



November 2020

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Chelsfield
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The Newsletter and "What's On" Guide for
Residents & Friends of Chelsfield Village

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COVID-19 Update

Both the Five Bells and the Bo-Peep provided us with details of the revised measures they had gone to to continue serving their customers while complying with Tier 2 of Coronavirus rules

However, following the announcement by the Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, on Saturday 31st October plans will be changing yet again.

The situation now is that from Thursday 5th October for four weeks

- Pubs and restaurants will close other than to provide take-aways
- Food shops will remain open
- Non-essential shops will close

From 2nd December restrictions will be eased and we revert to the tiered system

We depend on you for your stories, ideas, thoughts, planned events, experiences and diary dates.

Please send anything you would like included in the December 2020 issue to:

chelsfieldvillagevoice@gmail.com

or post to:

**Chelsfield Village Voice
2 Bucks Cross Cottages
Chelsfield Village
BR6 7RN**

**to arrive on or before
Thursday 26th Nov 2020**

The Parakeet

I recently took a trip to West Sussex to do a little family tree research and while there I decided to visit the Knepp re-wilding project which was just a few miles from my male-line ancestral home south of Horsham. The Knepp project has hosted 'Spring watch' a couple of times and what makes it a fascinating venture is its recent history as a failing, vast 3500 acre intensive farm that was heading towards bankruptcy – and its eventual success. Not as a farm however. Its owners decided to jack in the farming life and allow the land to return to nature: within certain conditions. If it had been left alone completely it would have returned to woodland which surprisingly is not that bio-diverse. So, they introduced Dartmoor ponies, deer, an ancient breed of longhorn cattle and pigs (surrogate wild boar), sold their farming equipment and let nature run wild. Twenty years later their estate consists of a mix of scrubland, heath and woodland and the wildlife has exploded. Some species such as painted lady and purple

emperor butterflies, nightingales and turtle doves have returned from being almost non-existent to one of the most densely populated spots in Britain for these species. And just last year, for the first time in Britain for 600 years storks started nesting there. Clearly they are doing something right. The owners consistently resisted attempts to set goals or to target specific species and just let the place run wild. They are still a bit of an amateur outfit relying on government support but visitor numbers are increasing and they earn cash from African style safaris, 'glamping' in specified locations and they sell meat from animals they have culled. If you'd like to take a closer look then the website is:

<https://knepp.co.uk/home>.

Also, on the subject of my trip to West Sussex, while returning across country from a church I had been visiting at the end of a day of hard walking I noticed a barn owl quartering the river Adur which runs through this area and in many ways

defines it. It must be at least fifty years since I have seen one in the wild so that was a bit of a highlight for the trip. Also, seems like our swallows have outlasted those at the Millers farm and left a couple of weeks later around the end of September!

This month's piece is on the controversial subject of the parakeet (or to give it its proper name – the ring necked or sometimes rose-ringed parakeet [*psittacus krameri*]). Three decades ago these birds were a rarity in London but now they are almost as common as pigeons. But it's not just London, and indeed Britain being invaded by this invasive species. It's more a matter of Britain today, tomorrow the World! It seems that at least 35 countries from the US to Azerbaijan are experiencing an explosion in their parakeet populations. There are records of these birds in Victorian times in Norfolk and central London but they do not seem to have survived. In all probability both the Victorian and modern populations are

the result of pet escapes during the 1960s. They then became established in the home counties and their numbers exploded in the 1980s. The country's current population estimate is about 30,000 with the population increasing by about 30% a year. Their most northerly conquest in the world (and incidentally the most northerly parrot population in the world) is Glasgow so it seems they may well have adapted to colder northern climates but they are synanthropic birds meaning they live in close proximity to humans making use of 'heat islands and bird feeders' while in the case of Azerbaijan, these birds roosting near oil refineries burning waste gas! It does seem strange that we usually have such problems maintaining the number of birds that are endemic to this country but new species that one would expect to be at a disadvantage seem to do well. I've heard it suggested that this is because species that once occupied an ecological niche have been lost and the invasive species are simply taking over that means of etching a living.



