

# **Harvington AD 2007**

**A year in the life of a village  
in the Vale of Evesham**

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The publishers wish to thank all the many contributors to this book for their time and generosity in providing material.

The publishers also wish to thank Fran Battin for her considerable contribution to this publication in so generously providing many of the photographs used herein.



**Jess and Dick Fairs in St James' Church with the sixteenth century pew tops.**

Some years ago these pew tops were found, abandoned and forgotten, in the bell tower of St James' Church, Harvington. They all bore hand-carved names and inscriptions and were believed to be very old. After research and expert examination it was established that they dated back to the sixteenth century.

Dick Fairs, a marine engineer by profession and one of whose hobbies was working with wood, decided that he would clean and restore the pew tops to their former glory so that they may be conserved and better appreciated. After his labour of love these historic church artefacts were temporarily mounted and displayed within the church for which they had been originally carved.

It is hoped that eventually a faculty will be granted so that they may be kept on permanent display.

Chris Haynes established the first Harvington website (www.harvington.org.uk) some years ago. This gives a brief history of, and introduction to, the village and has links to the individual websites of some village clubs, societies and organisations.

Keith Davies, another of Harvington's computer experts, set up the other village website (www.harvington.net) some while later to host and link to some local sites, as well as setting up a local business directory. In 2008 sites for the Ellenden Farm Shop, St James' Church and Parish Council are being added.

Thus, our village is no longer distant from the rest of the world as it would have been eight hundred years ago. Then it would have been a long walk to the nearest towns — Evesham and Stratford — and at least a day's journey to Worcester. Now it can be instantly 'accessed' by means of computer from the Australian outback or the depths of the Amazonian jungle. Those who have never heard of it before can find out something of Harvington's geography and people at the press of a few keys... or the click of a mouse!

And there's no reason to think that such 'technological miracles' won't increase into the future. Harvington may be a relatively small and intimate community but it also stands ready to take its place on the global scene.

Tony Grey

### Epilogue

My dictionary defines a village as '(1) A small group of houses in a country setting larger than a hamlet', and '(2) The inhabitants of such a community collectively'. It has been wonderful to have an early look at this snapshot of life in *Harvington AD 2007* (certainly larger than a hamlet) and Jess and Tony are to be congratulated for all their hard work. But of course the book wouldn't have been possible without the co-operation of so many villagers – our collective community.

The village started to expand after the Second World War. It is nice to know that so many 'incomers' have settled here and their skills and enthusiasm have helped to contribute to the active and friendly village that is Harvington. I hope that Pam Walden and Sheila Hemming will agree with me that, although 'original' villagers have sometimes had difficulty in adapting to change, it is change and growth that stop a village dying.

Now it's the middle of 2008 and many of the schemes written about are coming to fruition, particularly in the three main centres of village life, the Village Hall, St James' Church and the Baptist Church, and the revival of the Village Plan.

Long may Harvington continue to thrive.

Sue Coley

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others, having undertaken the task herself of setting up the Easter garden. She had put on weight and was obviously very tired and in great discomfort, but was bending over and tenderly putting the small figures into their setting when she realised I was watching. She turned her bare head and smiled up at me with a radiant face and said, 'I can't tell you how glad I am that they asked me to do this again this year. I've always loved this job. Isn't it lovely to know that He's risen again.'

Bob was kind enough to agree to my writing about Jane in this way. He was generous with his time and his confidence and I was glad of an opportunity to get to know him better. I explained to him that my wish was to write something about Jane's death and to let all that is woven into this one unhappy experience represent all the other losses felt by families in the village during this year – indeed, not just this year but at any time. Jane happened to be well-known; there are others whose deaths have not affected the community in quite the same way, but each passing has brought grief and loneliness to those who were most nearly touched by it.

In remembering Jane and grieving for those who have been most sorely affected by her death, let us remember all others of our community whose final days in this particular year will have left a space which cannot be filled.

Jess Fairs

### —- *Harvington into the future?* —-

#### Harvington on the Web



In the Foreword to this book mention was made of Robert de Clypston, the first priest of the parish of Harvington to have his name recorded for posterity. In thinking back those eight hundred years one wonders what sort of community existed here in those distant days. It must have been very small and, one supposes, quite primitive. When you walk around the village today and look at its oldest buildings, made of wattle and daub and roofed with thatch, it is well to remember that they came several centuries later when the times in which de Clypston lived were already seen as ancient history.

In these early years of the twenty-first century we may feel ourselves even further removed from the lives of those who came before us all those years ago, but can, perhaps, make some sort of reasonable guess about what life will be like in the future; a life where there will be an even greater reliance upon technological developments.

And Harvington has not been backward in taking advantage of present-day technology; not only is it on the World Wide Web... it has **two** village websites! It is now possible, with a computer and access to the Internet, to find out something about what goes on in this village... no matter where one happens to be in the world!

## In Memoriam

On 22<sup>nd</sup> February in 2007 Jane Parry died and the news of her death, though expected, brought sadness to the village. The lives of many people in the community had been touched by her in some way or another. She was popular and much admired, not least for the courage she had shown over a long period of time in dealing with the cancer which finally killed her. We had seen her always cheerful, resolute, always looking forward to being better, confident enough to go bare-headed even when her hair had disappeared, always ready with a kindly word and an enquiry about someone else's health. She was an exceptional woman and we mourned her going.

Born on 9<sup>th</sup> November 1944, Lucinda Jane was the daughter of Lucy Bayliss whose name, like Jane's, was known to everybody in the community. Mrs Bayliss was a busy lady, taking part in everything – both church and community affairs – organising this and that and being responsible, among other things, for establishing the Senior Residents' Club. As has been said elsewhere, this proved to be an immensely popular organisation, a popularity which was more than maintained when, eventually, Jane and her friend Margaret Salter took it over.

Long before this, of course, Jane had met and married Bob Parry, a serviceman whom she had met when he was in the area, fruit-picking to earn 'a bit extra' during his leave. This was in July 1969 and the young couple moved into Glebe Cottages on Old Village Street, eventually buying their house and painting it white – a bold move in those days! Only in recent years did they decide to move, which brought them to Orchard Place, to a delightful bungalow with a well-cared for garden overlooked by a conservatory which both Bob and Jane loved.

They had three children - Caroline, Tracy and Robert - and all of them, and the two grandchildren, keep a close and loving eye on their father and grandfather as he struggles to come to terms with the loss of his beloved Jane. 'Not that she was in the house much,' Bob says, 'always out somewhere, doing something for somebody or taking part in amateur operatics, or the church choir, or some other hobby that took her fancy. She loved everything she did and seemed so full of energy.' Jane had various jobs, one of which was as an assistant in the village shop – Lawrence's, next to the Post Office in those days – but then as a trained carer, working under the leadership of the same friend, Margaret Salter. It was in this role that Jane will be most clearly remembered by those whom she attended.

The news of her illness shook everybody who knew her and there was a particular poignancy in the fact that, at about the same time, Margaret was also found to be ill. This coincidence, and the sadness of it, gave rise to a lot of anxious and prayerful thought which continued for what seemed to be a very long time, a time when Jane and Bob had also to cope with the knowledge of their daughter's health problem as well as Jane's. We watched and we hoped. Our prayers included the families and other loved ones as well as the afflicted ones themselves.

Many will remember those months and years, indeed, I have one particularly clear memory of Jane during that period. It was Easter and she was in church with many

## Foreword

This book was the brainchild of Jess and Dick Fairs, well-known to many in the village of Harvington where they have lived for 20 years. 2006 was a very significant year for them as it marked their 60<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary and many of their friends and neighbours in the village were delighted to attend the celebratory garden party, held for them on a glorious, sunny summer afternoon. Jess and Dick were to be given many presents, especially gifts of money some of which was used to purchase some commemorative chairs for St James' Church which they have regularly attended for many years. When the dust had settled after that wonderful occasion there was a sizeable amount of money left over and it was decided that, rather than just donating it to the church Repair and Rejuvenation Fund, they could actually use it to good purpose and, hopefully, generate even more for the Fund.

Jess had long been interested in Harvington's history albeit that little of it had been reliably recorded through the centuries. But one of the oldest surviving structures in the village is, of course, the church, where is recorded and displayed the name of its first regular priest, Robert de Clypston, who began his ministry here in 1207. Jess felt that, as 2007 would be the 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his ministry, it would be fitting to commemorate it in some way. What better, she thought, than to produce a book giving a flavour - a snapshot - of Harvington in AD 2007? It could be a record of village life - its organisations, clubs and societies - and what went on in that year and, importantly, say something about the people who live in the village. It wouldn't cover everyone and everything, but it would be representative of Harvington life and activities at a particular moment in time. If copies of it were sold, the money raised could be given to the church's Repair and Rejuvenation Fund.

And thus it was that, as the person who currently edits the *Village News*, I became involved. Jess and Dick asked if I would assist them in this project and I willingly agreed to help with the 'technical side' of the business – 'inputting' the edited material on the computer and helping to prepare the book for printing. There were moments, of course, when the project seemed quite daunting and frustrating and, as in many things, moments of doubt. But as you see, it all came right in the end.

I congratulate Jess and Dick on their achievement and would like to express my thanks to all the many contributors who helped make this publication possible. It has been a community effort which, we all hope, will not only be of interest but also of some historical value to the village. It is, as I said before, a flavour, a sample of the life of the village in 2007. Jess and Dick, I know, hope you will enjoy reading it.

Tony Grey

June 2008

## Harvington – a few facts & figures

At the last census in 2001 the confirmed population of Harvington stood at 1636 and of that number 823 (50.3%) were male and 813 (49.7%) were female.

There were 656 households, thus giving an average of 2.5 persons per household.

By 31<sup>st</sup> March 2007 another 39 houses had been built in the parish so (using the average household figure for Wychavon District of 2.3) approximately another 90 persons had become resident, bringing the total population to about 1726. By March 2008 another 14 houses had been completed which would have added around another 32 persons to that figure. In general terms, therefore, in 2007 – the year with which this book is concerned – the population of Harvington would have stood somewhere between 1726 and 1750.

To add a little more colour to the demographic picture, at the time of the 2001 census 1124 members of the population (or 68.7%) were adults over 30 years and the largest single group of these (404) were aged between 45-59. Some 397 persons were aged 60 and over, while little more than a fifth of the population (345) were children or young persons under the age of 18. There were 36 in the 18/19 year category while the remainder (131) were in their twenties. Relating to ethnicity, the vast majority of the residents of the parish (99.2%) were white, only 12 being classified either as of Mixed Race or Black Caribbean/Black African.

About 67% of the population were economically active – that is, in some form of employment – with 29 being unemployed and another 30 being full-time students. 188 people were retired; 55 looking after home/family and another 33 permanently sick or disabled.

In relation to household tenure, three quarters of properties (499) were owned outright or with a mortgage or loan, 121 were rented from the local authority, another 33 rented privately and the remaining 3 in shared ownership.

Whilst 12% of the households had no car, 37.5% (246) had one car and another 36.3% (238) had two. Another 13.4% owned either 3 or 4 cars per household. All of which goes to show how vehicle-dependent society had become by the early years of the twenty-first century.

It is likely that in 2007 - only six years later - the nature of the population would have varied little from that shown in the census, and while such statistics have limited value they can, at least, give a *flavour* of some aspects of life in Harvington. Many years into the future, should this book fall into the hands of a resident of Harvington with an interest in the history of the village, it may be that these few details will provide a useful 'snapshot' of how things were in 2007.

When I first went to school at Greenhill - at about three - I was put on the bus to come home and it would stop outside Mandeville and the conductress would see me across the road! Another early memory is walking with my mother, who was pushing George in the pram, down Station Bank (Anchor Lane to incomers) onto the railway bridge, then waiting for the signal to drop and running through the steam from the engine as the train passed underneath. Then there were the tadpoles we fished out of the deep brook at the bottom of Leys Road, and the adventure of running through the pipe that carries the brook under the Evesham Road in the dip just after Ellenden Farm. What price Health and Safety?

I can remember asking my mother why the flags were up outside the village hall, and she told me that the war was over. What war? As far as I was concerned it was quite natural to go down to the village hall for film shows in complete blackness; we always went to church at 11 am on Sunday morning and I am sure there was no Evensong in the winter. The church fete was the great event of the year; it was held in the Rectory Garden (now the Old Rectory, the garden of which stretched right down to Grange Lane). Bowling for the Pig was one of the major competitions, it being often won by 'Titch' Harris, Michael's father. My father was heavily involved with the church, being a churchwarden for many years, a rather autocratic (as I understand it) Chairman of the Parish Council, a school governor. My mother ran the White Elephant Stall at the fete, supported the Women's Institute and the Mothers' Union, went to whist drives and entered, with my father, into church and village life.

Over the years, agricultural practices changed; the hoards of pickers who came for the pea harvest disappeared, and foreign imports affected the sale of plums. The village was full of orchards at one time, and when there was a glut of plums and they were left to rot on the trees: the smell was indescribable. 'Pick your Own' became one way of improving incomes, but this involved working seven days a week, and the loss of a lot of produce through a few light-fingered people.

After my father's retirement, and then my brother John's unfortunate early death, Nick (John's son) came back to run the farm. I moved back to Harvington following father's death in time for the christening of Nick's youngest daughter in the font at St James', where her father, grandfather and great-grandfather had been christened before her. Nick, Jayne and the girls have now moved to Cornwall, where Nick is enjoying life with a very small-holding, working on a large estate renovating the special plum trees, and learning how to grow tea! He now has weekends off, with more time to spend with the family. He is also meant to be getting a small boat so he can go fishing. Jayne is teaching at the school that the girls attend. My brother George lives in Wales, and sister Ann in Stratford, so I am the last Coley in the village . . . I hope for a few more years yet.

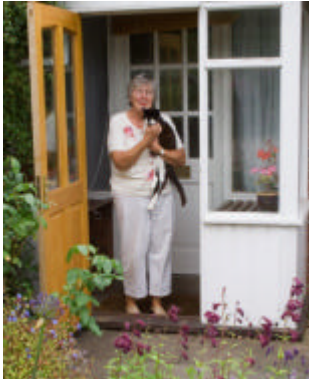
Sue Coley

ised that this was another name which had recently come to my attention. Janet was one of the founder-members of the Senior Residents' Club (referred to elsewhere in this book) and has happy memories of its early days. Both she and Pam are now members of the EXTEND exercise class which takes place in the Baptist chapel every Monday morning. Started in 2007 after a trial period, the class is part of an initiative begun by Wychavon District Council in conjunction with Age Concern to provide exercise practice suitable for older people. This it does, most successfully, thanks to the skill and humour of teacher, Julie, and is also an opportunity for all to enjoy a cup of tea and a pleasant chat...even gossip!...before heading off home, feeling more supple and light of step.

Pam and Janet live very near and have only a hundred yards or so to go to their homes. The attractive, cosy, well-maintained bungalows are ideal dwellings for those of our senior citizens who are fortunate enough to live there and, much though The Steps had its charm, Pam feels that she made a good move.

Jess Fairs

### A family comes . . . and (nearly) goes

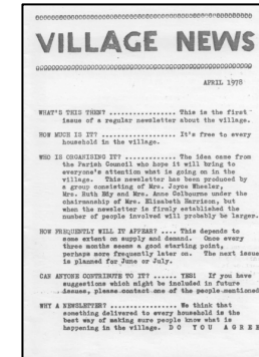


You will have read earlier about the 'Coming' of the Turners at Ellenden Farm. This, of course, was made possible by the 'Going' of my nephew, Nick Coley, thus nearly ending just over a century of the Coleys in Harvington.

My grandparents, Sam and Eliza, moved into 'The Golden Cross' very early in the twentieth century, and my father was born there. Apart from running the pub, they expanded into 'growing', eventually building 'Oldfields'. When he was married my father set up home at Mandeville with his wife, Doris, and eventually all four of us children lived there: Ann, John, Sue and George. My grandparents were active in village life,

with my grandfather being one of the Trustees of the Reading Room. He was quite an impatient man, and if the Rector preached for too long he would get out his half-hunter and wind it up in a very ostentatious fashion! He also thought nothing of driving a noisy tractor down through the village at 5am; if he was up, so should everyone else be! We transferred to 'Oldfields' after my grandmother's death in 1947. In my childhood, the village could really be described as agricultural, with most people working on the land – a particularly important job during the war. Many of the men were, therefore, in this reserved occupation. There was also a village fire service, with its own pump, and they were sent to such places as Worcester and Coventry during the bombing. Sunday was a real day of rest, even on the land, and of course there were very few cars about.

## Harvington Village News during 2007



The *Village News* originated thirty years ago when Elizabeth Harrison and Joyce Wheeler started a village news sheet to publicise local events and activities. The very first edition was published in April 1978 (see picture above) and, as time went on, various people became involved in its production and distribution, including Lucy Bayliss who is mentioned elsewhere. From humble beginnings, the publication has evolved considerably over the years into the one seen today, but it is fair to say that the Parish Council has always had an interest in assisting its production to bring news and information to the residents of Harvington.

The present editor's predecessor was Gordon Whittemore, who was the editor for ten years - a dedicated commitment indeed - until his untimely death in 2005. It was Gordon who was largely responsible for the format generally adhered to today. Although the *Village News* has its critics - and every publication does - those who produce it always endeavour to report accurately and with impartiality so that it fulfils its role in informing and entertaining Harvington's community. Quite apart from the editor, there are a whole army of distributors who ensure that it is delivered to each household in the village. Elizabeth and Toby Harrison are in charge of collecting each edition from the printers and then overseeing the distribution process. They have carried out this task efficiently and conscientiously for many years and it is with gratitude that their contribution to the publication is recognised.

As for what was going on in Harvington during 2007, one possible way to find out would be to study the front page headlines of the *Village News* which, although published by the Harvington Parish Council, is independently edited and produced ten months of the year - (no editions in January and September).

In 2007 it was quite clear that the future of the village hall had become a major issue because the headlines from February to April were exclusively related to it - '*Village Hall survey to be held*', '*Heated exchanges over Village Hall*' and '*Village Hall survey endorses new site*'. These banner headlines for the first three editions of 2007 reported on the progress and results of the survey to ascertain the views of villagers on the future of this amenity. The existing hall was reaching the end of its useful life and needed to be replaced. Villagers had been given various options for the

site of the replacement and the analysis and interpretation of the survey results became a more contentious issue month by month, raising the passions of many and the dissenting views of some over the future position of a key village facility. It was clearly an issue that wasn't going to quickly disappear.

The headline for May, '**Council Elections on 3<sup>rd</sup> May**', drew attention to the Parish Council elections and endeavoured to encourage village residents to exercise their democratic rights and vote for the candidates who were vying to represent them for the next four years. Then, not unnaturally, the June edition gave the results of that election under the banner '**New members on Parish Council**' and pointed out that, of the nine councillors elected, only four former members had been returned while five new members were selected for the first time.

Being the middle of summer, the July edition reported on one of the village's major attractions with the title, '**Another success for Village Fete**'. It recorded that, despite a short downpour at the start, there had been magnificent support from villagers for this event - an afternoon of fun, entertainment and fund-raising - that everyone's efforts were rewarded with a fair amount of blue sky and sunshine, and that more than three thousand pounds had been raised.

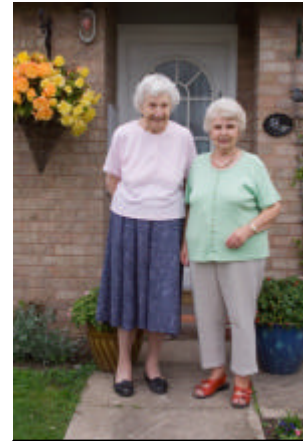
The main story in the August edition centred upon the awful weather that had struck the country on 20<sup>th</sup> July, causing floods over a wide area of the Midlands and South West and from which Harvington did not escape. '**Floods and road closure affect village**' was the front page headline and described how, for a while, the village was cut off from both Evesham and Stratford-upon-Avon, with some vehicles being abandoned by despairing drivers. While the village recovered from the worst of the flooding within a day or two, nearby Tewkesbury was in the national headlines for weeks as both the Avon and the Severn burst their banks and marooned the town in what was effectively a massive lake.

Harvington is a lively and active village and the October headline, '**Entertainments galore!**', drew attention to the many events and entertainments that were shortly to be held - a Halloween Ball, meeting of the Gardening Club, Village Talent Show, Harvington Amateur Theatrical Society production, concert by the Harvington Singers, all leading up to a grand finale at a New Year's Eve Party. It made the point yet again that the village is a vibrant and thriving community.

In November the headline indicated that the ongoing saga of the village hall had not yet run its course. '**Concerns over planning application**' was shorthand for the continuing dispute over the future of the present village hall when the hoped-for new hall should be built. Some villagers took issue with the proposed plans for housing to be built on the site of the present hall and passions and tempers again ran high.

The year ended on what seemed a less contentious note, the headline of the December edition declaring '**House available for local applicant**', and pointed up the fact that much new housing development had been ongoing in the village over a number of years. The local housing association, Rooftop, were now advertising the availability of a 2-bedroomed semi-detached house in Leys Road, marketed as 'affordable housing on a shared ownership basis' (owned jointly by the purchaser and the association). The scheme was designed to allow local residents the opportunity to

## **Pam Walden** (Her story as told to Jess Fairs)



Pam Walden (right) with her friend Janet Hartiss

Pam Walden (still often called by her maiden name of Shailer by the people who have known her for a long time) didn't 'come' or 'go' but she DID move in the year 2007 - in her case, within the village itself.

Pam - who was born in Harvington and, in the course of time married Ken Walden in St James' church - lived until November of this year in The Steps on Stratford Road.

Many newcomers must have been as fascinated by The Steps as I was when Dick and I came to the village twenty years ago. The door, reached by the three upward steps that give the property its name, gave every promise of leading to somewhere secret and very special. In fact, as many of you will know, it leads to a flagged passage between two properties which were once one building.

Pam, with her daughter Julie, lived on the right-hand side (son Martin had left home for the Royal Air Force before then) in a quaint old house, or cottage, which Pam grew to love. Her living room window looked out onto the road, her kitchen onto her garden and the area between her and Malthouse Close. She saw many changes, not the least of which was the reduction in traffic once the bypass had been made and the traffic to and from Stratford no longer passed her window. My own memories of being at Pam's also include admiring the colours of the area at the back - it was almost like being in a secret garden and was clearly well-loved by its carer.

In the course of time, Julie married and had children but then, sadly, died of breast cancer at too early an age, so Pam has known great pain as well as pleasure at The Steps. The cottage is owned by Rooftop - which was once the Evesham & Pershore Housing Association - and she credits them with keeping it in good repair and as up-to-date as any property of that age could be. But even they could not improve the stairs leading up to the bedrooms which are narrow and steep, with an awkward turn partway up which was becoming increasingly difficult for her to manage. So, with great reluctance - for she had had a long love affair with this ancient place and could not really imagine living anywhere else - she listened to advice from a friend at Rooftop and applied to be allowed to move into another of their properties not far from the school. Permission was granted and the move took place - not without its trials and tribulations - and she found herself starting afresh at No 55 Village Street. It was here that I met and talked to her and enjoyed her tales of life at The Steps and in Harvington - tales of people and events, and especially her own story, all of which added to my knowledge of this village which I, too, love as dearly as if I had lived here all my life.

