

HORNTON

ISSUE 125 May 2022



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Editorial

A new feature, a brief round-up of events across Hornton.

Firstly, in regard to the last issue of The Gossip, an apology for not drawing attention in the article on the Chapel, that I had added information that was not the work of Julie Stanley, in particular stating that the Chapel was a superior building to our St John the Baptist church. These additions were mine and mine alone and nothing to do with Julie's original text. Sorry, Julie.

The focus of this issue is our centre-spread, Pull-Out-And-Keep section on Ian Harris, who has done so much over the years for this village. For bored children, why not see how many times he features in this issue's photographs!

Planning rears its ugly head again, a reworking of a previous application that had no closure date, compounded by some bizarre alterations to the planning portal that changed the comments to the first amended site, then refused to accept a submission before crashing completely. Not good.

On a much more positive note, the divisions of Covid were greatly healed by an exceptional May Day that saw the village earn £5,307 for village good causes, the highest total ever. Well done all! And a big thank-you to those that allocated funds to the Gossip, with rising costs and losing advertisers this magazine needs every penny it can get.

Finally, from our next issue we will be opening up The Gossip to readers' letters, on any village topic except politics, maximum of one hundred words per letter and though anonymity will be provided, all letters to the editor must include name and address. Your chance to have your say.

The artistry of the church and chapel flower arrangers was very much on display this year, both at Easter and for the Ukraine Appeal.

The Church at Easter...







... and the Chapel for the Ukraine Coffee Morning



St George's Day's Knight

The Dun Cow played host to a new occasion on the Hornton calendar, a St George's Day evening, celebrating English culture.

After an excellent three-course meal, the entertainment followed with a traditional eighteenth-century, local Mummers' Play about St George seeing off the Turkish knight, an enactment that probably dated back to the Crusades of eight hundred years ago.

Once again the ubiquitous Ian Harris played St George as well as he played Rabbie Burns back in January. Fortunately the Turkish knight wasn't severely injured and after a draught of refreshing champagne was soon up and bouncing about!





The Dun Cow Dominoes Champions!



Celebration was the order of the day as our very own Dominoes team swept to the top of the table.

Congratulations and welcome!

Maddie Marley Finch arrived on Wednesday 23rd February, weighing in at 7lbs 14oz.

A daughter for Laura and Dom, and granddaughter for Paula and Tim Hewlett.

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May

Noon, Monday 2nd May 2022 and everything was all of a-bustle. The first May Day since 2019 and there was a distinct nervousness about the day. Would the weather hold? Would the visitors come in any significant number? And would there be enough attractions if they did?

In the event, everything went swimmingly, even the sun shone for the crowning of the May Queen and the first dances around the Maypole. For a nation bereft of attractions for much of the previous two years, and a village looking to come together, the day was a great success. In a more cost-conscious age the visitors were appreciative of a day with free parking, quality, affordable produce and a general sense of fun. For those with children at the village school there was a chance to see Hornton in detail, not to be rushed through on the school run. There really seemed a cheery inquisitiveness about it all.

The day began just after half-ten with stalls and pergolas being erected and stock brought in. Eventually everything was sorted out and at midday the Tadmarton Stick Clatterers (is this correct? Ed) arrived to begin their dances in the privacy of West End. And what a rumbustious affair it was, none of this pithering, namby-pamby scuttling often seen in rural craft shows. They waved red flags and bashed their staves together like some cross between Robin Hood and The Peaky Bloinders!

Meanwhile the sideshows, stalls and clothes rails were pulling in the customers with everything from the White Elephant Stall to Plate Smashing For Amateurs. Only the Dun Cow seemed left out, trapped as it was behind first the Morris Men and then the May Queen's Maypole. Maybe high level signage for next year? Fortunately for the excellent Burger Bar, the occasional clouds of smoke showed where to come for the tastiest (and good value) hot dogs and burgers that many had eaten for some time past.

In all, the May Day raised £5,307 for village causes, with the Pavilion and the Chapel being well supported. For those that manned the stalls, provided the raw materials (often out of their own pockets) and provided the entertainment – Well Done! As a bystander and a resident it made me feel proud to be part of this village. And of course a big 'thank you' to Pete and Sally Lemon, Jane Wain and their team - just remember you have to better this next year!





in Hornton







Opposite page: Tom Gibbs entertains the Morris Men (top left); the old May Day custom of 'Walking the Clothes' (far left). This page: Henrietta Woolf describes the cakes and biscuits (top); Sideshows (middle); White Elephants, anyone? (above).