Another potential reason for their success is that they select and defend nesting sites very early in the season and consequently nest earlier than British birds: often as early as January. This makes it difficult for birds such as nuthatches and woodpeckers to find suitable nesting locations such as hollows in trees. Personally I don't like these birds. I find them noisy and somehow 'out of place' and apparently can be aggressive but I do know those who think they add a splash of colour to the garden. There is however the question of the noise and agricultural damage. There are stories of people who cannot sell their houses because a colony exists in the

garden or in warmer climates they move away from human habitation and into farmland where they are wasteful and destructive eaters. The Seychelles have successfully eradicated them but that took an 8 year campaign and for somewhere like Britain, we needed to act decades ago if that path was to be successful. In places like India they are considered serious agricultural pests. Such is their detrimental affect in India that once produce is removed from the fields the fruits of the farmers' labours are still not safe with stories of parakeets breaking open sacks of food stacked on the railway platforms waiting for transportation. They are seemingly all pervasive and such is their effect on the ambiance of the sub-continent that no TV or cinema drama set in India is complete without flocks of these birds swarming or squawking in the background.

So, love them or loath them they are seemingly here to stay.

*Steve Fuller
November 2020*

Mutterings From The Millers

No fog, yet more rain. Up until 27th October, we have had 130 ml of rain during the month, about the same as last year, so we are grateful that we had the seed ready to plant otherwise we might be in the same position as last year. Peter was out spraying for aphids and found that the ground wasn't too soft, one of the benefits of not ploughing. All the crops have germinated well, albeit a bit messy from weeds but we will sort that out in the spring if necessary.

As you can see from the picture, Peter has been busy digging a 2ft trench around one side of the big black barn to lay a drainage channel, because water was getting into the barn. As the ground slopes away it was quite a job to get the drainage pipe levels correct, but he achieved it.

You may have seen on Countryfile about oil seed rape. The ban on neonicotinoids has allowed the flea battle to

become a major pest in all brassica crops, of which oil seed rape is one. This is also going to have an effect going forward about our ability to supply sufficient oil for bio fuel. Various farming methods are being trailed ie companion planting, the use of sewage sludge and leaving long straw stubble. You can make bio fuel from other crops but will there be enough to go round?

I spoke to Dave Gunn recently who cuts and clears the Chelsfield Green and he was saying that he normally makes about 35 bales off that field but due to the weather only made 3 bales. Perhaps that is why the wild flowers were not so abundant this year.

We have had very large flocks of Canada and Greylag geese coming in the morning grazing, quite a sight. Lots of sightings of buzzards and occasionally a kite. The pied wagtails are still around the yard and garden, you can't mistake that walk with any other bird. We were very



surprised to see a small flock of swallows weaving and diving about the house and yard for quite sometime on the 1st October, two weeks after they had left the yard but guess that they are definitely on their 6000 mile journey back to

South Africa.

The weather looks quite warm for the first week of November but just as fog in October suggests a cold winter, so a cold November signifies a mild winter. There are some depressing quotes for this

month but the following is a little cheerier.

*Ice in November to bear
a duck,
The rest of the winter'll be
slush and muck*

*Chris Miller
Court Lodge Farm*

Chelsfield Volunteers

It's beginning to look like it could be quite a difficult winter, and the Volunteer group will be ready for it!

During the last Covid spike Chelsfield Volunteers supported a great many people in Chelsfield and Green Street Green who were shielding or self-isolating. The volunteers are preparing to help people again this winter. We will be offering help with shopping and prescription collection and we will be able to find a phone buddy for anyone who is feeling lonely or isolated and would appreciate a call.

We expect to be busy and many of our volunteers are currently working again, so if you can, please do ask family, friends and

neighbours to help out – most people have been very willing to get shopping and collect prescriptions for others when they do their own.

This winter, Lloyds chemist on Windsor Drive have a paid delivery service. Please do think about signing up for this if you can afford it - after all every time a volunteer goes out, they are taking a risk for you.

Please share these contact details with local people who may need them.

The volunteer message line is 07767 211891, or you can email:

Chelsfieldvolunteers@gmail.com

You can also find information and news

at:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/2920719837986066>

If you are over 18 and under 70, and would like to volunteer please contact us. If you have access to a car that really helps. (I'm sorry but we cannot take volunteers with health conditions that make them vulnerable to Covid or people sharing a household with a person who is shielding.)

Having said all that, I'm taking a moment to reflect on how fortunate we are to have beautiful countryside around us, and a community where people are prepared to help others.

*Pam Temple
Chelsfield Volunteers*

Virtual London Marathon 2020

On the 4th October, a very wet day, eight members of my family ran the Virtual London Marathon. The runners consisted of my youngest son, my daughter and her husband, four grandsons and one granddaughter. The event was organised by Virgin Money in August after the cancellation of the April (and then October) actual London Marathon, an opportunity for charities to raise some of the money they would have raised at that event. Not much time for training.

