

# The Gossip

H O R N T O N

ISSUE 120

FEBRUARY 2021

## Fiona steps up



**Fiona Donaldson is the newly appointed clerk to Hornton Parish Council. She has a wealth of admin experience from jobs all over the world and, having lived in Hornton for many years, she knows the village well.**

Fiona is joined in the role by Lisa Wilkinson who is now the responsible financial officer (RFO). Lisa is also clerk/RFO to Shipton-under-Wychford and Hailey Parish Councils and has six years' experience in those roles. The split between clerk and RFO is something that has been done successfully before in Hornton and other parishes.

Thanking the former clerk and RFO, Cindy Koberl, for performing both roles so diligently over the last two years John Offord, chair of Hornton Parish Council, said: "Never having been a parish clerk before, Cindy fitted in quickly and did a first-class job. I should like to say a big thank-you to her for all she has done, especially in helping to get the buddy system up and running so rapidly last year".

Another change at the Parish Council has arisen with the resignation late last year of councillor Steve Tilling. "Steve brought an eye for detail and an analytical

mind to the job," said John Offord. "He has been a hard-working and dedicated councillor and we are sad to see him leave."

The Parish Council currently has seven members and would welcome enquiries from anyone interested in filling what is known as a casual vacancy. If you would like to know more about the job of a parish councillor (unpaid!), please email [clerk@hornton.org.uk](mailto:clerk@hornton.org.uk).

## New Rector

The Reverend Alicia Baker has been appointed as the next rector of the Ironstone Benefice and will be taking up the post on May 4, the date of her licensing service. She will move to Wroxton in April.

*The Gossip* hopes to interview Alicia in the coming months and to feature a profile of her in our May or August issue.

## Motocross latest

Cherwell District Council (CDC) has postponed the main planning application deadline until February 12. You may remember that the deadline was originally January 6 and it will come as no surprise to you that the January deadline came and went with no apparent action from CDC.

In the meantime, take a look at the Cherwell planning portal: <https://planningregister.cherwell.gov.uk/Planning/Display/21/00294/SO>. You'll see a letter from the agent of the applicant, Sandra Kerwood of Manor Farm, Balscote, requesting a screening opinion. This enables an applicant to establish, before submitting a planning application, whether or not an Environmental Impact Assessment is required and CDC duly confirmed that it was not.

Regrettably, despite assurances from CDC over many months that Hornton Parish Council would be kept advised of developments, Hornton only learnt of the screening opinion request, made on January 8, and the response to it, given before January 29, after all was done and dusted.

However, the letter from Mrs Kerwood's agent (based in Shropshire and therefore well versed in the countryside in this area!) requesting a screening opinion, throws light on what Mrs Kerwood will be asking for in her planning application for the motocross site, namely 24 days racing plus an **undefined** number of practice days. Be prepared.



# Martin Hemmings

Residents were shocked and saddened to learn of the sudden passing of Martin Hemmings in late January.

Martin was admitted as an emergency to Warwick Hospital on December 29 with what was later diagnosed as a form of leukaemia and was found to be positive for Covid. Despite bravely battling and overcoming Covid, Martin's condition deteriorated whilst undergoing treatment for leukaemia and he sadly passed away on January 22.

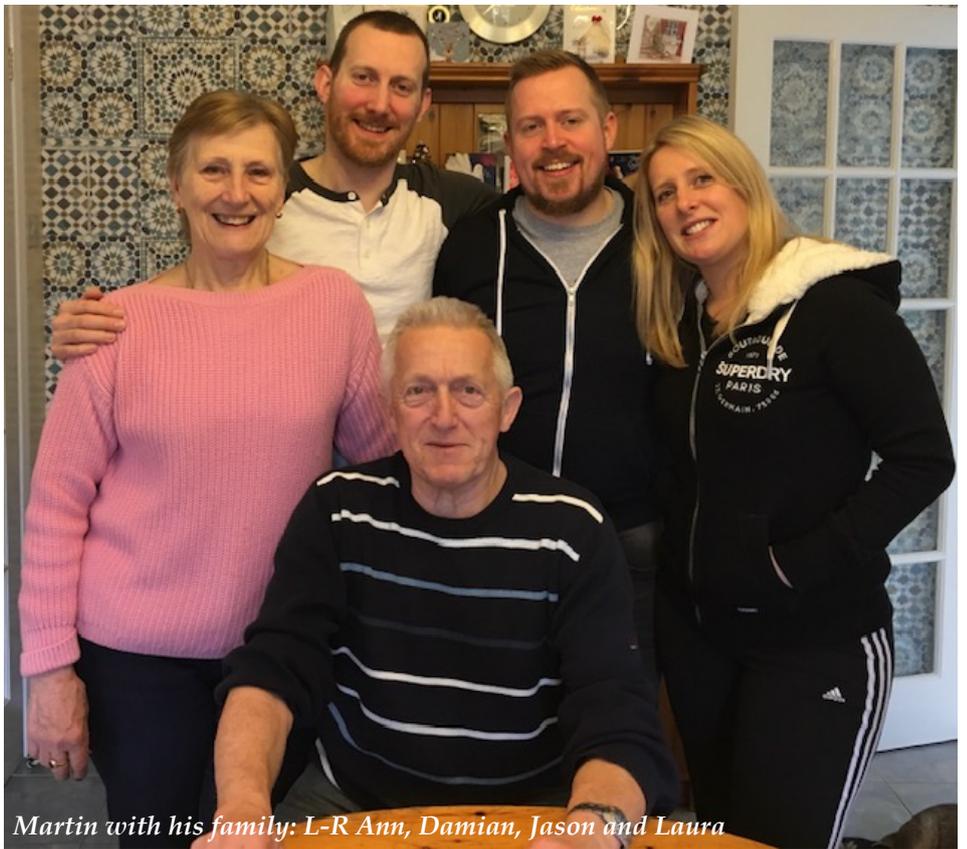
Martin was born at home, Number 2 New Buildings, Hornton (at the bottom of Bell Street) and was delivered at the top of the stairs by his grandmother when he arrived unexpectedly one month early. Apart from five years in Horley and a year in Shenington, Martin spent all his life in Hornton, attending the village primary school and later Easington Modern Boys' School in Banbury.

He started his working life as an apprentice electrician at Eric Turner's electrical business, acquiring skills he retained and put to good use in many homes in and around Hornton over the years. Martin then started working for Ben Tew, butcher and farmer of Shenington, and subsequently for Ben's son Roy, based in Hornton, where he happily worked on the farm for many years. In 1981 he joined Cleenol Group in Banbury where he worked until his retirement in 2012.

Martin lived on The Green in the centre of the village with his wife Ann. They have three children: Laura, Damian and Jason.

A real village character, Martin could often be seen working in his greenhouse and chatting over the wall. He was a keen gardener and had an extremely well-kept allotment. He loved his dogs and regularly walked the fields around Hornton accompanied by Izzie and Amber.

Martin will be sorely missed.



