

WINCHELSEA PARISH MAGAZINE

3rd July 2020



Winchelsea from above: Phil Mack & Ian Rowlands

Plenty of people have commented on the way lockdown has increased our awareness of the natural world around us. In this beautiful part of Sussex we have been especially blessed, and that is reflected in contributions to this month's magazine.

I'll be continuing with electronic versions for the foreseeable future and, going forward, will be needing contributions to be sent to me on or before the first of each month - so 1st August if you've got anything you'd like included next time.

For more of Phil and Ian's drone's-eye-view of Winchelsea, look here: <https://vimeo.com/272119364>

David Page david@ryeview.net 01797 226524



The swifts in Winchelsea are only going to be with us for another three weeks or so – so now's the time to go to the churchyard and enjoy them.

They made their journey up from southern Africa, a journey of 6000 to 8000 miles, and arrived in Winchelsea at the end of April. This is the same journey they make every year of their lives. If they have bred before, they will return to exactly the same nesting hole which, in the case of the Winchelsea swifts, will be one of the putlog holes in the church.

The breeding adults return first, to get on with rearing another new generation of Winchelsea swifts. Last month saw the return of the non-breeding birds, looking for a place to nest for next year, and soon some fledglings will be making their first journey into daylight.

Once out of the nesting hole these youngsters might not land again for another few years, until they start to breed. No other bird spends as long in the air, apart from nesting, swifts do everything on the wing – eating, drinking, bathing, sleeping, mating and even collecting

all the nesting material they need. We often categorise birds according to the habitats they are most often encountered - woodland, farmland, wetland or urban – swifts don't fit in to this as their habitat is aerial, which could be over any of the terrestrial habitats. However, during the nesting season they tend to become more urban birds, nesting in any building that give them the space to do so (although we do still have one colony in Scotland that nests in trees).

They tend to be found in older buildings, as these have the nooks and crannies that they can use. More modern buildings tend to be quite well sealed, offering no nesting opportunities for swifts (or house sparrows) unless an artificial nest box is put on the building.

Nine houses around Winchelsea do have nest boxes on them, and we are waiting for the first swifts to use them before we try and put up more.

If you've never experienced the swifts at the church, then I would encourage you to do so. Good times to do so are between 7-9am and 8-9pm when they gather in social groups called screaming parties and there could be around 50 swifts darting around your head.

Michael Howard, National Trust





Reflections from the Rectory

On Sunday, 5th July we are privileged to have been asked to provide an online parish service, which will be available to the whole diocese.

www.winchelseachurch.co.uk

or on the Diocesan YouTube channel

www.youtube.com/c/DioceseofChichester/

I referred to this in the last newsletter pointing out that it coincides with our patronal festival. I'm pleased to say that with the help of Jonathan Murphy we have produced a visual service, which emphasises both the spiritual and corporate aspects.

Of course it has not been possible to involve the Corporation fully but I hope it reminds us that our town has a religious as well as a secular heart and both have ancient roots in this place.

Our patronal service celebrates the anniversary of the translation of the remains of St Thomas of Canterbury to their resting place in the chapel in Canterbury Cathedral, which took place on 7th July 1220; 800 years ago. As I did some research into this for my sermon.

I was intrigued to find that the ceremony had been organised not only to honour St Thomas but to promote and encourage harmony between church and state. It came a few years after the closure of churches in this country during the reign of King John, which had lasted six years and reflected a dispute between the king and the Pope. The last time in our history that churches were closed. I think it reminds us that society is best served when the spiritual and material aspects of life are in harmony.



Our current mayor is the first clergyman to hold the post for a little over 200 years and his clerical forebear was only installed to follow the wishes of the local squire. Disputes between the rector and the mayor are I hope a thing of the past but it behoves us all to respect all aspects of our community.

Let us pray that as the translation of St Thomas's remains served as a symbol of unity and of hope in the land, today as we cautiously emerge from lockdown that

the lessons we have learned will help us face the future together and reflect fully on how we live our lives.

Church Services

As many of you will have heard, along with public houses, churches will be able to open their doors from 5th July for public worship. At this stage the way in which we can worship is under review both here and at a diocesan level.

Because of the special online service planned for this Sunday there are no plans to organise a formal service but the church will be open for private prayer from 10am to midday.



According to the instructions from our Bishop we are under no obligation to commence services immediately and I will be consulting closely with the churchwardens before deciding how to proceed.

It is unlikely that we will have a service here until 17th July but as soon as a decision has been made we will publicise our plans. In the meantime I'm very happy to hear from anyone who may have suggestions as to how we might proceed.