They all began the day starting from different places and at different times. My home, Stonehouse, was their base where they could rest a while, have a refreshing drink (preferably a warm one as the day was so very cold and wet) and even change into dry clothes, all of which took place in my garage owing to Covid restrictions. As in the 'normal' London Marathon they all had to run 26.2 miles, issued with official running numbers and codes to track their progress on

apps on their phones. All 26.2 miles had to be run outside so that satellites could track their phone's movement throughout to prove the distance run.

The day was not without a few mishaps: one fell over, lost his headphones and unbeknownst to him his phone stopped tracking after the fall. He noticed 5 miles later and so had to run an extra 5 miles at the end so his phone logged a full marathon, taking him to 31 miles actually run on the day! Another 2 lost phone signal and had to run extra miles thanks to bad luck and poor mobile phone coverage around

the area. Note these were all men, the girls had no issues at all!

The rain continued to fall all day and everyone got soaked through, even us the supporters who went out at various times and places to show support. I enjoyed seeing them run and cheering them on...nothing like the normal marathon but it was still a good day and between them they raised money for three charities: RNIB, WellChild and Prostrate Cancer UK.

My family all said that they were cheered on by people in passing cars and saw other runners



out on the roads also taking part, with whom they shared smiles and words of encouragement. A man in a car stopped and gave my daughter

£20 for her charity so even, or especially, in Covid time most people are thoughtful and generous.

Between the 8, over £2000 was raised, and about 219 miles run (due to mishaps!).

Brigit O'Donnell

The Joy of Weeds

The joy of weeds I would like to follow up on Steve Fuller's post in the last issue about Herb Robert. He mentioned that it may well be edible – and I wanted to say it is indeed a part of the diet for one particular Chelsfield resident; Clement the tortoise. Clem is only a year old (weighing in at 50 grams) so has a long life ahead of him – and his diet consists of edible weeds and flowers. We check whether they are toxic or safe feeds for him on 'the tortoise table' app. As a Hermann, treats such as strawberries can be



damaging in the long term, so we instead look for bright and pretty flowers, like the pink of Herb Robert or the bold pansies, to provide him with variety. He can be very picky and likes to have lots of different options. It has been a bit of a game changer for us – on walks we find ourselves looking down at the ground far more in case of spotting 'the perfect weed' (there is a goldmine of mallow leaves on the way to the station on the edge of Warren Road). In the

garden, whilst once I would have ripped many weeds up without a second thought, I get excited at the sight of sow thistles and dandelions now, and about my ability to identify them. Having Clement has brought us a new perspective, and as we all spend more time at home these days, we would do well to take a leaf out of his book and appreciate all the opportunist plants growing around us in the village.

Sophie Foreman

Appreciation From a Former Resident

Sirs, Mesdames, and anybody in between,

We moved to Chelsfield in 1991 and were immediately welcomed by our neighbours. This was a revelation for a South African girl (well, maybe not girl) as I had expected the "typical" English social reserve.

It was certainly not thus; and we hugely enjoyed our 28 years on Ox'wood Road among friendly, helpful neighbours, (some damned good parties, too, but we will gloss over those) and we are now living in Peasmarsch,

having converted a Wrecktory into a Rectory whose aged ghosts we hope to have appeased.

Yesterday, having things to be done in Chelsfield, I settled down to a toasted sandwich at the Bread and Butter and saw the Chelsfield Village Voice.

Over so many years I had so often been, insensibly, drawn into the very spirit of the place; by reading about the local history, trees, wild life, agriculture, etc., and the essence of the place.

Mike and I have learned so much over the years and we thank you for so

much pleasure and learning.

Bah, humbuggers and other expletives deleted, Millers. Rice next time? Doesn't need wet feet and I will supply the curry!

The article on shrews was a revelation. We have many in Peasmarsch (fewer because of blasted cast) and I had not an inkling of their life cycle or the fact that they use echolocation as an adjunct. Thank you!

For me, the Papal bulla was a truly exciting find. It may not be worth a row of beans in monetary terms, but the history resounds.

As indeed does Steve Fuller's article- hugely interesting, fascinating and informative.

I am a technophobe so have no idea if this all can be enjoyed online. I can click, just about. Anyway, thank you to the contributors and editor. A pleasant nostalgia reigns.

*Win Inkson
ex-Oxenden Wood Road*

November Sudoku

								6
5			7			9	8	2
		8				1	7	
4		5	1	7				
	2	1	8	6	7	5		
			9	2	4			1
	9	2			6			
3	5	7		9				8
1								

In this puzzle each 3 x 3 box, each column and each row must contain all the numbers 1-9.

It's simpler than it looks!