Martin with his family: L-R Ann, Damian, Jason and Laura

## A message from the family.

*We, Ann, Laura, Damian, Jason, Caroline and Maddie would like to express our heartfelt thanks to all those in and around the village who have shared kind words, anecdotes and memories of Martin or sent letters, cards and flowers. We have been overwhelmed by everyone's kindness; it has been a great source of comfort in this difficult time.*

If anyone would like to make a donation to Leukaemia UK in Martin's memory, they can do so via the donations page on Edd Frost and Daughters website: [www.eddfrostanddaughters.co.uk/tributes-and-donations/](http://www.eddfrostanddaughters.co.uk/tributes-and-donations/) or by post c/o Edd Frost & Daughters Funeral Directors, 14 Canada Close, Banbury, OX16 2RT.

Martin will be driven through the village for the last time on Wednesday, February 17, for those wishing to pay their respects. He will arrive at the top end of Bell Street at approximately 10.15am, proceeding down to The Green to meet his family, then on to Banbury Crematorium via Millers Lane at 10.30am.

Due to current restrictions, only invited guests may attend Martin's funeral service. However, anyone wishing to follow the service online can do so by requesting log-in details from the office of Edd Frost & Daughters: [office@eddfrostanddaughters.co.uk](mailto:office@eddfrostanddaughters.co.uk)

## Trail time

Fed up of frozen fields or miles of mud then take the chance to follow two village trails. One is a quiz as well.

A new fun trail quiz, designed to entice Hornton families to walk with purpose around the village, and the History Group's updated *The Way We Were* village trail promise to put a stop to those plaintive cries of "What can we do today?"

Devised by Lynn Corke, the trail quiz can be tackled by individuals and couples as well as families and is presented as a flyer within this issue of *The Gossip*. It is also available on the Hornton website [www.hornton.org.uk](http://www.hornton.org.uk) under *Hornton Happenings*.

"I hope the trail quiz will provide a good fun reason for getting out and about in the village whilst still observing current coronavirus rules," says Lynn. "There will be a prize of a bottle of wine and sweets for the entry with the most correct answers. The decision of the judges will be final as we know that Hornton is a very competitive, not to say argumentative, place! In the event of a tie, there will be a tie-breaker.

"To aim for the prize, answers can be sent to me by email, [lynnjcorke@aol.com](mailto:lynnjcorke@aol.com), or put through my letter-box at The Cottage, Church Lane. The closing date is April 11, the Sunday after Easter."

The correct answers to the trail quiz will appear in the May issue of *The Gossip* and

on the Hornton website after the closing date.

When you've completed the trail quiz, why not enjoy the History Group's separate village trail, *The Way We Were*, which has recently been updated and improved. It takes you around the village, giving the history of many of the houses and their occupants over the centuries. It gives an insight into how life has changed over the years and how you could get almost anything and everything right on your doorstep without getting deliveries from a supermarket or a white van.

*The Way We Were* trail can be found on the Hornton History Group website, [www.hornton-history.co.uk](http://www.hornton-history.co.uk) and on the Hornton village website.



*A Day in the Life*

# Jools Kirton

**Hornton's postman delivers a daily dose of cheerfulness**

Jools, 52, was born in Suffolk but spent his early years in Droitwich before moving to Bloxham when he was seven. He went to school there and left the Warriner in 1985. By his own account, he then messed around for four years doing bar work, including in the players' bar at Aston Villa Football Club, and delivering car parts for Lucas. In 1989 he joined Royal Mail as a postman. Jools lives in Bishops Itchington with his partner of 12 years, Sam, and their three girls: Miah (21) is Jools's daughter from his former marriage, Amelia (15) is Sam's daughter from a previous relationship and Lottie (10), their daughter.

My alarm goes off at 5.02am. I wash, dress, have a bowl of porridge and arrive at work at Banbury delivery office at 5.45am. For three hours plus I'm sorting: letters and A4 packets which will have been machine sequenced in Swindon and which I put into a delivery frame, and parcels and larger packets which are sorted into drop bags.

Around 9.30am I leave the delivery office and after a short 20-minute round in Banbury I head out to the villages. I start at the Apollo business park on Drift Lane, drop in at the old quarry offices, now flats, and then into Horley, finishing there between 11.30am and 12.00pm. Then it's the long run down Horley Road and Quarry Road, delivering to farms and

other premises, many of which have electric gates which slow me up. Then I stop on the roadside for my lunch: a sandwich and a cup of coffee.

I love my job: each day I have to prick myself to be sure I'm really doing it. I saw an ad for a postman's job when I was 20 and thought it would tide me over for a few months. I started out delivering on foot or by push-bike. I never dreamt I'd still be with Royal Mail 32 years later.

The job has changed over the years. We deliver far fewer letters but because of the huge increase in on-line shopping we deal with many more parcels and packets. The pressure is greater. I've recently become Banbury's union representative, not because of any political affiliations but because of my long experience of the job and the pleasure I take in helping people, especially newcomers.

After lunch I go down Millers Lane and into Hornton. Deliveries there take about an hour and 20 minutes and I also empty the post box as I do in Horley. Then after a few more deliveries outside the village, I head back to the delivery office where I leave my van and keys, sign out and go home.

My finishing time is one of the advantages of my job. It allows me to be home in time to collect Lottie from primary school and to take her to dancing classes in Southam. Sam is a PE teacher at

North Oxfordshire Academy and gets home a little later. We all have tea together. Sometimes I cook, sometimes Sam does and sometimes Amelia.

My working hours have other advantages. They let me pursue my interests: golf, supporting Aston Villa – I try not to miss a home game – and performing in plays and pantos. I also took advantage of last year's long summer evenings to learn to play the guitar. But more than anything, being a postman lets me meet lots of people. I feel so lucky to have Hornton and Horley as my delivery. I love chatting to people and feel I'm part of the community. I also keep an eye out for any unusual activity, almost an extension to Neighbourhood Watch.

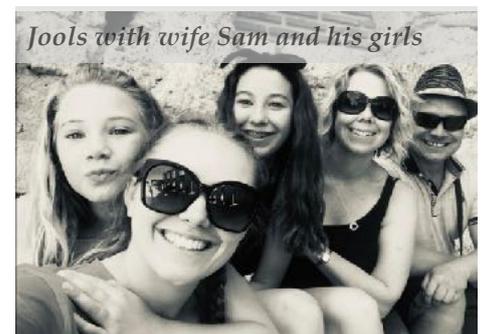
An example of this occurred a couple of years ago when Bob Edgerton was still with us and living on his own on Bell Street. I noticed that his Sunday newspaper was still in his letterbox. His daughter, Caroline, is a Facebook friend of mine so I was able to alert her. It turned out that Bob had taken a tumble and had been lying on the floor, unable to move, for very many hours.

In 32 years on the post I have never been bitten by a dog. I have had other shocks though. One day I needed a signature for a parcel delivery in Horley. A lady came to the door straight from a shower with a large towel covering her from neck to toe. But she had forgotten that there was a large mirror behind her in the hall!