Please note that there are regular services and posts on our benefice website www.winchelseachurch.co.uk

Church finance

As you can imagine, we are struggling to maintain church income. Our annual budget for 2020 is about £91,000. This does not relate to the fabric or work on the structure of our church, which is generously supported by the Friends. For the quarter ending in June, last year's income was just over £7,000, it was nearly £11,000 for the 3rd quarter, dropping to £7600 for the last quarter.

Although we have retained some regular giving by standing order you can see that we are facing a large deficit. If you normally give regularly I would ask you to consider continuing to make donations.

This can be done by cheque in favour of Winchelsea PCC (it can be posted to the Treasurer or dropped off to the Rectory) or by BACS (Bank Details - PCC Winchelsea 30 90 28 Ac No 01964020, with a reference) or through *JustGiving*.

The *JustGiving* link is

www.justgiving.com/fundraising/winchelseapcc

At present it is not adding the Gift Aid credit but that is in hand and should be operating properly soon.

You should note that there is a voluntary contribution to the administration of the site but you do need to opt out of it.

Grass cutting

We have already received a very good response for the grass cutting of the churchyard for which the church is very grateful but we are always grateful for extra support. The churchyard is very much a central and public space so anything that we receive benefits the whole community and is very helpful in defraying the cost to the PCC.

You can donate to this directly by cheque or by BACS as above. A gift-aid form can be supplied if necessary. Contact Pamela Jefferies 01797 222904 or the Rector 01979 226254



New Inn re-opens on 6th July

Winchelsea New Inn will be open again from Monday 6th July, seven days a week between 12 noon and 10pm.

“To help us ensure we meet the current guidelines we would be grateful if you could apply the following:

- Please ensure you pre-book a table if you wish dine with us. (Takeaway menu still available).
- Please keep to the social distancing advice as shown
- Follow the guidance given to you by our staff when you are in the pub, or beer garden

“We are sure you will appreciate that things will be, or appear to be, different but this is in everyone’s best interest.

“Before you visit us, you may have several questions or require further information, so please do not hesitate to contact us on 01797 226252. Our phone lines are open for bookings & enquiries from 11am every day. If we are unable to take your call, please leave your name and number and we will call you back.

“Thank you, Winchelsea, for all your support,
Paul & Debbie”

For full information, go to www.winchelsea.com



June Garden Pictures

The Winchelsea Garden openings on 20th and 21st June had to be cancelled but garden openers have taken some photos as they did in the spring and these have been posted on the town website.

Money collected from admissions and teas would have gone to the nursing charities that the National Garden Scheme supports. Friary Gardeners would also have been beneficiaries, as would the Friends of the Hospital at Rye. You can find out how to support these good causes by following the links from the garden pictures.

www.winchelsea.com/winchelseas-june-gardens/



Pictures of the Winchelsea Beach Gardens that would have opened for St Michael's Hospice are online here:

<https://www.facebook.com/stmichaelshospice/videos/>



FRIARY GARDENERS

Where people grow and plants smile

Friary Gardeners run a plant stall in Castle Street whenever we have a NGS garden opening, and they receive half of the money raised from the sale of teas in June. None of that has been able to happen this year.

The town has a link with Friary Gardeners because the project started at *Greyfriars*. It is now based on the Ridge in Hastings.

Friary Gardeners offers horticultural training and greater independence to adults with a wide spectrum of leaning difficulties in the Hastings and Rother area. It is a non profit making scheme and forms part of the Parchment Trust - a charity working in the field of learning disability and multiple and profound disability.

www.parchment-trust.org.uk/friary-gardeners



Art Exhibition looks to 2021

This year would have been the Art Exhibition's 21st year, so it is with great reluctance that like so many other town activities and events, the Art Exhibition will also have to be cancelled.

Apart from the pleasure the exhibition gives us all each year with around 100 exhibits from talented Winchelsea artists and beyond, our function as the Millennium Artefacts Society, is to raise funds for the maintenance of three town artefacts: the Beacon, the Millennium Tapestry in St. Thomas', and the Town Sign.

Fortunately, funds raised by the committee earlier, enabled the commissioning and completion this year of the restoration of the Town Sign. This we can celebrate as a positive outcome of our 21st year despite the cancellation. We shall look forward to a substantial exhibition next year.

artefacts@winchelsea.com



A Tonic for the Nation

I am delighted to be able to inform you that our next Second Wednesday talk will take place on July 8th at 2:30pm. One of our favourite speakers, Andrew Ashton, will be giving us an illustrated talk aptly entitled *A Tonic for the Nation: the Story of the Festival of Britain*.