Ian Harris

A man of many parts

Ian (77) was born in Wolverhampton but grew up in Bicester. He went to boarding school: first The Old Ride near Bletchley when he was six and then St Edwards School in Oxford at 13. His mother died when he was 10 and his father seven years later so after A levels and because of the intransigence of his father's executors, he found the family home sold, all his belongings gone and himself homeless. He drifted for a couple of years before trying his hand as an articled clerk and as a medical research officer but then took the job that was to be his career for the next 34 years: Road Safety Officer for Oxford City Council and in time Oxfordshire County Council. In 1982 he married Isabelle and moved to Hornton. Their two children, Amy and Calum, also live in the village. Ian has four children and six grandchildren, with another on the way.

"If I'm working I get up at 7.15am and have a cup of tea. I'm not a breakfast man. Although I retired as Principal Safety Officer in 2005, I still work. I'm a lead invigilator at Wykham Park Academy in

Banbury. At exam time I get there at 8.15am and leave around 3.15pm. With both mock and final exams, I'm invigilating for around three months of the year.

If I'm not at school I'll probably be doing archaeology, a major hobby of mine. I was introduced to it via the Hornton History Group. A speaker from the Warmington group encouraged me to join the excavation of a Roman site. I found, accidentally, evidence of a Neolithic burial beneath the Roman remains. I uncovered what I thought was a piece of chalk but was actually the finger bone of a man from the middle stone age. Beginners luck!

When the Warmington dig stopped four years ago I moved to the archaeological work going on at Hanwell Castle where we have been concentrating on a feature called the House of Diversions. There will be more work to do at Hanwell and possibly other sites including some National Trust properties.

My third time-consuming activity is mowing! In our large garden Isabelle does the planting of flowers and vegetables and I do the mowing and cutting back which sometimes feels like a full-time job. I dislike gardening intensely.

Whether I'm invigilating, doing archaeology or mowing, I'll stop briefly for lunch which is simple: sandwiches and a packet of crisps.

I love walking and if it's Saturday I join the Hornton Fat Blokes to cover around eight miles in training for longer, competitive walks that we sometimes enter as a team. In June we'll be tackling the 20-mile Welsh Three Peaks Walk.

I also cross-country run every week with Hash House Harriers, an international group of non-competitive running social clubs. I joined the Bicester group, which keeps excellent records, in 1980 and I was told recently that I had done more than 1800 runs with them. Each run is about an hour long and starts and finishes at a pub. HHH is described as a drinking club with a running problem!

At this time of year my day would probably also include instructing the village school children in Maypole dancing in readiness for the May Day event. Isabelle and I have been doing it for years. In due course we shall hand over the reins and, in preparation for that time, we'd like to find a young Hornton person to learn the ropes.

Whatever I'm doing each day I like, when I can, to join other regulars at The Dun Cow. I often get there around 6pm and leave a couple of hours later. Isabelle and I have supper together. She does more of the cooking than I do but I often have a go. I usually make dishes up; I don't like following recipes.

After our meal we watch television. I often do puzzles and word games at the same time. After midnight I go to bed and usually sleep well. If I go too early I struggle to get to sleep.

Interview by Lorna Abbott

The one-page profile of Ian Harris and a day in his life doesn't do justice to what he has done and what he does now so see below for a fuller account.

- Chaired the Pavilion Committee.
- Currently chair of JUMPA.
- One of a rota that mows the main green.
- Organises the village birthday flag.
- Belongs to the Men Only Book Club.
- Member of Hornton History Group.
- For many years a scout/cub leader for Hornton/Horley.
- 2010-2017 caretaker of Hornton Primary School.
- A keen motor cyclist, in 1969 Ian took up road racing and for about eight years drove a sidecar at both club and national meetings across the UK.
- Volunteered as an instructor in RAC/ACU motor cycle training scheme.
- As part of his job as road safety officer, visited hundreds of schools, including Hornton primary, instructing children on how to cycle safely.
- Long-term involvement in folk music scene. His first band was named The Three Wheelers, as two of the original members raced sidecars, and was quite successful including making a couple of records. Then joined the Hooky Band and various other ones over the years playing mainly at barn dances.
- A member of the Adderbury Morrismen since 1975 and still dances with them,



practising every two weeks. Also a founding member of Sunrising Morris which specialises in dances from the Tadmarton area.