Another time, again in Horley, a lady answered the door then sneezed. Her false front teeth flew out and fell at my feet. I stood there wondering if I should pick them up but fortunately she did.

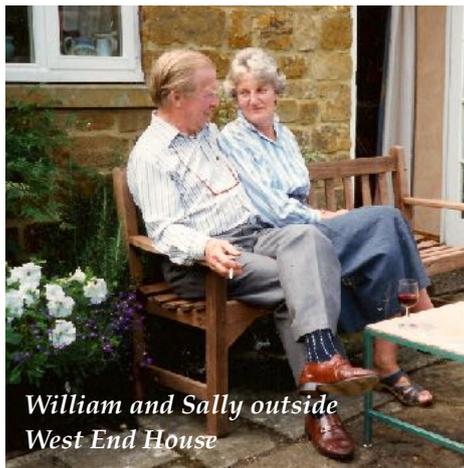
A less amusing incident was when, delivering in Hornton just before Christmas a couple of years ago, my van was blocked in by a mother collecting her child from school. I was under a lot of pressure so I asked the lady to please move her car so I could get out. She replied that she'd just be five minutes and walked away. I couldn't believe it!

On winter evenings, after tea, we do what most families do – watch the telly. Lottie goes to bed at 7.30pm. The rest of us are in bed by 10.00pm. I set my alarm for 5.02am precisely, ready for another day as a postie.



*Jools with wife Sam and his girls*

# Looking back



William and Sally outside West End House

The Spring 1992 issue of *The Gossip* featured a fascinating article, written by William Buchan, about the trip that he and his wife Sally took to Russia in March of that year, shortly after the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

The couple, who lived at West End House in Hornton, had been invited "by a strange and most welcome stroke of luck" to join a group visiting St Petersburg and Moscow.

"To visit St Petersburg was to be granted a long-cherished wish," wrote William, "and our expectations were nowhere disappointed. The city is magical: improbable in the same way as Venice (or New York). It is all sky and water and fantastic architecture."

William and Sally visited the Winter Palace, where they saw the fabulous picture collection in the Hermitage, and the Peter and Paul fortress. Whenever they stopped, groups of young men appeared from nowhere to offer fur hats, painted boxes, badges and trinkets. Roubles were accepted but what really counted were dollars.

A "clean but barely comfortable" night train took the couple to Moscow "and more staggering sights, a visual feast to be held in the mind's eye for ever."

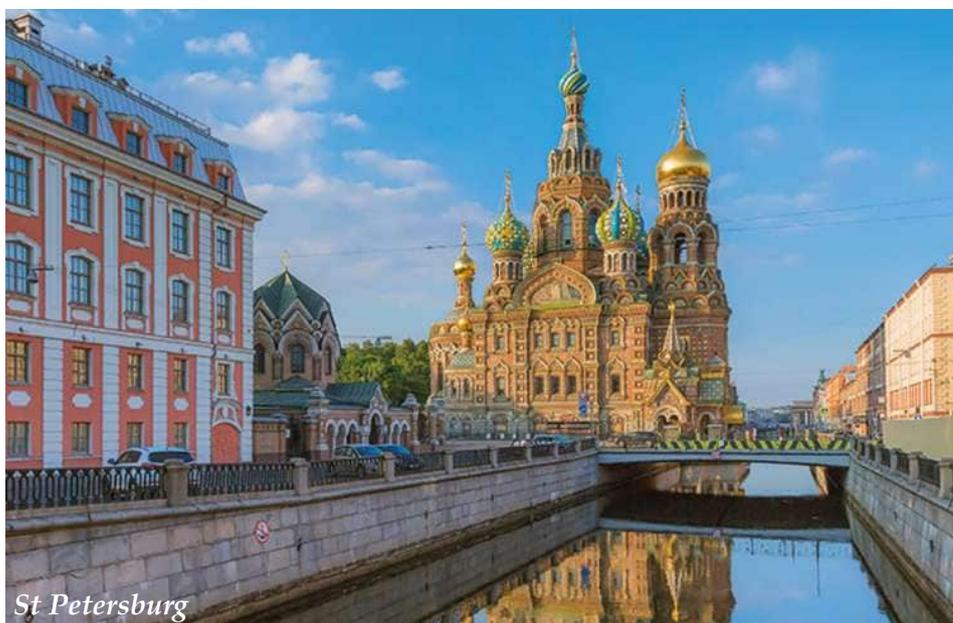
"The Armoury museum in the Kremlin is truly amazing, for so much that has been preserved from the Imperial past: not simply armour and weapons, in quantity, but the jewelled crowns and thrones of the Czars, dresses worn by Catherine the Great, state sleighs and coaches and – things we had especially wanted to see – marvellous Easter eggs made by the great jeweller, Faberge, for the royal family, including the one containing a working model of the Trans-Siberian train 39.8 cm long."

William concluded his 1992 article for *The Gossip* by writing: "What will happen next in Russia is anybody's guess: but it was oddly reassuring to note how even the Bolsheviks had been at pains to honour their country's past."

Some of our readers may not know that William Buchan, who died in 2008 aged 92, was a successful author of novels, short stories, memoirs and verse. He was also a peer of the realm, having inherited his title – 3<sup>rd</sup> Baron Tweedsmuir – in 1996, four years after his trip to Russia with Sally. He was the second son of John Buchan, 1<sup>st</sup> Baron Tweedsmuir, the author of *The Thirty-Nine Steps*, and Governor General of Canada.

Sally Buchan, now Sally Tweedsmuir, has fond memories of the Russia visit. "Our tour guide was a delightful young woman," she says. "On our last day she bought us a cake as a treat, which we ate manfully. It tasted mostly of sawdust!"

"Most people we met were friendly with the exception of the guardians in the hotel corridors and museum guides who were all very suspicious. Everything was very run down and there was nothing in the shops. I believe it's very different nowadays."



St Petersburg

# First responder

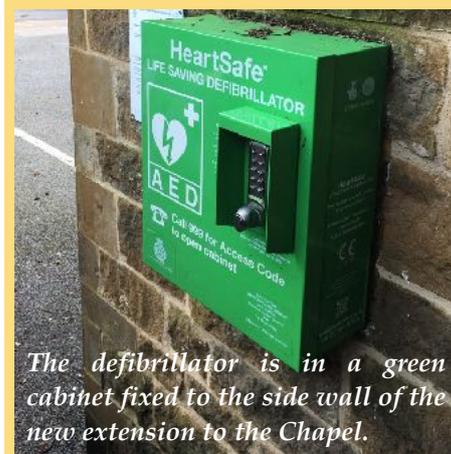
Jane Wain's call for a volunteer to join her as a registered guardian of Hornton's defibrillator was met with an enthusiastic response. First up was Alex Bebb so now she and Jane will be on the national database. Here, Jane reminds us of what a defibrillator is for, where the village one is and what to do if you need it.

"A defibrillator is a device that gives a high energy shock to the heart of someone who is in cardiac arrest. The shock is called defibrillation and plays an essential part in trying to save the life of someone who is in this situation.

