



Bisham Life

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The Bisham Parish newsletter for
May and June 2021



THE SEASON

Another fascinating update giving an insight into the changes in farming and cultivation, as experienced at Randall's farms

A CLEANER BROOK

Paddling in puddles is not just for Children; this update focuses on the work done at Parole Bridge; read on if you want to help

THE SCHOOL

Overcoming lockdown challenges and describing the internal and external changes to the school buildings

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

The Vicar Writes
Parish Council News
Puzzle Time
May/June Reflections

THE VICAR WRITES

Dear All, how are you doing? I know life is tough for many people as the continuing pandemic has such wide ranging effects on peoples' lives. It is good that we are moving out of the COVID restrictions, but keeping up with all the changes and trying to plan when details are unclear brings stresses of its own. So we hope and pray that by the summer most restrictions will be lifted, many of us will have had our vaccines, and there is no resurgence of the virus.

If that is the case, and please God it is, I wonder what you are looking forward to. What do you realise you miss most? There are material things we miss such as holidays abroad, visiting museums or theatre, eating out, or getting a haircut, but I think for many of us the things we miss are related to people. Being able to freely visit friends and family, playing with grandchildren, sitting with a sick friend or relative, and having those 1:1 conversations that don't happen on zoom, and of course HUGS!

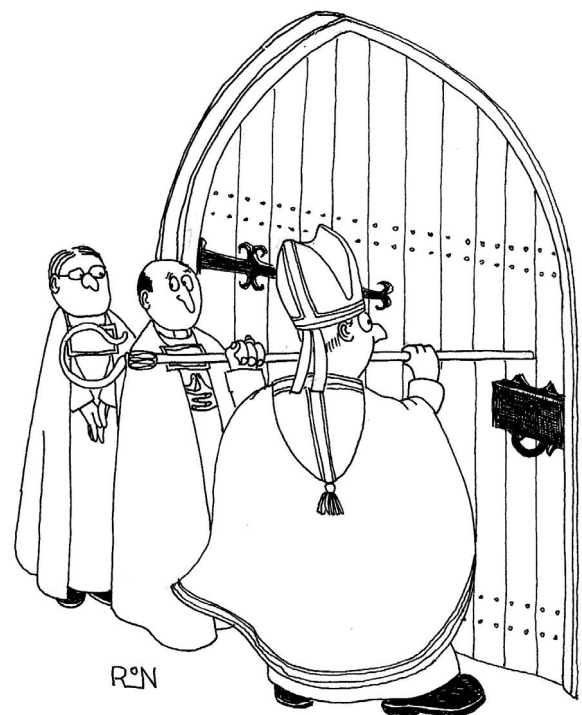
I am hoping desperately that hugs are allowed before my daughter's wedding so we can properly greet family and friends we have had to keep a distance from in even the hardest circumstances.

I know a lot of people are looking forward to opportunities to mingle. We have become more aware of community and have built new relationships but not been able to enjoy those connections in ways we normally would such as sharing food or having normal conversations at more than arm's length distance!

As a church we have a vision of enabling the church building to be a resource for the community, both local and wider afield, and to offer hospitality so that we can build relationships and offer people the opportunity to meet and socialise, in a variety of activities and functions. Getting the toilet and basic refreshment facilities in place was a huge step in enabling this vision. We realise we also need better refreshment facilities and a more flexible space to use. The first of these will be a bigger project for the future but we are in the process of creating what we are calling a Community Space. This will involve moving some pews around to make a clear space in the North aisle of the church. At the moment this is a trial and nothing permanent will be done so we can see how it goes and what might be needed longer term.

God bless and take care,

Sarah



There didn't seem to be anyone in

PARISH COUNCIL UPDATES



PLANNING APPLICATIONS

You may have noticed that the Borough is no longer issuing the yellow planning notices that used to be put up outside properties where a planning application was being considered. Neighbours to any property will still get a letter from the Borough, but if you wish to keep an eye on parish applications, you can find them using the link below. 'Bisham and Cookham' Ward comes after 'Belmont' on the list. The list is updated weekly, on Friday afternoon. <https://www.rbwm.gov.uk/home/planning-decision-and-weekly-lists>

FLOODING UPDATE

Our most important information for the parish is that Bisham Parish Council is progressing with its new Flood Plan really well, and a lot of people have come forward to take part and to help with all the arrangements, and we thank them all for their support.