She was delighted to find that her new neighbour is Janet Hartiss and I soon real-



Previously from a small village in North Oxfordshire, the Woottons are delighted to join the Harvington community and are hoping to spend many years here. They had viewed the house once before, lost it, and then were immensely glad (and relieved) to have another chance of buying it – their ‘dream house’. They already love it and are thoroughly enjoying making it their home. Liz has visions of furnishing it again in a style appropriate to its age which, they understand, dates back to the middle of the eighteenth century. This they have yet to determine, along with many other puzzling features of the place, not least of which is the wall and ditch in the front garden which, they hope, might prove to be a ha-ha. They look forward to restoring the gardens which looked so lovely before this recent period of neglect. Jamie has already been hard at work, cutting back the overgrown hedge round the outer part of their garden which was intruding onto the pathway used by many local dog-walkers.

Jamie works from home, running his own market research business for the pharmaceutical sector: Liz teaches French part-time and is a Governor and active PTA member at the Catholic junior school in Studley, attended by Alexandra (Alex), ten, and Benjamin, eight. Suzie, who is only two as yet, is due to start at Harvington Pre-school just before Easter.

For those of us who live nearby and who have been saddened at the gradual signs of deterioration at The Grange, the coming of its new owners has been a delightful experience – and it is good to see and hear children there again. We wish them all the happiness they are looking forward to.

Jess Fairs

buy a property in their own community rather than having to leave the area to find accommodation elsewhere, and interested parties were invited to submit applications ‘without delay’. The editor subsequently and happily found out that a Harvingtonian, Steve Tarling, and his partner, Lindsey, had indeed made application under the scheme. Despite the lengthy process — involving all the usual bureaucratic frustrations and legal encumbrances — they eventually moved into the house and are now delighted to be able to renew their connections with the village.

Tony Grey - Editor

—- *Civic Affairs* —-

**The Village Hall**

(A report by Chris Haynes, Chairman of the Management Committee)



A village hall is not just a building, it is a mirror – reflecting the health, wealth and happiness of a community. It is the one place where villagers of all ages and beliefs can meet, be entertained, informed and connected to one another. Belonging to the village, and run by the village, how it is managed also tells you much about the village. 2007 was a pivotal year in the history of our hall, and the events surrounding it shine a light into our community.

During 2007 the hall was used for around 1,200 hours – more than 3 hours per day on average. The biggest users were children, attending the Pre-school play group, the Jilly-tots mother-and-child group, the Rainbows, Brownies, Guides and the various clubs which make up the Youth Project organised by the two churches.

The next biggest use of the hall supports hobbies and interests, including the Art Group, Gardening Club, Women’s Institute and Seniors’ Club.

The Harvington Amateur Theatrical Society’s activities defy classification: is the society a hobby for a dozen or so people, or a major village entertainment delighting hundreds each year? Well, actually, it is both, and through their meetings, rehearsals and performances they are good customers.

A few years ago the Village Hall Management Committee decided to try presenting concerts as a short-term fund-raising mechanism. By 2007 it was clear that these

well-attended events should be continued for the foreseeable future as a popular contribution to the community life in their own right – almost regardless of any financial benefit to the hall. Our impresario (or is he our ‘Master of the Revels’?) was, and is, John Redman – himself an ex-chairman of the Management Committee – who books the events, prints the tickets, liaises with the groups and generally ensures all runs smoothly, while his wife, Margaret, usually finds herself cooking a meal for the artists! During 2007 there were 8 of these events, most of them having been produced in association with ‘Shindig’ – Worcestershire Council’s programme of arts sponsorship – which subsidises the costs and shares any profits from the events. What was notable about these concerts in 2007 was the mixture of attendees – from all parts of the village and from all age groups. The ‘cabaret’ layout, and the deliberate delay in turning on the full ‘hard’ lighting and in clearing the tables at the end were designed to encourage continuing conversations and social mixing – this seems to have worked as people were eventually having to be gently shooed-out more than half an hour after ‘curtain down’ so that the cast and hall volunteers could pack up and get home!

The big village-wide events, such as fetes, exhibitions, barn dances and quizzes, also take place in the hall – usually packing it to capacity – but it is also used for private parties and sundry other private activities.

Lastly, there is its use as the home of village democracy – a venue for the monthly Parish Council meeting, for the Hall Management Committee and for public meetings of importance to the village – and here the hall itself became the focus of attention in 2007.

Several years ago it became increasingly clear that drastic action was needed over the state of the hall. Set against 21<sup>st</sup> century needs it was seen to be too small, too damp, too liable to flooding and too expensive to heat.

In July 2007 the urgency was underlined when, yet again, the hall was flooded during torrential rain and had to be closed for six weeks. The Meteorological Office published a map showing that rainfall in The Vale area from May to July 2007 was over 3 times the average for the previous thirty years – giving credence to the suggestions that, at least around Harvington, there had been a permanent change in the climate and, in conjunction with the impact on surface water drainage of developments in the school, this had left the village hall in danger of more frequent flooding. Effective action by the Management Committee working with, and on behalf of, the Parish Council was needed urgently!

The community rallied round the need to fund the hall’s future – £500 was raised in a village-wide litter-pick, a team of mothers from the Pre-school and Jilly-tots groups re-decorated the ladies toilets and most of the groups making regular use of the hall raised and donated funds to the hall’s future.

The availability of National Lottery funding had seemed, in 2002, a major opportunity to replace or refurbish the hall, but here’s not the place to review all the twists and turns of the history of those attempts to bring about an improvement in the situation. In 2004 the village decided, in a village survey, that its preference was for a new hall on a new site – but it wanted to confirm that decision once a specific site had

which they produce or buy locally. This means that David is still able to keep one foot firmly in farming which is his first love. He tells of the long hours of planning which have gone into the move and which are still essential to its success, and he speaks with pride and gratitude of the way in which both his and Sarah’s families have worked together to make this venture possible.

What Sarah and David hadn’t bargained for was a series of near-disasters which came upon them soon after opening – flooding, hailstorms (two of them, which virtually ruined the fruit crops they had just acquired), foot and mouth disease which halted the movement of cattle, an outbreak of ‘blue tongue’ and, of course, the temporary but lengthy closure of the main road that runs past their shop! The last was probably the most damaging: David recalls that on some days they only had five customers. We can only imagine just how despairing they felt, and we can only be grateful, as they are, for the sympathy and support shown to them by a growing number of Harvington people which gave them the motivation to carry on. We remember with admiration that they always served us with a smile, were willing to chat, to ask and answer questions, and to make friendly efforts to embrace the village to which they now belonged and were beginning to feel part of. By this time we knew that both families were involved in the venture and it was pleasant to get to know who each individual was and who ‘belonged’ to whom.

We saw them all, plus many friends and helpers, on the day in late October when they held an Open Day. This was an event, not only to market their produce, but also to say ‘thank you’ to the many people who had supported and encouraged them through these first tough months. It turned out to be a great success and everyone was impressed by the high quality of all that was on offer. We took pleasure on complimenting them on the variety of their display.

We shared in their delight, also, at the birth of their baby, Matthew, on 12<sup>th</sup> November – another potential pupil for the village school which their older children, Emily and Toby, attend – and those of us who are often at church have been very pleased to welcome Sarah and the children to Morning Service.

Both David and Sarah speak of their happiness in having settled so well and it is clear that they look forward to becoming, increasingly, a part of all that goes on in Harvington. That’s good to hear! We’re glad they came and are proud to have such a stylish shop on the village’s doorstep. We wish them – all of them – continued happiness and the success they deserve.

Jess Fairs

### **New Faces at ‘The Grange’**

After more than twelve months of searching for a new family home in this area, Jamie and Liz Wootton and their three children finally moved into The Grange, at the top of Grange Lane, on 11<sup>th</sup> December 2007. The house, the gardens and the nearby stables had been empty and unused for almost two years and were desperately in need of a loving family to bring everything back to life again.

I was brought up in a small village in Buckinghamshire, where there was a post office store and another small shop, a couple of pubs, a primary school, a village hall and a common with a few swings and a slide. My Dad was involved in the village cricket club and organising the fete; my Mum was in the WI and no doubt had a hand in the cricket teas. And, most importantly, most of us knew one another. And now, with all the changes in society that the bustle of modernisation over the intervening 40-plus years have brought, I find myself – as though travelling back in time – in a place where people smile and greet you as they pass, where we all enjoy the benefits that modern medicine and easy communications bring without losing the common touch, the concern for our community and every individual that plays a part in it.

They say home is where the heart is, and mine is settling down nicely in Harvington.

Catherine Craig.

### Ellenden Farm Shop



Before the end of 2006 news went round the village that Coley's Farm Shop was up for sale. This proposed departure was greeted with sadness and a feeling of nostalgia; it would be a big break with the past if Nick Coley and his family were to leave. So it was that we waited, with some trepidation but intense interest, for definite news of a change and, sure enough, in the course of time we heard - and saw evidence - that a new regime had begun.

On May 1<sup>st</sup> 2007 Ellenden Farm Shop was declared open and we met first one then another of the Turner family (and its extensions!) and from them we learned, over time, something of the background and circumstances which had brought them here.

David - one of the owners and the third generation of a farming family - works, with his father, a farm in Coughton. It is a property of which his grandfather and father have been tenants for many long years; a property which it had always been their ambition to buy. Recognising that this was not now likely to happen, David - together with his wife, Sarah, and family - had begun to look for ways of expanding in another direction. He says it was never his intention to go into retail, but having been told of the probable sale of Nick Coley's business by a local friend, also in farming, they came to take a look. The result we know and have recognised, to our delight, that the shop is an outlet for their own beef and lamb as well as other items

been identified. Suffice to say that, at the start of 2007 the Management Committee - on the independent advice of the District Valuer in consultation with the Planning Department of the District Council - had identified only one possible new site for a new hall, on underused allotment land just the other side of the village school. The Big Lottery Fund required evidence of community support and preference for such a big investment, and so a major village consultation – the third in five years – was launched in January to find out on which site villagers preferred a new hall to be built: the existing site or the new one on the allotments.

This decision, to seek £630,000 investment in a new hall, is probably the largest investment decision the community of Harvington has ever had to make. Certainly the 840 forms returned – a 69% response rate – suggests the largest ever participation in a community decision – and what a narrow decision it was! Just 15 votes separated the two options – the slender majority being for the new hall on the new site.

(Subsequent to this decision it has been noted that 42 people had supported both site options equally strongly and a further 70 had said they did not care which site was selected; these votes were not included in the count which gave the majority of 15. It has been remarked that these 112 people were prepared to support whichever decision the Committee took and that they had effectively given the committee chairman a proxy vote to cast as he deemed appropriate. Had this interpretation been adopted the decision could have been presented as a majority of 126 for the new site.)

The pressure was now on to gain planning permission and to apply for the grant from the Big Lottery Fund's Community Building fund. It was known that this was the last opportunity to bid for these funds – probably until after the Olympics in 2012 – and £430,000 was needed from them.

However, regardless of the size of the majority, there was clearly a significant number of people unhappy with the choice of the allotment site and they were more than just the immediate neighbours. Indeed, the allotment area was seen by many as a village resource of the same significance as the hall, as a community asset which has been under pressure ever since the Enclosures Act of 1845, an asset which had been eroded by successive expansions of the village school, and that had to be defended against any change which might be used as a precedent for its re-classification as building land.

These concerns found expression in three ways: i) a petition was signed by several hundred people 'not accepting' the result of the consultation; ii) there was strong vocal opposition to the planning applications at meetings of both the Parish Council and Wychavon District planning committee, and (iii) someone sent the petition to the Big Lottery Fund and urged them not to make this investment in the village. There was no accusation of any flaw in the consultation or decision-making process – simply a refusal to accept the result of the most democratic decision ever taken by the village.

The Planning Committee took no regard of this petition. Their own processes and policies included the protection of allotment ground; the allotment owners were required to release at least this amount of land to act as replacement allotments – which they did. So, in terms of acres of ground, the village actually gained allotment

space as a result of this process. The two necessary outline planning consents – to build the new hall and demolish the old one – were obtained.

Two other grants were applied for and gained - £20,000 each from Wychavon District Council and from the Severn Waste Environmental Fund – these being in addition to the £50,000 offered by the Parish Council and over £20,000 raised by the village itself.

But the essential grant – the £420,000 from the Big Lottery Fund – was not to be. We had been told that our bid was ‘very good’, that we were in the top 10% of applications but, just before Christmas, we were told we had failed! It was of some consolation that they had only funded one new hall in the whole of Herefordshire and Worcestershire – that in a village with no existing hall, but it was disheartening news. So, although they gave no reasons for failure, and it appears that there may have been a change in their investment policy rather than any specific problem with our application, we shall probably never know whether the community’s own actions – the petition – contributed to missing the opportunity for the biggest ever investment in a village asset.

So, at the end of December 2007 the Management Committee had to decide what now could be done. There had been, back in May, a hypothetical ‘Plan B’ decision to press ahead regardless; to buy the new land and start building a hall with whatever funds could be found. However, when the necessity for Plan B arose, and the Quantity Surveyor had been consulted on current building costs, it became clear that a new hall – anywhere – was out of the question. Nor could we afford to wait for Lottery Funds to become available again – the hall was too urgently in need of attention.

The year ended with a realisation that the most funds we could hope to raise were around £100,000, and so refurbishment, and perhaps modest expansion, was all we could expect.\*

This was an exciting, but ultimately disappointing year for the Village Hall Management Committee, which comprised Richard Baugh, Edith Cappell, Amy Clements, Elizabeth Harrison, Chris Haynes, Sheila Hemming, Charlene Manning, Kathy McWilliams, Robin McWilliams, Roland Merrick, Hugh Nunn, Karen O’Neill, John Redman, Ken Rowlands, Mary Stinton, Andy Tooth, Jilly Tracey, Joyce White, Graham Whitehouse and Sheila Wolstenholme .

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\*As of April 2008 there is a firm plan to refurbish and expand the hall, including all necessary provisions for the disabled, environmentally-friendly heat-pump heating, flood-prevention, roof insulation, a new kitchen, an additional meeting room and many other improvements. Funding of £70,000 has been assured and other probable sources of funding should bring the total to match what is needed - around £110,000.

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It will be remembered that one of the aims of the Project has always been to give young people an opportunity to explore aspects of the Christian faith, it being the conviction of all involved that standards and life worthiness are important in society, and high quality learning opportunities can help establish values in the lives of young people which will stand them in good stead for the rest of their lives.

(Written by Jess Fairs after talks with, and the study of reports by, several of those involved – to whom, many thanks.)

### —- *Comings & Goings* —-

#### **Harvington – Home thoughts from a newcomer**

We came to Harvest Court in February 2007 – with some trepidation, if I am honest. We had lived in our previous house in Salford Priors for over 20 years so, although Harvington was only a couple of miles away, it was a huge move emotionally and we were naturally a little apprehensive!

Of course, I had often passed Harvington on my way to Evesham – in my mind a village on a hill with a striking, green church spire - but getting to know it has been a surprising pleasure. Just taking a quick walk, most days we discovered something new and interesting. There are so many pretty, old black & white houses – all with tales of their own to tell, I am sure. And, of course, plenty of conversions from barns and farm outbuildings – like ours which, according to Miss Stone, was a cowshed on the ground floor and a deep litter chicken house above!

And walking round the perimeters of the village, one is immediately struck by various views; from what I call the ‘rabbit hill’ just behind the playing field, we can see the fishing lakes and the wooded hills beyond – still with very few buildings in the landscape. And the muddy track which runs parallel (sort of) to the upper part of Village Street still bears all the evidence of what this area was always famous for – fruit growing. Strolling through the orchards in spring blossom time, and also when the trees are heavily laden with fruit, is a real pleasure. If you get your timing right you can pop out near the Norton roundabout and have a quick drink in the pub there!

Only a Martian could write about first impressions of the village without mentioning what was the most contentious issue of the year. We arrived in Harvington just at the time the Village Hall question was ‘hotting-up’. Whatever you feel about the way surveys were carried out and their results interpreted, however much you wanted the hall to be re-built where it is rather than re-sited, no matter how strongly you felt about the loss of allotment land, it was heartening to find a community where so many people held passionate views. There was nothing half-hearted about the meetings we attended or the force with which people expressed their opinions! And, for the record, although Harry and I each had a vote, they cancelled one another out so the newcomers were allowed a say, but had no influence in the result.

our young people are worth time, effort and money to enable them to utilise some of their spare time in an effective way. Good leadership was thought to be a prerequisite for this to be successful and the Project has been fortunate in having good leaders. Jayne and James are still with us; James now a teacher but still working (along with Jayne) with Harvington's young people, and still relishing their connection with all that it involves.

Neil Dunlop came, worked hard, married Vicky and left to become a Baptist minister, presently working in Bidford-upon-Avon. Then came Emma Lucas, already married to Ben, who took over the helm for two years before leaving earlier this year in order to study in Bristol. And that currently brings the leadership to our own Becky Vallender – a one-time member of the Project and a one-time employee of Hugh and Liz Nunn whom she credits with having shown her the way to be a Christian.

When the Project began in 1994, the two churches formed a Steering Group which has met, with laudable commitment, every two or three months since then. Part of its function is advisory, part is about finance, and part is about prayerful support. It works well and, in its turn, has been admirably supported by many other people, both inside and outside this community. This support has manifested itself in a flow of finance which has meant that the expenditure budget of £8000 or so has been met every year. Individual donations, together with financial help from the churches, the Parish Council, the District and County Councils, are but some of the other sources of money which have made the whole enterprise possible.

In the current year much has happened, one important fact being that the Project was granted Charity status and 'Community First' was then able to provide a grant of £7000 to enable the setting up of a Sports Initiative. Emma Lucas was instrumental in planning an exciting programme of activities and sports for the whole year – a programme which Becky has been more than ready to augment, helped by some enthusiastic volunteers. Autumn saw a party of twenty or more young people and their leaders going to the Woodlands Camp site, north of Birmingham, for a long weekend of fun, fellowship and physical activities.

#### The other groups:

**10+** This group continues to meet on Tuesday evenings and the leaders offer arts and crafts and games with some film clips – and the usual Christian teaching at some point in the evening. The Tuck Shop is staffed by members of St James' church and friends, working to a rota organised by Jenny Grey.

**7+** This group meets on Thursdays and relies on volunteer helpers who include Clare, Mike and Jason Crew, Richard and Gill Thorniley, Becky Griffin and Jeff Soulsby.

**Youth Café.** This 'drop-in' centre operates on Friday evenings with Becky present and various others, James, Jeff... and Sheila Wolstenholme on duty in the kitchen.

**Connect.** James (Jim) and Jayne continue to run this group; they have also started 'Connect More' which is held once a month at the chapel, aiming to bridge the gap between church and 'no need for church'.

## On being Chairman of the Parish Council - a personal view by Clive Allen



I have been asked to say something about my experience as Chairman of the Parish Council and my thoughts on being in this role in this particular year of 2007. That's not an easy task. Why did I put my name forward as being willing to become a councillor in the first place...a decision which led to becoming the chairman? Have I enjoyed it? Have I regretted it? The answers to these three in order are: Because I wanted to give something back to the village I'd grown to love: Yes, and, Yes, sometimes!

Actually, the plain truth is that I enjoy involvement. I like knowing what is happening and I like being part of it...usually, that is. But in the Spring of 2007 I found myself having serious doubts as to whether this habitual state of mind was enough to keep me going. By then I had been chairman for almost four years and, for the first time, because of the ramifications of all the difficulties which had arisen in the vexed matter of the new Village Hall, I felt that I had lost the confidence of the then Parish Council which, itself, was breaking into factions. This lack of cohesion troubled me greatly.

It is in my nature (and my way of behaving) to try to find a way through difficulties by discussing and adapting rather than by 'taking a stance', which seems to me to lead to loggerhead situations that are impossible to get out of without complete loss of face. So, to put it briefly, all that had happened and was still happening, all the accusations and ill-feeling, led me to resign at the meeting in February. At this point the chair was taken by Joyce White, my very capable vice-chairman, and she remained in the post until the election in May.

It was after being returned to the Council by a very comfortable majority of votes - and it again having been proposed that I should take the post - that I found renewed confidence to take the chairmanship again. There were now five new members on the Council\*, all of them committed to looking beyond the immediate difficulties, pressing as they were, to a wider view of other things which had come to be on the Council's agenda. By now the Village Hall Management Committee had a new chairman, Chris Haynes, who (together with the Council's representative, John Redman, the previous chairman) was most capably leading the negotiations concerning the new hall. So the Parish Council agenda could now embrace other matters of importance, not least the plans for the flood alleviation scheme. Hoorah!

Then, with work just about to get under way, there came more flooding! It's impossible to say in this brief account what extra work this entailed: long negotiations between the various bodies and the frustrations which plagued the possibility of any progress. What a setback! And what exacerbated the problem even further was that

other places also required swift action... places far more heavily affected than Harvington. I couldn't begin to count how many times I found myself having to explain why our need was not top of the list.

To add to my worries was the fact that the Parish Plan, after progressing well in the early part of the year had faltered because of Peter Oliver's unfortunate though understandable resignation from the task... and none of my searching had been able to find a substitute for him. Meanwhile, I had become very aware of the pressure of outside forces (resulting from facets of government legislation) which could change the future of villages such as ours if we had not got a Parish Plan in place. This propelled me into looking for another way of protecting Harvington's future – the creation of some sort of Village Trust, perhaps \*\* – and I talked to one or two people I thought might be interested in working towards this.

Between times, there were all the usual matters to attend to... and one or two more; many will remember the dissension between village and owner in the matter of 'the house under the bridge and the closure of the footpath'. Then, of course, in December, came the bombshell from English Heritage and the Lottery Fund – no help for Harvington's new village hall! I'll not go into that in detail – Chris Haynes' report will cover it, I know - but it was a body blow and I felt desperately sorry for the members of the Management Committee who had worked so hard, led the way in fund-raising, and taken such a lot of flak. What could possibly be done to repair the situation? All seemed doom and gloom. \*\*\*

So, my fellow-Harvingtonians, we came to the end of the year and what a tumultuous year it had been...not typical, I feel, but momentous for the village in many ways. As for me – it's been challenging but, yes, I have enjoyed it, although there *have* been times when I've come near to saying, 'Stop the bus – I want to get off!' The view is still pretty good, though, and there'll always be something interesting happening, so I think I'll stay on a little longer.

### **Footnotes**

\* The five new members were: Edith Cappell, Eric Hall, Sue Jenkinson, Ken Knight and Andy Tracey (who joined Clive Allen, John James, John Redman and Joyce White).

\*\* It is good to report that, at another public meeting called to consult on the suggestion that a Village Trust should be established, a volunteer, named Bill Burford, came forward, expressing a willingness to take on the revival of the Parish Plan. A man with the requisite knowledge and experience, his action could mean that the village's problems in this respect are on their way to being solved.

\*\*\* With commendable resilience and speed, the VHC put the past and their disappointment behind them and, at the time of going to press, have produced excellent plans for re-furbishing the old hall to a pleasingly high standard. These have been presented to the village at a public meeting called for the purpose and are now under consideration by the Planning Authority.

The Baptist Church has a rather less complex system of 'government' than that outlined elsewhere for St James' church. At the head of their organisation are five elected deacons (the diaconate) who, between them, are responsible for all aspects of church life. These five meet regularly and, until his retirement from the post, Hugh Nunn was chairman of those meetings, re-elected consistently every year over a period of some 20 years. In 2007 Jayne Nichol became his 'shadow' on many occasions, it having been suggested that she might be asked to assume his position in due course. (This did happen at the appropriate General Meeting.)

Speaking to Jayne about this was very rewarding. It is something which she has enjoyed, and enjoys, doing because it brings her into such close contact with all that is happening and especially with all the people involved. She feels that it is as near to ministry as any 'lay' position could be and has helped her to recognise that she is attracted by the idea of becoming a Baptist minister.