"Hornton has its very own defibrillator, fitted in April 2016. It is situated outside the Methodist Chapel on Millers Lane on the side wall. There is a light mounted just above to easily locate in the dark.

"In an emergency, dial 999 and the emergency services will locate the nearest defib and give you an access code. There is a keypad on the outside, type in the four-digit code, turn the handle and the cabinet will open. Inside you will find the defib in a carry case; take this to the patient.

"On the outside there is a green "on" button. Simply press this and you will hear detailed instructions to follow. There is no risk of "shocking" someone who doesn't need it; the monitor talks you through every step of the way, indicating if the patient needs shocking, or if chest compressions are required. If so, the unit explains how to do them. It really is that easy, and you could save a life by knowing how to use it."



The defibrillator is in a green cabinet fixed to the side wall of the new extension to the Chapel.

# You're kidding...

Q: Why can't Elsa have a balloon?

A: Because she'd only "let it go, let it go"!

An Omelette & Quiche joke



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## Hornton hygiene box

Lynn Corke explains a new way for villagers to help those so badly affected by the pandemic.

We all know how important food banks are during the pandemic and Hornton plays its part, with lots of people contributing food to the collection point in the church. We have also contributed shampoo etc but from now until the end of April I am becoming involved on the toiletry side and extending it, so there will be two separate boxes in the church - for toiletries and food.

I am either going to distribute it locally or through the charity Beauty Banks ([beautybanks.org.uk](http://beautybanks.org.uk)) which supplies personal care and hygiene essentials to people in the UK who can't afford them. We know that the pandemic has been terrible for many people and that some will be struggling having lost jobs and income. Beauty Banks say: 'We all have the right to be clean and fresh as our physical health, mental health and wellbeing depends on it'.

In whatever way you shop, please consider getting an extra item or two for the Hornton Hygiene box and take it along to the church porch between 9.00am and 5.00pm - perhaps with something for the food collection too! The boxes are there now and we shall be collecting initially until the end of March.

The items needed are anything around personal hygiene - so, for example, shower gel, soap, shampoo, deodorant, sanitary products, disposable nappies, baby shampoo, hair brushes, toothpaste, tooth brushes, toiletry bags, tissues.

Thank you Hornton.

Lynn Corke - Telephone: 670673

## Back of a crisp packet

Jill Offord suggests a green solution to a rubbish problem.

Having put an idea to the Parish Council and got the ok, I would like to start an initiative for the village to be able to recycle more of the rubbish that currently goes in to our green bins and then into landfill.

I am sure that we all do what we can at the moment but I know I continually feel as if I could be doing more. There are places that will take crisp packets, bread packets and lots more but this involves driving, which isn't exactly environmentally friendly (depending on the type of car you have).

Cherwell District Council (am I allowed to mention them??) have a collection point in their offices but with lockdowns and tiers they don't want extra people in the building. So, having been thwarted in these plans the only option is to put my money where my mouth is and do something for the village.

There is a company called TerraCycle that I found on the back of a crisp packet - yes really I did! They will provide bins, take the waste away and, in some cases, award benefits to village causes for the waste that is sent to them. I have contacted Ettington Primary School as they are a collection point. They use TerraCycle and told me that they would recommend them as it was very easy to set up and run.

Have no fear, I do not envisage filling the village with recycling bins but have a select few chosen for the demand asked for by parishioners. Firstly, we're going to need to know which items we don't or can't recycle at the moment. So, I am asking if, over the next couple of weeks, we can all be more aware of the waste we put in our bins that then goes to landfill. I'm not sure how yet but I will collate this information so suitable bin choices can be made.

I would like to get a small group together so please let me know if you would be interested in being a part of this small project by sending an email to [jillofford@aol.com](mailto:jillofford@aol.com).

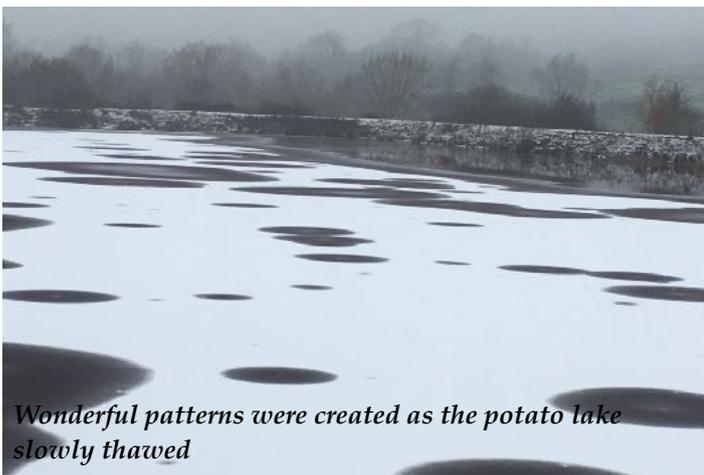
# Winter Wonders



January 24 in Hornton



Snow dog Lucy, Rachel Bosanquet's cocker spaniel



Wonderful patterns were created as the potato lake slowly thawed



The Atkinson's snowman was taking mask advice very seriously

# Newcomers

A warm welcome to Calum, Ivan and Jasper the lurcher who moved into The Berries on West End before Christmas. This is what they'd like to say to Hornton.

"We all feel very blessed to have moved to such a beautiful village and are enjoying our weekend walks in the countryside! We're a social bunch and we are very much looking forward to meeting everyone properly post-lockdown but thank everyone for making us feel so welcome thus far from a distance!"

A warm Hornton welcome too to the Andrews family - Mark, Andrea, Edward & Olivia who moved into the new house on Millers Lane in January. Mark says: "We have moved from Deddington after 25 very happy years but we are delighted to arrive in Hornton which we know to be an equally delightful village and community.

"Andrea works as a teacher, Olivia works at the HQ of a fashion retailer and Edward is studying for his A levels. I run a tech company and fledgling property development company. And on this aspect we would like to say a very big thank you to all the village community for their patience and understanding during our build which has taken considerably longer than intended, being delayed for reasons unfortunately outside of our control.

"We were very pleased to name the first house Cawley House in honour of a fallen WW1 Hornton soldier and we fully intend, if at all possible, to press on with the build of the other plot this year. We very much look forward to meeting people and finding ways to make a positive contribution to the village and the community."

**Paula Hewlett came upon the passage below on the website of her future daughter-in-law, Jess Burling, an events florist, Tiger by the Tail. Paula felt the thoughts expressed were so relevant to the current situation in which we all find ourselves that she submitted them to *The Gossip*.**

## Endurance

*When you cannot see yourself in the future and you can't imagine how something beautiful can come your way, remember: you are free to take this day by day. Start in the margins of this very minute .... for within it there are dozens of seconds you did not plan for but have already lived through. You have effortlessly collapsed in and out of them and already lost track of them, like a billion endless bright stars in the dead of night. You cannot count every second but they are all a part of your life, as countless stars are suspended in the sky. Even when you have no idea what could possibly be down the road and you have absolutely no idea how next year will go, you still have this second and, just like that, you're on to the next one. Somehow you've kept going, even without noticing. MHN.*

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## Covid question

If we contract Covid-19, what can we do to help ourselves recover from the virus? What follows is a nurse's advice.