Andrew is a ceramic artist and regular lecturer on history of art. Always popular in Winchelsea, Andrew's previous talks were on Banksy, Beryl Cook and Paul Nash. Although we cannot have him come to the town this year, I am delighted that he is willing to use Zoom so that we don't miss out.

I will send out the Zoom meeting invitation to people on the Second Wednesday and Literary Society mailing lists just the day before so that you won't have to hunt back through your inbox to find it. And if you know someone who would like to be included please send me their contact details.

Hilary Roome roome12hilary@gmail.com



Musings of a rector's wife in lockdown

Shirley Meyer writes: In our last parish in Oxfordshire, I instigated a project to naturalise native primroses into the churchyard. The churchyard already had an area heavily populated with spring flowers such as anemone blanda, aconites and some primroses but the addition of more meant three things: increased flowers for pollinators, an educational opportunity in conjunction with the village school and a fundraising opportunity to offer “Primrose Teas” in the spring.

With the help of a local nursery who grew one hundred plug plants, and children and their parents who planted them, we succeeded in our mission. I don't know what happened about the teas, as I left Ewelme to come to Winchelsea!! But a few reports reached me that things had been a bit slow on that front. Two out of three isn't bad!

Following the setting up of a Churchyard Sub-Committee by the PCC to look at all aspects of St Thomas's Churchyard (currently unable to meet), I have been expanding my knowledge of Winchelsea's churchyard ecosystems and have been making the most of my time in lockdown to follow the natural cycle of life of plants in particular. I have wandered through the churchyard at different times of the day, looking at how the landscape is changing quietly and slowly during lockdown.

I have been documenting the development of the sward and flowers in the churchyard and taking photographs. This is mainly because there has been a bit less mowing keeping the grass short and neat. The result has been that by early June there is quite a considerable difference in what we would normally see.

Some grasses are flowering (Yorkshire fog ,timothy and smooth meadow to name a few) and meadow species such as buttercup, ox eye daisy, achillea and plantain have appeared. These have always been here but we have not appreciated that fact, as they have been cut regularly. Anyone walking around the churchyard now will view a haze of grasses and flowers swaying in the breeze.

We have had a month of unprecedented sunshine hours and it is pleasing to see that the churchyard still looks reasonably verdant and meadow-like in parts. Obviously, there are areas of brown but most of turf remains green. Plants are doing what they are programmed to do, flower and set seed. The churchwardens have allowed a small area of grass to be left uncut, so that we can see what comes up.



Today is the Summer Solstice and another sunny day. We have all mentioned how lovely it has been to hear the birds singing, to have a clearer sky, to hear less traffic etc. and indeed, in Winchelsea it is a bit like being in a time capsule. But have we seen more wildlife and pollinators? More butterflies and moths?

Friday morning 26th June was the unveiling of the moth trap lent by Andrew from the local National Trust Office, in the Rectory garden. After a balmy night broken by a violent thunderstorm, we had a great haul of 19 species including seven elephant hawk moths (above) and a very rare white spotted plume local only to Sussex and Rye (below).

www.sussexmothgroup.org.uk



Were you aware that we even have a colony of wild honey bees living in the east wall of the church? Paul Youlten is very familiar with them and here is an extract from his notes:

“If you stand in the churchyard with your back to St Thomas’s Street looking at the big chancel window you will spot a very busy colony flying in and out of a putlog hole - one with a swift box door - on the right hand side of the window. It isn’t clear how long these bees have been living in the church but it is likely that they have been there for many years. What makes these bees particularly interesting is that, without human intervention, they have survived numerous threats to their existence, the most lethal of which is a mite somewhat scarily named Varroa destructor.

“Since the arrival of Varroa in Europe and North America, honey bees have suffered a massive decline. Huge efforts have gone into trying to solve the problem,

not just because the honey industry is affected, but because so much of our agricultural production depends on being pollinated by bees.



“Meanwhile the bees in St Thomas’s church and their cousins in the oak trees in Market Wood in Pett Level and more in Camber Castle have quietly got on with evolving ways to survive varroa without human help. As you watch the church bees remember that the DNA of these hardy survivors could hold the secret to survival for bees and also for humans.”

So there it is.... Winchelsea has it’s own colony of swifts, many interesting moths, a colony of bees and could have a churchyard with a much greater biodiversity of plants. With some imagination, passion and sound management the churchyard could be a nature reserve of wild species attracting more pollinators and wildlife and there is no reason for it to become unkempt and seemingly uncared for. I hope this short article might have captured your imagination.