She spoke with admiration of her four fellow deacons – Lynn Merrick who handles all the secretarial work, Mel Curnock who has responsibility for the building and fabric of the church, Peter Bowen who handles the finances, and Becky Vallendar who plans and drives forward the project involving the young people, not only of the church but of the village. Together the diaconate, with Jayne at its head, tends to the spiritual part of church activities...its worship, its aims, its projects, its outreach.

Together they do the necessary preparation for gathering all the members to a general meeting (three or four times a year) or whenever it is felt that everyone's opinion is needed; the deacons never make important decisions on behalf of the members; the members themselves vote and decide.

It is interesting to think of all that when admiring the changes and improvements to the church brought about during 2007 and contemplating what pleasure they must have given to the members...as they have done to the village. We wish them good fortune in all that they propose for 2008.

Jess Fairs

### **The Harvington Youth Project**

2007 marked the 13<sup>th</sup> year of a project which, when started in 1994, was being thought of as an activity that might run for, perhaps, three to five years – the very word 'project' conjuring up something of short-term duration. How, then, has the Harvington Youth Project persisted, indeed flourished, for so long?

One factor is outstanding and probably underwrites all others – the foresight and enthusiasm of Dr Hugh Nunn, who was responsible for bringing it into being. He was joined by others – members of his own church and members of the church of St James amongst them. He made it possible for James Nichol, the first appointed leader, to have paid work and enough financial support for him to live in the village and to devote many hours of his time to starting off the 'group' idea and, when James (Jim) married Jayne, for them to have a home.

The background philosophy of the Project, from the beginning, was the belief that

They had one last on 26<sup>th</sup> November 2006 when Jeffrey Soulsby was baptised. Quite dramatic it was – no half measures – right under he went but he came out alright and everyone seemed very pleased. It was almost a party atmosphere afterwards, but the leaders used lots of serious language as the service took place.

Beside baptism, which they say demonstrates death to self and new life in the Lord Jesus Christ they also have a monthly (first Sunday of the month) communion. Although it shouldn't happen there is always a chance here for something for me. But as always these Baptists do things their own way. Sometimes they will have someone along who calls himself (or herself) an ordained minister. Never, as far as I know, is someone in this capacity referred to as 'the Vicar' or 'the Rector'. They are non-conformists and come from a different tradition. And yet, as I perceive it, they break bread and drink wine just as they do in most Christian churches. From the words they use it is obvious that they are remembering the death of Jesus. But they always end this sort of service on a positive note, addressing Jesus in their prayers as someone who is alive today – quite something!

But I've probably lost my way, what I meant to say was that not only do these Baptists encourage their ministers to take communion services but also their ordinary members. So, quite a lot of the time leading members in the fellowship will conduct the 'breaking of bread' service.

I have probably been in and out of enough holes in these observations on what I see happening in the Baptist Church except to say that I do like two other key mouse feeding events. These are not your usual Sunday services but closer to social events for the people of Harvington. On the first, third and fifth Thursdays they have something called tots@hbc. The aftermath of this I enjoy very much. There is nothing like a one, two or three year-old for spreading edibles around the floor and furniture. The mums seem to enjoy it and the decibel level is such that I use my ear plugs – that is when I can find them.

On Tuesday mornings there is something called 'Coffee Time' – this appeals to a range of people looking for a time of sharing news, enjoying each other's company and of course drinking coffee. The cracks in the floorboards collect a good complement of biscuit crumbs so Tuesday afternoon means I feed well.

Well there you have it – the comings and goings at the Baptist Church. If you think I major on my stomach you are quite right but it is aided and abetted by the refreshment loving Baptists.

### Baptist Church

It will come as no surprise to readers that the church mouse responsible for the article on the Baptist Church does not actually live on the premises but spends a lot of time across the road at the home of Dr and Mrs Hugh Nunn. He (or she) will have noticed that there have been changes there, especially with regard to Dr Nunn's involvement with the said church, in that 2007 was Dr Nunn's last year as chairman of the diaconate – (see below).

### On becoming a parish councillor



I will admit that at the Annual Meeting in 2007 I was completely bowled over when I discovered that I had, indeed, been elected as one of the new councillors. I didn't think I was well enough known in the village to receive sufficient votes in a contest which, unusually, had plenty of candidates.

The first meeting was a knee-rattling affair as I really didn't know a lot about what was expected. Fortunately, the 'old hands', especially chairman, vice-chairman and parish clerk, were extremely friendly, helpful and anxious to give everyone a chance to relax and also to put forward their point of view.

The amount of form-filling, especially about the elections, was an eye opener. I can understand the need for transparency about electoral expenses etc, (particularly in the light of current Parliamentary revelations!) but feel that at parish level the matter could be far more simplified, where people are volunteers and unlikely to handle vast sums. The first sessions of training arranged by Wychavon were useful and certainly made one think carefully about acting at all times with care to ensure all discussions and decisions are open and will stand up to scrutiny.

The formality of the meeting system and need for all discussion to be public and subject to various rules – i.e. only items on the agenda may be discussed and, for the sake of all present, arguments should be brief and to the point – is something I am not used to and find hard and very slow in a decision-making process. However, I do understand the logic behind it in ensuring matters are handled openly and with care for the general good. I am afraid most businesses wouldn't be able to remain solvent with such a system of management though!

The subject of the Village Hall has remained an issue from the previous parish council and, perhaps, was the matter which, at least, gave the village a chance to elect from a good selection of candidates this time. I think that we've an active council now, representing a great variety of interests from all parts of the village and village life. They are all happy, also, to state their point of view and discuss issues and reach an agreement, which all accept afterwards.

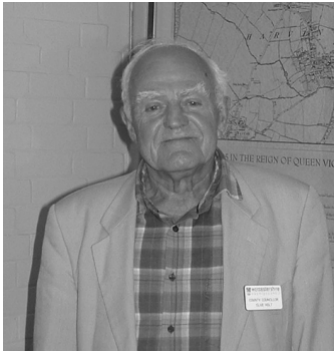
It is sad that the village plan has had to be put on hold as no one with the time and experience to get it to the next stage is available. Perhaps that will come in time... indeed it must! The fact that the councillors are all so involved and busy in their outside lives is one of the contributing factors, I think, to discussions being so good, and provides for wide-ranging, informed views useful to a plan's implementation.

One other frustration that I have had is that we cannot always get answers from other authorities, as neither the clerk nor the rest of us have time to continually chase these down. Usually, these are questions about planning matters which have then been decided upon before we can get a response. Thank goodness for the vice-chairman's tenacity over the issue of the public footpath over the bridge at the bottom of Anchor Lane!

Nerves still twist my tongue if I do want to make a point... but the knees are knocking less now! And I have thoroughly enjoyed meeting so many new people and hearing so many views from around the village.

Sue Jenkinson

### A County & District Councillor's view



Having served as Harvington's County Councillor for 23 years and District Councillor for 17, I have to say it has been an interesting, rewarding and, at times, challenging period of my life. In true democratic style there have been no less than eleven elections in that time because each Council has elections every four years.

Rather like the Queen with Prime Ministers, I have been privileged to work alongside no less than seven Parish Council Chairmen, namely Elizabeth Harrison, Glen Webb, Arthur Robinson, Max Byrd, Richard Sharp, Dennis McKenzie and Clive Allen. I have learnt a lot from all of them and Harvington residents are fortunate in having people of such calibre at the helm and steering the village through good times and occasionally turbulent waters.

There is no doubt that Harvington people are very community-minded and there are a host of organisations producing excellent activities for the village to enjoy. For my part, I have enjoyed being part of this and doing my best to secure Council funding for some of them.

AD 2007 will sadly be remembered as the year of the floods which caused so much hardship and misery for many people including Harvington's residents. Trying to get the various agencies to respond by producing viable plans to combat future problems is frustrating and time-consuming. However, progress is being made, with some hard work already undertaken, and more will be done soon to try and avoid flooding of properties in future.

Clive Holt  
County and District Councillor

who does the pizzas is very popular.

You may have noticed that the building has been changed recently. The oral history of my clan tells me that the original building was constructed in 1886/87. Not much changed until recently when joy, o joy, a new kitchen was installed about three years ago and this year has been the big change year. From a creature comfort point of view the new boiler and better insulation are to be applauded. One of the people, who I see in church regularly, was the new extension designer – Michael Bowen is his name. He put together a number of design options and, at a special meeting of members, the most appealing design was chosen. These Baptists decide what's to be done and then they get on with it. I did hear them muttering about Wychavon Planning Department but eventually any difficulties were overcome.

I rather liked it when Williams Bros from Bidford came this year to do the building work. They were a cheerful bunch, and although tidy in their habits, like builders everywhere they liked their tea breaks – the scraps they inadvertently left behind added spice to my diet. Builders' snacks are not quite the same thing as Baptist refreshments. Looking at Gary and Glyn at work – that's the 'Williams Bros' – made me think about what these local Baptists are all about. Why build bigger when over 100 years of historical building would surely do? Listening in on their business meetings I learnt that the new side room will be used for a variety of things including youth and children's work whilst the new entrance and hallway should, they said, give a more welcoming appearance. For myself I rather like the snug insulation above the new ceilings – very thoughtful of them to provide for my needs. Actually they seem to think that better insulation will save on fuel bills – they even talked about becoming 'greener', whatever that means.

I'm not one for flowers myself, edibles are more my line – but I must say they do try, those ladies who 'do' the flowers. Every week, without fail, new flowers appear but it's that cold in here during the winter that the flowers seem to last for ever. It's not unusual to see three weeks worth of flowers around the place in the winter. Which brings me to the 'rota'. 'The time has come', says Mrs Lynn Merrick (she is the Secretary) every six months or so, 'to fill in my special rota sheet if you are willing to help in many of the things that have to be done around the church to make things run smoothly.' Because the church members all seem to pitch in to something or other it really ought to be known as the Baptist Co-operative Society. Anyway, Lynn seems to encourage people to 'do the flowers', read lessons, welcome people at the door, make coffee, clean the place (too clean for my liking) and lots of other things. An alternative name for all who meet here could be the Harvington Rotarians – but then my Uncle once said that Rotarians and Baptists are not quite the same thing.

Whilst we are thinking about names it's worth asking the question, 'Why Baptists'? Well they do surprise me from time to time – not being a great one for water myself. My Evesham informants tell me that the Baptists in that town have a chapel with a sort of small swimming pool. They call it a Baptistry. Here in Harvington they do not have such permanent facility but not to be outdone by their town cousins they hire in something which can be filled with water – a freestanding pool.

Clare Susan Colman (adult)	Inkberrow
Harvey David Beebner (child)	Harvington
Amelia Grace Jinks (child)	Bidford
Isaac Daniel Jinks (child)	Bidford
James Gibson McWilliams (child)	Harvington

### Weddings

Unusually, there was only one wedding in St James' church in 2007 and that was the marriage of Nicholas Anthony Dore to Sharon Elizabeth Clark.

To all who were wed in this momentous year we wish a long and happy life together.

Jess Fairs

### Harvington Baptist Church – from the floorboards (as told to Hugh Nunn)



Baptist Church mice generally feed quite well. At Harvington Baptist Church I feed better than most. The best days for food are Tuesdays and Fridays – nicely spaced days – but these are supplemented by snacks on offer on most other days of the week. My observation is that the Baptists like their tucker. Don't get me wrong, the Church isn't some glorified restaurant, but they don't need a very strong excuse in order to bring out the refreshments. I must say the Harvest Festival this year wasn't quite up to scratch in terms of the Sunday display of corn and other goodies – my relations down the road reported a much better display of free food at St James'. But there you are, you can't have it all ways.

The highlight of my week is the Youth Café on Friday nights. The place comes alive with young people enjoying themselves – it's a drop in job – they come and go as they please. The pool table gets dragged out and is heavily used and the bean bags are arranged for lounging around on – my view is that they are not bean bags at all, no real beans to feed a hungry mouse. From reading the notice board I have come to appreciate that the Youth Café is part of the Harvington Youth Project. I should have known; I've seen a whole string of principal youth workers in my time. Still, you can read more about that in another chapter of this book. Anyway, Friday night is bumper food night. Seems to me teenagers and food are inseparable. Pizzas, chocolate bars and heaps of other goodies disappear at an alarming rate. That Sheila Wolstenholme



### — Organisations and Interest Groups —

#### HATS (Harvington Amateur Theatrical Society)



The Society may not attract the same critical acclaim as the Royal Shakespeare Company but it certainly has its own coterie of critics – an entire village! This is why the Society works so hard to maintain a good standard of production and why the village can look back on more than twenty years of mainly excellent, occasional very good, a few good and one or two duff productions.

The list of members and chairpersons over the period reads like a who's who of *Who's Who*. Founding members included Alan and Rosemary Hirst and Glenn Webb. Alan and Glenn still tread the boards, albeit with a lighter touch, and Rosemary remains the most over-used prompt in theatre history.

In 1985, though, it was the same Rosemary Hirst who played Miss Marple in Agatha Christie's thriller 'Murder at the Vicarage' – (this will surprise many people for whom she is the ever-present prompt *never* seen on stage). Twenty years later, in 2005, Heather Dallow played the same Miss Marple in the farce 'Murdered to Death'.

The years between witnessed some memorable productions. 1989 was the year of 'Pickwick', an ambitious and ultimately splendid musical, directed by Jess Fairs and involving almost half the village. Then, in 1990, an Edwardian Music Hall also by Jess, but with invaluable input from Moira Morris who was involved in directing Dennis McKenzie in a hilarious sketch entitled 'On the beach'. (It was thought at the time that this production probably involved the other half of the village!) Both these productions owed much to the Spencers – Chris who starred in both, and Joy who wrote the music for 'Pickwick' and collected, adapted and coached all the music for the Music Hall. Other memorable performances from that production included June Davies' elegant and comic rendition (in which she was partnered by Sue Peterson) of Joyce Grenfell's 'Stately as a Galleon' and Jenny Perkins and Rozanne Beard's rather risqué presentation of 'She Went and Lost it at The Astor'. Then in 1993 a pantomime for adults written by HATS filled the stage again and featured, amongst other surprising items, two existentialist trees from Dudley.

The very successful musical era of HATS had, by then, been dealt a severe blow when the Spencers left the village, but then suffered anew when Carol Bayliss (who had replaced them) also left. Nothing on the scale of those productions has been attempted since, but the leaning towards the risqué appeared again when Sue Stokes played a somewhat obliging ingénue (and underpants were seen once more on the Harvington stage!) in a production of 'No Sex, Please, We're British', the said garments having been banned since 1988 when they made an all-to-brief appearance in 'Surprise Package'.

'Something Borrowed, Something Blue' in 2004 featured Michael Bowen as Emcee from 'Cabaret', displaying a remarkable and nerve-racking propensity to ad lib, while Linda Attwood revealed an unexpected dexterity to play two kettle-drums, four tin cans and a kazoo all at the same time! Three murder mysteries between 2003 and 2006 allowed Sandie Davis to perfect the role of a dead body!

HATS remains committed to producing some form of entertainment each year, but in order to maintain variety it requires new members with new ideas – and new members with a little bit of youth into the bargain. God forbid that HATS should produce a version of ‘Grease’ using only a cast of fifty- and sixty-year olds!

The 2007 production, by the way, was a comedy, ‘Cash on Delivery’ directed by and starring Ken Knight.

The editors are greatly obliged to Ken for providing this report and the village is also indebted to him for his energy in keeping HATS alive and active. May he, and they – and the list is too numerous to include them all – long continue to entertain us.

Jess Fairs

### Harvington Art Group



In 1988 a comparative newcomer to the village, Mrs Christine Simpson, wanting to be able to pursue her own growing interest in painting, got together a group of people with a similar interest and suggested that they should meet regularly and work together to improve their artistic talents and abilities.

From this get-together the present-day Art Group was formed and ran for some years under Christine’s enthusiastic and energetic leadership. When she and her husband left the village Brian Egan took over the chairmanship. He, in turn, after some time, handed over to Alan Davies who has now been in charge for five years.

The number of members has varied but stands now at twenty, of which several come from Evesham or other nearby villages as well as from Harvington. Meetings are held fortnightly throughout the year in the village hall, members paying a weekly fee as well as putting on a bi-annual exhibition to help raise funds and to show the rest of the village what they have achieved. (The next exhibition is to be in 2008.)

Throughout the last two years, in response to a suggestion from Alan, members have doubled their entrance fee, agreeing that half of it should go into a fund for re-building the village hall. Added to this, in recent months the group organised a highly successful ‘Tramps’ Supper’, profits from which were also donated to ‘the fund’. These generous efforts have added over £1000 to the sum already collected. But their generosity did not stop there. In response to an idea suggested by member Barbara Butcher, they are producing a calendar for 2008, the profits from which will be given to St James’ church Repair & Rejuvenation Fund as the church is also faced at present with raising a large sum of money.

band consists of Anthony Wheeler, Mike Baxter, Judith Baxter, Keith Hemming, Sheila Hemming, Ella Purkis, Chris Haynes and Rowland Merrick from the village. We are helped out also by Beryl Harris and Christina Toyer from the Stratford area and

Dave Witts and Neville Holder from Norton. We practise most Tuesday nights from 7.30pm to 9.00 pm, and ring every Sunday on alternate mornings and evenings. We ring for weddings when required, when special national events occur, and we always ring out the old year and ring in the new.

All churches were asked to ring for the millennium, a request which we fulfilled and for which we received a certificate. Also, on 4<sup>th</sup> June 2002, we rang to celebrate Her Majesty the Queen’s Golden Jubilee and received a certificate from the Queen’s private secretary. Both these certificates have been framed and are hanging proudly in our ringing chamber.

We have an annual ringing trip where we visit other towers in a chosen area. Over the years we have been to The Forest of Dean, Staffordshire, Somerset and The Cotswolds, to name but a few. We also have visiting teams wanting to ring at our tower from all parts of the country, and we have even had a band of ringers this year from America!

Our ringing practice nights are not just about our striking prowess: we discuss various topics and generally put the world to rights. We have formed friendships and help each other through various problems. We are also very fortunate to have a pub over the road from our church where we can continue our discussions!!

Anthony Wheeler

**Postscript:** New members are always welcome because, as we get older, we hope to find other and younger persons with an interest in continuing this fine tradition.

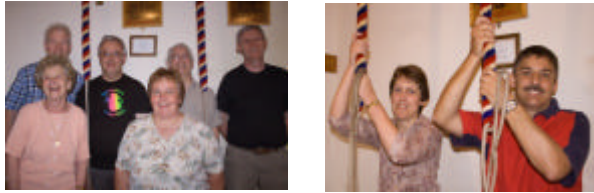
### Baptisms and Marriages 2007

Regrettably, we have no comprehensive details of births in Harvington during the year but, nonetheless, to all those born, we wish a healthy, happy and fulfilling future... and a good start here in Harvington!

There are details of baptisms which took place in St James’ church. It is interesting to note where the families concerned came from: not all were from Harvington and not all were babies.

Macey Alexandra Carlin (child)	Harvington
Anthony Smith (adult)	Lenchwick
Anthony Smith (child, son of above)	Lenchwick
Sean Smith (child)	Lenchwick
Thomas George Smith (child)	Lenchwick
Michael Jack Davies (child)	Wyre Piddle

## Harvington Bells



The church tower is 12<sup>th</sup> Century but the spire was only added in 1855. The original six bells, cast in 1854, were hung in the tower at a cost of £170. An upgrade was carried out in 1947 and the bells were taken away from the church. They were then melted down and recast by Taylors of Loughborough and re-hung in the tower; the total cost in 1947 being £511 and 9 shillings. This was paid for by a local lady, Mrs Edith Towers, as a memorial to her husband Samuel. Unfortunately the money ran out and the job was never properly completed, so the bells were hung in a static position in the tower. They were operated by an Ellacombe Chime which only required one person to ring them.

In about 1992, Mr Chris Povey (the tower captain of Evesham Bell Tower) started the ball rolling by visiting the church and making a few enquiries about the possibility of re-hanging the bells for “Full Circle Ringing”. A committee was formed by the Rector, Stephen Little, and the task of raising £35,000 was undertaken. The Millennium Fund was approached and advised that they would contribute half the money if the parish raised the other half. Many contributions were received, the largest of £5,000 from Harvington Parish Council. The task was completed by a very keen and enthusiastic committee, namely Reverend Stephen Little, Chris Povey, Ken Rowlands, Keith Seager, Mike Homans, Joy Davies, Rowena Warrington, Anna Morgan and myself, Anthony Wheeler. The final cost of the project was £47,300 a far cry from the original cost in 1947.

In April 1998 the bells were removed from the tower by the contractors Hayward Mills Associates. After Mike Baxter had been up into the tower to photograph the bells in their old frame, Anthony Wheeler encouraged Sheila Hemming to help him remove the 50 years of pigeon droppings that had accumulated there. Unfortunately, on the chosen day, Sheila had just had her hair done and they both came out covered in bird droppings and feathers - it was a very messy job!! The bells were returned in late August, along with a new bell frame and fittings, and were laid out in the church for a few days for all to see. The bells and frame were then lifted into a lower position in the tower than they had been originally, mounted on wheels and with ropes fitted to enable them to be rung for “Full Circle Ringing”. The ‘try out’ came on Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1998 by an enthusiastic band of ringers, and on Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> September the bells were dedicated by the Dean of Worcester.

From the beginning we were fortunate to have a local band capable of ringing the peel of bells; the original group consisting of Anthony Wheeler, Judith Baxter, Steve Bowley, Keith Seager, Sheila Hemming and Keith Hemming. Over the years we have taught many to ring but unfortunately some have fallen by the way side. Our present

Both these gestures were extraordinarily kind, and greatly appreciated by both recipients.

New members are always welcomed and need have no fear of being intimidated; there is no formal instruction given, and no tutor present, but all members – between them using all types of media and of varying expertise – are ready and willing to share any advice or suggestions. The atmosphere is very informal and light-hearted... and obviously enjoyed by all who attend.

Enquiries should be directed to Alan Davies on 01386 870156.

Jess Fairs

## Harvington Cricket Club

The first recorded match played by the club was in 1893 when, in June of that year, Harvington lost away to Offenham and beat Dunnington at home. For many years the village parson was team captain.

In the late 1960s the club almost folded through lack of support but was rescued by the determined efforts of a nucleus of players. In the early 1970s the combined efforts of keen cricketers provided the finance to build our first proper pavilion for the princely sum of £3000. About that time a Harvington Cricket Club skittles team was formed with the objective of keeping the cricketers together during the winter months, and the team still plays in the Evesham Skittles League.

The Club progressed from playing social cricket on Saturdays and Sundays to a league cricket debut in the Morganite Crucible League, later joining the Cotswold Hills League in 1993 in which we still play. The new clubhouse, opened in 1997, was built with the financial support of grants from the National Lottery, Wychavon District Council, Harvington Parish Council and the club itself.

The Club is run by a committee of 14 which meets every month. Stuart Powell is the current Secretary and lives at 6 The Rowans, Harvington. There are at present some 60 club members.

The new pavilion is a most excellent facility with good changing rooms and hot showers. There is a large, well-appointed function room with bar and cellar, and the kitchen is well-provided with all necessary appliances. This not only allows the playing of cricket and other sports but also enables the hosting of social functions for members. We have held highly successful summer balls, weddings, quiz nights, christenings, birthday parties and so forth. The pavilion and its grounds are available for private hire through a club member.

