

THE REDLAKE

NUMBER 14

SPRING 2011

THE CHURCH: MOVING AHEAD!

We approached the Parochial Church Council meeting in mid-February somewhat apprehensively as there were two resignations and a funding problem on the agenda. In the event things turned out quite well, the meeting being lively and go ahead. Andrew Gibbs, was replaced as churchwarden by Pat Hancock while Helena Lane withdrew her resignation as secretary. James Middleton who has served as churchwarden for 25 years remains for one more year. The finances were described as 'dire' but not impossible. There is some difficulty in obtaining grants from English Heritage as churches of architectural and/or historical distinction have priority. There is enough money in the Fabric Fund for essential repairs although money will have to be found for other important work such as the replacement of a roof beam. It might be difficult to find money for the parish share. Barry Palmer, Deanery Treasurer, points out that "In the Bucknell Benefice we pay for our priest, church quinquennials and 35% of our allocated headquarters costs which is the lowest in the deanery". He feels it is very important for everyone in the parish to understand this. "We are incapable of paying our share and have the lowest share for the services we get!"

Thanks are due to Tony Oakley for carrying out essential repairs to the church and keeping it safe for use; also to his wife Christine for her efforts in making fuller use of the church.

Even if you have some difficulty with the full Christian dogma, such as belief in miracles, I personally believe there are still reasons for going to church, for there is comradeship and space for

meditation and reflection away from outside distractions. Church attendances have now increased, with nearly 20 at the service at the beginning of March. The fortnightly Chapel Lawn services are all Eucharist but there is no obligation to take communion. Perhaps some thought could be given to other forms of service with the occasional use of the Book of Common Prayer. Just a thought!

Michael Macturk

Christine Oakley writes:

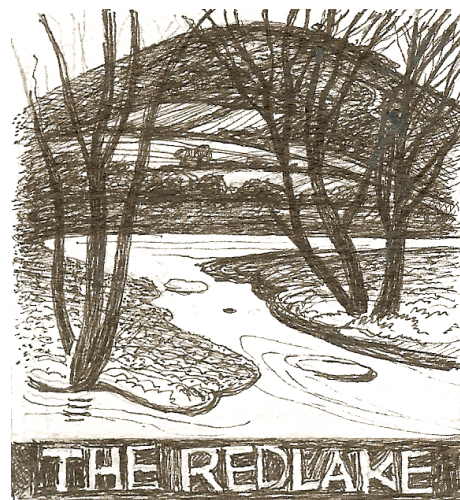
An Easter Workshop was held on Good Friday 22 April, for children (and adults) making hot-cross buns from 10 am to around mid-day, followed by prayers in the church.

On Sunday 8 May Our *Voices of the Valley Concert* with guest appearances by Nathan Davies and Bethany Davies. Di Crosgrove will be putting together her choir with Eileen Davies of Woodside singing, Nathan is the grandson of Ted and Ruth Griffiths, Menutton Farm, and Bethany is the granddaughter of Russell Williams, Five Turnings.

In June there is a joint Village BBQ and the lunch and ramble is in September. In October in the week before Harvest Festival there will be another bread making workshop for children to prepare bread for the altar. For the Harvest Festival we are planning to get the farmers together again for something spectacular.

Looking for Lal Edwards

Does anyone know how to get in touch with a lady called Alathon (Lal) Edwards who lived in New Invention around the time of WWII? The



The History Boys

In recent months some members of the History Group have travelled down every road in our six Townships recording houses for posterity. What seemed remarkable was the very extensive minor road network in the area and, for some of us at least, seeing a large number of properties, particularly west of the Knighton Road, for the first time, nestling in valleys down winding tracks. Also noted were properties sharing the same name and others whose names had been changed several times over the years. The local postmen must find life interesting - and enjoyable although perhaps not in winter!

We have now managed to all but complete our house photograph project through the efforts of Jim Rogers on camera, Rankin Lewis and Jane Kent knowing where everywhere is - or was - and Michael Macturk on clipboard.

Michael Macturk

History Group would like to contact her as it is believed that she wrote an account of her childhood in the Redlake Valley in the 1940s. Please ring Patrick Cosgrove 530347.

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Profile**Hannah Willetts**

Do you have a garden? If so you will surely know Hannah Willetts. She lives at New Invention and during the season has a table of delectable plants on the roadside for very reasonable prices which tempt you as you turn into the Chapel Lawn road.

