

# Ashton News



12-page  
information  
guide with  
this issue

Summer 2010

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## Planners set to reject plea for gypsy caravans

Proposals to site up to six mobile homes and caravans behind Willow Cottage, opposite the Star Inn, seem almost certain to be rejected, following a flood of local objections and advice from planning officials.

William Gilder, who has had three housing schemes refused, said he supported the latest plan by traveller Tom Stevens who wanted to buy the site from him.

The application for three family pitches, each with a touring caravan and mobile home, would last ten years, with Willow Cottage unaffected.

Mr Gilder said that the disused house was "not an asset to the village" and that he had tried earlier to come up with designs to satisfy planners.

At least 34 objectors have contacted the district council including the Vale of Evesham Civic Society, Campaign to Protect Rural England and Cotswold Conservation Board.

A former resident, now in Australia, recalled "real Romanies" living in Back Lane, but like others he objected to the impact of the proposal on the area.

Vicky Lawson of The Star supported a prior plan for small homes,

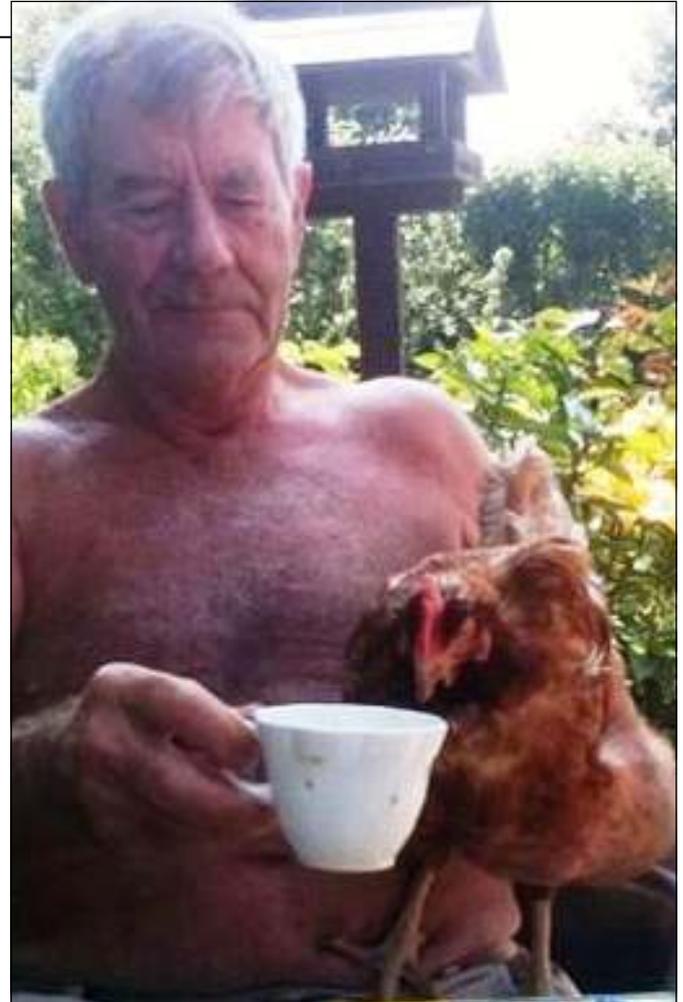
### But what next for site, parish council asks

but said caravans would damage her business.

"Don't ruin our village," an objector wrote, and many urged restitution or sympathetic development of the site. "Willow Cottage decays before our eyes," said one.

The parish council, which did not oppose a previous plan, has objected strongly. The site was in the centre of the village, alternatives existed nearby, and the plan would adversely affect The Star at a time that country inns were under

**Continued page 2**



**Coffee-doodle-do:** As soon as Colin Creese settles down for breakfast these days, he is likely to be joined by some of the 12 rescue hens he has adopted. They are so tame - proof at last that sometimes the chicken does come before the egg.