Cricket is played from the end of April to the end of September. We have four thriving sides, our Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> XI which currently plays in the Cotswold Hills League, Division 4: our Midweek XI which plays friendly 20/Twenty games: our Sunday XI, and an indoor Winter VI. Our Associated Members Cricket Club, the Round of Gras, plays friendly matches on Sundays and on Wednesdays at Harvington.



Coaching for youngsters began again in 2007 at the Club when two junior teams were formed: an Under 12s and an Under 14s. They competed and enjoyed their cricket in the North East Division of the Cotswold Hills League. Junior cricket coaching, new teams and league games are planned for the 2008 season and Harvington youngsters wanting to learn and play the game will be made very welcome.

The full programme of cricket at Harvington in 2007 was only partially interrupted by rain and flood. In the downpour of 20<sup>th</sup> July the playing field was flooded but the pavilion, built on raised ground, thankfully, was not. There were many memorable highlights during the season, just two of which are mentioned here. One was the 20/ Twenty competition that was played on a very hot 5<sup>th</sup> August between Harvington, the Round of Gras and Flyford Flavell. The last mentioned won a very entertaining three-way competition and everyone enjoyed the evening barbecue that followed. The other was the HCC tour, which went to Cattistock and Abbotsbury in Dorset (8<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> September) and was so enjoyed by the players that it will be repeated in 2008.

### **Football**

During the winter months the playing field is used by Harvington Junior Football Club which has 7 teams of different age groups, each group with its own manager. All teams are guided and supervised by Mark Lee ( 8 The Rowans, Harvington). A senior football team based at the Coach & Horses Inn, Harvington, plays at the ground on Sundays.

Visit our website at [www.harvingtoncricketclub.co.uk](http://www.harvingtoncricketclub.co.uk) to find out more about the Club. Why not join us, either as a playing member or, perhaps, as a social member. We welcome senior and junior players with open arms. You will find us along Anchor Lane, across the flyover bridge over the A46, then turn left and follow the road to the cricket field.

### **Contacts:**

Club Secretary: Mr Stuart Powell – 01386 872764

Membership Sec: Mrs Lucy Powell - 01386 872764

Social Secretary: Mrs Noreen Maude – 01386 870452

Winter Cricket: Mr Steve Shepherd – 01386 871155

Junior Coaches: Mr Trevor Knowles – 07967 152394

Mr Andrew Green – 07765 851070

Junior Football:

Head Coach: Mr Mark Lee - 01386 870455

Senior Football

Representative: Mr James McNaughton – 07792 876965

Robert Maude  
President, Harvington Cricket Club

## **Sunday Group? Sunday School? Sunday Club? ...** **Gill Thorniley's challenge\*\***

Gill writes:

One of my greatest joys in 2007, an otherwise difficult year for me, was the start of the St James' church Sunday Group.

As a church, we had recognised for some time that we offered very little with which to nurture the spiritual needs of our children, apart from the Family Service which was now well-established but not a weekly occurrence. The Sunday Group, held at the Rectory, and taking place while parents are in church attending Morning Service or Holy Communion, was set up to try to meet some of these needs. (It has to be the Rectory: the church has no hall and no room suitable for the purpose – a fact, we are told, which has always posed a problem.)

The children leave the church before the regular service begins, after a welcome and then a short prayer, accompanied by the supervising adults into whose care they are now given, and waving happily to parents and adult members of the congregation.

The first encouragement I received, after putting forward the idea, was the number of people willing to commit themselves regularly to the project – three people helping to prepare the craftwork which is an integral and popular part of the overall plan, and three helping each Sunday on a rota basis – with two others willing to be used in an emergency.

But the greatest source of joy for me was the youngsters themselves – their energy, their enthusiasm, laughter and questions...particularly, perhaps, the questions. In the first week, while I was still finding my feet, I was asked, during a discussion on creation '...So how did God create everything out of nothing?' Now we all know that this is a question which has stumped many great theological and scientific minds...so what chance had I? Fortunately, I am not afraid to say, 'I don't know!' This IS fortunate, because I've had to say it many times since!

Sometimes I am able to find an answer and pass it on the next time we meet; sometimes we live with the tension (and dissatisfaction) of not finding an answer. But I encourage the feeling that we are on a journey, exploring God together...and the children seem happy to be part of that. It is a happy time that we spend together.

The problem that faces me now (and it is a problem recognised by the people who help and support me in this venture) is where we can meet and how we can provide for the children as they get older? There is no apparent solution at present...but can we hope to have found one by the end of another year? 2007 saw the start of the Sunday Group – perhaps 2008 will see another chapter in its story.

\*\* Footnote: May 2008. The group is now called The Cross Club...a name chosen by the children, who felt that Jesus' death on the cross and the events which followed are the basis of all that Christians believe, and it would be good to have that represented in the name of their group.

Jess Fairs

to complete, after which time there will be a grand service of Thanksgiving and an invitation to everybody to 'come and see'.

Sophie would like it to be known who her fellow committee workers have been so, in alphabetical order, they are: Clive Allen (church and B&F committee treasurer), Jess Fairs, Annette France, Carol Goodchild (churchwarden), Margaret Redman (secretary to the B&F committee), Ken Rowlands and Graham Whitehouse. She also wants it to be recorded how greatly indebted to them she is for their uncomplaining attitude to the work they have undertaken, for their initiative and for their unflinching support.

Jess Fairs

### Licensed as an Assistant Priest



A rare occurrence, and one which was attended by a large number of supporters and admirers, took place in St James' church one evening in October 2007. This was in connection with the Reverend Fran Battin, whose coming to the village in 2005 was the start of an increasingly important relationship with the many people with whom she was to make contact. It rapidly became obvious that she was here with the purpose of giving help in meeting the spiritual needs of the village; help which was greatly appreciated by the Rector and by the members of the other three churches in the ARCH Benefice. (Abbot's Morton, Rous Lench, Church Lench and Harvington parishes, all having the Reverend Richard Thorniley as their rector or vicar.)

She writes: "My husband, David, and I moved into Harvington in 2005 after 20 years in our previous home. We experienced such a warm welcome, not only here in Harvington but within the whole benefice, that we rapidly felt completely at home and part of a large family. After a time of assisting with all manner of clerical duties, I was then formally licensed in October 2007 as Assistant Priest to the Benefice. It was a wonderful, impressive occasion in St James' church at which the Suffragan Bishop of Dudley presided, and I was very touched by the care which had been taken to make it a special and memorable service. But formality and titles were not what it was about for me. Far more important was the fact that I now officially belonged to this loving extended family who had adopted me, and now was the time to celebrate what we had already shared and would continue to share in future...and, above all, to give thanks to God for all that this meant."



### Harvington Horticultural Society also known as 'The Gardening Club'



In the summer of 1984 Elizabeth Harrison, then chairman of Harvington Parish Council, convened a meeting of all villagers who were interested in forming a gardening club. The meeting was well-attended and a number of people agreed to stand for election to a committee. Margaret Crossley became chairman and Tony Watts was elected secretary. Because none of them had experience of forming a club of this kind, they asked for help from the chairman of Inkberrow Club who pointed them in the right direction.

The club was to be called the 'Harvington Horticultural Society', was to meet monthly, hear good speakers, take part in helpful discussion and pay visits to gardens of quality. The annual subscription was to be £1.50 and the entrance fee 30p. In the course of time it was felt that the formal title might be putting people off, so the name was changed to 'The Gardening Club', which is the title by which it is generally known. (Its formal title is still used for administrative purposes.)

Tony Watts writes interestingly of the early years, recounting excellent speakers and fascinating visits, the club building an excellent reputation in the village. Sadly, though, in time there came a decline in membership and the inevitable difficulty of finding officers willing to take on the administrative duties. The downward slide halted after the arrival of Edith Cappell whose energy proved to be the tonic that was needed. She continued with the excellent monthly newsletter, introduced earlier by Tony Watts, and its chirpy tone and humorous comments made it a very popular means of communication. Her enthusiastic approach to her secretarial task, which included representing the club on the Village Hall Management Committee, won her the respect of all who served with her.

Millennium Year found the members of the club planting thousands of bulbs in St James' churchyard, bought as a result of fund-raising, together with a grant from Wychavon District Council. Meanwhile, a legacy - left by the late Eric Newing - to be spent at the discretion of the club for use by and in the school, was thoughtfully used in ways designed to foster the children's interest in horticulture. Alongside activities such as these ran the continuous fund-raising for the planned new village hall, plus two 'Open Gardens' weekends which were both popular and lucrative. Add to these the outings, the demonstrations, the discussions - not forgetting participation in the yearly Inter-club Quiz (which Harvington won in this year, 2007) - and you have a picture of a thriving and popular organisation.

There are currently 51 members; membership fee is £5; entry is £1 for members and £1.50 for visitors. Meetings are held on the fourth Wednesday evening of each month... and everybody is welcome!! As Tony Watts (again Secretary, after the last A.G.M.) says, 'It is one of the most successful organisations in the village and I am proud to have been associated with it all this time. Long may it continue!'

Jess Fairs

## Harvington Singers



In 1994 the then Rector, the Reverend Stephen Little, surprised his congregation - and anybody else who was present at the time - by saying that he had invited a friend of his from the time he was in a team ministry at St Mary's, Warwick, to come to Harvington and show us that ANYBODY can sing...and...that friend duly came and did just that!!

His name was Ray Sollett and he coaxed and coached us, a motley assortment of people, to the point where he felt we could give a concert in St James' church. That, probably, was where The Singers began. But it should be hurriedly said that he brought in, to help us, a number of experienced people from his own choir. He did this twice, then (as he always said he would) left us to fend for ourselves. Helplessly, we all looked round for a solution to the problem of a new choirmaster and it came in the shape of one Martin Horton - known to Rosemary Hirst as her boss - who, having heard of our dilemma, said he would like to 'have a go'.

He and his family lived in the village - in the house on the green opposite the village hall - and, now retired, he had time to spare for us. He was passionately fond of music, of which he had a wide knowledge, but had little experience as a choirmaster. But what he did have was a very clear idea of what he wanted to achieve and, above all, was enthusiastic in a way that conveyed itself to all of us and made us want to please him. He was a strict disciplinarian and a hard taskmaster... and he could be irritable...but we loved him, especially as we began to see ourselves improving. His accompanist was Helen Ormorod, the assistant organist at St James' church, who practised very hard to make herself the best that she could be, and we were full of admiration for her.

A number of the singers, namely Rosemary and Alan Hirst, Jess and Dick Fairs and Martin himself, then went on to put together a succession of concerts, all of them held in the church (whose members by this time seemed to have happily accepted the inevitability of our being there!) for about three years. By this time Helen had moved to Yorkshire and our accompanist was John Langley who, when asked if he could suggest someone who might be willing to accompany us, offered himself. That proved to be a lucky day for The Singers!

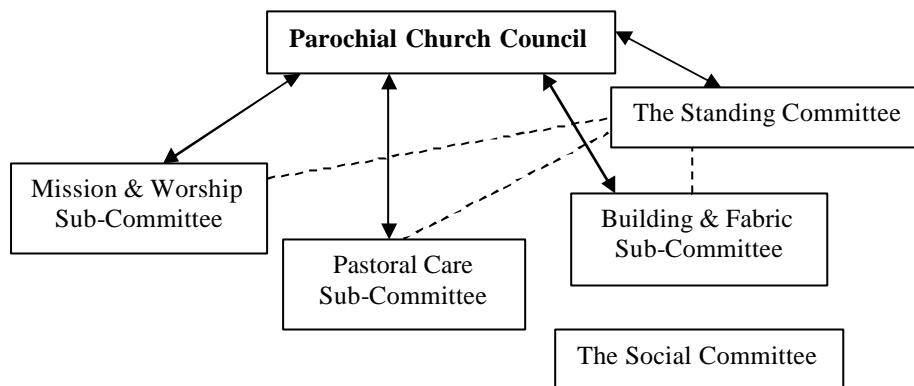
Actually, they were not yet 'The Singers'. That became properly agreed upon at a meeting in January 1999 when it was recognised that 'the choir', now increasingly successful, needed a more formal structure. Alan Hirst was elected as chairman, Rosemary as secretary, Dick Fairs as treasurer, and Jess Fairs as jess-of-all-trades, but with 'production and staging' her particular forte. Martin, also a committee member, was to have complete control over the choice of music, but was to be ready to consult John at all stages, which duly happened and led to a very successful

content of sandwiches and the numbers of sausage rolls required at any event was not a matter that should take up the time of the PCC. To this end, the Social Committee takes on the responsibility for all such occasions, including the Pancake Supper, now a feature of Shrove Tuesday evening. Since the launch of the Repair & Rejuvenation Fund, the committee has also helped other organisers of fund-raising events with their catering needs, a role which they have enjoyed. Currently, the chairman is Sue Coley who is able to keep a finger on many pulses at once because of her position as coordinator of the Friends of St James' church, many of them very active in the scheduled fund-raising. Her fellow members (in alphabetical order) are Kay Barrett, Jess Fairs, Carol Goodchild, Cathy May and Sheila Wolstenholme, all of whom - when not making cakes or their 'buttered-something-or-others' - can be guaranteed to be selling tickets!!

## The St James' Church Repair & Rejuvenation Fund

In January of 2007 the preparatory work done over a period of some 2 - 3 years by the church's Building & Fabric Committee resulted in the launch of a substantial appeal to the community for help in raising £153,000. This sum was intended to cover work which had been planned for some considerable time, starting with essential repairs to the floor at the south west corner of the nave and the repair of the big East window and two aisle windows in the West end. But after much deliberation, and acting on instructions from the Parochial Church Council, the B & F Committee also undertook to raise the floor of the church from and including the bell tower to the steps leading into the chancel... and to carpet same. This was planned, not only to improve easy movement throughout the building and to overcome a change in level between the West end and the central part of the nave, which has always been considered dangerous, but also to facilitate entry and movement for disabled people using the church. The West end was to have not only its pews permanently removed, thus providing an easily-accessible area for a variety of activities, but also the wooden screen and door into the bell tower. This would be replaced by one of toughened glass so that the full impact of the 12<sup>th</sup> Century tower and splayed window can be better appreciated. Obtaining a faculty (that is the official permission of both the diocesan authorities and English Heritage) for such work is a long and extremely complex operation, needing patience, flexibility and persistence, and it has been these qualities which have been most needed in the members of the committee and chiefly on the part of its chairman, Sophie Dodds. It says much for her skill in handling the complexities involved and for keeping up the spirits of all concerned that the faculty was finally obtained and work put in hand. This needed money, hence 'The Launch' and the forming of a 'Friends of St James' Church' association committed to initiating and supporting the many fund-raising events which have taken place over the year and which will continue until all bills have been paid.

Work is scheduled to begin some time in March of 2008 and will take several weeks



changes considered necessary in the format of same. They are constantly looking for further ways of spreading the Christian message to the community.

ii) The Pastoral Care sub-committee – Chairman: Carol Goodchild.

Plus Diana Huggins (churchwarden) and any PCC members who have chosen to serve on this body, and some members of the congregation who have special interest in this work – Joan Banting, Sheila Wolstenholme and Sheila Harris.

They visit and give comfort, care and advice — as well as they are able — to all who need their interest and attention.

iii) The Building & Fabric sub-committee – Chairman: Sophie Dodds.

Plus Carol Goodchild (churchwarden) and any PCC members who have chosen to serve on this body (namely Clive Allen, treasurer, Graham Whitehouse, Ken Rowlands, Annette France) and two members of the congregation who have served on it for some time past and who retain a special interest, namely Margaret Redman (secretary) and Jess Fairs.

They deal with the maintenance of the church, repairs and upkeep, making sure that the requirements which follow the Quinquennial Report are carried out. They plan and supervise improvements, have responsibility for the condition of the churchyard and graveyard, and negotiate with interested parties the Living Memory scheme.

The grooming and tidying of the grounds is organised by Clive Allen and Mervyn Huggins who supervise necessary work one Saturday morning per month through the summer with the help of volunteers from the village.

The Social Committee

Another sub-committee of the church, though acting more informally and independently than the others and not having to rely for its membership on serving members of the Parochial Church Council, is the Social Committee, which is responsible for all the events which require catering to be provided. This committee was set up in the time of the Reverend Stephen Little who felt that discussion about the

partnership. The annual subscription was fixed at £10, January as the date of the A.G.M... and so 'The Singers' was formed.

St George's Day 2000 saw a splendid concert of patriotic music and verse in a church decorated with large Tudor roses and flags of St George, approached along a path flanked by heraldic shields and crests. It was a memorable evening...but clouded by the knowledge that Martin and his family were leaving to go and live in Cornwall. For his 'farewell performance' he chose for us to put on a complete Choral Evensong as near to St James' Day as possible, July 23<sup>rd</sup>. Never a churchgoer, he had nevertheless a particular love of church music and his choices for that evening were delightful. We all robed and for that occasion became the 'church choir'. It was splendid... and a very moving occasion.

Change followed, but we were again extremely fortunate in that Peter Harrison of Pebworth – where he already ran one choir – responded to an advertisement in the *Evesham Journal* and became our Musical Director. It was a post which he graced for seven years, only resigning at the end of 2007. His, and The Singers', successes have been numerous - two concerts a year, in June and December, always with a full church of supporters to listen and encourage, and always with the knowledge that we had a wonderful venue in which to rehearse and perform and a most pleasant relationship with the church authorities which benefited both parties. There have been some excellent programmes – Peter's choice of music and his recognition of what his Singers could achieve have been impeccable and he has well deserved the applause which has always greeted his work.

In the course of time, the committee changed: Richard Sharp became chairman, Margaret Williams treasurer, Barbara Sharp the secretary and general factotum, and the Hirsts and the Fairs took a back seat. Vernon Goodchild, now church organist, gradually allowed himself to be 'drawn in' and is now fully committed to The Singers. He shares the playing with John who is thus able on occasions to join the ranks and enjoy singing!! Numbers of members remain high and it is always a joy to see new faces.

I write now as an ex-member. Many of you will know that my husband, Dick, has developed a lung condition which makes his breathing very difficult indeed. This means he is no longer able to sing. This is a great sadness to him because he has been singing – mostly in churches – ever since he was a choirboy at the age of 9, developing a lovely treble voice for which he was in great demand as a soloist in Yorkshire where we lived. As a man, he was a tenor and enjoyed the fact that he was able to contribute – handsomely, he was told – to the tenor section of the choir. We joined The Singers together and loved our connection with them, so, when Dick had to give it all up, I decided to retire with him. It wouldn't have been fair to have carried on when he couldn't do so any longer. But we've both missed it very much. We've missed the singing and the performing, and the friendship which permeates the group. We are sad that it is all now out of reach, but we watch their progress with pleasure and pride and hope that they will long continue! We shall go to hear them whenever that is possible...and no one will be clapping louder.

Jess Fairs



## Harvington W.I.

### Not just Jam and Jerusalem!



The Women's Institute (the W.I.) was introduced into Harvington in 1924, when, in response to an open invitation, 84 women met in Langton House on Village Street and voted unanimously to start a branch of this rapidly growing movement. Its origins were, actually, in Canada where, in 1896, one Adelaide Hoodless lost a child through drinking contaminated milk. She was determined that this should not happen to anyone else so she set about trying to educate women in rural communities on how to feed and provide for their families more safely and more healthily.

The movement spread to the British Isles and, in Wales in 1915, the first branch was formed. In those early days it existed under the umbrella of the Ministry of Fishing and Agriculture but, not long afterwards, it became an institution in its own right, going under the title by which we have always known it. It was intended to revitalise rural communities through the women, encouraging them to become more involved in producing food, but also in extending their general knowledge and responding to a desire to be better-educated than they were.

There is now a National Federation which is the largest women's voluntary organisation in the country, with over 200,000 members. It plays a unique role in providing women with the opportunity for education, building new skills, taking part in a variety of activities and campaigning for issues, not only in the community but also on a national level. In recent years it has campaigned on excess packaging, adult education funding, farm gate milk prices, climate change and children's diets, to name but a few. More recently, the plight of Evesham Hospital has been highlighted.

Harvington W.I. is a member of the Worcestershire Federation. Within this county we belong to the Vale group, which has 11 local branches. Through this we meet up for group meetings, outings, etc, and share ideas.

Deep in the heart of Oxfordshire there is Denman College. A gift from a National Chairman, it opened in 1948 and provides courses from one to four days where members and non-members can spend time learning anything from arts to personal development. This provides a wonderful opportunity to share learning with likeminded people and is an experience not to be missed.

On a local level, Harvington W.I. has been very active in the community throughout its 83-year history. It was instrumental in the building of the present village hall in 1931 and, in fact, organised the first Horticultural Show to be held in the village hall in 1932. It had its own country dance team - which was frowned upon at the time! - a prize-winning Drama Group, a choir and, in 1962, opened a monthly Baby Clinic for Harvington mothers. The continuing existence of The Institute has been in no small way due to the many characters who with their own individual contributions maintained the spirit and ethos of the W.I.

Over the years, meetings have continued to be held once a month. After a brief business section, a speaker or a demonstration usually takes the main spot in the programme, followed by refreshments and social time. There have been subjects

## --- Church Matters ---

### The Organisation of St James' church



#### The Parochial Church Council...the PCC

Chairman: the Rector, The Reverend Richard Thorniley BA., MA (T) S.  
Plus The Reverend Fran Battin, 2 Churchwardens (Carol Goodchild & Diana Huggins), the Church Treasurer (Clive Allen) and 6 elected members\* who serve for 3 years on a 'rolling rota' system.

Only people who are on the Electoral Roll can serve on this committee – plus the 2 representatives to the Deanery Synod, who also have voting rights (Gill Thorniley & Ken Rowlands).

This group of people make up the governing body of the church and all decisions rest with them.

The Secretary (as at present) co-opted with no voting rights (Jenny Grey).

(\* As at March 2007: Sue Coley, Michael Clark, Sophie Dodds, Jenny Egan, Annette France and Graham Whitehouse)

#### The Standing Committee

Chairman: the Rector.

Plus the 2 churchwardens, the treasurer and the secretary.

This group of people draws up the agenda for all PCC meetings, organises the day-to-day practicalities of the running of the church, oversees budgets, is the first body to be called on in emergency and is empowered to spend money (an agreed amount) when necessary.

There are 3 sub-committees who work on behalf of the PCC, each of which has a chairman and secretary and meets independently of that body, submitting all minutes for their approval. The final decision in every case is made by the PCC.

i) The Mission & Worship sub-committee – Chairman: the Rector.

Plus the churchwardens, any PCC members who have chosen to serve on this body and some members of the congregation who have special interest or expertise. (Mervyn Huggins is of great importance to this group in that he runs the Morning Service on the first Sunday of every month – a 'lay' led service with no priest present.)

They plan and organise all church services, routine and special, and make any

in the not-too-distant future... I confess I can't help thinking of ideas. Shall I be ready when the telephone rings?

Yvonne Bishop



### New Year's Eve Party

The New Year's Eve Party in the Village Hall rounded 2007 off in style. Parties of that nature were very popular in the past but had somehow disappeared from the scene in recent years, so the gang of three - Sue Coley, Clive Allen and I - set off to revive the idea. We would organise an event for all who wanted to come and enjoy an evening of fun, music and good food, and then dance the night away to the sophisticated sounds of Duke's Music under the accomplished baton of Phil Bawn.

The hall was transformed into a cabaret-style area by means of covering the walls with blue velvet curtains. Balloons, gold trimmings and romantic candlelight were added, giving the otherwise rather dull and sad looking Village Hall a new air of sophistication and charm.