Hannah was brought up at Kingswinford in the West Midlands, but went to boarding school in Solihull. Sadly, while at school, and when still very young, she fell ill with bone disease in her knees. She was therefore unable to do gym, games or any robust activity. Instead she spent solitary periods reading or in the art room. When she was nine or ten she was given an 1880 hand driven Singer sewing machine, so, from an early age, sewing became as important to her as drawing and painting. While still at school she had drawings accepted for exhibitions in Solihull and Dudley and was only fifteen when she was shortlisted for a Vogue magazine fashion illustration competition. Hannah's school was very "hot on drama" and Hannah was designing and making costumes on a regular basis.

When she left school Hannah spent a year at Art College doing a foundation course and then went to Leeds University for a degree in History of Art and Textiles. While there she continued to design and make costumes for the University workshop

theatre. Some of the productions were taken to the Traverse Theatre in Edinburgh and one to the Round House in London where she won a Sunday Times award for costume design. Those years in the art room and with the old Singer machine had not been wasted! Trevor Nunn, the theatre director, noticed Hannah's work and offered her a job at Stratford. She declined, saying she wanted to finish her degree. He suggested she contacted him then, which Hannah did - the response "I have never heard of you!"

When Hannah finished university in the mid seventies she went to live in London where initially she worked for Berman and Nathan a theatrical costumiers. While she was there she made costumes for well known actresses, among others Ingrid Bergman, Wendy Hiller, and Nyree Dawn Porter, and for the Royal Ballet at Covent Garden. Alongside this work, in her own time, Hannah studied pattern cutting and couture tailoring with a retired head cutter from Dior. Having honed her talents, Hannah eventually decided to go freelance and to start her own business designing and making clothes for private clients. It was a very demanding career. Hannah had always made clothes for friends, so she did not have to advertise, customers came by recommendation. Clients would approach her wanting a wedding, or a ball dress, coats, hats etc. She had gentlemen customers too, chiefly for embroidered or hand painted waistcoats or dressing gowns, and she would both design and make them. Often the fabric had to be designed and made first so Hannah would tackle the arts of weaving, printing, painting, quilting, embroidering and beading. She says some wedding dresses would take over a thousand hours to make, which meant working through nights. They sometimes involved antique silks and family heirloom lace. Hannah says these needed particular care, being priceless and often so delicate that a wrongly placed needle hole would show for ever. She was working on

just such a dress when the Iranian Embassy just down the road from her flat was stormed by the SAS. The resulting blast caused her sewing machine to jump as she was quilting so the design had to be altered to accommodate the resulting squiggle of needle marks! It was not an altogether peaceful part of London (Kensington!) she mentioned an afternoon when police snipers invaded her sitting room intent on monitoring a flat nearby which they believed was an IRA bomb making factory. One commission Hannah received was to design a silk fabric for the upholstery of a DeLorean car. If you remember DeLorean went 'belly up' - needless to say she was not paid. Another commission was to design and make waitress outfits for a night club; at a fitting session, Hannah was surprised to find Mick Jagger sitting in. Some of Hannah's designs were photographed for fashion magazines - Harpers and Queens and Tatler - and in her idle moments (!) she did fashion drawings and illustrations for magazines, catalogues and trade publications, botanical paintings and book illustrations.

When Hannah first went to London she took a cordon bleu cookery course and while her design business was getting under way she cooked Directors' lunches at a Merchant Bank for a while to cover a friend's maternity leave. She enjoyed it so much that for a time she joined a couple of freelance cooking agencies, who would telephone each morning with the next job. The work was enormously varied, including canapes for 250 for a drinks party, dinner for 12, cooked in someone else's kitchen, a week long shooting party in the wilds of Scotland and quite often lunches in the City where the guests occasionally included the great and the good - Cabinet Ministers, Bishops, once, even the Queen Mother - and sometimes the not so good, Ernest Saunders just before the Guinness scandal broke.

At the same time Hannah was continuing her design work. This involved a great deal of travelling at

weekends for the various weddings where Hannah would complete the final flourishes often adding the traditional “something blue” at the last moment, generally a discreet bow. Hannah lived in central London so clients would call in for fittings on their way home from work, she says that most of the time it was eighteen hours per day, often seven days per week “but I loved it - being busy and creative in so many different ways, no two days ever the same”. However even Hannah began to feel the need for some quiet times so in the 1980s she started to look for a cottage near Ludlow. McCartneys sent details of Caradoc Cottage even though it was outside the area she gave - and she came, saw and was conquered. She had always loved gardening and had gardened whenever possible but had a great ambition to develop a garden from scratch and this cottage offered that possibility. She started to wind down in London and flitted between the two places for some time. While here Hannah spent every spare moment developing her garden and taking notes about it's progress. Eventually, in 2006, her book “The Essence of the Garden” with Ann Arnold's painting of her garden on the cover was published. If you are fond of gardening, it is an excellent read, it is not just me who thinks that - she was reviewed very favourably in the press. The garden writer Robin Lane Fox said it was one of his three favourite books of the year. Hannah says it was unfortunately by no means a best seller, but if you get a chance, do read it.