• In 2003 volunteered to chair Oxfordshire CC's meetings for Referral Orders for young offenders. Asked to volunteer for two years but remained for eight. When he retired, Ian was told he had dealt with more than 1000 young offenders. "Hopefully some left these reparation meetings never to reoffend," he says.

Editor's note

It is actually quite hard to overstate just how much Ian does and has done for Hornton, despite his myriad outside interests. Whether it's raising the flag for birthdays and anniversaries, helping to erect the Christmas Tree or organising the carol singing, Ian is always there. From one-offs such as repairing the Dun Cow tepee or winching the chassis of a shepherd's hut up across a garden, Ian can be counted on to lend a helping hand. If there's something wrong, in your neighbourhood, who you gonna call....?!!



There's Only One Hornton! goes national

Twenty-two years after it was made, the millennial film encapsulation of Hornton village life has now been accepted into the permanent archives of the British Film Institute!

Originally made as a co-production with Anne Joyner, Roger Corke says, "I approached Patrick Russell, the head of the nonfiction team at the BFI, and he was very enthusiastic about acquiring this narrative. He was particularly interested because it echoed the famous 1946 documentary 24 Square Miles which was filmed south of the Bloxham – Hook Norton road (and included both villages). Narrated by a very young John Arlott of cricket commentary fame, it documented the often quite basic lives of rural South Banburyshire in the year immediately after World War II. "

There's Only One Hornton! performed a similar role fifty-five years later, and watching it today, the changes that have taken place since then show that even in these idyllic backwaters, time marches on. Whilst fortunately Hornton has been spared the development some other villages have suffered, in part due to the loss of a shop and a public bus service, many faces have passed on or moved away, to be replaced by others who have arrived in the intervening years. Yet it is only a hundred years since a trip to Banbury for the fit was a ninety-minute hike, or a slow plod in a horse-drawn wagonette that was little quicker.

DVD copies of *There's Only One Hornton!* are still available from Roger Corke; you may call him on 07721 988977, or e-mail Roger.Corke@aol.com.

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Planning... the saga continues

No good news this issue, instead a catalogue of re-hashed plans, official legalese and a complete breakdown in Cherwell's Planning department.

Firstly, the plan to build a 'farmhouse' plus stabling on the ridge behind Bell Street has had a third incarnation, being moved two hundred metres east from the much-opposed second location. (Remember, the first plan, to replace the bungalow and barn on the hilltop site, was completely unopposed). The trouble was, noone could find the new site's planning number in order to register any objection. Some tried using the second application site, some tried but were unable to submit, and some used the application that cancelled the original development proposal. And all the while the (unspecified) final date for comments was approaching. Yet exactly the same development, on the same site, had been vetoed by Cherwell four years ago?

Whilst this was taking place, Hornton Parish Council's request for a Planning Meeting to halt or delay the advertised reopening of the Wroxton Moto-Cross track on the 21st/22nd May was rejected by Cherwell's Director of Planning, Alex Chrushiak. Allegedly this was on the grounds that as the site owners had made a start on complying with stipulated conditions (for reopening), and that as it had once been a temporary track, it really ought to continue, especially as major earthworks had taken place. That these earthworks had all been made when under the original terms the land had to be used for agriculture between races, and no planning permission had been sought or granted to change this, appears to have passed Mr Chrusiak by. Potentially then, we may see an imminent resumption of racing on this site. No mention of monitoring noise levels, no mention of whether a tally of operational days will be maintained with a clear annual end date. All very vague.

So now Hornton is faced by the resuscitation of two threats to both amenity and future expansion of the village by speculative build, and it now (9th May) transpires that the latest application on the hilltop site above Bell Street – had been put on the Planning Portal by Cherwell – under Balscote - and the expiry date for comments was on the 4th of May! Clearly there has been a failure of democratic accountability, compounded by the Planning Portal being under reconstruction and quite often unavailable.

In addition to all this, a cycle road race along Quarry Road has been sanctioned for the same Sunday as the first Moto-Cross fixture, so Horntonians may well face obstruction or congestion on both routes out, should they wish to leave their village!



X marks the spot - the latest site proposed for the Bell Street 'farmhouse'

CVS

Whilst a blizzard raged outside, Paul concluded his final MOT - Thursday 31st March 2022.