Almost 60 Harvingtonians and friends from further afield were delighted that they could spend an evening of that nature, not having to travel too far and, if they had a few drinks over the top, actually able to float home on foot! Soon, in a remarkably short time all the tickets had sold out.

Teve's Tasties Delicatessen and Ellenden Farm Shop supplied most of the delicious food - salmon, roast beef and cheeses. Salads galore were home-made and lovingly prepared by our loyal friends and helpers from the village. The wine, as always, came from Evesham Hotel and the buttonholes for the ladies were by Gem's Stems. A wonderful team of helpers gave up their precious time (bearing in mind that everybody is busy at that time of year) to lend a hand to put the final touch wherever it was needed. The raffle gave, as always, that extra bit of excitement, and at the end everybody went home feeling rather pleased that the New Year's Eve Party had come up to expectation.

The 'gang of three' were delighted that we were able to organise an event of that sort and by doing so augmented the Repair and Rejuvenation Fund by £750.

Sophie Dodds

ranging from 'Lantern Lectures on the League of Nations' by the Reverend Dauncey in 1930 - reported to have had a very poor attendance due to 'lack of interest or indifference' - to a slide presentation this year on the 'The Back to Back Houses in Birmingham', which attracted a large audience, both female and male.

Demonstrations are always popular; in 1930 we learned how to work an electric cooker; in 1949, how to make underwear from parachute silk! Nowadays we are more likely to have demonstrations on recycling and how to save the planet by *not* using an electric cooker!

Of course, we do have fun along the way. Outings are always a great favourite; as well as the many theatre trips, there have been visits to many historical houses, churches, gardens, wild fowl trusts and even a trip to Holland to see the bulb fields. In 2007 we returned to Blenheim to see the Christmas festivities. Our outing in 2007 was to have been on the River Avon but, unfortunately, due to floods, our vessel sank a few days before!! However, we are looking forward to a trip up the river in 2008, along with a programme to suit all.

In 2008 speakers' subjects will range from 'Inn Signs' to 'Well Dressing' and there will also be an umpire from Wimbledon.

You do not have to be a member to come along and enjoy one of our talks or take part in any of our activities. We welcome visitors at any of our meetings and details are posted on notice boards around the village each month.

Written by Carol Barbour

President from November 2007 (succeeding Joyce White, President for six years)



### Harvington Wheelers



Harvington Wheelers began around twenty years ago when two gentlemen of mature years decided it would do them good to cycle on a regular basis - once a week on summer evenings. The name arose when recounting their adventures in the *Coach and Horses* one Friday night, although it is fair to say that derision rather than ambition was the inspiration.

Over the years others joined in and sometimes there would be ten or so who would journey to some local hostelry and back. In time, however, half way stops had to be abandoned due to legs, knees and backs stiffening up.

For some years now, the end of the season has been marked by taking part in the annual sponsored ride in aid of the Historic Churches Preservation Trust, held on the second Saturday of September. For the Wheelers this would involve a planned circular route of 35 to 50 miles, to include a carefully chosen pub where we could have lunch, and visiting some fifteen to twenty lovely churches. Sponsorship was never compulsory but over the years in excess of £2000 has been raised, half of which goes directly to our own church.

In 2007 only two or three went out over the summer but five took part in the sponsored ride and raised £200.

Alan Hirst

### C.A.M.E.O. Teas



C.A.M.E.O. (or Come And Meet Each Other) Teas was an initiative which sprang from an idea introduced by Sheila Wolstenholme and was developed – and is now run – by members of the church’s Pastoral Care Committee. It is designed to bring together, over a cup of tea and homemade cakes, people who feel the need of more (or different) company and who enjoy coming into a different place to meet each other and having the opportunity to exchange news and views. The time: 3 o’clock on the second Wednesday of every month. The place: the West end of St James’ church.

The scheme has proved popular and works well, with highlights being the occasional change in arrangements, an occasional entertainment and events such as the Christmas Carol Service, the Christmas lunch, and an exchange visit in the summer with Class 5 of the school. It is open to **all** and newcomers are assured of a warm welcome. Enquiries to Carol Goodchild on 870554.

### Cotswold Ways & Beyond

This is the title under which operates the ‘walking group’ set up by Trevor Knowles at the instigation of Zoe Gourlay (then living at Cedar Lodge) some ten years ago. Zoe told Trevor she would love to be part of a group going on guided walks with a knowledgeable leader, who would be responsible for their organisation as well as their routes, and who would plan and issue in advance a programme of walks.

Trevor had recently retired from teaching, was an experienced walker, holder of a Mountain Walking Leaders’ Certificate and ready for another challenge, so he responded very quickly and came up with a proposal for the first walk. He was joined by three people – Ruth Price, the late Gordon Whittemore and Zoe herself – who, at the end, all declared themselves highly delighted and asked for more. The outings have been happening ever since.

Nowadays, although Trevor no longer lives in the village, the scheme works admirably and has many members, not all of whom live in Harvington but who are delighted to take part. The distance varies but is usually about 6-8 miles, often with a pub lunch at the end but occasionally requiring the provision of a packed lunch. There are usually two walks per month, assembly being at Harvington village hall and costing £3.50 per head. Car sharing is necessary for transporting everybody to the actual start, passengers paying the driver £2.50 a time for their lift. To date, some 200 walks have been completed, which means a lot of miles covered... and a lot of pubs visited!

then the story of a life began. Birth, childhood, teenage years, and so on through adulthood, with each anniversary represented by one fabulous arrangement after another. Each arrangement bore a title and the name (or names) of the floral artist(s) responsible. After a simple arrangement representing ‘Life’s Hardships’ the display ended with a beautiful representation of ‘In Memoriam’ and, finally, outside, an antique bier sensitively decorated to mark ‘the end’.

It had been a long and tiring day, but a very happy one – all the hard work and preparation had come together and the church looked beautiful. We all loved what we saw and we were ready to show it off next day when everyone could come to see and admire.



THE DAY, Friday, dawned and it was raining! Oh well, we thought bravely, it might clear up! The short service planned as an opening to the flower festival was well-attended...but the rain outside was getting heavier and heavier. As cups of tea and coffee were being served, someone came in and announced that some of the roads in the village were already flooding. The pool of water near the church porch was getting deeper and some kind male helpers started to sweep it away. I soon realised that, if I didn’t get home to Leys Road, it would be impassable so, reluctantly, I left. Sure enough, rain was running down Leys Road like a river... and now all thoughts of the festival were obliterated from my mind by the sheer necessity of keeping the water out of our home. It rained all day and, by evening, the news was dire. The whole area was very badly affected; Harvington itself was cut off by flooding in every direction. One brave visitor came to the church – the only other attendees were people whose names were on the steward rota. We could hardly speak to each other, so great was our disappointment. Locking up took place early – what was the point in staying?

Saturday arrived, the sky still heavy but not raining. News was dreadful: people driven from their homes, river levels at unprecedented heights, the worst flooding ever in the Vale. It was devastating. ‘Business’ for the festival was understandably slow, but those who braved the awful conditions said how wonderful it was and they obviously spread the word round because on Sunday there was a steady flow of admiring visitors, many coming back time after time for another look and, the church being kept open for a further day, a goodly number of people did manage to see it. So all was not quite lost and the Repair and Rejuvenation Fund benefited by over £1250, but what a disappointment it had been for all those who had worked so hard.

Still, there’ll be another time. I do hope that we shall have another Flower Festival

## The Flower Festival – July 2007

One morning in the early weeks of 2007 I had a phone call from a member of the Parochial Church Council, asking me if I would like to organise a flower festival in St James' church to help raise funds for the newly-launched Repair & Rejuvenation Fund. As flowers are my passion, I didn't hesitate to say 'Yes' but, after putting down the phone, I immediately began to wonder what I'd let myself in for.

Over the next few days my mind went into 'overdrive', trying to think of a theme which would appeal to a majority of people likely to take part, until, suddenly, I thought, 'What is life all about?' From there, the idea of the anniversaries which mark our lives came into mind, and I felt I had my answer. I put this idea to the PCC, it was immediately accepted and the flower festival was born. Several titles were suggested but then 'This life – a pilgrimage' was put to me, and it sounded so right for what I had in mind that I grasped it eagerly.

The next step was to ask the many flower arrangers if they would like to help and, to my delight, almost everyone I approached gave an enthusiastic 'Yes', while others who were unable to 'do' flowers offered to help in some other way. What a wonderful community spirit Harvington has!

Over the following weeks there was a lot of preparation to be done; we held several meetings, Sophie Dodds, Jean Spires and I (Sophie has overall responsibility for the provision of church flowers and Jean is a friend and colleague who is extremely talented and dependable) and, from these, various fund-raising events were planned and the workload on the day allocated. There were countless phone calls and discussions - together with all the trappings that accompany a big event - and, as weeks progressed, excitement grew... as did the nerves. 'Had I taken on too much?' I asked myself scores of times.

But I needn't have worried. Everyone was so helpful, and extra help came from all corners of the village. Lots of visits were made to the church to draw up plans, take measurements and decide on the ideal spot for each arrangement. The school children were asked to colour a large flower each, to be put on a stick and placed up the path-way leading to the church. This they were helped to do by a young trainee teacher who happened to be visiting Sophie, and they turned out well and provided a lovely welcome.

At last 'the week' arrived and a party of volunteers came along to give the church a 'spring clean'. There wasn't a cobweb or a spider to be found once we had finished – only the lingering smell of polish! Now we were ready to create 'This life – a pilgrimage' and soon the church was active with props and materials, stands and containers, all being made ready for 'the Big Day'.

... And at last it arrived! Thursday, the day we would bring all our plans to life. The sun was shining and it was a beautiful day. One by one the artists arrived, bringing in buckets full of flowers - the air heady with their intoxicating perfume. Slowly, as the day went by, our normally attractive but simple church became absolutely stunning. Starting with a display in the porch, representing the 4 elements, it moved through to the West end where there was the figure of a monk, a poem about Pilgrimage, and

All participants speak highly of the pleasure and friendship they get from being a member of the group, and they are extremely grateful to Trevor for the continuation of the walking programme each year. It is clear that there is a lot of laughter as well as the opportunity for serious conversation, but the spirit of the scheme is caught very well by Pete White, one of its members, who can't resist recording in verse the characteristics of those taking part. He has given his permission for one or two verses to be quoted; all refer to Harvingtonians whom many of you will know.

Toby Harrison: Organs are Toby's obsession,  
Though not biological types.  
If he's missing, we'll search  
and find him in church  
Peering at bellows and pipes.

Glenys Carter: Glenys hasn't been walking much lately,  
Perhaps she's not keen on the rain.  
It may not be the weather  
Maybe it's just whether  
Her hairdo needs doing again.

Noel Mobberley – (one of whose hobbies is working on the restoration of old trains and their accessories at Toddington station)  
Noel tramps on looking skywards  
'Cos he's ornithologically game  
It gives him a thrill  
To hear a bird trill  
He'll describe it and tell you its name.

But if you should happen to whistle  
Then his face will light up with elation  
He'll say, 'Don't be absurd  
That isn't a bird  
It's the 3.10 from Toddington station.'

... and of Trevor himself, the poet writes:  
Where would we be without Trevor?  
Probably on the right path!  
But knowing it's Trevor  
That won't happen... ever  
But it certainly gives us a laugh.

Jess Fairs



## St James' Harvington Handbell Ringers



### Our beginnings

The team was formed in September 2005 from the then St Matthew's (Salford Priors) team, because of a conversation with our rector at the Tower Bell A.G.M. asking if we would like to 'transfer' to our own village church. Most of the then team were from Harvington anyway (plus one or two members from around the area) so we jumped at the chance because it was something we had wanted to do for a long time.

We ring on a two-octave set of Whitechapel Handbells (25 bells) using the 'in hand' method of ringing and we wear our team uniform: bottle green tops with our crossed handbell logo, black trousers/skirts and shoes.

### Our aims

These are quite simple: to work for God and our church in any way we can, to go out and about, playing our handbells, to bring pleasure to all who listen to us with our wide range of music, and to enjoy – and to have some fun in doing – all that we do.

### Membership

In our current team we have nine members who are all members of the Handbell Ringers of Great Britain and also of the Heart of England Handbell Society. After our very first concert, we find ourselves with five more people who have expressed an interest in coming along 'to have a go'.

### Our programme

Our repertoire of music ranges from Religious, Christmas, Classical, Folk and others which don't necessarily fit into any recognised categories. New ones for this year include Suo Gan (Welsh), Pomp and Circumstance No 4 (Elgar), Can Can (Offenbach) and Minuet from the Royal Fireworks (Handel). We also play the Gloucestershire Wassail which was taken from a brass band score, with permission from Philip Harper of the Polysteel Band.

### Achievements

Our greatest one has to be the Autumn Concert, which we did in September 2007. We organised and gave a full evening's entertainment (with the help of others) raising £500 for the Repair & Rejuvenation Fund. We also have a good Christmas fund-raising programme where the amount we raise is divided between the church and the County Air Ambulance, retaining sufficient for our day-to-day running and bell repairs. Also important was the launch of our website in April 2007, which can be found at [www.harvingtonhandbells.org.uk](http://www.harvingtonhandbells.org.uk).

### Team characters

We have a wide range of ages and professions within the current team, and we are all different except for the fact that we all enjoy our playing and the music which we perform.

at least another dozen worthwhile prizes, all donated by the generous Harvington community.

It was a most enjoyable day and the feedback from adults and children alike was one of delight... in having had such a jolly good afternoon out, where they could all come together, relax in the pleasant surroundings of the lovingly-tended playing field or meet up with friends in the Village Hall for afternoon tea. At the end, as always, it was my great pleasure to thank everyone concerned for the wonderful response they had made to this annual, and very successful, village affair. While it is an event intended to boost church funds it does, of course, do far more than that in bringing people together at the very heart of the community.

Sophie Dodds



### Auction of Promises

One Open Garden treat was missing from the summer agenda in 2007 – Sonya and Bob Byrd did NOT open their delightful garden and invite the village to share it with them and then sit to have drinks and nibbles and buy plants and etceteras from their stalls. This was a deliberate omission because they were doing something else instead!

One sunny evening, numbers of people gathered on another of Bob's properties in the Lenches where, while enjoying a barbecue supper, they took part in an Auction of Promises, raising the spectacular sum of £10,000. This was in aid of the local McMillan Unit at Evesham Hospital – one of the charities which the Byrds support, and typical of their generosity.

In choosing to include this in this commemorative book, the editor wishes it to represent all the generous acts which are continuously taking place in and around the village, many of them unknown except to a few individuals but bringing valuable help and cheer to a variety of good causes. The ingenious ways in which the people of Harvington raise money and the amount of thought and energy which go into them are truly amazing and something of which the village can be proud.

Jess Fairs

Parish rates down', conscious of a duty 'not to waste money'.

But he misses it! He misses feeling that he used to have a part to play but, as he walks around the village nowadays (more slowly than he used to) he no longer feels that he has any particular responsibility towards it. He sees things he feels need to be put right, but it's no longer up to him – he now hasn't a voice. Sitting with the public in the village hall and hearing the councillors discussing everything in which he can no longer take a part isn't the same... and he doesn't really like it. Can we blame him?

Jess Fairs

### --- *Notable Events* ---

#### St James' Church Village Fete 2007



Organising the church's Annual Fete (as I was asked to do by the Rev. Ann Hadley during her time here) was, at first, a very daunting undertaking and I was very nervous about taking it on. It proved, however, to be a great pleasure and, over the years, has given me real satisfaction. It has been going from strength to strength and, indeed, expanded in 2007 to such an extent that we knew that people from far and wide had come to see what we had on offer.

Our showcase over the past two years has been the Competition Marquee – run on the lines of the old-fashioned Village Show – with a variety of categories which people have been able to enter to show off their artistic and domestic skills, and judged by 'outside' adjudicators in order to make everything absolutely fair. Jess Fairs and her committee, heading a strong team of helpers, ran the show with military precision and were delighted with its success, bringing in more entries and spectators than ever.

The weather was kind, which luckily encouraged visitors – almost 500 in total – to come and try our delicious roasted sausages and burgers, to sample a Pimm's, sit in the sun or under a gazebo, listening to music provided by our own village musicians or, alternatively, to stroll round the field, sampling the goods on a wide variety of stalls. There were the coconut shy or skittles, games of chance or skill... and, for the little ones, the ever-popular 'hook-a-duck'. Then there were the vegetable, flower and cake stalls, with toys, bric-a-brac and books to browse amongst, or the Tombola to be chanced. Everywhere there were bargains to be had and things of interest to see. Visitors were greeted at the gate by a couple of strong men (they will be interested to read this description!) who made sure that nobody slipped through the open gate without first paying their dues, before moving on to buy the ubiquitous raffle tickets. Prizes to be won were £50 cash, a meal for two at the Evesham Hotel, a bottle of whisky... and

#### The Future

Our plans are looking interesting at this time: not only do we have nine team members with a two-octave set of bells, but should the 'prospective members' who expressed an interest at one of our concerts all join us, making our number fourteen, we could look at fund-raising and/or grants to bring us up to three-octaves (and a further twelve bells). Then we should become one of the larger teams in our area.

In addition, we shall continue to improve on our Christmas programme which is our main source of income, and are also being called upon to ring at weddings – so the future looks good!

Keith Hemming – Team Leader.

#### The Senior Residents' Club

In April 1967 Mrs Lucy Bayliss, an energetic and far-seeing lady (mother of Jane Parry, mentioned elsewhere in this book), called together a few other like-minded women in order to discuss what might be done to improve the lives of the village's senior residents. From that meeting, the Senior Residents' Club was formed and, at the announcement of its inaugural meeting, 73 members joined. From the outset, it was very popular and its meetings and outings were well-attended and enthusiastically supported. Janet Hartiss, one of the earliest members and, as she laughingly says, 'just about the only survivor', can tell many an interesting tale of those early days.

Even when Mrs Bayliss was no longer able to take a major part in running it, the club fell into good hands when her daughter, Jane, together with her good friend Margaret Salter, took it over and helped it on its energetic and popular way. Sadly, though, the time came when both Jane and Margaret were each stricken by serious illness and had to retreat from heavy involvement. This also came at a time when problems attaching to the village hall itself were increasing and making organisation difficult. Into this state of affairs came Mary Stinton, now the Bookings Clerk for the hall and, in the course of time, its cleaner and caretaker also. It was her input, together with the efforts of the other committee members, which managed to keep the club going.

In 2007 the numbers stand at 28 – which means that there are insufficient members to make it possible to fill a coach for outings – but they now join with Salford Priors in booking coaches so they can continue 'to go places', and the list of outings during this year is very impressive.

Sadly, Jane has died but Margaret recovered sufficiently to be able to 'get on with her life' which includes looking after her husband, John, who has now lost his sight. She is, however, back again with the Senior Residents' Club and heading their present committee. It was requested, although not by Margaret, that John should be mentioned because he was a stalwart and greatly respected member of the club and its secretary for many years. He was also churchwarden for some time – a fact not known by many of today's generation.

Serving on the committee with Margaret at present are Mary Stinton, Pam Walden, Barbara Ludlow, Jean Spires, Jean Bailey and last, but by no means least, Cathy Davies who is spoken of with admiration and gratitude. She is much younger than the others and doesn't attend meetings – although she often goes on the outings, her children with her – but she is 'a wizard at figures' and acts as the club's treasurer, balancing the books and always ready with advice and helpful suggestions where money is concerned.

Meetings were suspended during the winter months, the hall being too cold for comfort, so Mary, who represents the club on the Village Hall Management Committee, reports back to interested members when and where she can, chiefly at the Tuesday coffee mornings at the Baptist Chapel. They are hoping that when the hall is refurbished and brought up to date they will be able to resume their monthly meetings which will be as well-supported as 'in the olden days'.

Jess Fairs

### Women's Network

Stemming from St James' church, but open to allcomers, this organisation has two branches: one a study group and, the other, a Coffee & Craft group. Neither is exclusive and members can go from one to the other as fancy takes them. Lists of dates and meeting places are on the church notice board, with phone numbers as needed, and new members are urged to come along and see how the groups work. They are much enjoyed by all who attend and there is ample room for more women ready to savour each other's company...and learn something into the bargain.

Churchwardens Carol Goodchild and Diana Huggins would be happy to give further information on request.



### Rainbows



This is the delightful name for a group of little girls aged 5 to 7 who meet in the Village Hall every Wednesday evening from 4.40 to 5.30, proudly wearing their uniforms and looking forward to another evening of happy companionship. Together with their leaders (currently Dawn Nutton, Charlene Manning and Rachel Heggarty...and helper Einir Johnson) they will be engaged in something which encompasses some aspect of their motto – 'Look, learn, laugh, love'.

Interestingly, they are not all Harvington children, a situation which has arisen naturally because of a variety of circumstances but which works well because the girls have learned to be friendly towards, and to work and play with, others whom they are not meeting and playing with every day. The programme of interesting activities, projects, visitors, etc, is fascinating and one has the feeling that these are

marrying Betty at the age of 20. For a while they lived in a converted double-decker bus on his father-in-law's farm. This was very common in those days and many young couples were very glad of such accommodation. Keith and Betty were, certainly, delighted to have a place of their own which was well-fitted out, electrically lit and very cosy. Somewhat later, they rented a house in Church Lench, but then bought their first property in Rous Lench. (It was interesting to learn that Keith was churchwarden at Rous Lench for some time, and also on the Parochial Church Council at Grafton Flyford; he has clearly always been a churchman at heart.)

Keith and Betty had had their children, including twins, and it was later – when they were to get their first jobs – that they decided to move to Harvington. They were tired of not being on a bus route, and the prospect of Keith having to provide lifts for TWO of his youngsters to and from their jobs was too daunting to contemplate. So, seeing the house in Harvington next to the Baptist chapel was up for sale (the white house which we still associate with them), they bought it and moved in before the end of the school year in 1971. Imagine their feelings when BOTH twins got jobs at the Black & White Garage, close by the crossroads and so near to home!

Keith said, though, that they have loved living in Harvington since the beginning. By this time he had a very good job as an inspector with the Highways Authority, working out of the Evesham office – a job he enjoyed and which gave him insight into the workings of local government and its various departments. In time, almost inevitably he thinks, he became interested in local affairs and was elected to the Parish Council here in 1982. His memories of the years since then are too numerous to put into this account, but it will be remembered that he has served with a sequence of Chairmen - and women - and on a variety of sub-committees (Village Hall Management Committee, Recreational Trust, Church Bells Committee, Playing Fields Committee) but his name is, perhaps, most closely associated with the village hall.

Betty was the hall's caretaker for a very long time, but it was Keith who was always to be seen around when anything was happening, often being the first on the scene when there was trouble – vandalism, flooding, electricity failure, 'the Great Fire' and, of course, the skips! We all remember the skips and how hard he had to work to stop them becoming an unsightly mess outside the village hall...an amenity abused and maltreated. The job of keeping an eye on them was an onerous responsibility, but one which he carried out with remarkable good humour. On a more dignified note, he is proud of having instituted (with Chairman Arthur Robinson) the idea of an annual Civic Service held, alternately, in both village churches. He would also like it to be known that he still serves on the Playing Field Committee – a project which has had his keen interest over many years.

The time came, though, as it comes to us all, when he knew he had to step back from most of these commitments. Increasingly conscious of his slowing down and knowing he was becoming hard of hearing, he reluctantly decided not to stand for election to the Parish Council in 2007; and so we no longer have a Councillor Seager sitting in the monthly meetings and 'stirring it' when he feels it to be necessary.

