



Dancers want more

In response to popular demand Liz Harris is holding a four-session course in Scottish dancing in the village hall in April. The successful course held in January ended with a Burns Night dinner and ceilidh (pictured opposite), much enjoyed by all participants. The next course will be to learn new dances, but this time there will be no ceilidh. Dates are Tuesdays 1, 8, 15 and 22 April, from 8pm until about 10pm. The cost (to cover hall hire) will be £4 per head. Ring Liz on 01488 658330 to book a place.

A far cry from the mill...

A newly published autobiography from a Hamstead resident details a rollicking story of love, treasure-hunting, ghosts and treachery in the Caribbean.

Anne Jennings Brown, who has lived at Millstream Cottage for the last 15 years, supplies a candid account of her previous marriage to

a handsome Texan adventurer, who at one point attempts to kill her.

The book has been self-published, and is offered by Amazon at £11.99 plus £2.75 p&p. Anne Brown is however offering copies to *Hornet* readers at £10 (plus £2.25 for p&p). She can be contacted on <roatanne@btinternet.com>.



Regular maintenance for recreation ground

The village hall management committee has agreed to a regular maintenance programme for the adjoining field. Bob Warrick has been contracted to do an initial tidy up in April, and five further total field cuts during the summer months.

The field is for the benefit of all the local community, but in particular for children's play, and

it is intended that some of the parish plan's initial grant will be used to buy sports and games equipment for use in the field (under supervision).

The hall committee would like to stress that the field may not be used for any motorised vehicles, and that dog-walkers should scoop their poop and remove it.

Elm Farm events

The Farm Walk on 27 April is an ideal opportunity to enjoy the springtime flora and fauna of the farm. Elm Farm has much more wildlife than most farms because organic farming conserves and encourages biodiversity, and parts of the farm are managed specifically for conservation. Bob Winfield, the education officer of the Organic Research Centre, will lead the walk round the trail starting at 2pm.

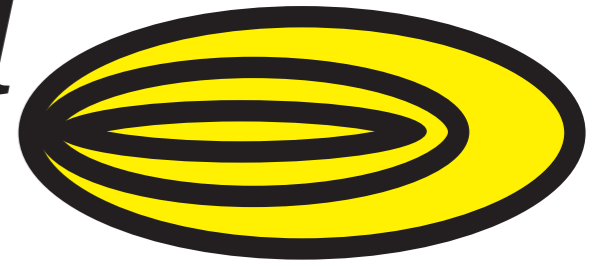
Open Farm Sunday on 1 June is a national event sponsored by several farming organisations. Participating farms demonstrate how food is produced and how farming integrates with conservation of wildlife and landscapes. Elm Farm currently has organic beef and dairy cattle, arable crops and a number of conservation areas to visit. Dogs are welcome if kept on the lead.

The playwright Alan Bennett recently wrote of his impressions of Hamstead Marshall in the *London Review of Books* 3 January 2008. On an undated visit he viewed St Mary's church and, like Pevsner, mistook the 1620s tower for eighteenth-century work. He observed the pillars of the old mansion house "marooned in a huge field of barley" (more likely maize, but perhaps Bennett is not a countryman) and took the footpath across the field, noting that it felt like a scene from the 1940s, and would "make a good *Brideshead*-like beginning for a film".

The *Hamstead Hornet* is posted on <www.hamsteadmarshall.net> which also carries story updates and detailed village information.

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Hamstead Hornet



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Everything and the kitchen sink Half-term makeover for village hall kitchen

The village hall now has a sparkling new kitchen, with light ash units, light blue worktops, white tiling, an undersink water heater, two separate bowl sinks and a drainer – all of which brings the kitchen into line with current environmental health and health and safety requirements. Additional improvements include a new catering kettle, cooker and microwave. Installation has been carried out by Mick MacGillivray.

The project follows last year's acquisition of new chairs and tables funded by Awards for All, and a 30-piece dinner and tea service funded jointly by the village hall committee and the monthly community market.