A full flood team is now in place and Bisham Abbey will be the site for a Flood Hub where, in times of flooding, the team can be based and the emergency equipment stored. Shortly the Flood Marshals will deliver a leaflet to parishioners outlining the Plan and giving contact details. Flood information currently available on the Parish Council's web site will be expanded in the coming weeks to give live water levels.

<http://www.bishamparishcouncil.org.uk/flooding-information/>

WORK IN THE ORCHARD

An initial inspection of the trees in The Orchard for this year has recently been done. and there seem to be another two trees that will sadly need to be felled, as we think they are dead. We are waiting until all the trees are in full leaf before getting further advice about whether any further work will need to be done.

THE SLIPWAY

When the building work on the School has been completed, the Slipway is due to be reinstated and reseeded, to repair the surface damage done by the various pieces of machinery that have needed to be used for access during the building work.

Mandy Robson Brown

THE SEASON — CULTIVATION AND HISTORY



Judging by the weather forecast, waking up to a covering of snow in mid-April may well turn out to be the sum total of the month's precipitation, which of course is a real threat to our developing spring sown crops of oats and field beans. Their saviour to date is that they were direct drilled without any pre-cultivation into damp subsoil, thus conserving the moisture that they will have to rely on for the next two weeks or so. The scars of the past winter's flooding are now very apparent in some of our autumn sown crops of wheat—another stark reminder that our adequate annual rainfall is rarely evenly distributed. The expected onslaught of pigeons attacking the oilseed rape crop for once thankfully did not materialise.

I would like to continue to recall our farming history by mentioning with the break-up of the Bisham Abbey estate in the 1960's, we were fortunate to have the opportunity of buying Hyde Farm as sitting tenants. This also included land south of Bisham village adjoining our land at Temple. The upgrading of the A404 in the 1970's could have been problematic regarding the efficient running of the farms, but careful reasoning resulted in us having tunnel access between the farms opposite Temple golf course. Milk production continued at Temple. The pedigree herd with a prefix, 'Bishamwood' achieved very high yields, but by 2002 quotas restricting national over production had been introduced via the EU. Although quotas were a tradeable commodity to buy into the market, farming almost adjacent to the river Thames, we were also having increasing difficulties with manure disposal that demanded a massive capital injection. It was decided then to cease milking cows, the year after the terrible foot and mouth disease outbreak in 2001. A farm that was affected in Cumbria wanted to continue in milk production and purchased our whole herd and quite recently, we learnt that the Bishamwood herd still survives today, via farming social media.

Soon after the herd dispersal, opportunities to expand our arable acreage occurred with our neighbouring farmers, Findlay Brothers deciding to rent out their land at Furze Platt. In 2008 we also had the opportunity to buy land at Park Farm, towards Cookham Dean. We are now farming approximately 900 acres.

We are members of the Royal East Berks Agricultural Association and as well as farm acreage competitions and social gatherings, the main event is the Annual Ploughing Match and Show, which is held rotationally on willing member's farms. It was our turn in



1987, when at least 65 ploughmen competed in classes as diverse as horse drawn single furrow combinations to massive eight furrow implements. The photograph shows the ploughs lined up beside our driveway after competing. The acreage crop classes' pinnacle of competition is the King George Vth cup, which, after some fifty years of trying, we were awarded in 2019. We hosted again in 2004, but not since, as we are pursuing a policy of regenerative agriculture, which very rarely involves any ploughing.

So you can gather that, over the years, we have been extremely fortunate to find ourselves where we are today. There has also been a lot of hard work involved too. Our son, Andrew who came back to the farm following six years managing a Scottish estate, has been inspirational in not only developing a successful regenerative approach to our farming but also masterminding the diversification of our redundant farm buildings into storage and workshop facilities that are so important to our income stream as crop margins are increasingly under pressure. I must mention the contribution made by Stephen Porat who for nearly forty years now has literally kept all the wheels turning in so many ways. Although a keen ploughman and winner of the above competition, he is now a firm convert to our non plough system.