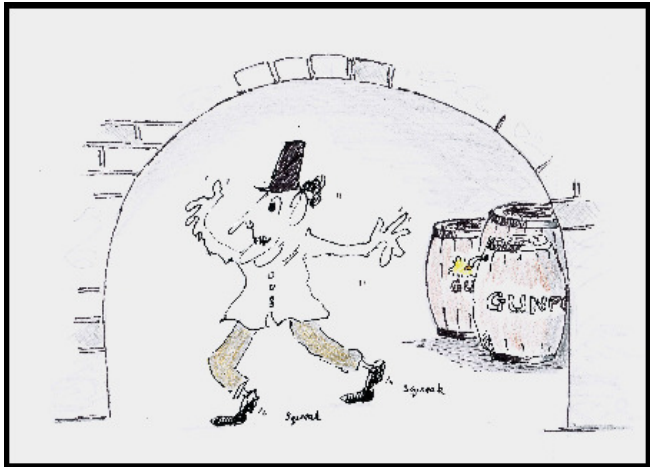
The Gunpowder Plot

Where we actually live in Seaford is within a 3 minute walk of Chyngton Manor and Farm. This was built and the land given as a gift to the people who prevented Guy actually succeeding. This why the Bonfire Societies are so strong here. Sadly they cannot hold an event this year because of restrictions. Last year's went off well but the previous event was cancelled due to high winds. It is usually every 2 years. It is usually very well supported and safely managed and starts in the middle of Seaford with a long parade of groups scattering firecrackers and banging drums,

carrying flares. Huge effigy and massive bonfire, plus a model of Houses of Parliament,

which burns. Then big firework display on the beach.

Phil Lane



*The plot to blow up Parliament
(A plan some felt was Heaven - sent)
Was foiled for Guy, who with regret
Bought squeaky shoes from the Internet!*

Unsolicited Door to Door Seller

Last Tuesday, Janet came into the house asking, "Have you got a fiver?", "What? What for, and no I haven't." "Well there is a man in the garden who won't stop talking and won't go away." - Right, ... out I went. It was getting dark. "What do you want?" "I'm here to better myself" he said. He had walked up

the path from the garage.... he was about 25, dressed in black and a bit like a tall Andy Burnham. "Your wife..." he started, "hang on, she's the gardener, not my wife..."

Whereupon he said, "I don't like your attitude..." "Then perhaps you should leave...take this

£2 to help you on your way" I replied. "You know where you can stick that", he said. He had a back pack on and was selling I don't know what.

A friend told me today that there have been several complaints in Knockholt of similar occurrences.

Chris Parsons

Grass Snake Sighting

This picture of a grass snake was taken whilst in our field one warm sunny day - remember those? The first time ever we have seen one in Chelsfield.



Has anyone else spotted one in the village or surrounding fields.

Sally Kemsley

Little Tich and His Big Boots

As a young child I was very small. Small enough that by the age of seven I was called "Tich" by family and friends. I grew to normalish height and the nickname disappeared, but I was amused when I moved to Farnborough to discover that there had been a famous comedian called Little Tich.

Relph from Cudham get to be such a big music hall star — and who named him Little Tich?

Harry, was born in 1867, probably in the Blacksmith's Arms, which was run by his father. He only grew to 4 feet 6 inches tall. He also had six fingers on each hand and as a child was chubby.

called him Little Tich. His height and physical oddities caused him immense personal embarrassment but he was to use them to advantage in his professional life and he did the same with his nickname, turning it into his stage name and so adding a new word to the English language: Tich meaning small.

We went for a drive in the country and stopped for a drink at the Blacksmith's Arms in Cudham. I found a Blue Plaque to Little Tich, aka Harry Relph, on the wall and memorabilia, including a pair of his Big Boots (more about them later), in a glass case inside. But how did a country lad called Harry

When he was four years-old there was a sensational court case in which Arthur Orton claimed to be Roger Tichborne, heir to the Tichborne estates and baronetcy. He lost and was jailed for 14 years for perjury. Harry's brothers and friends decided he looked like a small version of Orton and

Harry was the sixteenth child of 77 year-old Richard Relph by his second wife, Mary. Richard was a farmer as well as the publican of the Blacksmith's Arms. The family was comfortably-off and Richard was known as a sharp businessman. His young son inherited his father's intelligence and

although he attended Jail Lane School (now in Biggin Hill), claimed he was largely self-educated.

He excelled in art and by the time he was five his drawings were being sold by his father to patrons of the Blacksmith's Arms. He could also mimic the travelling performers — dancers and singers — employed to entertain guests at the Blacksmith's Arms, causing much amusement to both his family and patrons. So good were his impersonations that his siblings frequently took him to neighbouring public houses where they would get him to perform for money.