As the garden began to take shape Hannah wanted to spend all her time here so she decided to re-train as a lawyer so that she could work in Shropshire full time, but sadly before she could complete either the course or the winding up of her design business she became ill and in 1991 was diagnosed with ME. She says that for many years after that both her garden and her house had to look after themselves as she was too ill to do anything and lived mainly in Kingswinford, where she was cared

for by her mother. But little by little she has learned to manage her illness so that she can now do some gardening but often the housework has to be ignored. If you know Hannah's garden you will know that the efforts she makes have amazing results. Her garden is packed with variety and interest throughout the year and she also manages to run a plant stall which sustains gardeners all down the Redlake Valley and the proceeds of which go to the charity Action for ME.

Hannah has difficulties joining in community activities because she tires very readily and is very susceptible to infections but she says that the fresh air and quietness of the valley, her helpful friends and neighbours and cultivating her garden keep her fighting. Those who stop for plants will know that she is a great source of plant knowledge and very game for a bit of a gossip. Next time you pass, see Hannah gardening, and think ‘what a nice country lady’ just remind yourself of the enterprising and exotic route that led her to Caradoc Cottage.

Jane Kent

Not just a retirement area...

Campbell Rouse Ltd

Campbell Rouse Ltd started as a means of escape from London for Liz and Ian Campbell, originally as a property renovation company.

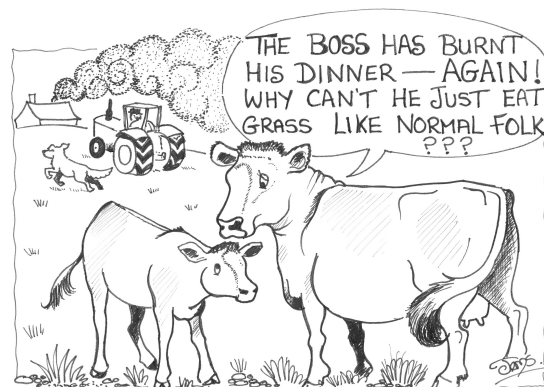
After gutting and rescuing a number of houses, Part P of the building regulations came in, which meant that Ian had to become registered in order to install electrics.

With the downturn in the housing market, Ian and Liz realised that sparkyng was more likely to pay the bills than doing up houses, so Campbell Rouse Ltd became an electrical installation company, with one house still to sell in Clun. Anyone want to buy it?

Farming Column

The coldest winter for years now seems long ago, being replaced with one of the finest springs I can remember. Lambing, after the usual problematic start, progressed well in the fine weather and was finished for Easter (I know Easter was late this year). Losses of lambs were kept so low that the ewes had to resort to lying on several to keep things even. Cows and calves were also out at grass by mid April, which was a big help as straw and silage were running out.

Hours just fly by when you are lambing and calving, as my neighbour found out to his cost when he returned home to find his meal burnt and a kitchen full of smoke!



Spring barley and lupins have been sown into good conditions and look

well despite the dry weather – and yes, more ‘sky-lark plots’ this year – time to fix the drill I think!

James Middleton

Redlake Valley Artists Show

A group of artists based in the Redlake Valley are getting together to put on an Art Show in the Village Hall in September from Thursday 15th to Sunday 18th, with set up and a private view on the 15th. We already have 17 artists interested but are inviting anyone else in the valley who might like to show their work, bearing in mind there may be a shortage of space.

If anyone is interested, next meeting to be held in the Village Hall Thursday 19th May at 6pm. Can meet at Redlake Cottage first then walk round to Hall. We are calling ourselves Redlake Valley Artists. Contact: images@sarahjameson.co.uk or jeremy.jameson@sky.com

SEASONAL GARDENING NOTES

Now seems an odd time to be discussing Michaelmas daisies – those glorious, late-summer and autumn flowering plants, that come in a wide range of sizes and colours, from white, pink and crimson, to lavender-blue and violet. But now is the best time to plant them and also to divide those you have already to make more. The bees and butterflies will thank you for their final fattening meal before next winter – the flowers are as irresistible to them as buddleia but, if your soil is as heavy and cold as mine, they are much more reliable.