## Ashton to subsidise rates at the local

Ashton parish council has voted 5-2 to make a small donation to reduce business rates on The Star.

The move follows a similar appeal for rate relief from the Post Office. The Star already receives a 50% reduction from Wychavon, but had applied for the first time for further relief, which will mean around £180 a year from the parish.

The pub said it drew 70% of customers from the locality and employed eleven.

Parish councillor Ted Williams proposed approval. The parish paid about £1.2k annually to the church, but more people used the pub, he said.

The council is to investigate possible sites for allotments, after Jeff Fletcher said villagers had approached him.

Beckford Road is to be closed in August for culvert repairs near Grafton.

At an earlier meeting, PC Gary Sheppard urged more Ashtonians to join Neighbourhood Watch to increase the email alert network. If interested, contact Roger Umpelby by email at [roger@bugman.free-online.co.uk](mailto:roger@bugman.free-online.co.uk).

Footpath warden Joe Aspey said his volunteers had carried out ten projects during the year, and all agreed he should carry on after leaving the village.

## Closure of main road: How it may affect you

Access to some homes may be cut off during the day and bus services into the village will be restricted during the final stage of Central Networks' project to remove overhead power lines.

Houses between Cottons Lane and Gorse Hill are likely to be worst affected because of the narrowness of the road and the size of machinery. A normal bus timetable will operate, but only from the shelter in The Groaten. The library van that parks near Cornfield Way should not be affected.

The work from The Groaten to near Wood Lane is due to last from 23 July to 2 September, followed by power breaks until October. By then the £250k project will have replaced 1.1km of overhead cables with 1.3km underground.

Project manager Trevor Doyle said it was likely the road would be closed for up to a day while trenches are filled. Some residents might have to park for a time a short distance from their houses, but disruption would be minimised.

Anyone facing problems through disability, or expecting large deliveries, should contact him at 07989 700479 or [trevor.doyle@central-networks.co.uk](mailto:trevor.doyle@central-networks.co.uk).

### Ashton News

Ashton News will appear again in November. Reports and letters by then please to 882364 or email [colin.davison@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:colin.davison@hotmail.co.uk)

## Opera star opens Parish Music season

The 16th season of Parish Music starts at St Barbara's in Ashton at 8pm on **Saturday September 18**.

Local soprano Rebecca Rudge (pictured right) returns with a wonderfully varied programme, ranging from Mozart to Flanders and Swann and taking in music by Schubert, Lehar, Puccini and others.

Rebecca has performed as a soloist at many of the UK's most prestigious venues and has broadcast often on Radio 4.

Operatic highlights of her career include Heloise in Offenbach's *Bluebeard* at the Buxton Festival and future engagements include *Carmina Burana* with the CBSO under Simon Halsey at Symphony Hall. So put this Ashton date in the diary now.

On **Saturday October 16** in Alstone, the Chelys Viol Consort and a singer present *Four Funerals and a Wedding*, courtly music from Elizabethan



and Jacobean times.

Reflecting the recent creation of a wider parish, the series has been extended to Bredon for the first time. On **Saturday November 13** Bredon will be host a concert of German music by Parish Music's old friends the St Cecilia Singers of Gloucester.

There will be three concerts in spring 2011. Details will be sent at the end of August to those on the Parish Music mailing list.

They will also be available on the website [ashtonunderhill.org.uk](http://ashtonunderhill.org.uk) under organisations/music or by phoning 881479 or 882060.

## Field, fresh air, and fitness - but only if you want it

The Community Centre is anxious to get village views on the best use of land by the playing fields.

After clearing an area by the tennis pavilion, the latest idea is to install fitness equipment for adults and over 12s.

Previous ideas to extend and improve the playground met with little response, and plans were put on hold.

It's hard to decide what Ashton wants unless local people respond, so please comment on the latest idea to Penny Scotland 881594 [penny@home.gb.com](mailto:penny@home.gb.com) or Doreen Cope 881656.