Village information point

Mick MacGillivray has also started work on refurbishing and transforming the Ash Tree Corner bus stop into a village information point. Tangled vegetation has been cleared away and the roof tiles scraped clean of moss. A new bus stop has replaced the battered old one.

In the coming weeks a large new noticeboard will be erected inside, displaying village information

including a large map showing footpaths, a separate map showing cycle routes, a list of house names with post codes, information on the village hall, church, and parish council. The shelter will then carry a sign on the front saying "Village Information Point".

The project is part of the parish plan, and is being carried out with the assistance, both financial and practical, of West Berks Council.

April bikers rally

Holtwood is bracing itself for a repeat of the seventh Last Stand Rally for motorcyclists at Holtwood Farm on 4, 5 and 6 April. The event has been held there annually for several years by the 3Bs rally club ("bikes and parties – that's us" says their website) and promises camping, five bands, stalls, beer, games and food. The local organiser is Alan at Flat 1, 2 Church St, Kintbury, who can be contacted on 07799 827417.

Arboreal art



The tree stump in the village hall car park has become an attractive, quirky sculpture depicting a family and a sunflower.

The Hamstead figures were created with a chainsaw in half a day by Southampton-based Robbie Kinnaird, better known to the Sunflowers nursery children as Mr Scotty the clown. He professes a passion for trees, particularly stumps in which he can see the possibilities for transformation. Mr Kinnaird currently has commissions for similar work for a hospital and a country park in Hampshire, but for the Hamstead work he made no charge.

What's on in the village

<i>date</i>	<i>event</i>	<i>more details</i>
20.00 Mon 10 Mar	parish council meeting in village hall all welcome to attend	Jo Wheeler 07766 692235
Sun 23 Mar	Easter Sunday lunch at the White Hart 3 courses £19.95 (£12.50 children)	01488 658201
10.00 Sat 29 Mar	St Mary's churchyard working party all helpers welcome	
19.30-21.30 Thu 3 Apr	Circle of Friends meeting in village hall all ages welcome – £3 includes tea/coffee & raffle	Sue Watts 01488 658932
20.00 Sun 6 Apr	White Hart quiz £2 per person – all proceeds to charity	01488 658201
10.00-13.00 Sat 12 Apr	monthly market in village hall cakes, local meat, veg & preserves, crafts, refreshments etc	Sue Watts 01488 658932
14.00 Sun 27 Apr	guided walk around Elm Farm trail with Bob Winfield	Pam Tibbatts 01488 658298 x5
19.30-21.30 Thu 1 May	Circle of Friends meeting in village hall all ages welcome – £3 includes tea/coffee & raffle	Sue Watts 01488 658932
20.00 Sun 4 May	White Hart quiz £2 per person – all proceeds to charity	01488 658201
10.00-13.00 Sat 10 May	monthly market in village hall cakes, local meat, veg & preserves, crafts, refreshments etc	Sue Watts 01488 658932
19.00 Mon 19 May	parish council meeting followed at 20.00 by parish assembly	Jo Wheeler 07766 692235
Sun 1 Jun	Open Farm Sunday at Elm Farm	Pam Tibbatts 01488 658298 x5
20.00 Sun 1 Jun	White Hart quiz £2 per person – all proceeds to charity	01488 658201
19.30-21.30 Thu 5 Jun	Circle of Friends meeting in village hall all ages welcome – £3 includes tea/coffee & raffle	Sue Watts 01488 658932
10.00-13.00 Sat 14 Jun	monthly market in village hall cakes, local meat, veg & preserves, crafts, refreshments etc	Sue Watts 01488 658932
19.30-21.30 Thu 3 Jul	Circle of Friends meeting in village hall all ages welcome – £3 includes tea/coffee & raffle	Sue Watts 01488 658932
20.00 Sun 6 Jul	White Hart quiz £2 per person – all proceeds to charity	01488 658201
10.00-13.00 Sat 12 Jul	monthly market in village hall cakes, local meat, veg & preserves, crafts, refreshments etc	Sue Watts 01488 658932
regular term-time activities in the village hall		
10.00-11.30 Weds	yoga classes	Inga Craven 01488 658744
13.30-16.00 Mons	oil painting classes for beginners & improvers	Newbury College 01635 42824
weekdays	Little Sunflowers nursery school	Teresa 01635 253201 Trudy 01635 255363

Property market

Merrow Mead at Chapel Corner is being advertised on the Rightmove website for sale at £675,000. The four-bedroom house has 4.2 acres and stabling.