Instagram @winchelseachurchyard



Icklesham Parish Council

Rye Harbour Signal Mast

At long last we have managed to get the mast taken down to ground level. The Clerk has been attempting to get this work done for six months or more. Last year's Health and Safety Inspection identified a potential safety issue with the condition of the mast and some of the fixings. It was then damaged by a storm.

Whilst measures were taken to ensure public safety, it was clear that bringing it down to ground level so the integrity of the mast could be determined was the only solution. After a number of cancelled attempts due to adverse weather conditions, it was taken down by Rock Channel Marine and we are expecting their detailed report any time now. The report will enable the Council to determine the future of the mast.

The mast site is owned by the Environment Agency and our lease has expired. The new draft lease on offer requires that the mast be taken down for inspection annually. This may be a condition that the Parish Council feels unable to accept bearing in mind the cost and the fact that taking it down and re-erecting it is very weather dependent. We also need to consider the cost of any works that the condition report recommends.

We took over responsibility for the mast from the Environment Agency in 1999, when they were proposing to remove it. It is an important piece of the history of the village. Its original purpose was as a storm signal mast to signal to seafarers in the Channel of approaching bad weather, such as that that caused the loss of the Crew of the Mary Stanford Lifeboat.

The history of repairs over the past 21 years does not suggest to me that bringing it to ground level on an annual basis is justified.

Cricket Field Allotments

Work is due to start this week to provide a handrail to the access from Hogtrough Lane. This is work also advised by our Health and Safety Adviser. Once this work is complete, the Allotment Committee has decided to lock the gate to the Cricket Field and retain it as a contractor's access. It will also enable the Council to comply with our lease that requires us not to permit a public right of way through the site.



Affordable Housing Scheme

This project is still alive, although you might be forgiven for thinking otherwise due to the fact that 14 months have elapsed since the Rother Planning Committee resolved to approve the planning application and still the consent has not been issued. The Community Land Trust agreed a draft legal agreement at the end of May.

They are still awaiting confirmation from Rother that it is acceptable.

Thanks

Finally. On behalf of the Councillors I would like to express our thanks to our Officers and all the volunteers and neighbours who have worked tirelessly to support the most vulnerable residents of the Parish over the past months and continue to do so.

The Parish has been extremely fortunate that the level of infection locally has been well below the National average. The mutual support provided in the Parish has no doubt played a large part in achieving this.

Your Councillors are here to represent you and welcome your views on any matter. Please do talk to them or send your views or requests to the Parish Clerk at ickleshampc@hotmail.co.uk or write to PO Box 395, Hastings. TN34 9JU

Cllr Peter Turner



Community Association

News from Winchelsea Beach Community Association is that we are gradually putting in place the rules and regulations as advised by ACRE (Action with Communities in Rural England) and hope to open our village hall soon. *Jill Bruce*

www.winchelseabeachcommunityassociation.co.uk



Winchelsea Anniversaries

450 Years Ago

By 1570 even the town's own Corporation had to admit that Winchelsea was in a 'poor and lamentable state'. Five years earlier an inquiry showed that there were 109 inhabited houses; five years later that number was down to 'not above 60 and those for the most part poorly peopled all which happened by the sea forsaking the town'.

When Queen Elizabeth I visited Winchelsea in 1573 the Mayor and Corporation dressed up and put on a brave show in the hope of being in a position to convince her that financial help was needed. Just one local feature, the cellars, was spoken of positively in a contemporary report to the Privy Council. This reported the presence of 'a great many costly vaults arched and set forth with pillars of Caen stone, such as merit to have houses built above them for wealthy merchants'.

Unfortunately there weren't any wealthy merchants and the attitude of the ordinary people of the town to these remarkable features is indicated by prosecutions against those who 'threw dung into them'.

Desperate for some improvement and well before the queen got round to granting help the mayor and jurats issued a decree requiring that all future freemen must

give an undertaking that they would invest in 'merchant fishing or in the fishery' to prevent the complete decline of Winchelsea's maritime trade.

The *Victoria County History of Sussex*, however, draws attention to one aspect of the town's circumstances which might make the horizon look rather brighter. After stating that 'the mineral wealth of Sussex was always confined to its iron' it notes that Sir Thomas Smith made, in 1570, experiments in Winchelsea 'in the transmutation of iron into copper'. These experiments were successful and led to some profitable exports.

No such development could, however, disguise the fact that 'New' Winchelsea was rapidly becoming old and poor. It was to be another 300 years before things began to improve.

Malcolm Pratt



Rescue Boat

Over halfway through the year already! Despite restrictions being lifted, even 'normal' activities feel strange and understandably cautious as our very different kind of summer continues. As ever, the volunteers here at Pett Level Independent Rescue Boat hope that our friends in Winchelsea are keeping well.

