballast, meant that rust had broken away around the brake drum. The wires securing the anchor chain broke and she anchored herself in ten fathoms of water. It took four days to get to the Tyne and we were all glad to get off home.

My next two years were on my old friends Sagamore and Edenmore. Now the twins were two years old we talked about the family coming with me for a short voyage. At this time there were wives and children regularly sailing with us. I had spoken to our personnel manager and he was quite willing to assist us if he were able.

On 22nd November 1974 I was flown to Balboa on the Pacific side of the Panama Canal to join a bulk carrier, Clyde Bridge; about 35,000 deadweight loaded, and on her way to Antwerp with a cargo of coal and then to dry dock there for a couple of weeks. From Antwerp we were to load a cargo of urea in Bruges for Corpus Christi, Texas. The ship had plenty of cabins and a very comfortable owner's suite. The Captain had his wife and daughter on board. The Second Engineer had his wife and two children. They were all going home for Christmas. The ship would spend it at sea on our way to Texas. The ship was manned by Houlder brothers but managed and owned by another company.

During discharge their Superintendent. An engineer came to visit and explain details of work agreed with the dry dock company. After the meeting he said he would like a chat with me. He came straight to the point that he would not allow my family to join. For every reason I had a perfectly good answer and there was no way he could reasonably refuse. The next day he returned and said the new Master would not accept liability for the safety of my family. Once again as he well knew I had to sign a waiver releasing the master of all liability. His final effort the next day was that he had spoken to the joining Captain and that my wife and family would not be welcome on board, obviously that was that. He then asked me, hopefully, if I now wished to leave the ship. Certainly not, I was sent there for six months and that is what I would do! When the new captain arrived I was very pleased that Eileen did not have to put up with him for six weeks.

On my last voyage we returned to Tilbury to discharge corn (maize). The discharge berth on the River Thames has a very high rise and fall so it was safer to use a Board of Trade ladder rather than the accommodation ladder. This consists of wooden batons crossing planks of timber. Substantial wheels help it move up and down whether rigged parallel or at right angles to the ship.

Eileen had travelled to Tilbury to drive me home. The Superintendent was on board. The Chief Engineer's wife. A very sweet lady, came to our cabin to say whilst the Superintendent was going ashore his right foot slipped, hit a baton and split his Achilles tendon. As my wife was a

nurse would she come and bandage it up for him. My wife refused, - good for her! The Super had not spoken to me for six months. He was on crutches for a couple of months. All's well that ends well...a few years later he was finally sacked by his company for fiddling expenses and other financial irregularities.

In September 1975 I joined a general cargo ship 'Westbury'. However, this was not going to be her regular run but was chartered to Shaw Saville for a voyage to New Zealand. First stop Auckland where Eileen's elder brother Peter lived. Quite a long voyage for the family of about five months. Eileen had never met Peter's wife. What an opportunity but sorry there is no room as the captain is taking his wife and daughter. Sad, but relieved, with Mark nine and the twins four...five months away from school was too much.

The Westbury was built in 1960 by Hawthorn Leslie, Newcastle. A conventional five hold cargo ship with three hatches forward off the accommodation and two aft. With sixteen cargo derricks and a fifty-ton jumbo derrick there was plenty of maintenance for the ship's crew. I did not know the Master, but his reputation was not great. Still perhaps his wife would keep him in check.

The usual loading ports around the continent apart for the last, which was Genoa. Then we had a couple of weeks out to Panama and three weeks down to Auckland. I don't seem to remember any problems with the apart from him whinging about how long the crew were taking to overhaul the cargo gear. Generally, I think they kept very much to themselves. Certainly no Sunday after inspection and before lunch drinks with the 'old man'.