- Sleep on your stomach at all times. If you can't sleep on your stomach because of health issues, sleep on your side. Do not lie on your back, no matter what, because that will allow fluid to build up in your lungs.

- Set your alarm clock every two hours while sleeping on your stomach, then get out of bed and walk for 15-30 minutes, no matter how tired or weak you are. Also move your arms around frequently; it helps to open your lungs.

- Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth. This will help to strengthen your lungs, plus help get rid of the pneumonia and any fluid you may have.

- When sitting in a recliner, sit up straight - do not lie back in the recliner. While watching TV, get up and walk during every commercial.

- Eat at least one or two eggs a day, plus bananas, avocado and asparagus. These are good sources of potassium. No milk products or pork. Drink Pedialyte, Gatorade Zero, Powerade Zero & water with electrolytes to prevent you from becoming dehydrated. Do not drink anything cold - have it at room temperature or warm it up. Water with lemon and a little honey and peppermint tea are good suggestions for getting in fluids.

- Vitamins D3, C, B, zinc, Probiotic One-Day are good ideas. Tylenol for fever. Mucinex or Mucinex DM are good for drainage and also help the cough. Pepcid helps for cramps in your legs. One baby aspirin everyday can help prevent getting a blood clot, which can occur from low activity.

- Drink a smoothie of blueberries, strawberries, bananas, honey, tea and a spoon or two of peanut butter.

STAY SAFE

Protect yourself and others



# Lockdown: seizing the day

Lockdown, however undesirable, has provided an opportunity for people to do all sorts of different things. Here are four Hornton examples.

## A chance to be creative

Tim and Paula Hewlett used lockdown to tackle two major projects in their garden. Here Paula explains what they did.

In the beautiful weather of Lockdown 1, we completed two projects in the garden, which served to tidy up and create new vistas. We cleared an area overgrown with brambles, branches and ivy, having discovered that it is bathed in the evening sun until about 6.30pm. The idea of a grandchildren's secret garden and mud kitchen was born.

Tim designed the outdoor toy kitchen and set about plans on how to level the steep and challenging ground. After clearing, hacking, sawing, heaving and planting, we installed old railway sleepers, new timbers and levelled the ground. Bark chippings were barrowed up the garden and a newly planted willow tunnel leads from the mud kitchen to the recently renovated tree house. Tim built the timber hut which shelters the kitchen itself, from scrap materials.

Fortunately, the easing of some of the Covid restrictions meant we were able to enjoy a couple of outdoor visits from the grandchildren. Utopia. We retreated to the top of the garden where they enjoyed messy play followed by sausages and melting marshmallows on the fire pit at dusk, feeling as if we were on a mini camping trip, with lanterns and bunting made from scrap material, happy as pigs in.....blankets.

Project 2 was to turn the disused hen-run into a fruit and veg garden. Tim



*Mae, a little strawberry girl*

created raised beds from surplus reclaimed timber and I started an asparagus bed, which got off to a flying start with the hen-manure enriched soil and loads of well-rotted manure from generous Hornton residents, or their animals to be precise!

We experimented with growing potatoes in tubs and were delighted at the yield. Having discovered a plentiful supply of wild garlic in the shade of the large trees, I made wild garlic butter and pesto which went down a treat on meat and fish from the BBQ.

Lockdown for us presented opportunities to get creative. Like everyone, we shall welcome the day when we can see and hug our friends and family again and look forward to hosting the gatherings we have always enjoyed, feeling truly blessed to be living in Hornton.



*Paula's granddaughter Mae 'cooks' in the outdoor toy kitchen*

## A challenging assignment

Bob Langton tells us how, newly elected as a club chairman, he tackled the challenges that lockdown threw at him.

Little did I realise, when voted to be chairman of Banbury Probus in January 2020, what unexpected challenges would lie ahead with Covid about to hit the country. Probus (Retired Professional and Businessmen's Club) has about 40 members, including a few in Hornton and Horley.

2020 was our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary and many special events, involving the local Great and the Good, had all been planned, venues booked and invitations sent out. Our schedule of monthly lunches with speakers, monthly coffee mornings and visits were all booked for the year. Then down went the shutters on everything and there was a mad dash to unscramble it all.

What to do? Our average membership age is close to 80 and six members died (not from Covid) during the year. We needed to keep in touch. So our committee allocated themselves a number of members in order to phone or where possible visit on a regular basis. We thought about Zoom meetings – but so few can use Zoom so we finished up, with the help of my wife Jo (Probus secretary) to produce informative and lively monthly newsletters which actually went down very well.

During the summer we did manage several outdoor coffee mornings when up to 6 people could gather – but of course that soon changed so that plan was short-lived. We have tried, as much as possible, to help members use Zoom and actually managed to get 16 to link in for a virtual AGM in December. We now have some Zoom lectures planned for each month until we can properly meet again.

The bad news for me is that I have been asked to do another 12-month stint for 2021. Hopefully, with the help of Jo, I'll be able to re-plan all the events that had to be scrapped in 2020. Such is life!



*Bob Langton (left) takes over as new chairman of Banbury Probus*



*A new train being collected from the ferry terminal on the Isle of Wight*

## New venture on track

**Cath Bellamy describes how despite the pandemic she has launched her own main-line railway company.**

2020 will be remembered by many of us as a unique year and I know for some, it was not a happy one. For me and my family it represented the start of a whole new chapter.

A year ago, I was offered the investment and partnership needed to start and build my own main-line railway company. Some already know that for most of the past 28 years I have been doing this unusual job – but for other people.

Twelve months on and SLC Operations Ltd is a fully licensed rail freight operator. We have created eight full-time jobs and 15 part-time jobs – including 12 for part-time train drivers. Our clients include Balfour Beatty, VivaRail, Transport for Wales and two major passenger railways. Our jobs include moving locomotives and rolling stock around the UK for clients, supporting Network Rail with specialist rail treatment services and providing drivers to test the newest electric and battery trains.

Last December we were on the Isle of Wight collecting brand new trains from the ferry terminal for testing and acceptance over there. And all being well, we will be driving battery or hydrogen trains at this year's November World Climate Change Conference in Glasgow.

But it's not all about running trains. As someone who has been encouraged and supported throughout her career in rail, I am passionate about creating opportunities for others. Focusing specifically on train drivers: so many social groups are underrepresented, including women, young people, and those from deprived areas. And there are of course many practical reasons for this.

To help make it easier to become a train driver or guard, we have set up the UK's first ever online rail training academy, The Rail Academy.com. This will offer flexible, remote learning opportunities to train and qualify in a range of safety critical operational roles, including train driving.

I feel very sorry that for so many 2020 was not a good year. But I am also grateful that for us, it marked the start of a new adventure which we hope will last for some time.

## Digging diversion

**Ian Harris describes how for the most part lockdown has not prevented him enjoying his archaeology hobby**



*Ian at work on the site*

Although most activities have been curtailed during the current pandemic, archaeology at Hanwell Castle has been possible, suitably socially distanced of course, between March and December last year.