VarneysEnd of an Era

Friday, 6th of May 2022, Varney's Garage, Hornton closed for the last time. The final MOT had taken place at the end of March and the business had wrapped up with oil changes and repairs as they prepared for the final auction.

The site itself had originally been offered as a going concern, or alternatively as industrial units but, as is the case these days, the real money is in housing, so four jobs will be lost and not replaced.

Paul Grossi has worked here since 1985, when he, his wife Cath and cousin Rocky (Rocco) bought the business on the demise of the original owner, George Varney. George had set up the business on land bought from the Oxfordshire Ironstone Company in 1954.

At the start of Paul's working life, he and his cousin had been working for Colonel Lewis at Tadmarton Hales Farm, with Rocky working at both the 'Ally' and the farm, and Paul had day release at Banbury Tech. When they moved to Hornton, Rocky concentrated on the second-hand and scrap side of the business and Paul the car repairs and MOTs.

In time the business changed, government safety regulation concerning the stacking of scrap cars caused the business to focus on second-hand cars and repairs, but over the years the sale of scrap had financed the new buildings that replaced the original structures.

Like most Horntonians, I can honestly say it was a luxury to be able to drive the car to the garage and walk back home across the fields. I asked Paul about his dealings with his local customers and he was very enthusiastic, "Absolutely brilliant, it's been a great pleasure to serve them, they've been so pleasant and cooperative, honestly, I couldn't have wished for better..."

We're going to miss our local garage, I think. It makes one realise how precious our few remaining facilities are. Like the Dun Cow, the school, our two churches, and Tom Gibb's blacksmithing. When they're gone, they're gone.



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Hornton History Group

Visit to King Richard Bosworth Battlefields

Villagers are welcome to join Hornton History Group on a day visit to the Battle of Bosworth Museum and battlefield with an onward visit to Roman Leicester and the King Richard Ill Visitor Centre next to the Cathedral where Richard is buried.

The trip will include coffee on arrival at the Battlefield Centre, exclusive talk and walk of the battlefield site with our own guide, with free time to explore before boarding the coach for Leicester and the King Richard Ill suite where a soup and sandwich lunch will be served. To be followed by another talk to our group about the Wars of the Roses, time to explore the Visitor Centre Exhibition before some free time to explore some of Roman Leicester. Before leaving we will be given a short-illustrated talk about the reinternment of the King.

The party will then visit the Abbey Pumping Station Museum with a special tour of this massive building which will be working especially for our visit. The day will end with supper on return at the Dun Cow. Cost will be in the region of £45 to include the lunch and drinks on arrival at Bosworth.

THE DATE: Saturday September 24th. The coach will be leaving The Green at about 8.45am and returning about 6.30pm.

To book a place please contact event organiser, Bob Langton: bobslangton@gmail.com or telephone 01295 670359.

Spring flowers in Hornton (right)



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There are only three species of woodpeckers that live and breed in Britain, unlike in Europe where a much larger variety exist. Of these three British varieties the Green Woodpecker and the Great Spotted Woodpecker are common and widespread. The Lesser Spotted Woodpecker is one of our fastest declining species and rarely seen. We once had a fourth type, the Wryneck, but that is now only recorded as a scarce migrant visitor. All species are absent from Ireland and the Isle of Man and only arrived in the Isle of Wight in 1910 which suggests a reluctance to cross water

The woodpecker most often seen is the Green Woodpecker, large unmistakably green with a bright red cap. They mainly eat ants; eggs, larvae and adults, and can often be seen digging holes in the ground or excavating anthills. They are uniquely adapted to this anteater diet, having a tongue ten centimetres long, about one third of its whole body length. To put that in perspective, if it were your tongue it would measure almost two feet! When the tongue is retracted it folds back round the birds skull, over its eyes and is stowed away in its right nostril.

They will also eat other insects, pine nuts and fruit, but only in the winter if ants are hard to find. Their bills are large but weaker than other woodpeckers and they only drill into soft wood to nest if they can't find a ready made cavity, and they rarely drum. They are very vocal and their distinctive song sounds a bit like a laugh, leading to their nickname 'Yaffle'. Some places call them 'Rainbirds' as they appear to summon the rain, but this is probably because they sing the most in Spring when showers are common. Elsewhere they're called Betsy, and Weathercock.