The voyage from Panama to Auckland by 'Mercator Sailing', (straight line), takes you quite close to Pitcairn Island.....of Mutiny on the Bounty fame. The captain decided it would be good to pass close to the island. No danger, no shoals, loads of water. On a Monday morning Pitcairn came into view on the Port Bow. I wandered up on the Bridge. The family and one or two others were on the Port side with binoculars and cameras. For some reason I stayed on the Starboard side. Perhaps I was not too pleased with him at the time. As we were pretty close by I noticed a long boat driven by oars with a fellow wearing a pith helmet holding up a bunch of bananas, (not forgetting the ostrich feathers on the hat!)

With regular traders on that route they know from their radio station of ships in the vicinity. Some of the regulars stop and barter with them. They will post letters with the Pitcairn stamp in exchange for a few gallons of diesel oil. I went to the Port side to ask the old man if he was going to stop. They had not seen the boat almost abeam us now. I could hear them shouting 'are you going to stop?' obviously embarrassed the old man said we could not as we were on a scheduled run. I said thirty minutes in three weeks is not going to make a lot of difference. This was their first time I had come across the impractical abilities of the old man. Before our arrival in Auckland we managed to get all our cargo gear stripped down, overhauled and the ship cleaned up.

It was nice to see Peter again as he had been in New Zealand for seven years. He had married eighteen months previously but his wife had developed terminal cancer and sadly he was widowed after I left.

Apart from the odd argument I had a pretty quiet time with the old man. In later trips this was not to be so. Without his wife he turned out to be a very short tempered drunk. Oh yes, on the way back to Panama we did not go closer than two hundred miles from Pitcairn!

The following are a couple of extracts from the January 2021 WWL Newsletter.

Online Talk: Gardening for Bees - Thursday 11th March, 6pm

Rebecca Twigg, creator of two community gardens and the award winning interactive ‘Bee Trail’ in Salisbury, will be delivering an online talk that explores some basic bee identification and tips for gardening with these pollinators in mind.

This free online talk will be delivered via Zoom. If you would like to attend please book your place by contacting CBDproject@wiltshirewildlife.org

To find out more about Becky’s work please visit her website <https://www.kingdomofsticks.com/>

Mammals of Coombe Bissett Down nature reserve By Oliver Davies, Community Engagement Assistant

Whether you are an avid ecologist or a casual visitor, there is no denying that Coombe Bissett Down is rich with wildlife: vibrant wildflowers and butterflies, buzzing crickets and bees, mewling raptors, and chorusing songbirds parade the sheer diversity of species that can be found in Britain’s calcareous grasslands. However, the nature reserve’s mammals are a little bit less conspicuous.

With the assistance of a trail camera, I was able to get an insight into the lives of our countryside’s more elusive inhabitants, ranging from highly opportunistic carnivores to specialists of mature deciduous woodland.

Found in almost any mixed landscape of woodland and open fields, roe deer are our commonest species of deer. They are usually seen browsing in small family groups (particularly in winter), and the males will scent-mark the boundaries of their territory come late spring, chasing after intruders with dog-like barks as they go. Foxes and grey squirrels are also extremely common, and they both carry out vital ecological functions that sustain our habitats: foxes help control rabbit and rat populations, and grey squirrels widely distribute nuts and seeds, allowing for the subsistence of deciduous woodland.

The nature reserve is also rich with small mammals: I captured footage of wood mice, yellownecked mice, field voles, and common shrews – each of which (with varying degrees of specialisation) are found in grassy and woodland habitats. They are all a vital food source for birds of prey, as well as the weasel, which is the world’s smallest member of the terrestrial carnivores. This highly secretive species is notoriously difficult to find, but I was fortunate enough to catch one on camera.

Habitat restoration projects, like the National Lottery Heritage Fund project at Coombe Bissett Down nature reserve, provide a vital lifeline to native mammals, and with a set of conservation challenges on the way – not least, anthropogenic climate change – we must do what we can to protect our precious wildlife.

Want to find out more about Coombe Bissett Down's mammals? Check out our blog for trail camera footage and further information:

<https://www.wiltshirewildlife.org/Blogs/coombe-bissett-blog>