He prides himself on having been 'a bit of a rebel', arguing with the chairman and his fellow councillors whenever he felt he needed to do so, and trying to 'keep the

bedroom is one thing, but in the cold of winter, not to be recommended. My heating bills rocketed as I warmed the air at my end of the village.

I took pictures along the way as the thatching progressed and the ridge was particularly lovely as it took shape and I enjoyed the fact that visitors to Harvington would park in the Coach and Horses car park and take a quick photo of my little home as the roof developed.

Very near the end of the thatching I was in my sitting room preparing some work for the next day when a movement caught my eye. I thought it was an exceptionally large spider. (The house does boast spiders of people-eating proportions.) As I watched, however, a mouse moved into the centre of the room and sat looking at me, waiting for a response. Of course I moved. It ran and disappeared. The next day saw me buying humane mouse traps and sonic rodent repellents as I am none-too-keen on sharing my home with mice. Apparently (though no-one tells you this) mice are attracted by new thatch. I am pleased to say that I never caught the mouse, and neither he or she, nor any evidence of their presence has been seen since.

In March 2007, the wire went on over the thatch and the scaffolding came down. I purchased a garden vacuum, and things looked up. The thatch was beautiful and began to darken but look impeccable. My pretty little house had once again taken on its chocolate box appearance, and all had been infinitely well worthwhile.

Annette France

### Keith Seager



Keith Seager was born in 1924 in Shell Mill, Himbleton, where his father was the grinder, producing flour for the local farmers. The mill was owned by a local landowner and, as was usual in those days, his workman was poorly paid. Keith remembers well the struggle they had as a family to make ends meet. He has always been conscious of not having had a good education and he recounted the many factors, not least of which was his own poor health, which

meant that he 'missed a lot of school' and got off to a very poor start. He recalls, though, with pleasure one success he had at school: being presented with a bible for 'coming top' in a Scripture exam. This amuses him because it makes him wonder what good it did him! (Actually, he has been a churchgoer and supporter of his local church all his life even though, as he admits, he doesn't attend these days as often as he might!) Many years on, he did very well in an exam at the end of a course he was asked to attend after he applied for and got a good job with the Highways Authority – a job he loved and was very proud to have been associated with. So, he rightly feels, he didn't do too badly after all.

He left school at 14 and became a Waggoner's boy at 7 shillings and 6 pence per week (37½p today!) but then worked for his uncle from the age of 17, meeting and

fortunate children to whom their elders are giving much thought, and for whom they are creating many opportunities for learning and development. They look forward eagerly to 'becoming Brownies' - which they see as the next step - and ultimately Guides. It is cheering to think that this admirable movement will continue as this little group moves on.

Helpers - Mums who can give time and commitment - are desperately needed.

'Please,' says Dawn Nutton, '... could this be **you**?'

### 1st Harvington Brownie Pack in 2007

The 1<sup>st</sup> Harvington Brownie pack has 24 Brownies aged between 7 and 10 years. They are divided into four Sixes – Gnomes, Elves, Sprites and Imps. The pack wears the current Brownie uniform; in 2007 this comprises a Brownie t-shirt (long or short-sleeved) with brown trousers or skirt and a badge sash (worn when full uniform is required for an important occasion). The girls can optionally add a Brownie hoodie or gilet, but the pack does not wear neckerchiefs.

At the beginning of 2007 the pack was run by Sue Thomas (Snowy Owl) and Lynn Stewart (Tawny Owl), assisted by two Young Leaders from the 1<sup>st</sup> Harvington Guides and a number of helpers. It met on Monday evenings at 6pm in the Village Hall. The pack was full and had a healthy waiting list.

During the spring term the girls worked hard to gain their World Culture and Dancer badges. They studied four countries: Poland, Thailand, Hawaii and Spain. Each six made a scrapbook and devised a dance using traditional music from their country. They also had the opportunity to cook and taste a typical dish from each country. If this wasn't enough, the girls also prepared and presented their own version of the "X-Factor" talent show, judged by our very own Sharon Osbourne (Sue in a very fetching wig!) and made crafts for Mother's Day and Easter.

The summer term was just as busy, with the girls earning their Science Investigator badge. As part of this badge they investigated the insulation and magnetic properties of a range of materials, and created a glorious mess outside the Village Hall making volcanoes from bicarbonate of soda, food colouring and vinegar (luckily it rained later that evening, which washed the paving stones!) The girls also took part in the St George's Day parade in Pershore as part of the Boy Scouts' centenary celebrations; held an "It's a Knockout" evening; had a skittles evening at the Coach and Horses' skittles alley and finished with a Hawaiian beach party.

The highlight of the summer term was a Brownie "American" Sleepover held at Peopleton Village Hall. The Brownies gathered at the hall on the Friday evening for a barbeque and sing-song, followed by a night orienteering event (OK, dusk orienteering, but they still needed torches) before retiring to their sleeping bags with hot chocolate and snacks to watch a DVD. On Saturday morning, the (very tired!) Brownies completed their sleepover diaries and made Brownie bracelets before being awarded their Brownie Holiday badge.

The sleepover was tinged with sadness as Lynn announced that, due to work and family commitments, she would not be able to continue as Tawny Owl. Running the pack is not a job that can be done single-handed, even with the aid of willing helpers, so for a while it looked as though the 1<sup>st</sup> Harvington Brownies might have to close at the end of the year. Fortunately, two new mums came forward and volunteered to train as Brownie leaders so the pack was able to continue.

As a result of the change in leadership the Brownie meetings moved to 6pm on Wednesday evenings in the Village Hall. During the autumn term the girls earned their Craft badge by sewing glove puppets, making models of their ideal bedrooms, and making Christmas crafts. They also had a Pirate Evening (giving them a chance to show off their pirate costumes), a Halloween fancy-dress party and a Christmas disco. In between all this partying, they managed to fit in a visit to the Arts Centre to see the Phoenix production of “High School Musical” and spent a morning at the fire station learning about water safety to earn their Water Safety badges. A highlight of the term was the evening when two volunteers from the Ark Animal Sanctuary in Evesham visited the pack, bringing a variety of animals for the girls to see and stroke (including giant snails, a hissing cockroach, a ferret and a snake).

At the end of 2007 the 1<sup>st</sup> Harvington Brownie pack is flourishing under the leadership of Sue Leathers (Little Owl – due to her short stature) and Sharon Barnett (Brown Owl), assisted by Cathy Davies (Wise Owl – some say Wise Old Owl, but Wise Owl will do nicely!). Sue Thomas is handing over the reins to the new leaders and Snowy Owl will soon be flying away to a peaceful retirement. The pack still has 24 Brownies and a healthy waiting list, which we hope means that our pack will continue running for many years to come.

Sue Leathers (Little Owl)

### — Service Providers —

#### At the Post Office



Since the days of the penny post a key service at the heart of any community has always been the village post office. In 2007 Harvington was no exception, its post office having occupied the present premises in Village Street since the early 1990s.

The present owners, Mel and Carolyn Curnuck, purchased the business in 1999, having moved from a large town to enjoy life in a country village. They have always endeavoured to help their customers in as friendly a way as possible, many of these customers becoming, over the course of time, their friends as well. As part of the community they are keen to support all organisations within it, and have been pleased

settee I bought (all carefully measured to be the same size as the previous owner’s settee) had to go back as it couldn’t be got in through my little hall and into the dining room and thence to the sitting room. But all of this was nothing compared with being re-thatched.

I knew the thatch was not in good order when I bought Candle Cottage but hoped I would have a few more years before I would need to replace it. Heavy rain and subsequent leaks convinced me differently. Deciding on a thatcher was the first hurdle. People think it would be difficult to find a thatcher – but there are enough. The problem is trying to find a good one. How would I know? Eventually, after three quotations and ‘interviews’ of both thatchers and their clients, I made my choice.

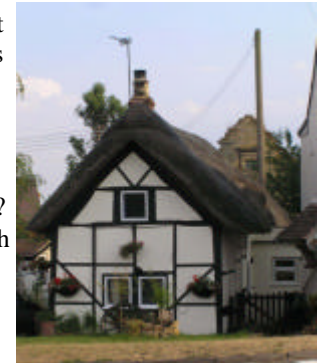
Secondly, I didn’t realise I would have to wait so long to have the job undertaken. Of course, I should have guessed that a good thatcher would be busy. Mine was very helpful though, and covered the leaking part of the roof with blue plastic until he was able to start work. Eventually work began in October 2006. I had naively thought that it would take 8-10 weeks but was advised differently.

Probably no-one else remembers that winter precisely, but it was wet and windy! Thatching has to stop in the wind and the rain. Consequently, the three to four month job was destined to take much longer. What I did not consider was the impact of scaffolding all around the house. I was very lucky that Richard Castle, my neighbour, was prepared to be similarly long-suffering as scaffolding spread onto his property too. One unforeseen circumstance of this was that I had to park on the road. A drunk driver crashed into the back of my stationary vehicle in the early hours of one morning – not something I had ever imagined might happen – and it would not have occurred had I been able to park on the drive.

The other factor I had never considered was the amount of straw that gets, well, *everywhere*. My hallway, my car, my kitchen, my garden (including pond) were strewn with bits of wheat straw for the whole period of the re-thatching. At first it seemed a reasonable trade-off but rapidly became depressing. However, as the thatching progressed and it was clear that a first rate job was being delivered, I knew it was all a price worth paying. The thatcher told me that he found a squirrel’s drey and a tree in the old thatch, along with evidence of rats and mice. I was not altogether sure this was information I wanted to know.

Then there was the evening I set fire to my chimney and four fire tenders arrived to make sure the house did not burn down. It would appear that the word ‘thatch’ results in the most prompt attention imaginable. I did not realise that when you are being thatched you should not have an open fire because (in spite of spark arresters on the chimney) the risk of fire increases. Fortunately, the only action needed was to put out the fire in my wood burner, but it was an interesting lesson to learn.

Another factor I had not considered was that as the thatch is removed it lifts plasterwork from the inside of the house. Daylight streaming in through the walls of your



## Reverend Richard's adventure in 2007



My long-held ambition - to walk the 192 miles from St Bees Head on the Cumbrian Coast to Robin Hood's Bay on the North Yorkshire Coast - was fulfilled in July 2007. The 'Coast to Coast' walk as it is commonly known was made popular by Alfred Wainwright, the famous walker and author of many beautifully illustrated books. The 'Coast to Coast' walk passes through the Lake District, Yorkshire Dales, and North Yorkshire Moors on this most famous of his journeys, which attracts more than 50,000 walkers a year.

Accompanying me on the walk were my son, James - who used it as a 'wind-down opportunity' after his college finals - my brother Robert - who did half before preparing to move to Australia - and Geoff and Jenny Dainty, very keen walkers who live in Church Lench and are up for any walk going. We stayed in camp sites along the way but did not have to carry our tents as Jenny acted as chauffeur, dropping us off and picking us up at either end of the day.

We completed the walk in 13 days and, looking back, my one regret is that we did it too quickly. The countryside is stunning and demands that one should stop from time to time to fully appreciate what a beautiful country we live in. As you travel on foot and look around, you come to realise that Wainwright chose his route well.

Like many before us, James and I hope to return and encounter that magnificent scenery again at a more sedate pace. There are very few walks to surpass it, or better ways of getting away from it all.

*Richard Thorniley*

## Candle Cottage

It was love at first sight on the internet! I was searching for a new home and decided that Worcestershire might be a good place to live. Colleagues from work commuted from (admittedly north) Worcestershire, so it seemed a good place to look... and I found Candle Cottage! Little did I know how interesting it would be to live in a tiny, quirky, thatched home.

Firstly, I had to build all my beds in situ as two bedrooms are reached by the steepest of staircases you can imagine, and the third is reached only via a ladder. One chest of drawers had to be taken away, sawn in half and rebuilt in the bedroom. The first

to assist with fund raising and publicity, often displaying posters in the post office to advertise forthcoming events.

Harvington's Post Office has a rich blend of customers from the village and further afield and many strange and funny stories could be told of things that they have said. However, discretion and professionalism have always dictated that anything said, or any information given, by a customer is always treated in the strictest confidence, and this helps to ensure that customers always feel comfortable, whether stopping to chat for a while or dashing in to conduct their business then dashing out again.

Sometimes and inevitably, the nature of the job of running the post office brings its own stresses and pressures - and a long working week! - but the support and kindness of the villagers is always apparent and their friendliness makes it satisfying and worth while.

Although the business is predominantly related to post office products and services, on the retail side customers' other needs have also been taken into consideration with a varied selection of goods - greetings cards, confectionery, household items, etc - offered in the limited space available and this, too, is warmly welcomed.

Whilst no one knows what may happen to any post office in the years ahead, Harvington Post Office is well placed to provide services to the community it serves. It is hoped that the community will continue to need, use and value its village post office and that both will continue to thrive for many years to come.

*Jess Fairs*

## Ferndale Garage, Leys Road



The only garage - for repairs and maintenance, not petrol sales - remaining in the village in 2007 is that owned by John Walsh who lives 'on the premises' as it were and is now enjoying the idea of being semi-retired and being able to pick and choose his jobs.

Coming from a background of mechanical work - cars, boats, aircraft - and after serving many years in the army as a mechanical engineer as well as, at one point, being seconded to the Royal Air Force and spending two memorable years in Antarctica, which he loved, it was natural that he should then look for a business which fitted him and kept him involved with 'making things work'. He says he is never happier than when he is doing just that but adds that, nowadays, boats probably give him his greatest pleasure. He owns one, which is kept in Milford Haven, and loves nothing better than going down there to enjoy it!

He came to Harvington in 1987 after viewing the property and liking it... and has been very happy here, never feeling unduly challenged by the Black & White Garage or Harvington Garage, both of which were 'just at the end of the road' but have now both gone out of business. He says there was work for all and he has always been well-supported by his local loyal customers.

The floods of 2007 were his worst experience ever because both his house and his

garage were inundated, but he remains remarkably unconcerned. Asked about his hobbies, he says that he likes cooking, attributing this to never having been married and being well able to fend for himself. He adds that ironing a shirt holds no fear for him because of his army background.

Obviously a very happy man, this seems to rub off onto his dog, Bo'sun, a handsome black Labrador who barks fiercely when necessary (John admits that this can also apply to him!) but who loves a cuddle!

Jess Fairs

### The Coach & Horses



John and Kath Knight, the present - day licensees at this old public house, have a list of their predecessors dating back to the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. This is particularly interesting when we recall that - following the Enclosure Act of 1787 - the 'road', such as it was, which led down Cress Hill\* on its way to Bidford was designated as 'the second public road', and orders were given

by His Majesty's Commissioners to have a gravel pit dug at the bottom of the hill for making and repairing same as necessary. (The 'first public road' was the one from Evesham to Alcester and considered to be of primary importance.)

This meant that Church Road (up to then just a little village street) now gave onto a 'proper road' and was to become the main road to Stratford. What better place to build an inn? Certainly John and Kath feel that they have a prime spot and they love it! They even love the Tuesday evening bell practice which takes place in the steeple immediately opposite them!

They came in 2001 as partners in the holding of the licence then, the following year, with the withdrawal of Bob Byrd, they took on the tenancy in their own right and have been the licensees ever since. By the time of their arrival, of course, the first by-pass to Stratford had been created so they never knew the nerve-racking noise, and danger, caused by the ever-present traffic, and were able to start to build up their business and make the inn and the corner on which it stands more attractive.

Asked about the special significance to them of the year 2007, Kath immediately spoke about the imposition of the smoking ban and the effect it had on their trade. They had already imposed a partial ban some three years previously, ensuring that no smoking was allowed in the main front area where food was served, but the full ban meant that some people stopped visiting the pub altogether. This led to their decision to stop lunchtime opening on weekdays – a move which they remain unhappy about.

But they have their regular clientele with whom they enjoy a warm and valued relationship, and some of these are the river fishermen who have been coming to the pub for many years. They enjoyed hearing that village people speak well of their establishment; that the church is grateful for the good-neighbourliness which they show and that there are no complaints about rowdiness.

competition.

And of course there is the sponsorship that raises millions of pounds for a whole host of charities, both nationally and locally based. Among the pounding feet and the exotic costumes there is compassion. For some it is an urge to support the charity which fights the disease that took away their loved ones, a determination to raise funds that may help to prevent others from suffering the same fate.

The bond that has drawn together those thousands of runners stretches far beyond the long and winding road. For every one who runs for a charity there are hundreds who have agreed to support them. Many charity runners will not have run anywhere since childhood. They will start off on a high then find the distance merciless, but they will finish. They are the real heroes and heroines of the day. Having claimed their medals and collected their sponsor money, perhaps they may embark on a new health regime to lose excess weight and improve fitness. The numbers of female and older runners have increased substantially over the years. The London marathon has brought mass participation into the living room and inspired thousands.

I have many treasured memories of my London marathons. The camaraderie of the early miles, the enthusiasm of the spectators, the children offering 'high fives', the euphoria of the final surge down Birdcage Walk and the sight of the finishing gantries in The Mall. Then having crossed the finish line the silicon timing chip is removed from your shoe, a pretty girl drops a medal around your neck (what girl isn't pretty at that moment?) and you're ready for the photograph.

Afterwards the happy struggle to cope with a bottle of water, a sandwich, a goody bag all thrust at you by smiling volunteers, plus the kit bag transported efficiently from Blackheath. Picking your way among the bodies stretched out in recovery – not a good idea unless you're unconscious – and seeing elation and exhaustion vying for supremacy on the faces of those who remain upright. Unforgettable.

However, one of the fondest memories of my running days will always be that of the unstinted generous support I have received from the people of this village. Ringing doorbells at a time when most people are either preparing or having their evening meal was at first a daunting prospect, but I need not have worried. There were lots of friendly smiles, sometimes traces of concern of disbelief at first. Later it was, "Not again!" or "I've been expecting you" and "See you again next year."

During those years the people of Harvington contributed over £13,000 to charities I ran for in London marathons. On behalf of those charities I would like to say "Thank you." This village has a heart.

But what of 2007? Was it the end of an era? I still did it. I lined up with the others. I ran every mile, I endured the pain, I felt the joy, but for once I didn't need to take the tube and train home. BBC television brought the marathon to me. No medal this time, of course, but I filled my own goody bag. Perhaps it was not an ending but a new beginning.

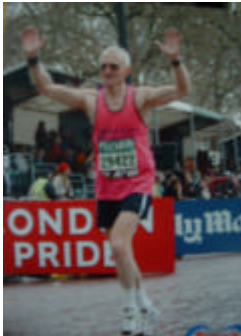
Mervyn Huggins

the Children's Carol Service in St James' church. Finally, they played for what is becoming a delightful annual happening – 'Carols on the Green' opposite the village hall. This takes place early in the evening and attracts a pleasant crowd of villagers who, well wrapped up for the occasion, thoroughly enjoy the atmosphere, each other's company, the sense of tradition...and, perhaps most particularly, the hot drinks served in the hall and at Cedar Lodge during the interval.

This has been the first, and increasingly successful, year of the Wind Band's existence. We shall watch its progress with eagerness, with gratitude for its coming into being, and for the joy it brings to very many people.

Jess Fairs

**“Let us run with patience the race that is set before us”**  
(Heb 12: v1)



When Diane and I came to live in Harvington I had little thought of running the London marathon again. I had been there four times in the nineteen eighties and intended to keep to shorter distances in future. After all, I was getting on. I was over sixty!

But once tempted to Hereford for the twenty-six mile challenge, and having secured a trophy and a 'good for age' qualification for London there was no going back. Well yes, there was going back - every year for the next ten, from 1997 until 2006.

I can look back on that period with some satisfaction and much thankfulness simply for being able to run, being able to do it. However, they were years that were not entirely trouble free. Three spots of minor surgery and a few joint and muscle problems (every runner has those) have kept me off the road at times, but always there has been the prospect and the consolation of an early resumption. The road is always there, patiently waiting.

The London marathon became a regular April ritual. There were many other races of course during that decade, including four autumn marathons and a number of championship events but London is special. It is a pageant that brings together over thirty thousand runners of all abilities, a superb organisation which includes hundreds of willing volunteers, and thousands of well wishers and spectators who line the route and maintain an endless cacophony of sound that precludes any possibility of you faltering in your stride. And there are the bands, the drums and the ghetto blasters. It is a carnival that goes on and on for hours as, of course, does the road!

It is not the sense of achievement that makes London different. It is the occasion, the being part of an endeavour that encompasses young and old, fit and disabled, fast and slow, encouraging one another, all with the same simple mission – to finish.

The elite runners at the front are on a different planet - they want to win. The rest of us are not striving to beat one another though we may be out to beat ourselves by running a faster time than last year or finishing within a target time. That is healthy

Kath said that they only come out 'onto the street' on New Year's Eve and this has become a tradition which their regulars enjoy. Unfortunately, on December 31<sup>st</sup> 2007 there was a hiccup. Amidst all the laughter, it was a while before someone realised that the church clock hadn't chimed and the New Year was already several minutes old before they'd noticed!! We didn't pursue any enquiry as to whose fault (if any) it had been... certain important people are customers there!

\* NB. Cress Hill - so named because of the cress beds which lay at the bottom - had borne its name for a long time. It was subsequently misnamed 'Crest Hill' by virtue of a bureaucratic error!

Jess Fairs

**The Golden Cross**



Because of the difficulties experienced in 2007 by the management of this public house and its devotees, it has not been possible to get a coherent account of what happened during the year. One minute it had been 'taken over' by someone who wanted to make it 'more upmarket' and the next, it had been closed because of alleged financial problems. Certainly there was an air of gloom about the regulars...a gloom which only lifted when it was reported, at the very end of the year, that it had been taken over again, this time by 'someone who knows what he's doing'.

In fact, this 'someone' was Terry Malary – also of 'The Vineyard' on the Stratford Road. It was he who put in place, as licensee, the very experienced Gwenan Frans-Jones and it is she and her partner who are working hard to put The Golden Cross back on the map.

The map in question is that of Harvington on which Harvington Cross was shown as a place-name as far back as the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. It would be nice to know whether the first public house to have 'Cross' as part of its name was so-called because of the crossroads... and just how long ago would that have been? This remains a question for some future village historian. But it's a good name and deserves to be well-thought-of by the village it serves.

The present concern is that of restoring the reputation of an old and well-loved pub which was badly shaken during recent years when rowdiness and thoughtlessness were grumbled about even at Parish Council meetings! Not so now! These are things of the past, and everyone looks forward to happier times. Indeed, the Golden Cross football team has had a highly successful year, coming top of the Evesham League without losing a match and winning two trophies which now stand proudly beside the team's photographs in the bar. We wish them all well. They deserve to succeed.

## The Shop on Leys Road



At some point in 2007 the shop had been, for a while, the SPAR shop, taken on as a franchise by a family of Indian origin. Its stock and its appearance improved greatly and there was an air of greater efficiency about it. But then, early the following year, it changed again and was no longer a part of the enfranchised SPAR business; but it remained a well-stocked shop, clean and attractive and run by a family who, sadly, do not live in the village. It was they who changed the name to 'Harvington Convenience Store' and so, for the time being, John Hardman's shop – as it used to be years ago – is a Convenience Store.

And it is!! – very convenient and very well provisioned, meeting the needs of those people who cannot make the journey into town... and long may it continue to serve the villagers!

We realise, of course, that in Harvington there are many other service providers who have not been mentioned here. A glance at the advertisements in the parish magazine, the ARCH Messenger, will reveal the many and various self-employed persons in our locality: electricians, plumbers, builders, interior decorators, gardeners, horticultural specialists, computer experts, peripatetic hairdressers and so on, to say nothing of the many people who do all kinds of unpaid work, helping others and displaying an amazing range of skills.