Hanwell Castle was a high status venue belonging to several generations of the Cope family. In the mid-seventeenth century, Sir Anthony Cope upgraded the already extensive gardens with features probably designed to impress his visitors, many of whom were leading scientists of the day.

One of the features mentioned in the contemporary records of Robert Plot, an eminent botanist, was the 'house of diversions' and finding this and uncovering the remains has been a major part of the current project. The building was constructed on an octagonal island, surrounded by water, and evidently housed a fountain inside the structure. Below is an image of what it may have looked like.

Currently much of the octagonal wall has been uncovered and it appears that the feature was deliberately destroyed, probably around 1675 following Sir Anthony's death. On top of the wall were many decorated terracotta garden urns. It is clear that these urns were thrown into the water and much of the upper part of the stone wall was then pushed on top smashing most into many pieces.

Fifty-seven of these broken pots have been found to date along with a host of other contemporary finds – bottles, clay pipes, drinking vessels, plates, roof tiles, window glass, plaster from the building walls as well as evidence of feasting in the form of oyster shells and animal bones.

The urns were common in high status gardens in the 1600's. However, being made of terracotta they were vulnerable to frost and weather and virtually none have survived so the Hanwell finds are almost unique. It is hoped that, in time, some will go to museums for professional reconstruction. A few have already been put back together locally and one is illustrated below.

Digging has stopped for the time being, partly due to Covid but also winter weather, but it is hoped to start again in March this year. If you are interested in seeing more information please visit the archaeologists site - [www.polyolbion.org.uk/Hanwell/Project.html](http://www.polyolbion.org.uk/Hanwell/Project.html)

Alternatively, you can ask me...



*An artist's impression of the House of Diversions (left) and one of the terracotta urns (right)*



The beautiful interior of St John the Baptist Church

## Join the Club

The St John the Baptist Church's 100 Club has been running for six years now and has paid out over £4,000 in prize money to date. This year, the prize money totalled £876 and, as new members join, so the prize money goes up.

For anyone who does not know about this, the way it works is: members pay £5 per month per share, quarterly. Every quarter we draw a first, second and third prize; winners receive one third of the money paid in that quarter. You can have more than one share, which will increase your chances of winning.

At present, first prize is approx £110, second about £75 and third about £40. This obviously varies a little depending on members joining or not.

The money we raise helps us to run our Church, which dates back to the 12<sup>th</sup> century, and which I think everyone feels is the centrepiece of our village. Being in the Club is also fun.

If you would like to know more or join our 100 Club then please contact me, Andrew Overton, PCC treasurer, on 678920 or [aoverton64@gmail.com](mailto:aoverton64@gmail.com). Thank you.

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# On the farm

*Hadsham Farm has 10 bell tents for wedding guest accommodation*

## **Charlie Taylor introduces us to Hadsham Farm and describes how his family is weathering the Covid storm.**

Hadsham Farm is a mixed family farm of around 400 acres, extending from the garden fences of Horley, across the undulating fields, until it meets the boundary with neighbouring Eastgate Farm close to Hornton.

The land has been farmed by the Taylor family since 1941 when Grandad Bill and Granny Taylor (Betty) took a farm tenancy and then bought it from Horley Manor in 1957. It was called Manor Farm for a long time but recently changed to Hadsham Farm as we've diversified.

Today, the land is owned by my parents, Wykeham (Bill's son) and Fiona Taylor and farmed by them, my two younger brothers, Rob and Dave, and me. Chris Hawtin from Shenington is our only

employee, having been with us for over 40 years now. He knows more about farming than the rest of us put together!

Unusually for a farming family, all three sons, together with our young families, have found our way back to the farm over the years, much to the delight of Mum, the new Granny Taylor. Dave was first back to Horley (he never really left) and has worked on and taken over the farm since 2005 as Dad has slowly (very slowly) stepped back. Rob and I have returned more recently, from London and Birmingham, with Rob now living in Horley and my wife Sarah and I having converted Hadsham Barn into our new home in 2017.

The farm itself is predominantly a mixed arable and commercial sheep farm but over the last decade or so we have necessarily diversified into other areas.

This has allowed us all to earn a living, an achievement considering the relatively small size of the farm. Weddings, storage and horse livery have been the three main new diversified businesses, but we're also now doing a pop-up live lambing event in the spring and selling Christmas trees in December.

Covid did unfortunately hit us pretty hard in 2020. There were no weddings at all last year (nearly 40 were booked) and a number of postponements are now appearing for 2021. The spring lambing event for 2020 was cancelled at the last minute too and I fear the same will be the case this year. We have managed to weather the financial storm to an extent by not having all our eggs in the hospitality/tourism basket. The other business areas have been fine, and we did manage to convert the wedding venue to a pop-up glamping site during August and September which helped. You may have seen some of our guests frequenting the Dun Cow!

On a practical level, not much really changed for us during the lockdown since working from home is what we all do anyway. We got lots done in the glorious sunshine whilst recognising how lucky we are to live and work where we do. We've completed some great new additions to the wedding venue; started a successful dog-walking business; made plans for some more pop-up events when the restrictions allow; and got a good way through the long list of odd jobs that are always in the back of a farmer's mind.

Stay healthy everyone and we hope to see you in the pub or at one of our pop-up events soon!



*The live lambing event team*

# American adventure



*Alex with Amelie and Monty on the beach*

**When Pete Bebb's job with the world's leading visual-effects company took him to Los Angeles last year, the family went too. Here he relates the ups and downs of their extended stay.**

Our adventure to LA began with the premise that Alex and the children would visit for around six weeks. So we packed ready for a long holiday, eager to explore LA. We arrived in February to warm sunshine and ocean views, and eagerly started the trips to the beach, Malibu, swimming, and exploring the vastness of LA. Alex was almost ready to move there as it was a welcome break from the UK winter.

Then Covid hit and lockdown began. Everything closed, including the beaches, parks, playgrounds and our tiny apartment got even smaller as I moved the office from the film studios into the kitchen. Everything seemed to escalate rather quickly, with UK government advice to return immediately. After deliberating the pros and cons and having multiple conversations with the Embassy we decided to stay. The ocean views were no longer quite as tempting nineteen floors up with two children eager to escape. Consequently, we started to look for more suitable lockdown accommodation.

Then the riots began; sleepy Hornton was starting to be missed. It felt almost unreal. Helicopters and sirens were a constant reminder of what was happening and we started to feel rather unsafe. The building was locked down for everyone's safety. The riots were as close as half a mile

away and smoke could be seen from the apartment; we started to think we should have returned home.

Eventually things seem to settle and we moved to a family friendly area (Playa Del Rey) with new walking routes, local playground and a professional band member as a neighbour, who held weekly concerts for the street. We enrolled Amelie in summer camp and joined in the 4<sup>th</sup> July street parade.