This week the parish council supported a move to win a district council grant for the plan.

In his annual report chairman Tony Lewis said a study had started into hall renovations, which would soon be needed.

He thanked many helpers and benefactors including Open Gardens and the parish council.

## Willow Cottage: Council seeks solution

**From page one:** pressure, members said.

In fact, the plan seems sure to fail. A Wychavon report says the site "would not be suitable primarily because it is within the Conservation Area" and that it was hard to see how its designation would not be compromised.

The parish council thanked two young people who painted over graffiti daubed at the site over the weekend.

Ted Williams said he was perplexed about what Wychavon would approve for the site, where little progress was apparent. As a result, the parish council

agreed to invite a planning officer to a meeting if, as expected, the current proposal is rejected.

**Other plans:** Wychavon has rejected extensions to 17thC cottage The Coppice, Cottons Lane, and Acacia Cottage, Elmley Road, but approved those at 27 Gorse Hill, and 16 Cornfield Way.

Applications to be decided include extensions at Elmwick, Field Cottage and Camley Cottage (revised), Little Owl Farm (conversion), land at The Groaten (sawing and farm machinery), 10 Gorse Hill (garage replacement) and Orchard House (access track to Bakers Lane).

## Hoping for rain to save winter fodder



### Farm life

by Charles Archer

At this time of year it is the farmers with livestock who are the busiest; the sheep have been sheared and most lambs have been separated from the ewes.

Silage and hay making is continuing and winter stockyards are being emptied of farmyard manure so that it can be spread on the fields to encourage plant growth.

Some of the early grass crops yielded well but there has been limited re-growth due to lack of rain. Consequently livestock farmers are becoming concerned that they will have to start using winter fodder early with the worry that it will run out before spring.

The blue haze of linseed flower is missing from the landscape this year as winter cereals were successfully established last autumn, and these are now turning from green to gold.

In this part of the country oilseed rape is the first crop to be harvested followed by barley, winter wheat and field beans.

All in all it has been a good growing season, although more rain would be welcome to fill the grain in the ears. It is a case of watching and making sure the combine harvester and other machinery is ready to roll.

# Open Gardens win praise as sun keeps his hat on

by Malcolm Nelson

Around 1,100 visitors came to the 2010 Open Gardens, including coach parties from Hampshire, Hertfordshire, Gwent and Staffordshire.

The fine weather lasted until shortly after the Sunday close, when rain came with a vengeance. Competing local events, the credit crunch, and the start of the World Cup reduced attendance slightly compared with the 2009 record, but visitors gave glowing feedback.

Read what they said, and see more pictures at [ashtonopengardens.co.uk](http://ashtonopengardens.co.uk).

Many also said how much they enjoyed seeing pupils from both schools, preparing their imaginative gardens, selling smoothies and playing in the church.

Open Gardens raises money for the village and succeeds only with the generous efforts of more than 100 volunteers.

We owe a huge 'thank you' to all who helped.



*Darling, have you seen my gardening boots? Imaginative planting seen during Open Gardens. Photo: Jo Brown.*

They include garden owners, programme, plant and raffle sellers, WI and Free Church members, exhibition organisers and stewards, flower arrangers, stall holders, tea servers, cake makers, bus drivers and helpers, bell ringers, and all on traffic duty or who tidied up later.

We are grateful too to the Guides who helped serve teas, and to our visitors.

The event realised just over £6,000 for village organisations. The



Community Centre and St. Barbara's have shared £5,800 with a further £325 split between the First School, the middle school Gardening Club, the guides and WI.

Meanwhile planning has already started for next year's event, on the weekend of 11-12 June.

Could you help Kathryn Perry or Malcolm Nelson with publicity, sending information to tourist boards and gardening clubs, or organising distribution of posters?

Could you spare time to plan helper rotas, or with car parking or signage? Do you have ideas for the children's quiz or the exhibition in the church? The Open Gardens website is now important for potential visitors. Could you give it a make-over?