We also realise that, in this particular village, we have no doctor's surgery, no pharmacy, no butcher's shop and no hairdressing salon; all of which makes us doubly grateful for the Post Office and the Convenience Store. There is a bus service, linking us with both Evesham and Stratford-upon-Avon and some of the villages in between, and there is a Mobile Library van which visits every two weeks. Without these the older villagers, in particular, would find themselves more isolated from the wider world even though Harvington is an active and lively community with much else to offer. For the services we enjoy we are grateful and give thanks to them all for the expertise they provide.

Jess Fairs

It is always a great pleasure to note that the band embraces all ages, from Sarah — Keith and Cathy's seven-year old daughter — to church organist, Vernon Goodchild, who is in his 80s. It is also satisfying to note that, while most of the regular players are Harvingtonians, they do have much-appreciated help from musicians in neighbouring parishes and local community bands... and the presence of Jayne Nichol and Michael Bowen emphasises our links with the Baptist church. Now it is planned to bring in willing teenagers to help and lead the singing. The scheme shows great promise and is already giving a lot of pleasure to a lot of people. May it long continue!

## The Student Wind Band



'The Joyful Noisemakers' is not, however, Keith's only venture into helping people to make music.

In 2006 it was realised that Worcester Youth Music had ceased to provide any local opportunities for children who were learning musical instruments to play together in an ensemble. This was a situation that had become apparent during the running of a Wind

Band Workshop held during that summer, and which was attended by a surprising number of both adults and children, including some from this village. This realisation led to Keith's formation of the Wychavon Student Wind Band – a venture which, it was hoped, would draw from a wider community than just this village students of all ages who were learning to play wind instruments. It was fortunate in obtaining a Community First grant of £900, which helped enormously in purchasing music stands and some instruments, and led to the band giving its first public concert in April 2007, sharing a programme with a visiting choir from Cherokee High School, Evesham, New Jersey, in the USA. This took place in Evesham Methodist church, which was full to capacity, but then - as Keith readily admits - the audience had really come to hear the impressive singing of a group of American gospel singers! Nevertheless, the band put on a good performance, despite its small numbers, and they were pleased with their reception.

They had a busy summer! At the church's Village Fete they followed Phil Bawn and Duke's Jazz Band in providing a musical background for the event, playing a programme of popular music, including some Andrew Lloyd Webber favourites. Then, as part of the Evesham Music Festival, they took part in a Wind Band Workshop, playing with musicians of quality under Jonathan Earle, the Musical Director of Stratford Concert Band, who conducted while Keith filled in on drums. They also played informally in our own village hall on an occasion which coincided with the Open Gardens event, by which time their repertoire had increased in a very impressive way.

Then, nearer Christmas, with the band increased in numbers, they played again at

village. Usually, some two dozen volunteers turn up, half starting from the Spar Shop in Leys Road with Dr Nunn, while the others start at the village hall with John. Dr Nunn uses this opportunity, also, to check on the trees he has planted in his capacity as Tree Warden – thus two birds with one stone!

The streets certainly look smarter when the pickers have finished and they are to be commended on a very worthwhile effort. By this time, the fund is larger by some £2000.



### **Making Music**

#### **The Joyful Noisemakers**

Psalm 100 (in the King James version of the Bible) commands us to worship with the words, ‘Make a joyful noise unto the Lord’; and with this as his motivation, and following a deeply-held conviction, Keith Davies, a member of St James’ church, decided that he would do just that! He formed a church worship band – the Joyful Noisemakers. This, in the first place, was in order to provide some music at the Children’s Activity Day, held at Spitten Farm, where, despite its lack of experience, the fledgling band enjoyed gratifying success. To Keith’s, and our, great pleasure, the tradition has continued and their services have been called upon on an increasing number of occasions.

This year they have played for the Evesham Benefice’s Activity Day, the Fathers’ Day Service, the School Leavers’ Service and a number of Sunday Family Services at St James’ church. The presence of the members of the band and their instruments (particularly Keith’s wonderfully ridiculous, over-sized Sousaphone!) tells us instantly that we shall be having a happy time, singing heartily to the inspirational words shown on a screen above the pulpit, clapping hands, smiling at those around us and...being joyful! The words and tunes are usually well-known to the children who are present because they are what they sing at school, and they are catchy enough for the rest of us to be able to follow in remarkably short time. (‘Shine, Jesus, shine’ has become a firm favourite!) Increasingly, the band also plays traditional hymns so that *their* beauty is not lost to any of us, children included. This bringing together of words and tunes — which will linger in our minds and enrich our thoughts and prayers so that we can, at all times, make a joyful noise — will, it is hoped, fill a gap which could be caused by an increasing separation of traditional and modern ‘church’ music.

## — *Education in Harvington* —

### **Harvington Pre -School**

Harvington Pre-School was set up approximately 30 years ago in the village hall to provide high quality and affordable childcare to Harvington’s pre-school children. In those days the group was very informal and run by willing volunteers and parents. Pre-School today is still managed by a committee of parents and volunteers but the informality of previous years is now replaced with Ofsted Regulations and inspections and an Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum designed specifically for pre-school children.



A few years ago, Harvington Pre-School’s survival was threatened after Harvington First School opened a Local Education Authority-run nursery. The committee at the time strongly believed that Harvington still needed a community-based Pre-School so they diversified and offered wrap-around care and also opened the doors to 2 year olds, a decision that was fundamental to our continued success.

2007 was a year of great change for Harvington Pre-School. With an almost entirely new committee, we set our sights on raising our profile in the local community and making Harvington Pre-School the number one choice for local parents. Also during the year, our supervisor, Sue Johnson, retired after a remarkable 20 years work with Pre-School and we were pleased to appoint Tara Singleton as Sue’s successor. We have a fantastic team of staff all of whom have childcare qualifications (Ofsted requirement is only 50%) and, in order to meet demand, we extended our opening hours and began to accept Childcare Vouchers (a Government-backed scheme to provide tax relief on childcare costs). We increased our fundraising activities, which have been wonderfully supported by local people and this has enabled us to buy some great new equipment.

The hard work and commitment of staff and the new committee paid off when, in June 2007, we were inspected by Ofsted and achieved “Good” or “Satisfactory” in every standard.

As the 2007-2008 school year draws to a close we are faced with a new challenge as Heron Nursery extends its hours, but, with a holiday club and breakfast club in the pipeline, Harvington Pre-school intends to be around for another 30 years. With all of the changes to childcare provision over the years, one thing has remained constant and that is our commitment to providing high quality, flexible and affordable childcare for local parents and children.

For more information on the services offered by Harvington Pre-School, please visit our website at [www.preschool.harvington.net](http://www.preschool.harvington.net)

## Harvington Church of England First and Nursery School



The school is first and foremost a village school and we are proud to serve our community. Our aim is to provide the best possible opportunities for local children who attend and those who choose to travel to be part of our community. It's my belief that the children give a village its heart and that when a school closes the village, in effect, withers as its youngsters leave to be educated elsewhere.

Village schools like ours need to be kept alive and thriving and, fortunately, with the support from our community, parents, governors and staff our school is alive and well, moving from strength to strength. At present there are one hundred and sixty-eight pupils on roll; we have seven classes, seven full-time teachers, one part-time, and sixteen support staff.

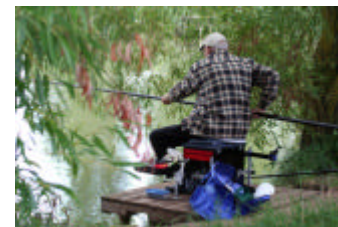
This number of employees must surely make us the leading employer in the village - many of the staff actually live in the village - ensuring that we provide work for our local community. Some staff have grown up in or close to the village and, therefore, our links with old village families is strong. Peggy Prudden, from an established village family, was secretary here for many years and her precious memory lives on. Christy Cresswell was educated here and became a teacher and I have her contract as a teacher, dated 1940, hanging in my office. It's interesting to note that I have tried to hang it in a variety of places but it always fell off the wall! Only in my office, which was originally her classroom, does it seem content! Both these ladies are commemorated by a tree planted in the school grounds. They both worked hard for the school and each time I go out on duty I remember them. The school is fortunate because its current staff provide that same kind of commitment and dedication.

Links with the parish church of St James are important to us and the children love nothing better than delivering hand-made harvest baskets to the seniors of the village. It is an old tradition which goes back many years, but it has the function of bringing old and young together and teaching the children how to care for others. Over the past two years the oldest Year Five pupils have also taken part in the Cameo Teas, set up within the village church where people can gather to meet and chat. Jess Fairs and I saw this as an opportunity to bridge the age gap and bring them together. It has been so successful and, whilst the children very much enjoyed the home-made cakes provided at church, they loved playing host and entertaining when the church regulars

business between them, has become a most attractive extension of the village, as well as proving to be a very successful business venture.

David Byrd spoke feelingly about his family's historic connection with Harvington and the part that many of its members had played in it over the years. It is with sadness that he has had to accept the fact that the circumstances mentioned above caused a rift in that relationship which may never be completely healed. In spite of that, he and his family love the area, are very happy here, and hope to enjoy for a long time to come the way of life which they promoted when it became necessary to make the change from traditional farming, which had been the family's livelihood for so long.

He was kind enough to provide this statement (below) about the business which he accompanied with an invitation to the people of Harvington to 'walk down and have a look' if they would like to see what Manor Farm Leisure is all about.



'In 1991 Manor Farm Leisure diversified from its farming interests and started a leisure business, initially with six letting caravans and river fishing. This soon grew to fourteen letting vans, plus tourers and new holiday homes for sale.

The fishing lakes were constructed to complement the letting business, and then the golf course was opened to make a complete package for the holidaymaker. Fishing is also available on a day ticket basis, and golf on a "pay and play" format.

Manor Farm Leisure has a policy of supporting local businesses and tradesmen, which benefits the local community and economy.

We attract tourists from all parts of the UK, Europe and further afield, who enjoy what the Vale of Evesham has to offer, with many of them returning year after year.'

## Litter Picks

A new type of fund-raising activity has taken place over the past two or three years – litter picks!

In 2003 an initiative by Wychavon District Council offered Parish Councils a monetary incentive to organise groups of people to take to the streets and clean them up. It was when this came to the notice of John Redman, then chairman of the Village Hall Management Committee, that it happened here. He told the Council that he would organise a litter-pick if they would then hand over the promised fee to him for the 'new village hall fund'. This was agreed, and duly happened... and has happened each year since then, the sum of £500 being passed on by the Council every year.

Bags and 'grabbers' are provided, collected by John who then passes half to Dr Hugh Nunn, a sympathetic supporter, for distribution to helpers at the far end of the

receiving the bread and wine from the hands of the priest or his assistant to being responsible for the preparation of the elements and vessels for use with the members of the congregation.

After discussion, it was agreed that the Sunday morning service would be my responsibility. Carol officiates at the Sunday evening and Wednesday morning services, to both of which she is accompanied by her husband, Vernon, who is now the church organist. My husband, Mervyn, usually officiates at the first Morning Service in the month, when there is no Eucharist; it is he, of course, who has been churchwarden on a number of occasions in the past and he, like Carol, has been a great help to me.

When I am 'on duty' I find that a quick check five minutes before the start of the service is essential. Are the candles lit? Is the microphone turned on? Are the hymn numbers in place? Usually all is well but sometimes things do get overlooked - after all, we're only human!

Then one day I DID get a nasty shock. When I had read somewhere that churchwardens have the authority to officiate at Morning or Evening Prayer if no priest is available, I took little notice. When would I ever take a service? When indeed! Then, one bright sunny morning, the telephone rang at 8.30...could I possibly take the morning service? Help!! Fortunately, I didn't have time to panic. I had to make some preparations. More fortunately still, I think I coped. No-one laughed, no-one walked out... and the collection plate was as full as usual! What a relief!

All in all, this has been a rewarding year for me and I have enjoyed it. Even though I have to attend lots of meetings and carry out my regular duties - and these can seem a bit weighty at times - I feel greatly blessed to be part of the St James' team, helping to keep the word of God alive in this community in which I live so happily.

Diana Huggins

### **Manor Farm Leisure Limited**

Not far from the banks of the River Avon, approached from the ancient Anchor Lane, are the offices of Manor Farm Leisure - actually, at present, two caravans - and the homes of Max and David Byrd and their wives Christine and Wendy. The present arrangement is only temporary because, in July 2007, along with many others, they were flooded out of their bungalows and offices. Permission to re-build in their chosen style has been difficult to obtain and only now are they commencing the process of refurbishment.

Many in the village will remember that, a few years ago, the proposal to create fishing lakes not far from the entrance to Anchor Lane caused a furore which brought pain and anxiety to the whole community, including all members of the Byrd family who were involved. It is good to report now that, although that period may not have been forgotten by those most affected, time has healed a lot of wounds. At the present time the whole area, enhanced by the facilities now offered by Manor Farm Leisure in which the brothers and their wives are partners, managing all aspects of the

came and had tea at the school.

It has made me proud that many of our old pupils have chosen to send their precious youngsters to school to follow on the tradition and be educated here. It's strange to see those you remember as children bringing their tots to school for the first time. Some even travel from other villages to come to school here. That speaks highly of the school but it also demands that we continue to raise our standards and provide a first rate education.

The school has recently had an Ofsted inspection and we were deemed to be 'a good school with outstanding features'. What pleases me most is that our outstanding classification was gained as a result of a new government agenda called 'Every Child Matters'. This initiative entitles the children to be healthy and safe, to know right from wrong, to have an understanding about the world and how it works and, for me, this is the most important category, for it comments on our humanity and how we relate to others. In this respect, we continue to support a charity called 'Schools for Progress' and, in particular, a schoolboy named Mustapha, in the Gambia, whom we 'adopted' some time ago, having since then paid a yearly sum to help keep him in education. He is now 14 years old, a pupil at Junior Secondary school, and we receive regular reports on his progress which are always passed on to our children. Earlier this year, after our successful Book Week, we sent an additional gift of money to buy books for his school. We give to other charities and worthy causes, of course, and so our children are used to the idea of 'raising money' to help people in some kind of need. We think this is of great importance to them.

At the same time as the Ofsted inspection, we were inspected as a church school and were deemed to be 'outstanding' - a judgement which pleased us very much. It has much to do with our church links but also the relationships that have been fostered with the church and our Rector, Richard Thorniley, whose enthusiasm rubs off onto the children when he delivers an assembly.

Voluntary helpers play an important role in our school and I don't underestimate their value. Children enjoy the attention when they read to volunteers, are supported in class and when swimming. Edith Maybury is in her eighteenth year of supporting this school and she has remained diligent in her commitment despite personal ills and being flooded out of her home. It's also pertinent at this time to comment on the role of governors in this school. Their role, though major, is voluntary. They have always worked hard to support the school, whilst being critical friends. Brian Tarling, as chairman, has been outstanding in his continued commitment both to the school and its staff. The PTFA, also a voluntary group, has supported the school without reserve. This continues to this very day and these unsung, often unknown, parents give freely of their precious time and provide generously for all the children through their hard work.

Additions to the school building seem to be a speciality and each year, usually during the summer holidays, some major development takes place. First, new classrooms, then a hall and a nursery, and extensions to the staffroom and nursery. These provide what our children need to fulfil their potential.

From a personal perspective I have enjoyed being the head teacher of this school.

Never a dull moment, never at a loss for the next project. And what could be better than doing something you love?

Marcia Palmer, Head Teacher.

### On being a School Governor

‘How would you like to be a school governor?’ I was asked one very ordinary day in the 1980s.

‘Oh, I don’t know,’ I said, ‘I’ve never thought about it. What do you have to do?’

‘Not a lot,’ came the reply. ‘Attend a meeting now and again: perhaps once a term. It’s not onerous.’

Well, that didn’t seem to be too demanding, so I agreed to become a school governor... and that’s what made that day an EXTRA-ordinary one.

The first meeting I attended lasted, at most, fifteen minutes and the only decision I can remember us making was the approval of an extra day’s holiday.

But things have changed since then, believe me. Nowadays governors are responsible for all aspects of school management, including finance, staff appointments, anything to do with the actual buildings and the oversight of the school curriculum, plus a number of incidental things which never get listed...and the meetings are at least twice a term and they last a lot longer than 15 minutes!

Then, of course, there are the Ofsted (the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills) inspections. Even those people who don’t know much about schools have heard of the dreaded Ofsted visits – they make even the most confident and experienced teachers quake, and even the governors and parents are apprehensive! But this year, the highlight of 2007 was the school’s success in achieving the assessment ‘Good with outstanding features’ - this was in both the Ofsted and Denominational assessments. (For a better explanation read Mrs Palmer’s account earlier.) We were all delighted and there was much rejoicing.

I want to tell you, though, that these achievements are a fitting tribute to the inspirational leadership of Marcia Palmer and her management team, plus a highly motivated and enthusiastic staff, with all of whom I am privileged to be associated. But I must not neglect to praise, also, the children and their parents whose ready response to all the school offers means that they are enabled to make excellent progress in every respect. This equips them to look ahead with confidence to their future in education and in life.

I am extremely proud to have been a governor of this school and to have served as chairman to an excellent and hard-working group of people who make up the governing body.

As to the future: there are plans and ideas for the school to offer even more facilities to our local community than it already does...so keep a lookout!

Brian Tarling,  
currently Chairman of Governors, Harvington First & Nursery School

### The Lengthsman

‘Smartening up’ is the key expression for describing the Lengthsman – someone new in Harvington’s history. He is the workman whose time and effort are shared between several local councils and whose contribution to the tidying-up of our village is very impressive. He goes quietly and unobtrusively about the tasks set for him by the Parish Council, trimming edges and hedges, tying back, pruning, clearing out gutters and gullies, removing growth which shouldn’t be where it is, touching up paintwork where necessary, etc, etc. The name is historic, the effort is present-day; both are highly valued and we are glad that his job brings him to Harvington.

Jess Fairs

### On becoming a churchwarden



Early in 2007, at the Annual Meeting of St James’ church, I found myself elected to the post of churchwarden.

“Being an effective warden is not rocket science. At some levels, it is just an expansion of what you probably do in your own household. Except that now you are charged with the care of God’s house.”

These words of wisdom, recently imparted to new churchwardens, now applied to me! Was I reassured?

I was not... and the fact that I had had three sessions as wife of a churchwarden had done nothing to prepare me for the reality of being in the role myself. Neither did the wealth of information available to wardens – indeed to anyone who cares to seek it out – in books and countless other sources of information about churches, church history and administration and many other aspects of church life and tradition. All of this only served to tell me how weighty the responsibility is, historically, legally, socially, etc, etc. And this was all to be brought home to me at my very first service ‘in office’ which, to my consternation, was to be a service of Confirmation presided over by the Bishop of Worcester!!

“Nervous” doesn’t begin to describe my feelings on that evening as I stood in a vestry packed with members of the clergy waiting to precede the Bishop down the aisle. ‘What comes next?’ I kept asking myself as I struggled to put one foot in front of the other... and keep my balance... and not turn and run home! That walk and what followed seemed to go on forever, but I was told that I played my part well and nobody noticed how shaky I was. In fact, I found myself enjoying it and appreciating the fact that it was a moving and uplifting occasion.

In time I grew used to my new situation and soon learned to take my duties much more calmly. I must make it clear that I was not... am not... alone in carrying out my duties. I have a very helpful and capable fellow churchwarden, Carol Goodchild, who has proved invaluable in showing me what is expected, not least in setting up the altar for Holy Communion. It is quite a step from simply walking up to the altar and

have cause to be grateful for...but they are also achievers in their own right in those areas of their lives which are not in Harvington.

Phil is known to many of us now because of his money-raising efforts for the future of the village hall. He has organised and run two very successful Talent Competitions, the funds from which were increased by grants given by Wychavon District Council – and the obtaining of these is a success in itself. Both these shows, playing to a full hall each time, have been well received and some impressive talents have been revealed. Both events have begun and then been interspersed with items from The Duke's Jazz Band – a popular group which owes its existence to Phil's initiative. In fact, it is often wrongly called Phil Bawn's Jazz Band, but this isn't quite so, though the explanation is too complicated to go into here.

Phil has always loved music and had always had a desire to perform. In the early years of their marriage he and Doreen (both Somerset people by birth and upbringing, and country people, too) found themselves living near Bristol, and it was there that Phil saw an advert for the sale of a saxophone. He wanted it; he had wanted to play one since he was a very young boy so off he went to track down the owner who was amazed to learn that Phil had never even handled a saxophone although he couldn't undertake to teach him because he had no teeth (the owner, not Phil!). Unperturbed, Phil bought it, took it home and taught himself to play it... and that was the start of his determination to have his own band, which now he has! Available for hire, as many village people know, they perform in many different venues, always adjusting the programme to the likes and expectations of their listeners. The make-up of the group varies; there are several players who can be relied upon by Phil to take part according to whether or not they are available. Nor is this unique. He has another band – a 'big band' called The Daniels and they, too, play in a variety of places... and have many tales to tell. The organising of all this is mind-blowing (oh dear, no silly pun intended) but, to add to the complications, Phil also gives solo performances whenever called upon to do so. For instance, he plays piano at a Day Centre for people with severe learning difficulties and is touched and delighted when they cheer his appearance. It makes a nice tale and Phil has a pleasant way of telling a tale as well as always being ready to tell a joke against himself. Incidentally, when he's not doing any of the above, he acts as Link Co-ordinator for the Neighbourhood Watch Scheme in the village...and that's another story!

Meanwhile Doreen (who started her dearly-loved hobby of bowls when they lived in Cheshire by agreeing to take part in a bowls match for her local W.I.) has achieved something remarkable in her own right. She has been Vice-President this year of the Worcester County Women's Bowling Association and, by the association's rules, will become President in 2008 – this being only the second time in its hundred year history that a member of the Evesham branch has been voted President. It is seen as a very prestigious post to fill and is a fitting rounding-off of a talented and distinguished career in this popular sport.

Jess Fairs

## On being chairman of the Parents, Teachers and Friends Association of Harvington School

When I was invited to write an account for this book of my role as chairman of the PTFA, my thoughts turned to the faces that *are* the PTFA, because all parents and carers of the children attending the school are automatically classed as members of the Association — there is no question of 'joining'. Some are willing to give — or are in a better position to give — more time and effort than others but I believe that, in the main, we have a common interest in wanting to give something back to the school, the children and the village in return for all that the school does for the community it serves. This is particularly so of the members of the committee. We all lead very busy lives these days and no-one has time, it seems, to get involved with PTFA affairs, but it is possible to *make* the time and then it becomes very rewarding.

We meet often and try to come up with ideas not only for raising money to help to provide things which the school needs, but also to raise money for charity because this is setting a good example. One particularly ambitious idea was proposed in 2005 for a Harvington Fireworks Evening. We had relatively little experience of organising such an event and were almost overwhelmed by the regulations and challenges which beset us, and the team of volunteers which we had to bring in from the village and the surrounding area. But it all worked well and was a big success – a triumph which has been repeated twice more since! We have been extremely grateful to the many people indirectly connected to the school who have given freely of their time and effort to make it an event for the whole community – something which we sincerely hope will continue long into the future.

In 2007 we joined with the school in raising money for the County Air Ambulance. This was done through a raffle, a non-uniform day (something which the children enjoyed almost as much as the staff!) and a collection of donations. A special visitor from the unit came to the school to accept the cheque – a very memorable occasion.