By the age of ten he had developed a dance and tin-whistle act. In the early 1880s he had a blackface act and gained popularity with performances in Chatham at Rosherville Pleasure Gardens and Barnard's Music Hall. At 17 he was appearing in music halls in London.

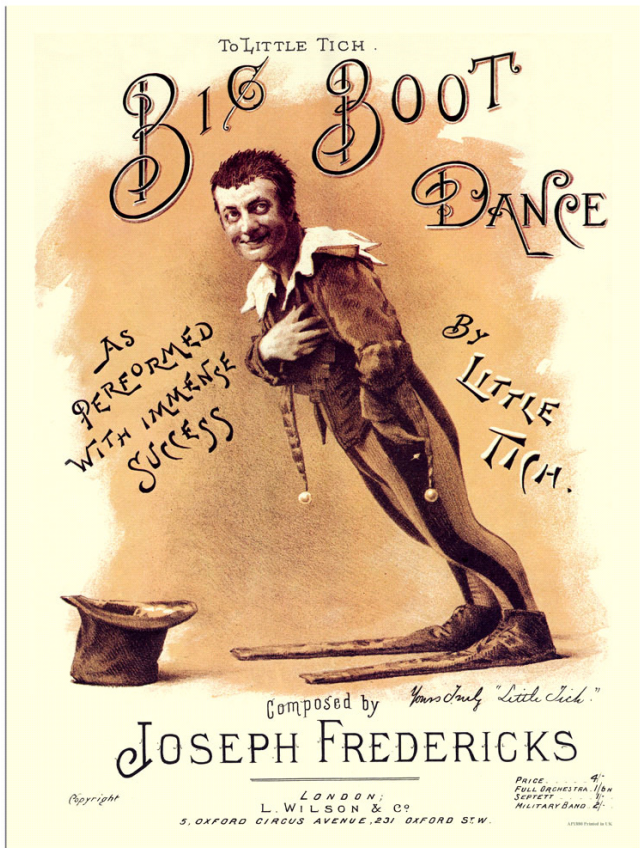
Harry was spotted by an impresario who took him on tour in America. He dropped the blackface act and perfected the act for

which he became best known, the acrobatic and comedic Big Boot Dance.

Dancing in big boots originated from clog dancing, with the outsize flat shoe being used for comic effect by American black comedians. Little Tich wore boots with soles

28 inches (71cm) long, impressing audiences with his ability to stand on the tips of the shoes and to lean at extraordinary angles

Despite his success in America, Harry was homesick and eventually returned to Britain, where



he added Christmas pantomimes to his repertoire, appearing at theatres throughout the country and in London at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, alongside Dan Leno and Marie Lloyd.

Harry toured in Europe and formed his own musical theatre company. At the height of his career Little Tich was one of the highest-paid performers either side of the Atlantic. He is quoted as saying: "I know I earn more than the Prime Minister but after all I do so much less harm,

don't I?"

He gave back to the profession that brought him status and wealth, becoming one of the founders of the Variety Artists' Federation and a member of the Grand Order of Water Rats. Nor did he forget those who were struggling further down the ladder. In 1903 — at the height of his fame — he was out on the picket line when 25 music halls in London were closed during a strike over pay.

While his professional life

flourished, it took a toll on his personal life. Married twice, he had two children but was estranged from his son. In 1927 he suffered a stroke, which was partly triggered by a blow to the head received accidentally during an evening performance at the Alhambra Theatre. He never recovered fully from the injury, and died the following year at his home in Hendon, aged 60.

Little Tich and his Big Boots can be watched on YouTube

Christine Hellicar

Halstead Horticultural Society

Hello All
I am pleased to advise that at a recent committee meeting of the Halstead & District Horticultural Society it was agreed that subscriptions for 2021 will be free of charge in recognition of the fact that due to the ramifications of Covid-19 our members have been deprived of the

bulk of the great programme of events that your committee had lined up for 2020.

Free membership in 2021 will apply to new members as well as existing members so if you have friends or relatives who might like to join us please ask them to contact me.

Allotment plot holders will, like other members, enjoy free membership in 2021 but their annual plot fee of £20 will still be payable.

Green finger
Barrie

blundellbarrie@gmail.com
We are on Facebook and Twitter @halsteadhort

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Once again in the light of the COVID-19 announcement on Saturday 31st October we have removed all diary dates and await updates from you, or your organisation, regarding recommencement of activities.