Any help would be appreciated. Contact John Dodge on 881487 or Malcolm Nelson on 881778.

## Star rebuilding to start soon

The Star has won planning approval to rebuild its kitchen and restaurant, to upgrade its toilets and re-landscape its gardens.

The work, likely to start this month, will help to better cater for parties and weddings. Food and drinks will be served as normal while it goes on.

Vicky and Ed have thanked villagers and



parish councillors for supporting their project. Updates can be seen on the project board inside the pub.

And if you're stuck during the road closure (see page 2), they suggest, you could always walk to The Star, have a freshly ground coffee, use its wi-fi, have a bite, or try the award-winning Guinness.

# Diary hides clue to firm's history

by David Williams-Thomas

The diary has always been a part of my life. It lived for years in my grandfather's desk. It then moved to the archive and museum kept by my family firm, Royal Brierley Crystal. I now have it at home in Ashton.

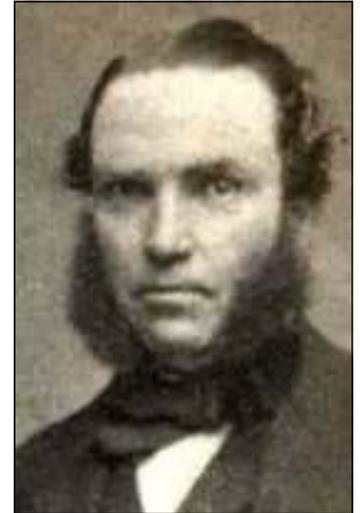
It covers the period 1869 to 1882, and was written by my great great grandfather, Sam Williams, in minute handwriting in eight tiny pocket notebooks and covers business, family, and local affairs.

There is at least one entry every day, and its contents have been the basis of the history of the firm, which I am writing.

There are a number of entries in Sam's personal shorthand code. It was quite common in the 18th and 19th centuries for codes or ciphers to be used for security in private and business papers.

In 1977, Leon Taylor, a retired cryptographer, revealed that the vast majority concerned financial matters, but I have discovered that

## Who can decipher code to reveal secret thoughts of great-great granddad?



*Doomed love affair: Joe Williams and his cousin Pollie. Sam (right) was careful to guard his private thoughts about his son's romance.*

one very small passage has not been decoded. I think it was simply missed in the text.

It relates to a day when Sam's son Joe, then about 25, returned from a regular visit to his "intended," his young cousin Pollie, who lived in Wellington, Shropshire.

Joe had had an important meeting with Pollie's father, which one can imagine, may have been to ask if

he might marry Pollie. Sam then wrote the comment in his code.

The short passage probably contains his thoughts on the match. Was he happy about it, or not? Was he saying "at last he's popped the question" or "they are far too young"? It would be fascinating to know.

And there is an added poignancy, because Pollie died soon after, following a short illness. So the young couple never did marry.

Joe was devastated. Pollie's death affected the way the firm developed over subsequent years, for he married instead the daughter of a wealthy local banker, Mr Thomas, who became an important influence on Joe and the firm.

I wonder if there is a reader of this newsletter who might have a crack at decoding this small passage. It is in shorthand, not Pitman but similar, and it may be another recognised shorthand of the time.

I have all Leon Taylor's working notes on the original decoding.

It would be fun to break this little mystery open, and to know Sam's view of this crucial moment in the family's history, especially in view of Pollie's subsequent death.

If you can help, please email me at [d.williams\\_thomas@btinternet.com](mailto:d.williams_thomas@btinternet.com), call 882304 or contact me at Orchard House.

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## Curse of the night visitors revealed

*This note signed **Wolfie** was left on the Ashton News courtyard after dark*

We dogs of Ashton have formed Canines Under Revolt Society (CURS for short) and as Executive I am CURSE to you.

We've also formed Pugs Against Waste (PAW). That's why you find us rooting round your bins.

We all agree that we are being discriminated against because we sometimes mess up the footpaths and upset your bins.