Green woodpeckers are anti-social and live alone apart from a partner during the breeding season. They nest in live tree cavities, ideally one which they've used previously. Five to seven eggs are laid and the pair share care of the fledglings - you will find it easy to spot the parent birds teaching a youngster how to find ants on the lawn.

The Greater Spotted Woodpecker is Britains most numerous woodpecker and is common everywhere except Ireland and the North of Scotland. It is a shy bird and hides away in broad leaved trees in dense wooded areas, rarely landing on the ground, but can frequently be seen on garden feeders where it enjoys fat balls, mealie worms and sunflower seeds.

The Greater Spotted Woodpecker is the one we hear in early Spring with its distinctive drumming on tree trunks and telegraph poles, or even metal structures. It does this to establish territory rather than singing, since it doesn't have much of a singing voice, just a high pitched kaka sound. This woodpecker is also uniquely adapted to life as a head banger and its brain is designed to withstand all this drilling into hard wood by several modifications. The skull contains less fluid so that the brain is not in contact with the bone, and several complex, flexible bone structures above the beak form a series of shock absorbers. So successful is this feature that experiments are under way to see if a similar structure could be used to develop protective headgear - for humans.

Breeding starts from mid May and the birds chisel nest holes in live trees where they lay three to five glossy white eggs. Bothe parents rear the young which they feed mainly on the larvae of tree dwelling insects but will also take eggs and chicks from other birds and young shoots.

The Lesser Spotted Woodpecker is a tiny woodpecker, with the same colouring as the Great Spotted Woodpecker, but only the size of a nuthatch. It is now very rare and is only found in Southern England where it frequents orchards, dense woodland and parks. Its diet and habits are the same as its larger cousins, and its call is proportionally softer and quieter.

Whichever species you are lucky enough to see it is said that all this drilling and drumming reminds us to look out for opportunity knocking on our door, and to take full advantage.

Birdbrain

Rhubarb and Custard Brioche Bake



This is an easy Good Housekeeping recipe for that glut of rhubarb which is about to arrive. Serves 8 but you could scale it down. I don't think you need to be too precise on the custard ingredients!

Serves 8

INGREDIENTS:

400g rhubarb, cut into 4cm pieces

125 g caster sugar

Butter for greasing

300ml milk

200ml double cream

3 medium eggs

1 tbsp vanilla bean paste (or replace with vanilla extract -

although you could try maple syrup instead)

400g brioche loaf cut into 2cm thick slices

METHOD:

- Pre-heat oven to 160 degrees (140 fan). Toss the rhubarb pieces with 75g sugar in an ovenproof dish, then cover with foil and bake for 15 minutes. Uncover and make sure any unmelted sugar is coated with the rhubarb syrup.
- Re-cover and return to the oven for 5 minutes, until the rhubarb is just tender and the sugar melted. Pour the rhubarb syrup into a separate dish or jug. Instead of baking the rhubarb you can cook it gently in a saucepan.
- Grease a large ovenproof serving dish and arrange half the cooked rhubarb in the bottom. In a jug, whisk the milk, cream, eggs, vanilla and remaining sugar. Cut the brioche slices in half diagonally and arrange standing on their cut side in the dish on top of the rhubarb.
- Dot over the remaining rhubarb, pour over the milk mixture, cover loosely with foil and set aside to soak for 30 minutes or so.
- Reheat the oven to 160 (140) degrees and bake the pudding -covered for 30 to 35 minutes or until the custard has just set. Remove from the oven and serve with the reserved syrup you could have cream or ice cream as well of course!

Enjoy! Lynn Corke

Some Useful Times

The Dun Cow

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Drinks only, **no food**

Wednesday 6pm - 11pm

Food available until 9pm

Thursday 6pm – 11pm

Food available until 9pm

Friday 3pm – 11pm

Food available until 9pm

Saturday 12pm – 11pm

Food available until 9pm

12pm – 10pm

Food available until 4pm

Alkerton Tip

 $\begin{array}{ll} \textbf{Monday} & 8am - 5pm \\ \textbf{Tuesday} & 8am - 5pm \end{array}$

Sunday

Wednesday 8am – 5pm Thursday 8am – 8pm *April to September*

 Friday
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 Saturday
 8am – 5pm

 Sunday
 8am – 5pm

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The Gossip

The copy deadline for the next issue of *The Gossip* is Friday 29 July 2022.

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