We managed to get in some whale watching and regular weekends to the beach and the odd bit of plane spotting; Playa Del Rey is right next to LAX airport. Then unfortunately, more bad news hit LA as the fires in the mountain regions were some of the worst on record. Poor air quality and daily deposits of soot over everything left outside. You could smell the fires in the air even though we were quite some distance away.

Paramount studio never reopened so I remained working from home; thankfully in the new house we managed to gain a



real office. As a family, we settled in for the long haul, the film was delayed whilst the studio decided what to do, so work tapered off a little which was welcome so we could regroup. There seemed little point in returning back to the UK and risk travelling. I would have to return and we did not want to split the family apart during the pandemic.

Settling in to family life in LA was a nice and unique experience. Playa Del Rey provides what I would class as the quintessential US family neighbourhood. Think ET or The Goonies and the feel that conjures up: children on bikes, families sitting under the porch or on deck chairs on the front yard. At first, we thought this rather odd but then saw the reasoning. People like to stop and chat. It generates a very friendly and welcoming atmosphere. Reminded us of Hornton really...but not so much London :-)

Throughout our stay we experienced a pandemic, riots, valley fires and of course the election. But nothing quite compared to how our American friends celebrate Halloween. Halloween is a very serious affair.



*Americans take Halloween very seriously*

It is common to go all out with huge animatronic inflatable characters from Dracula to Frankenstein. Giants spiders, cobwebs draped over the entire house, grave stones on the front yard; everything and anything is used to create the scariest house on the block. There is some neighbourly competition for sure. One chap had three visits from the Police for creating such a realistic murder scene on his front porch that it was reported. Three gallons of fake blood and a hammer in the head of a rubber corpse will do it. The chap is a SFX expert to the film industry, so I am guessing he felt obliged to create something quite special.

After several flight cancellations we finally returned home in December in time for Christmas. Routine period of quarantine, one day of freedom and then tier four lock down. The rest is history as they say. Good to be back, albeit if essentially locked up!

## Brilliant and beautiful

In Greek mythology Ceyx and his beloved wife Alcyone lived in Trachis and were happy until Ceyx's ship was hit by a thunderbolt and he drowned. Alcyone heard of his fate in a dream and set out to try and carry his body back to land but she also drowned. The gods took pity on them and turned them both into beautiful birds forever attracted to water - kingfishers.



Folklore has it that for seven days before the winter solstice and again before the spring solstice, windless peace will settle on the countryside. Rivers, streams and lakes will be unusually calm and flow gently. These are the halcyon days when the fishing is easy and the kingfisher is able to find a partner and a nesting site. The kingfisher is a symbol of luck, patience, speed and agility and carrying one of its feathers will bring good luck, good health and see off negative energy.

No doubt we could all do with carrying a kingfisher feather nowadays, but since few of us have even glimpsed one of these brilliantly coloured birds we're unlikely to have a feather! Despite being listed as amber on the Birds of Conservation Concern list, they are, in fact, common to all areas of the British Isles except the Highlands and the Isle of Man.

Surprisingly, walking near water is the least likely way to spot one of these elusive beauties; patience and a hide, or through the window of a visitors' centre are best. They are protected by law and you need a licence to approach a nesting site or to photograph them if there is a risk of disturbance.

Unlike other birds, kingfishers don't construct a nest; they excavate one into a steep, vertical bank over water. The male starts by pecking at the soil until he has loosened it enough for a foothold, at which point both birds drill like woodpeckers until they have made a tunnel. They take it in turns, with one working and one acting as lookout.

The tunnel is only five centimeters wide and finished when the bird is able to

emerge head first, indicating the chamber has been constructed. Given all this hard work it's not surprising that they will use the same site two or three times in a year and return to it in following years. They don't line it - nothing featherbedded for these six or seven glossy white eggs!

The parents take it in turns to incubate and feed the chicks, which can eat an exhausting 18 fish a day. The adults also have to eat their own bodyweight in order to survive, so proximity to clean, clear, abundant water is essential. When they have fledged, the chicks are only fed for four days - their school days - and then they are driven away by the parents to fend for themselves. Unsurprisingly it's estimated that only half of fledglings survive more than a week or two and very few live for more than one breeding season.

Kingfishers can only survive on unpolluted waterways that contain minnows, sticklebacks, shrimps and aquatic larvae and insects and which have banks that offer shelter. In the past that meant they would never be seen in cities. However, in recent years the authorities have worked hard to improve water quality in our rivers and as a result kingfishers have been spotted in unlikely inner city locations particularly around culverts and drainage ditches.



The birds hunt from a perch above water and when they spot a fish they gauge its exact position by bobbing their heads and then dive, their eyes protected by a transparent lid, their wings open for exit thrust. They stun the fish and swallow it head first. They are territorial but will share territory during the breeding season and if the water freezes they will move closer to the sea, returning when they can.

*Birdbrain*

## Wilding

Anne and Pete Joyner have set up a nature-watch camera in the wildlife area of their garden. On one night in January it took these four photos.



## Inspiration

At an outside church service, socially distanced, Roger Bellamy was inspired to paraphrase Rupert Brooke.

Thinking back on England  
From afar  
I dream of a place  
In rural Oxfordshire  
I wonder about life  
In Hornton heaven  
And is the clock still stuck  
At twenty-five to seven?

## Fly the flag

Ian Harris reports that in 2020 the revenue from the village birthday flag was £150. It has been added to Pavilion funds.

If you would like your birthday, or a loved one's, celebrated in this way at a cost of only £5, contact Ian at Bellevue, Bell Street, 670304.



## Norman wisdom

**No, not that Norman! Our Norman, Norman Britton who would like to share two useful tips with us.**

The first: When driving along winter's very muddy roads and meeting a large vehicle, agricultural or commercial, pull as far into the side of the road as possible. This will prevent the large vehicle sending mud flying all over your car and thus save you the trouble of cleaning it so frequently.

The second: Try to avoid strimming close to wooden fence or gate posts because it can break down protective coating on posts and, in time, cut right into the posts so that rot sets in. Norman has discovered that a nine by nine-inch gate post that he expected to last for years has rotted and he is sure that strimming is responsible.



## Sweet treats

Hornton Churches Together joined forces to serve the village, the needs of our area and those of the wider world over a very different Christmas! Our appeal for sweet treats for Banbury Young Homeless food hampers was brilliantly supported; the photo below shows the magnificent haul laid out before delivery. BYH extends their thanks to the whole village.

Unable to hold our usual candlelit procession we delivered a Christingle to families with children between the ages of three and eleven. Also, determined our National Children's charities should not suffer from the lack of collections, we held a walk-through Covid-safe sale in the Chapel supported by villagers and school parents and raised £100 each for Save the Children and The Children's Society.

Many people understandably felt unable to attend a service this year, so the Ladies Working Party set out the story of Christmas in flower arrangements and the nativity scene. Thank you to everyone who either helped or visited the church.

*Lindy Bridgeman*



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*Hornton's stationary and socially distanced carol singers, who braved cold and drizzly weather to bring Christmas carols to the village, raised £250 for Cancer Research UK.*

## Beware of the dog

An apologetic explanation to anyone who, as they make their way down the Townend footpath (that's the one on the north side of the valley) has been startled by our big dog leaping up at the gate and barking furiously.