There are others also: the Hallowe'en Disco, a Burns Night supper and the Bingo Evenings – all pretty well supported by the village as a general rule, though we wish sometimes that we could broaden the circle of people willing to show interest and active encouragement.

As chairman, I've found it necessary to accumulate a selection of boxes and 'useful' bits and pieces, all of which have to be housed in spare bedroom, loft or garage. This has to be ceremoniously passed on the next chairperson in due course! I'm not sure when that will be, but I can truthfully say that I have enjoyed great times being involved with the PTFA even though, at times, it has been frustrating. I've met some interesting people, made good friends and discovered what can be achieved when everyone pulls together. I can thoroughly recommend it!

A family newly arrived in Harvington — whose children were just beginning to adjust to their new school — recently commented to me how welcoming both school and village are, and how 'acceptance' is instant. That was a very pleasing and reassuring thing to hear and I felt proud to be associated with all that the compliment implied.

Jude Oakey

## Memories of a pupil at Harvington School

When I set foot for the first time over the doorstep of Harvington Church of England First School as a raw young pupil of the age of five, I was totally unaware of what connection I would have with it all these years later. How could I have known that I would still be going there every day, loving it and with not a trace of nerves or hesitation? At the time, my only assurance that 'it would be alright' was that my Dad – and, I believe, my Granddad – had also been pupils there.

I was very unsure of it all on my first day as, I'm sure, so many other pupils have been, but for me there was always the knowledge of a gap in the fence and that it would have been easy to escape. Then all I would have to do was cross the road (remember there was not so much traffic then) and, hey, I could have been home! But it wasn't necessary. On the first day all went well and very soon I settled into a well-loved routine.

It is difficult to imagine that, in those days, we only had two classrooms – now the computer suite – managed by the headmistress plus one other teacher, in what is now the library. There was a cook and a helper in the kitchen where hot lunches were prepared, cooked and served on site in what is now the Resources area and offices. The area by Year Five's classroom was the main playground, with a separate girls' playground together with the girls' toilets over to the left behind the original school building.\* The boys' playground and toilets were to the right. Bordering the main playground were small plots of land which the children worked and planted. The class teacher in those days came to school on her bike and this was stored round the back in a lean-to next to the girl's toilet. The coveted reward for the day was to fetch her bike for her return home – oh, how things have changed!!

The head teacher took all classes in the one large room, where there was a piano which had its back to the main body of the school who sat on the floor facing it. This was becoming tatty, and I can remember cutting out leaves from fabric which were then placed onto other fabric to make a picture. This was then sewn together to create a backing cover for the piano.

Eventually, I made my way into the top class and faced the frightening task of sitting the infamous '11 Plus', which I passed, thus going on to the Grammar School – now Prince Henry's High School.

When our son, Michael, started school at Harvington First, it had grown somewhat into four purpose-built classrooms, the original classrooms having changed their use to hall/dining room and library. The allotments to the rear of the school had been acquired in order to provide a larger playground and grass field and, also, an area on which to site two portable classrooms. A few years later and the loss of more allotment land enabled the school to benefit from a further two permanent classrooms, a purpose-built nursery and a super hall with excellent facilities, which is also available for use by the community – for a fee, of course.

When Michael had settled in I began going into school as a helper – hearing children read, accompanying school outings and visits, and helping in a general way when and where I could. Then, to my delight, I was asked about committing to a

defined 'safe surfaces' and 'drop heights', 'trip hazards' and 'slip hazards'; 'responsibility' and 'accountability' – and the lawyers licked their lips and opened new departments to deal with blame and claim litigation.

The playing field died - suffocated by new regulations - and the boundary hedge cast a forbidding dark shadow over the enterprise and initiative embodied in the play area.

A playing field committee chaired by Hugh Nunn struggled with the problem in the late 90s but was hampered by the lack of funds.

The new millennium however offered a new opportunity. This was initiated by a bequest from Eric Newing, one of many that he left to village causes. This bequest was used as a base for obtaining grants necessary for the rejuvenation of the playing field. A new committee was formed in 2003 and a grand design was drawn up for a larger open area with facilities for all ages.

A defining moment was the removal of the overgrown hedge and the opening up of the field to sunlight and expansion.

This grand design is ongoing. The committee has spent some £45,000 in providing play and recreational activities on an expanded site and the ambition for the future is to provide paths and nature areas which radiate from the original field.

Wellington claimed that the battle of Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton. Who knows where the Harvington playing field might lead?

Playing Field Committee: Roger Beard - Chairman, Sheila Hemming - Secretary, Jenny Cocks – Treasurer, John Cocks, Mike Crewe, Lynn Merrick, Keith Seager.

Roger Beard

## The Bawns – Phil and Doreen



Those of us who live near Phil and Doreen (they live in Grange Lane in a bungalow built on land which was part of The Grange property, and which was built by the late Miss Morrow for her retirement after she sold The Grange) know that they are the best of neighbours, keeping a caring eye on all of us who need their concern and their active help and doing it quietly with a minimum of fuss...a fact which many of us

Once the water had receded and we had been able to restore electricity and hot water we were able to reflect on the remarkable stoicism of our neighbours, who had remained cheerful and taken a practical view on the situation from when it began. But it was only after the river was back in its normal place that we could begin to realise the scale of the task ahead.

Each decision has its own implications that would affect domestic and professional relationships for the next eight to nine months. Depending on the age and stage of family life, very different factors have to be considered. Sleeping upstairs but cooking and eating in a caravan is good fun for a week – but not for thirty! It disrupts the established patterns which give a home stability, and a family its cohesive strength. The opportunities for sixth sense appraisal of problems at school or trouble at work are lost, and solid relationships become strained as we each cope in our own private way with the impact of losing half our home. Everyone lost personal items – my '70s collection of LPs, the girls' boxed school memorabilia – reports, photos, art projects, GCSE course work, items from their past which they had hoped to take into their future – and it was the same for our neighbours too.

There is the intrusion of the building work, the inevitable dust and noise, and the frustration of it all happening too slowly. It all combines in a dark cloud of confused disruption, where much of your past has been forcibly removed and the future seems uncertain.

So although the thought of a new three-piece suite and fresh paint everywhere is on one hand a nice one, take my advice and get the paint brush out and put a few pounds aside for the new settee. Don't look forward to a rainy day!

Simon Greenhalgh

### — *Village people and their activities* —

#### Harvington Playing Field

Playing fields have such an important role in the development of the child and the sharing of family energies: a village can be judged on its playing field.

Some thirty years ago the Coley family donated a plot of land as a playing field for Harvington village. The plot was developed by a group of volunteers. A hedge was laid as a boundary and play equipment was installed. Out of these endeavours grew a set of substantial swings and a see-saw together with goals ingeniously fabricated from scaffolding poles. Harvington had gained its playing field.

And then came the disaster. Not foot and mouth; not BSE; not floods; not pestilence; not apathy or neglect...but Health & Safety!

Health & Safety crept into the national consciousness of the 80s without clear warning. It sounded like the title of a naturalist magazine or a guide to mountain walks. How could one resist a title that suggested all that was good and desirable?

But suddenly the implications became apparent. Health & Safety regulations

permanent arrangement...and I'm still there, ten years later, enjoying the company of children and adults and the whole sense of involvement. Over that time, I have found I've worn a number of hats, each with its own challenge, but always enjoyable and rewarding. I love the school and everything about it and I'm delighted and proud to have had this long association with it.

Sheila Hemming.

\* The late Helen Ediss who lived in St James' Close had a wonderful story to tell about her father and these separate playgrounds and lavatories. The latter were of the 'earth' variety, the seats being simply round holes in a wooden board and, behind them and low down on the outside wall, doors through which the night-soil men came to clean out the refuse. One playtime, in a fit of devilment, schoolboy 'Dad' and one of his more daring pals, sneaked out of their playground, ran round to the open field area behind and, pulling a clump of nettles, opened the 'night soil' doors whereupon they nettled the buttocks of the seated girls. Shrieks and screams brought teacher running... and the rest we can guess at. Helen used to laugh heartily at this tale. 'He was such a devil,' she would say, 'always in trouble'. One time he and his pals burned several of the head teacher's canes which they stuffed up the chimney in the main room, lighting them with bundles of newspaper, doubtless smuggled in for the purpose!

I must ask Mrs Palmer what stories SHE can tell which rival these!!

Jess Fairs

### — *Avon Tales* —

**The Greenhalgh family has lived by the Avon near Harvington village since 1987. For many years they ran The Mill at Harvington as a small country hotel and restaurant. In 2003 they closed the hotel to change the buildings back to domestic occupation and to restore the original Georgian house into their family home. Then, in July 2007...**

Toll Barr, Catliffe, Dinnington, Syresham - were all villages we had never heard of before. We sat by the television unintentionally improving our geography as we watched the devastation of large parts of northern England hit by flooding. Little did we know...

We had been flooded before of course, in 1998. We were experienced in these things. We had been there and wrung out the tee shirt. We could comment knowledgeably on the suffering and despair that would follow as the flood waters receded. We knew how the water would affect not only the furniture, but family pictures and family relationships too. The irreplaceable bits and pieces of years of family life. Those worthless, priceless, sentimental treasures over which tears would be shed as their loss was realised. And so to our turn.

Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> July was a glorious day, and I had been laying bricks on our extension stripped to the waist - blue skies, light breeze, Radio Four – the best of British

summer. The weather forecasts had been tracking a low pressure swirling round over the Atlantic and there was talk of it hitting the mainland by the end of the week. Depending where it hit and how it behaved, yet another area could be flooded, and this time, they were saying, it could be the Midlands. It certainly didn't seem like it as I cleaned my tools and tidied up at the end of the working day.

Our neighbours were hosting an end of term pool party for their daughter's school friends. And so it was that towards the end of the afternoon, a throng of youngsters excitedly turned up to enjoy their friendships, the sun and the water. They were leaving behind them the disciplines and timetables that learning imposes upon them, and hungrily anticipating both the freedom of the summer holidays and their hot dog and burger barbecue supper, which was all to be part of the "do".

And then, at about seven o'clock or so, the sky clouded over, darkened, and all the pent up electricity which had been building in the low pressure for days was released to earth – and right into our garden it seemed. The commensurate thunder shook the windows, the walls and most certainly and dramatically any remaining will of the children outside to carry on the party. They all dashed screaming for cover... and the rain had begun.

It rained for about 24 hours, right through the night and most of Friday – in prodigious quantities. Tracks became tumbling torrents, then roads rivers, flooding fields, draining into ditches, building up in brooks, swelling streams and backing up at bridges. It caused huge disruption throughout the region. Harvington villagers were threatened once again in their homes, roads were blocked by the water and commuters and shoppers only made it home with great difficulty and stoicism. Some couldn't make it home at all and slept in their cars, wherever they had been forced to stop because of the water coming off the land. Pub car parks seemed to be the most popular places of refuge – funny that!

As everyone suffered on the Friday, the river remained benign, but as the day wore on and the rain continued, we began to have doubts about how the river would cope when all the water on the land hit it. Harvington Brook had already succumbed to the rain and had overflowed onto Anchor Lane, blocking the thoroughfare to traffic with fast flowing water over the bonnets of most cars. Annoyingly, we had to abandon our own car on the bridge over the A46 and get a lift in with a friendly neighbour in their 4x4. Little did we know at the time what a blessing that irritation would turn out to be.

The mood in the Greenhalgh household during the evening of Friday 20<sup>th</sup> July, was becoming distinctly uneasy. We all seemed to be taking a slightly different view on proceedings. My wife Jane was taking a "mum's" position and began to move bits and pieces to higher shelves, even going to the laughable lengths of taking certain items upstairs. I can only think that there must be some instinct associated with nesting and protecting the family which takes over at times of threat. I made suitably disparaging comments about wasted time and acted in a generally discouraging way about all this disruption – until I looked out of the window into the darkness.

This was only possible because I had been given one of those ten zillion candle power torches for Christmas last year. I hoisted the black and chrome monster to

meals for which we had both the technical wherewithal and raw materials to hand. Its completion was dependent on me returning to the kitchen, in the still rising water, to gather the bits and pieces. The gas still worked and I could light the burners with a match. So slowly but surely "SALT AND PEPPER!" the meal came together. There I was, underpants once more full of shirt, standing in two and a half feet of Avon, stirring beans and poaching eggs. "PLATES!" This was not what I had had in mind the day before as I contemplated what to do on Saturday.

Having lunch was the right idea, and we felt much uplifted afterwards. We sat about, glowing gently with cholesterol, and irrationally emboldened. It seemed the Blaxalls had had the same feeling, and were outside, rowing round the garden in the dinghy, taking video and photographs – generally making the most of it – there was nothing else we could do after all.

We spent the afternoon taking film, planning what to do when the water receded and washing up in a bathroom basin. I made several trips to the kitchen to keep an eye on things. Looking round, it was clear that we had grossly misjudged the height that the water would reach, and although we had cleared the contents from the bottom shelf of the kitchen cupboards, the second shelves were now well under water.

Anything that could float was now randomly sailing around. There were apples and lemons, bowls, dishes, an assortment of Tupperware, sandwich boxes, foil containers, an M&S bag with remarkably buoyant properties and all manner of items which would normally be found in the back of kitchen units – long forgotten and not used for years. These all had to be collected and placed above the water.

We were buzzed by several helicopters, offering assistance or evacuation if needed which was a kind thought, but we were safe and well and hope that we gave them the message that they should save their fuel and energies for more urgent cases than ours.

By 4 o'clock the water stopped rising. By 6 o'clock it began to fall. And by 9 o'clock we were all shattered and went to bed and caught up on the wider situation on the news. Evesham was headlining the bulletin! We were famous! But didn't actually appear as such.



I got up shortly after 5 o'clock on the Sunday to see what was happening but there were still 2 or 3 inches of water down stairs. By 6.30 it had cleared the floor and we could begin clearing up. The river had receded as fast as it had risen and the sooner we could make it safe to move around the better.

Cal and Jackie Springer had been thoughtful enough to move their hen coop to the highest ground in our garden. It sat, with its three feathered inhabitants, along with the garden tractors and our house guest's car, under the big Chestnut Tree. We all felt that this would be a safe enough height. However, as the level continued to rise, Jackie lost her nerve and enlisted the help of the Blaxalls, who



had a dinghy and a canoe, to bring the hens to the safety of her attic. These craft were really for use on the river, of course, but were now commandeered to form a Task Force for supplies, evacuation, rescue and emergency support as needed.

The Dunkirk spirit was spreading – we'd even got the boats now!

With Malcolm Blaxall rowing, and Jackie as passenger with cardboard box, they managed three return trips, one for each bird, to save the flock. There was a nasty moment for Henrietta, when Jackie slipped getting out of the dinghy. Self sacrificial to the end, Jackie managed to hold the bemused bantam aloft and dry above the muddy surface while she herself suffered the indignity and discomfort of total immersion in the flood water before regaining her balance to complete the mission of mercy. I'm sorry to admit it, but there was a slightly comic side to the whole thing.

Watching this rescue from our bedroom window reminded us that our cat, Monty, had been trapped inside since the previous evening. Monty is an outside cat in terms of toilet habits and we have never had need for cat litter. Being a cat of high personal standards and considerable experience, we were certain that she would be very anxious not to let herself down, so to speak, but we were also aware that she did not have access to her normal facilities outside and could therefore be suffering some distress. We were fairly sure that the Springers had some cat litter. We also knew that the Blaxalls had a canoe, ably manned by George, aged 11. It was simply a case of a mobile 'phone call and shouting out of the bedroom window to bring together the resources. And so it wasn't long before George was heading our way across the water with half a bag of cat litter. He canoed straight through the open front door, past the study, into the hall and moored at the stairs to hand over the supplies. Only completing a swift Eskimo roll would have made the situation more bizarre. He went about, and paddled back home, where we watched him pass through their own open front door and into the lounge! What a strange day it was!

Armed with the litter, we found a tray and with great relief put it down for the cat. I think our relief was somewhat overshadowed by that of Monty, who after a couple of quick prods with a paw, settled immediately over the litter and made herself more comfortable. Phew!

All this rescue stuff had made us hungry, so we began the laborious process of gathering the ingredients for poached eggs, on beans, on toast. This choice was made in a magnificent moment of unanimity, assisted by the fact that it was one of the few

chest height in both hands and levelled it to out to shine onto the lawn towards the river. Bracing myself against the recoil this beast would surely pack as I switched on, I illuminated the garden and found to my considerable concern that instead of the deep green of our carefully cut and cared for lawn, I was staring with some discomfort at the turgid brown waters of the Avon on their way to invade our home.

"Of course", I explained to Mrs Greenhalgh, who was now delighted to have been proved correct, "I expected the river to rise in response to the deluge, and will be keeping an eye on things in case it looked dangerous and in case we needed to start any serious evacuation of belongings". I did however feel that she was looking a little tired from all the carting about she had been doing and could perhaps do with a little help – and I did take the precaution too of isolating the electrical circuits which I thought might give us trouble should the river come in. Don't think for a moment though that my optimism was totally blind. The possibility of a visitation from the Avon was an increasingly likely one, and as the evening wore on and the water level outside continued to creep up slowly, my sentiments began to shift more firmly towards the "mum's" position I had viewed with such scepticism earlier on.

We decided that we would go to bed but get up every so often to review the situation. At about half past midnight we had a phone call from Katie, our elder daughter, who is on the Warwickshire Police Force and was working a 7am to 7pm shift. She was still working and having to spend the night in Shipston on Stour evacuating people and allocating rescue resources and was herself trapped by flooded roads. The water, she warned me, was so deep everywhere that the Avon was bound to carry on rising for ages as the Stour added itself to the already swollen levels.

I sat in bed for a further 20 minutes, and at 1am made the change. It was time to take a "dad's" position. "Everybody up! And not just up, but fully-dressed, proper shoes on and ready for work." It was time for action. We prioritised the work and resources, which included our weekend house guest!

It had already become surreal – getting up at 1 o'clock, getting dressed, dark outside and strangely quiet, but with a feeling of inevitability creeping towards us. We took everything that was moveable upstairs first – smaller items of furniture, rugs, loose carpets, lamps and chairs until the landing and bedrooms were full. We lifted the heavy furniture onto concrete blocks and reconsidered our position. Heaving the torch off the floor and setting myself against the recoil, I once again illuminated the garden. It really is a great torch and brings for me now a whole new concept to the term Floodlight. It confirmed Katie's view about the effects of the Stour. The water was still rising and already alarmingly close. Inundation seemed unavoidable – but we still had some time.

In keeping with the age and style of the house, we had fitted oak panel doors, oak plank doors and oak kitchen unit doors during the renovations. I decided that it would be seemly behaviour under the circumstances to remove as many of these as we could to save time and money in putting the house back to rights after the flood had subsided. In a blur of activity we began to take the doors off and continued to do what we could to mitigate the damage that now seemed inevitable.

By the time the water crept under the door at 4am we were waiting for it. It was

like watching a film on the television and seemed strangely disconnected from reality. We stood watching in a small group, Jane and me in our green wellies, Polly, our younger daughter, prettily sporting bright pink ones, staring in quiet bemusement at the unfolding event. There was no point wielding mops and buckets for this one. It was very clear that we were in for a soaking and as there was by then nothing more we could do, we sort of hung around and watched as it spread right through the house and began to rise. I suppose it was rather hurtful in a way, that without so much an “excuse me”, nature had conspired to come and destroy what had taken us years of work to create. If any thoughts of heroic acts had entered my head, they disappeared at this moment.



The concrete blocks were soon engulfed and the muddy, brown water crept up the legs of all the furniture, up the first few stairs, and inexorably up the kitchen units. When it got to the top of our wellies, at around 6am, we decided that we may as well get a couple of hours sleep. There was nothing we could do in any case.

You will not be surprised to hear that sleep was not easily attained. Despite having been up for twenty-four hours, we rested a bit and maybe dozed off for a while, and decided eventually that what we most needed was something to eat to raise our blood sugar levels and spirits.

Now this is where the Dunkirk spirit came to the fore – well, we had the water after all, so we were half way there. And it was deep enough too. We had the provisions and equipment, but they were downstairs. We were upstairs, and all we had to do was to work out the best way to join the two elements together. The water was too deep for wellies by now so there was no point employing those. It would have to be wading, trousers off, shirt tucked wherever it would go – I would advise not trying too hard to build a mental picture of this, dear reader – suffice to say it was not a pretty sight.

The water was cold, but not freezing. It was very dark brown, and smelled muddy, stale, and there seemed to be things on the floor which shouldn't have been there as I trod carefully across the hall and into the kitchen. Jane and Polly were offering encouragement from the stairs, and what they felt was helpful advice on the best way I should progress on my mission. “KETTLE!” “FRUIT AND FIBRE!” It was hard to know what to grab first as the requests speeded up and they got into their stride;

“NO, KETTLE AND TEABAGS”

“WHAT ABOUT MILK, CAN YOU GET TO THE FRIDGE!”

“I NEED A MUG!” There was one already standing there in two feet of muddy water with his shirt tucked into his underpants, wondering if a fridge half under water but apparently working would electrocute a person if they grabbed the handle in search of milk. “KETTLE FIRST, THEN MILK” You have to remember that I had no pockets, and that my underpants were already full - of shirt - and that when paddling round your kitchen in two feet of muddy water, it is best to keep one hand free for balancing, or for fending “SPOONS!” off unwanted random objects as they float by, apparently on a mission of their own. So progress was slow to say the least, each item “COFFEE!” being transported separately to the stairs for hand over.

After some time, my confidence grew, and wading “TOASTER” through the slowly rising water, I managed to deliver the entire requirements, both the hardware and software, of “BUTTER” a reasonable breakfast for us all. Despite the water being dark brown, the strange thing was that my legs, by the end of this expedition, had turned blue! It's a funny world isn't it?

We felt much perkier as our blood sugar levels rose after some breakfast and we had established “base camp” on the landing. Kettle, toaster, milk, teabags, cereal, butter – all those things you assume to be on hand under normal circumstances, now seemed highly prized items - booty! The water was still rising slowly but there was nothing that could be done about it. We felt OK about the situation, nobody was hurt or in danger and we had the basics to keep us going. We were down but not out!

We were hearing an increasing number of strange noises from below – clinking, banging, the occasional thump. I was sent to investigate the more worrying ones. Wearing sandals on my feet just in case, I returned to the water. Bobbing past on a sedate bid for freedom was our best gravy boat, released from its shelf by gently rising flood water, but separated from its saucer, I realised, because the saucer would have been weighed down initially by the boat itself, thus becoming submerged where it sat. I believe the boat was most likely hoping to reach the main stream of the flood, with a view to reaching Breen Sands by Sunday evening, given a decent run on the tide. How it thought it would get back I don't know, but I can't really blame it for fancying an excursion! Anyway, I spoilt its game by picking it up and putting it out of harm's way in a wall cupboard. They are expensive things, gravy boats!

Fridges, I learned, when immersed in flood water have a very strong urge – an instinct even – to fall over. And this causes complications for the contents. I tried on several occasions to right them but it was to no avail. They were soon all lying in the water at 45 degrees, door up. Think about it! They are filled with highly buoyant foam insulation. They are full of air, and have a very heavy compressor at the back. What else could they do but behave in this way. This was the source of the thumping and banging, and we were very relieved not to have found anything more serious.

After a cup of coffee we decided to see how the neighbours were fairing. They had the advantage of a flood protection wall, which held quite satisfactorily until the water came over the top – after that of course there was no point having one at all. Not surprisingly, both houses had water in them to the same depth as ours. Like us, they had taken precautions with some of their belongings, but had been caught out by the height the water reached. Most of the ground floor furnishings were ruined.