Aster is the botanical name for Michaelmas daisies, not to be confused with the annual bedding asters which, botanically, are callistephus. Those come from China and are properly known as china Asters. The true aster is perennial and comes, mostly, from North America, although you are more likely to grow the beautiful hybrids that have been developed from the species. Much of the hybridizing has been done by the Picton family from Malvern, who hold the National Collection, and whose garden at Colwall is a joy to see at flowering time.

But the time to plant is now – asters can rot if they are planted or, worse still, divided in the autumn. They need full sun and plenty of food and water. Watch out for slugs until they get going properly, and be prepared to stake the tallest ones. Gardeners in warmer areas than the Redlake Valley can save themselves that bother by practising the Chelsea Chop: shearing the plants back to a couple of inches from the ground in late May – the time of the Chelsea Flower Show – so that they grow on again to flower later than normal but at a much reduced height. The trouble for us, here, with our early frosts, is that they won't flower at all. So it is much better to let them flower naturally at their proper height and arrange some discreet support for them. Paul Williams at White House Farm, Purlogue, makes beautiful metal plant supports in a variety of sizes.

Hannah Willetts

RECENT EVENTS

Food and Flicks – It's Complicated

Saturday 5 Feb evening entertainment started with two heats of chilli con carne and veggie enchiladas with salads and bread - all locally produced – followed by the usual spread of puddings. We then sat (stuffed) to watch Meryl Streep, Steve Martin and Alec Baldwin in as the title suggests, a complicated relationship. It was a good choice with a gentle humour, easily digested after such a delicious supper.

WI Pancake Bonanza 9th March

The WI meet on a Wednesday and as Shrove Tuesday was booked to a meeting of the Village Hall Committee, they made it a 'Shrove Wednesday' instead; inviting all and sundry to a Pancake Bonanza. Hot pancakes with sugar, syrup, lemon juice, cream and fruit fillings were on offer at £1 each and we could have as many as we wanted. I don't know how many Barry consumed, but I think I had at least four, or was it five? The only disappointment was not experiencing the intrepid WI members tossing their pancakes and adding to the patina of the kitchen!

Mervyn Stutter 12th March

We were treated to a very congenial evening with Mervyn Stutter, who talked about the absurdities of life in a very funny way and adapted well known songs with his own brand of humour. As promised, some of the audience were in stitches, particularly the 'children of the sixties', to whom the stories and songs held special significance.

Film - Another Year 26th March

This, the last film of the season, was very well attended, which is great and I hope that those new to the experience were not put off by the film itself. It started with a promise that something was going to happen but 10 minutes into the second half and still nothing was happening I gave up and left.

Thank you all the entertainments committee for the hard work, organisation and clearing up, which has gone into the events of 2010/11.

DIARY DATES

More at: www.chapel-lawn.co.uk
Every 2nd Wed of the month
WI 7.30pm in village hall
Last Thursday every month
Astronomical Society 7.30pm
Friday 29th April
Royal Wedding Tea Party 5pm
 in the Village Hall. Sandwiches, tea & Bucks Fizz to celebrate the Royal Wedding
Sunday 8th May
Voices of the Valley Concert
 Church 3pm £4 entrance
Monday 16th May
Knitting Workshop 10-2pm in village hall. Marietta 07794 351394 or Angela 01547 530237
Sunday 12th June
Village BBQ 12.30 Village Hall
 BBQ and salads, scrumptious puddings and lots of fun games
Sunday 14th August
Hodre Pond clearing 11am
Sunday 11th September
Village Ramble & lunch Walks start 10.30am; lunch at noon

VILLAGE PRODUCE STALL

This month we also launch the new Mark II Village Produce Stall, lovingly crafted by Christine; clad in wooden boards and felted to keep out the rain and weather (except wind, which still got in!). James has strengthened his moneybox, which is now strapped, bolted, weighted and alarmed to deter any/all possible theft. This stall is for the use of anyone in the locality to sell their surplus produce, be it plants, flowers, vegetables, honey (please Steve), chutney, jams, fleeces and eggs. Anything too valuable or large to leave on the stall can be advertised on the notice board at the back. Last year, in spite of thefts, the stall was a great success and we are hoping that it will prove to be equally attractive this year, helping to redistribute vegetables and plants between the residents of Chapel Lawn. That is not to say visitors cannot use it as well - in fact we hope they do.

Becky Whitton

Next issue July (copy deadline 15 July)