Just remember we are mostly shut up all day, except when owners drag us out on leads for walkies, so we are restricted as to where we can go.

Luckily my owner understands our need for freedom and lets me out unsupervised at night when, being a responsible animal, I always 'go' off road.

Now I hear that some miserable bloke is moaning about the mess on his lawn. Dogs cannot win.

Horses leave mess on the road and even on footpaths, but do all riders clean up after them? No, but *Ashton News* does not give them a bad press.

And what about those flea-ridden felines? Dozens have the freedom of the village and it don't seem to matter where they go and whose gardens they mess up.

Is it one law for them and another for the PAW, we wonder?

Well that's about it. I feel better now I've got that off my chest, so I'll go and have a good scratch and a roll in some nice smelly stuff to cool down and then wander down to the playing fields to meet the rest of the gang.

## Former Players stalwart dies in Yorkshire

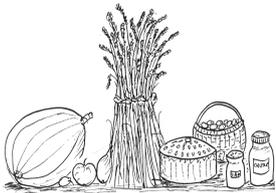
Long-standing Ashton residents will be sad to hear that Peter O'Rorke, formerly of Cottons Lane, has died at Thirsk.

Peter and his wife Margaret were enthusiastic members of Ashton Players' front-of-house team in the 1990s, for memorable productions such as *The Boyfriend*, *DAGS*, *The Sound of Murder* and *Charley's Aunt*.

They moved to Cheltenham in 1999 and last year to Yorkshire to be near their family.

Peter suffered a stroke on Thursday 24 June and died the same day. The funeral was held in York on Friday 2 July.

## Harvest Festival



St. Barbara's Church will hold its Harvest Festival at 11am on October 3.

Harvest gifts for distribution to local elderly are welcome. Donations of fruit and vegetables to decorate the church would also be appreciated. Please bring them on the Saturday.

## Rails End success

The weather was perfect for Tea on the Lawn at Rails End in May, and raised £220 for Marie Curie Cancer Care from the raffle, teas and donations. Sally Skinner thanks all who attended and supported the event.

# Top theatre groups for Ashton

Ashton lovers of fine drama are in for a season of classic plays as the village continues to attract leading performers.

With local authority budgets under threat, there may have been anxiety about the future even of ventures as successful as *Shindig*, which has helped to bring so many top acts here.

So organisers were delighted to book what promise to be three excellent shows to the village during the winter.

In addition, they have also booked a music and comedy duo that has earned rave reviews from festival appearances across the UK.

On **Saturday 23 October**, Northumberland Theatre Company bring their funny and at times grotesque version of *The Old Curiosity Shop*, not quite as Dickens knew it. Here Nell and her gambling-addicted grandfather are on the run, pursued by Quilp and the crooked lawyer Brass.

"Brilliant," "great stuff," were the verdicts of local audiences on NTC's adaptation of *Whisky Galore*, and this promises to be another triumph.

The play on **Saturday 20 November** brings a local theme as New Century Theatre Company brings *Blue Remembered Hills*, Dennis Potter's brilliant and often hilarious evocation of rivalries, games and tragedies in the wartime Forest of Dean.

The original TV production, with Helen



*The ugliest dwarf*: Anthony Newley as Quilp and Sarah-Jane Varley as Little Nell in the classic 1975 film.

Mirren and Colin Welland playing the seven-year-olds, became a classic. A promoter who saw this new production said it made the audience laugh out loud, "then shocked them into silence."

Other dates are **Saturday 5 March** for duo Quicksilver, superb musicians performing funny songs from Victoria Wood to Victorian Music hall, and **Sunday 8 May** when New Perspectives Theatre Company bring *Lark Rise to Candleford*.

## Cricket club social night

Get off the sofa and dance to the Sofas at Ashton Cricket Club's annual social evening from 7pm on Friday 23 July, with games, raffle and legendary barbecue. Just turn up at the club, entry free. A donation will go to St. Richard's Hospice. After challenging weather in recent years, who could imagine anything but a sunny evening?