The latest Farmers Weekly magazine has arrived with reports of drought situations far worse than we are experiencing. Here's hoping the rain gods will have obliged before my next report.

Alan Randall, 23rd April 2021

BISHAM BROOK — WORKING PARTY AT PAROLE BRIDGE

On the 29th of March, a group of twelve willing volunteers waded in the mud of the stream, armed with rakes, loppers and a chain saw; removing debris — branches, tyres and even a wheelbarrow — from the stream to improve the flow under Parole Bridge. It was good to have a project to get involved with during lockdown, as we could space out along the bank and in the stream in the open air. A good, full morning's work with everyone pitching in resulted in only a short stretch of stream being cleared.

Fortunately, Bruce has been talking to the appropriate authorities to enlist further assistance to improve the quality and flow of water in the brook, which has not been cleared from top to bottom since 1946. He has been encouraged by the level of interest shown by the various agencies and landowners who are keen to support the aim of encouraging fish to return by improving the flow and cleanliness of the water, which should also increase the capacity of the brook to take flood water when required.

If you are interested in getting involved, please contact the clerk at clerk@bishamparishcouncil.org.uk.



TEA TIME PUZZLES

Can you find 24 words from the Ark story, below, in the word puzzle opposite?

God gave Moses two stone slabs with his laws for the Jews on them. They were kept in a special chest, the Ark, and carried with them. When the Jews got to Israel, the Ark was kept at Shiloh. The Jews did not keep God's laws so he let the Philistines attack them.

The Jews took the Ark into battle to make God help them win. But the Philistines won. They took the Ark to their city, Ashdod, and put it in the temple of their god Dagon. The next day they found Dagon's statue face down. They put it back up, but the next day it had fallen over again and its hands and head had broken off. Then the people became covered in sores. When they moved it to Gath, the people there began to have sores too.

They were going to move the Ark to Ekron, but the people there wouldn't let them. So they put it on a new cart with a gift of gold. God led the cows pulling the cart. At Bethshemesh, people harvesting saw the Ark, and celebrated its return. But some people treated it with disrespect and died; so it was moved to Keriath Jearim for safe-keeping.

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SODOKU - HARD

THE SCHOOL YEAR



The last year has been one of significant change for the whole school community with the challenges of lockdowns for both families and staff. We were delighted that the children returned, and are hopeful that we can look forward to a stable end of the year.

Our initial focus was on closing the learning gaps created by lockdown before Easter, whilst maintaining a balanced curriculum, so that we can move forward with the children's learning and our summer topic, the Edwardians, after Easter. The term will culminate with our outdoor performance of *Mary Poppins*, which we are very excited about.

Last year we invested significantly on the internal facilities of the school and now have seven learning spaces, a new toilet block and a well-resourced outside area for the Foundation class. In addition, thanks to a government grant, the school has a new fully insulated roof which has improved the heating efficiency and resolved a number of leaks!

Laura Morel

MAY/JUNE REFLECTIONS

This year Her Majesty the Queen's official birthday falls on Saturday 12th of June, two days after what would have been Prince Philip's 100th birthday. I hope this is a sunny, joyful day, even if there are moments of sad reflections. My own father would have been 100 later in June also, and I am planning my own happy/sad celebration.

The eagle-eyed of you may have noticed the front cover graphic, which features the Queen Elizabeth rose.

Although it is not January, Robert Burns has been on my mind recently. I gave a homily in church titled *Leadership and the Missing Haggis*. His line *Man's inhumanity to man makes countless thousands mourn* (from *Man Was Made to Mourn: A Dirge*) reminds us all that wars and conflicts continue despite the headline-grabbing Covid articles.

A saint I wish I could emulate is St. Pachomius, who should be the patron saint of administration! Back in the 4th century, without a computer or a mobile he managed to run eleven monasteries like clockwork. The gift of administration is listed by St Paul as a genuine gift of God, and prudence and clear forward planning are highly prized in the Proverbs.

Stewart F-C, editor and church warden

This newsletter is also available online at <https://www.bisham.co.uk/newsletter/BishamLifeMayJun21.html>