So what have we been doing? Our teams have continued to maintain a socially-distant, behind the scenes presence at the beach and boathouse and in the community as necessary. Our committee has 'met up' using online technology and we've had the task of reviewing all of our planned and postponed events for 2020. As a result, it's with heavy hearts that we need to share that:

Our main annual fundraiser, with an emphasis on fun - our Open Day - has now been fully cancelled and our planned celebration for the 50th anniversary of our service in 2020 has also been cancelled.

Both of the above events were initially postponed but, with ongoing concerns about gatherings and of course no guarantees about the right kind of weather to allow socially-distanced events outdoors, the decision to

cancel is definitely the right one in the current climate of uncertainty when it comes to gatherings.

And as much as we love being 'out there' with our local communities, cancellation is also certainly the right thing to do in respect of our own mission to protect our communities from harm - in this case by making community safety our primary focus.

To try and help reduce the impact of this loss of major fundraising for our service though, we do have exciting news about an online fundraiser. Coming soon will be the chance to support us by playing the Weather Lottery, as a way for us to move into online fundraising. The plan is to launch our lottery this month, so please do keep an eye out on our website and social media for information about how to get involved.

So, please take care and stay beach aware, and stay in touch through our website at <https://plirb.com/> or our social media: Twitter @PLIRBRescue and Facebook @PettLevelRescueBoat. And stay well too!



Masks to order

Winchelsea Town Covid-19 Face Masks

From the beginning of July face masks, which have been available from Winchelsea Farm Kitchen, will be made to order for a donation of between £3 and £5 per mask. The money raised will be split between St Thomas's Church and the Rye Food Bank.

Masks will still be of the same high standard. Triple layer washable cotton and linen construction. All masks are pre-washed and air dried before coming to you. Please continue to wash your mask as often as possible at 40 degrees and air dry outside where possible.

If you would like a mask please add your name to the list at the shop including your email address or telephone number.

We aim to make your mask as quickly as possible but time taken will depend on demand and availability of resources.

All enquiries to shirleymeyer@btinternet.com



Winchelsea Coronavirus help

Here's an outline of the information that's given more fully on www.winchelsea.com

Icklesham Parish Council contacts

If you are self-isolating and need help, or if you can offer help, contact Anna Evett 07714 169901 or Jocelyn Cannings 07483 127514

Rye Mutual Aid

Coordinators for Winchelsea and Winchelsea Beach are Simon, Carol, Paul and Luciano. They are available on 01797 360748 and 360749

Winchelsea Farm Kitchen 01797 226287 are able to deliver groceries.

Jempson's Coronavirus Home Delivery Plan for over-70s and those isolating.

Phone 01797 226 044 and select option 4.

Leave the following details on the answer machine:

a. Name, b. Address, c. phone number.

Jempson's help desk will then call back for the order.

Johnson's Fruiterers 01797 222133

Greengrocer formerly in Rye High St and now based at Rye Harbour will deliver to Winchelsea. Phone in an order by Monday evening for delivery on Tuesday or Wednesday.

Rye Food Bank continues to need our support

Rye Food Bank continues to be much in demand and are very grateful for our donations.

Details for donation by direct transfer are, 'Bexhill Food Bank, Rye Branch' Barclay's 20-54-25 a/c 83501116. Cheques can be made out to 'Bexhill Food Bank (Rye Branch)' and sent to C. Emson, 24 North Salts, Rye, TN31 7NU.

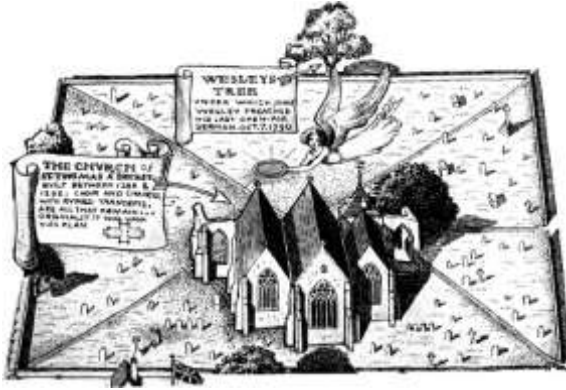
www.trusselltrust.org



For Winchelsea Beach information go to
www.winchelseabeachcommunityassociation.co.uk

For Winchelsea information go to
www.winchelsea.com

For more information about the Church go to
www.winchelseachurch.co.uk



Rector of Winchelsea and Icklesham

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