## New homes plan now in doubt

More than 200 people attended displays at both Beckford and Bredon in the consultation exercise about the number and location of new homes in south Worcestershire.

The attendance, which followed coverage in *Ashton News*, was the highest in any Wychavon villages, said district cllr. Adrian Darby.

Parish council chairman Gerry Barnett said that Bredon Hill Conservation Group had met twice to discuss the issue and

had objected to the number of homes envisaged, and to the relatively high priority given to Ashton.

However, he said, the plans were now "back in the melting pot" because of a likely policy change by the new government.

## Minibus shopper

The next parish minibus shopping trip to Worcester will leave Ashton on Friday 23 July. Call Gilbert 881455 or Ray 881441 to book

## Parish walks in July and August

Walks take place at 7pm every Monday, costing just 20p each. Coming dates and venues are:

**July 19:** Red Lion car park, Wainlode.

**July 26:** Cleeve Heights Golf Club on Cheltenham-Winchcombe road.

**August 2:** Lychgate, Ashton's Bredon.

**August 9:** Lychgate, Dumbleton.

**August 16:** Bredon's Norton walk and supper. Details to come.

## Village awaits fete with high hopes

Fairy tales can come true, but sometimes a little late.

Organisers of the last Ashton fete in 2008 had to cancel the planned fancy dress parade through the village due to a downpour.

The theme was to have been Fairy Tales and Nursery Rhymes, so not to waste a good idea - or those costumes - this will be repeated when children assemble at Old Manor Farm at 1.30pm on Saturday 11 September.

After judging and a parade to the playing fields, there will be prizes before the official opening of the fete at 2.30.

Attractions include a falconry flying demonstration, a dog display team, the Denovo dance group from the middle school, Morris men, a showman's traditional organ and visits by emergency services.

The Pimms tent is always popular, as is the White Elephant stall - bargain hunters please note, no early entry!

Amusements will include egg throwing and catching, splat

## Ashton looks for fairy tale start this time

the rat run by the girl guides, skittles, target golf, tug-o-war and "ergo racing" on rowing machines.

Visitors like to try the swing boats before enjoying the teas and cakes provided by the WI.

Entrance costs just £1, but children enter free. To avoid delay, buy a sticker in the main street or car park before the parade.

A dance in the giant marquee from 7pm with a bar to 11pm ends the day. Tickets cost £5 each, family tickets £10 for two adults and two over 10s, students £2, accompanied under tens free from Tony Lewis 881555 or Derrick Rees 881239. Proceeds go to the Social Centre.



*Getting into the swing: Dancers at a previous, sunny fete. Below, produce show exhibits.*

*Pictures: Jeremy King and Roger Umpelby*

## Produce show seeks monster entry

The warm summer and more than 80 classes, with sections from under-nines to expert gardeners, could make this year's Ashton Produce Show one of the best ever.

The event is held on the same day as the fete, Saturday 11 September, when the playing field marquee will be open for exhibitors to bring their entries from 8 to 10am.

They should however send a completed entry form to Carole Reeve, Bramblebank, Elmley Road, or Izaak Jackson, 8 Elmley Road, not later than Thursday 9 September.

The show is open to residents of Ashton and neighbouring villages. No exhibitor can make more than



one competitive entry in a class. Sections include vegetables, fruit, cut flowers, floral art, preserves and home baking, home-made wine and photography.

Exhibitors must supply their own containers or vases. Prizes and cups are presented at 5pm, but entries will remain until 5.30pm and must be removed by 6.15pm to allow preparations for the dance.

New categories include a decorated cake, three matching eggs, and the intriguing "Monster" to be made of vegetables, for monster-makers 12 years and over.

Children, 9-12, and over 12s, have their own section including miniature gardens, baking, painting, and a colouring competition contained in the programme, available from the post office, The Star, and Beckford shop.