The bungalow Waverley near Ash Tree Corner is being advertised with Downer & Co for a six-month rental at £1,145 pcm.

Broadband *new BT landline ruled out on cost*

Hopes of a BT solution to Hamstead's broadband problem have been finally extinguished by a six-figure quote for laying a new, more direct landline from the exchange to the village.

The costing was promised by the BT director and two BT Openreach managers who came to the village last November to meet the parish plan broadband committee chaired by Frank Ellis. Originally promised for the end of November, two figures were finally mailed to him on 6 March.

The lowest was £190,000 and the higher (based on fewer poles and more buried ducting) £408,000. Both would be subject to VAT and further uplift if unforeseen problems were encountered. Whatever the work might eventually cost, it would carry no guarantee that BT would then be able to supply

broadband to the 80 or so households in the village who cannot presently obtain it.

BT made it clear in November that none of their money would be forthcoming to fund a new landline at any price. Investment in such a small community would not be in the shareholders' interests.

"There is no chance of any public funding at this level for such a small group of subscribers," said Frank Ellis. "The broadband committee will now abandon BT and examine other options as a matter of urgency. We'll produce a short report of our findings, hopefully in time for circulation with the next Hornet in June. Then, if there is sufficient demand, we'll hold a public meeting in the village hall for presentation and discussion of the various options."

Security and parking dilemmas in the Grove

The parish plan questionnaire identified concern about insufficient parking spaces around Ash Tree Corner, particularly since the demolition of the Sovereign garages, but the problem looks no nearer solution.

An increase in the number of spaces in Ash Tree Grove could only be gained at the expense of existing grass. This may not be acceptable to all residents.

The additional solution of grasscreting of the roadside strip on the Kintbury Road was costed by the council at £18,000 for 50 metres, but no funding has been forthcoming to carry it out.

The parish council recently discussed the issue of security in the Grove in the context of recent burglaries. A streetlight was suggested, but it was thought that this, like the parking spaces, might not be unanimously acceptable. The council is to conduct a consultation exercise to determine the views of residents.

Children at Enborne School enjoyed a day of circus skills with Jonathan of Table Top Circus on 25 January. Different groups were taught how to juggle, use a diabolo and walk a tightrope. Originally intended for the ill-fated Party in the Parish last summer, the booking was re-scheduled for the schoolchildren in celebration of a successful Ofsted inspection.

Sarah Ward's carol singers raised £181 for the Parkinson's Disease Society last Christmas.

The clerical team at St Mary's Church has been joined by the Rev Caroline Robinson as an NSM deacon. She lives at Wash Common.

The Four Valleys taxibus service 114 linking Holtwood to Combe has now been discontinued.

The parish precept will go up by 25 per cent for 2008/09. This is to counteract the shortfall arising from an administrative error which led to no increase being implemented for 2007/08.

Slow progress on curbing speed

Andrew Garratt of WBC highways department has confirmed that the extension of the 30mph speed limit, together with the installation of roadside gates as used in Stockcross and other villages, is still on track for the 2007-08 financial year.

In a reply to a letter from the parish council he stated that "works associated with the speed limit have been ordered and will be in place when the speed limit order comes into operation on 28th March."

He also said that traffic-calming improvements at Ash Tree Corner are now complete, although David Harris, who chairs the parish planning traffic group, considers the changes hardly noticeable. He is seeking more information on:

- 1) exactly what work will be done by 28 March
- 2) what is proposed for Chapel Corner (the Garratt reply says that an assessment has been done and works have been programmed for 2008/09)
- 3) where the VAS will be located and when.

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