Her name is Bailey and what she's actually doing is shouting: "Hello! I said HELLO! LOOK AT ME! Come in and play. I SAID COME AND PLAY WITH ME! Catch me, go on, catch me, look at me, it's all about ME!" She's very poodle you see.

We've done our best to train her. We've made her watch the relevant episodes of *Dogs Behaving Badly* which she has enjoyed, sitting bolt upright on the sofa instead of lying across Pete's lap. Unfortunately, the only bit that sank in was that you get a snack if you sit nicely while your human is there; all her best intentions go out of the window when she's alone.

We realize that she's not everyone's idea of a useful country dog. She can't retrieve as there are too many distractions – birds, flies, smells, a moving blade of grass – and she isn't a 'working dog', unless chasing rabbits, squirrels, balls and imaginary objects count as work. But she's a very good guard dog and regularly alerts us to prowlers at night, although these thankfully turn out to be foxes and cats.

She is also very good at making us laugh, giving us hugs and kisses (something we've been missing this year!), and looking pretty. So please don't feel anxious if she shouts at you, she won't jump over, and we apologise for any upset she's unintentionally caused.

*Anne & Pete Joyner*

## Open gardens on! Dramatic update

Virus permitting, we shall be holding an open gardens afternoon on Sunday July 4 from 2pm to 6pm. A number of gardens, large and small, have signed up as well as the allotments and, of course, there will be teas.

Katharine House Hospice are excited at the prospect of an event as they have lost a significant amount of their income due to lack of fundraising opportunities during the last year. They will help us with signage and publicity and proceeds from the event will be shared between the hospice and village causes.

Obviously we shall have to review the position nearer the time but hopefully by July it will be permissible and possible for us to go ahead and we should do well as people will be keen to have an outing after months of varying degrees of virus restrictions.

So, put a note in your diaries which will be looking pretty empty at the moment and if you have not signed up do think about opening your garden; this is not the national Yellow Book expecting high standards but a fun local event for good causes. We shall also need helpers on the day as well as home-made cakes of course!

*Lynn Corke*

[lynnjcorke@aol.com](mailto:lynnjcorke@aol.com) Telephone: 670673

## Gardening Club

Joy Hillman, president of the Three Hs Gardening Club, says:

"Owing to the present restrictions, the Gardening Club will have to remain on hold until they are lifted. In the meantime, I wish you all well and stay safe."

We are determined that the play, *Act Naturally*, will happen! The cast have all learned their lines, indeed they have had time now to forget them as well. If...now there's a word that's been overused of late....we emerge mid-February then I'm fairly sure we can perform by the end of March, but I daren't put an actual date on it. Watch this space!

*Anne Joyner*

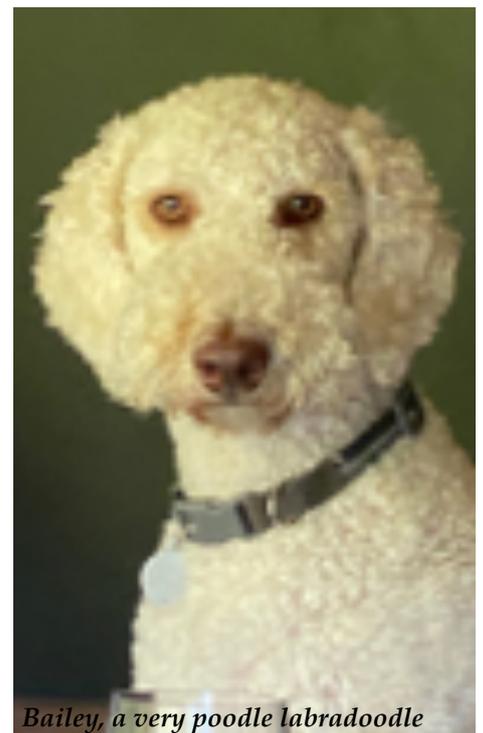
## Going round the bend

I should like to echo the STOP PRESS message from Hornton Parish Council (*The Gossip*, November 2020) encouraging everyone to 'refrain from parking on the bend outside the Chapel, due to safety concerns'.

As a motorist, I know how difficult it is to see round this bend in Millers Lane, just above the Chapel, and anticipate oncoming traffic; as a resident, I have a unique view of the bend and am well aware of the difficulty large vehicles have in manoeuvring round parked vehicles. The school coach, refuse trucks, oil tankers, tractors, emergency vehicles, and a vast array of delivery trucks and vans all make a valuable contribution to modern life in Hornton, but some of our habits don't make life easy for their drivers, and thereby pose a safety threat to Hornton's pedestrians, residents and motorists.

We moved here in April 2018, and have already seen several 'incidents' involving vehicles on this short stretch of road. Please stay safe everyone.

*Jane Martin*



*Bailey, a very poodle labradoodle*

# Hot cross bun pudding

Serves 6

As we can get hot cross buns anytime you do not need to wait for Easter before making this rather naughty alternative to bread and butter pudding. You could use leftover buns and Easter eggs should you end up with such things!

## Ingredients:

8 mini hot cross buns or 4 large  
4 tbsp hazelnut chocolate spread (to taste, more or less)  
1 pear, peeled, cored and cubed  
25g dark chocolate, chopped  
2 eggs  
150ml double cream  
25ml whole milk  
25g caster sugar



## Method:

1. Cut the buns in half horizontally, sandwich together with the spread. Arrange in an ovenproof dish, crosses upwards, and scatter over the pear and chocolate.
2. Whisk together the eggs, cream, milk and sugar. Pour the mixture over the buns and leave for at least 30 minutes to soak in.
3. Heat the oven to 180c/350f and bake the pudding for 35-40 minutes until golden and just set. Stand for a few minutes before serving.

*Or there is this less decadent version:*

1. Slice five hot cross buns top to bottom, butter them and arrange them in a 6 x 8 oven dish.
2. Beat a large egg with 300ml full milk and pour over.
3. Sprinkle lavishly with demerara sugar, rest for 30 minutes and then bake for 30 minutes at 180/350.

Enjoy!

Lynn Corke

# More Ghosts

Sally Tweedsmuir responded to *The Gossip* request for more ghostly stories.

I can add something re ghosts at the Old Red Lion. When Richard and Jill Baldwin lived there in the eighties I was sitting in the kitchen with Jill and I heard loud footsteps in the room above. I said: "Richard is home early" and Jill said: "No that's the ghost".

She seemed completely unfazed and I didn't pursue the conversation. I think I am a fairly level-headed person and I definitely wasn't imagining the footsteps.

## The Gossip

The copy deadline for the next issue of *The Gossip* is Thursday 6 May 2021 - submissions please to [abbott@hornton.myzen.co.uk](mailto:abbott@hornton.myzen.co.uk). To advertise in the next issue, please contact Cindy Koberl at [ckoberl@btinternet.com](mailto:ckoberl@btinternet.com).

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