

Cuckfield Life

Inc. Brook St, Ansty & Staplefield

Local village talk,
by the village

Issue #15 : Jan/Feb '14

Free

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EDITORIAL

By David Tingley, Editor

It feels like life is getting back to normal again now. Those of us who work are hopefully getting back into the swing of it, school pupils will have all but forgotten about the lazy mornings and those who are retired have finally got M&S to themselves again!

This magazine is packed with local stories about the village. For instance **Tom George**, who goes to school here, is featured on **page 16** as he got a well-deserved treat partying at **No 11 Downing Street!** I'm pleased to say that Tom is in remission after receiving treatment for acute lymphoblastic leukaemia. It's heart-warming how many folk have rallied to his cause - even the **Cuckfield knitting group!**

There was recent news on the story of the **Play Meadow** behind the Holy Trinity Church - which I know is something heavy on the heart of many residents. Read the article on **page 6**.

If **New Year's Resolutions** are your thing, then **Neil Fairhall** - our local firefighter - has a few suggestions on **page 12**. If you are looking at getting involved in something for 2014, then **Margaret Tyzack More** from **Cuckfield Local** offers some advice on **page 13**. Plus the local **Scout group** is after support too - see **page 4** - so there's plenty to consider.

On **page 21** we have a very exciting Valentine's competition for you to take part in - thanks to **local florist Belinda Campopiano**. Tell us about who you love and potentially bag a great bouquet!

I'm also very grateful to **Andy Crane**, head chef at **Ockenden Manor**, for doing a guest spot on **page 22** where he shows us how to cook up a lovely Spring Chicken dish. A dish for that special night in perhaps?

Before I close I must mention the **Cuckfield Dramatic Society**, who are blending performance and good food on 15th February - a perfect mix! More on **page 7**.

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NEWS

We'd love to hear from groups, organisations and individuals about what's happening locally. Include a photo if you can. Email your stories to editor@cuckfieldlife.co.uk

First time buyers in the making



Mansell McTaggart Cuckfield are delighted to be sponsoring the U12s Cuckfield Cosmos football team this season, pictured in their new strip at their home ground at Whiteman's Green.

Mansell McTaggart has a history of providing local sponsorship and support to various clubs and societies throughout the district of its 16 offices. Richard Butler, director, comments: "It's of real importance to us as a local company to show our support and be able to give something back to the local community as a whole. Being a resident of the village myself it gives me particular pleasure in being able to support Cuckfield clubs and events throughout the year, which hopefully I can continue to do in the years ahead."

Can you help the Scout group?

1st Cuckfield Scout Group is looking for new Group Scout Leader (GSL) to help develop its programme and adult leadership team. The role will suit someone with experience in managing people and, if possible, someone who has had past experience with the scout movement, although this is not essential.

Scouting offers challenge and adventure to 400,000 young people and 100,000 adults across the UK. Scouts grow in confidence by trying out new skills and stretching themselves.

Cuckfield Scout Group has almost 100 members across three sections, Beavers, Cubs and Scouts. These sections are run by a number of adult volunteers who organise the weekly meetings and various other events such as camps and hikes. The GSL's role is to manage and support the Scout Group and its leaders to ensure it runs effectively and that scouting within the group develops in accordance with the rules and policies of The Scout Association. The GSL is the main point of contact between the various section leaders, the group executive committee and the district commissioner.

If you would like to find out more about this role in Cuckfield, please email the district commissioner Robin Springer at: robin.springer@gmail.com

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Warden Park head says farewell

Last month saw the end of an era at Warden Park with the retirement of popular head teacher Steve Johnson. During his 11 years' headship at the school, Steve has seen Warden Park flourish from a village comprehensive school to one of the country's first Academies. Here he shares his thoughts on retirement.

"Retiring from Warden Park isn't easy. It is a tremendous place to work and our excellent students make each day different, unpredictable and, above all, a considerable pleasure.

"Although I've continued to commute from Bexhill each day for family reasons, Cuckfield has been like a second home. There are so many positive people living here who are passionate about developing a community spirit that must be second to none. Warden Park, with 1500 teenagers on roll and 200 staff all needing to use Broad Street twice each day, could have been an unwelcome intrusion on village life but I hope Cuckfield people have appreciated some of the advantages of having the Academy on their doorstep.

"We're always happy for local people to use our facilities and our students have enjoyed participating in village events. I hope that an even more productive partnership will grow under new head teacher Jonathan Morris.

"Parents and Directors have given me two fine paintings of Cuckfield, so I'll be reminded of this unique and welcoming village community for many years to come. I'll be back too – on the odd holiday – to visit Bolney Wine Estate, Nymans, Wakehurst and Borde Hill. What a privilege to have these fine attractions on the doorstep.

"Thanks to everyone in the village who has supported Warden Park students and the development of the Academy. I'm leaving with so many fond memories."



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Play Meadow sale row continues

By Claire Cooper

The New Year has brought a devastating blow to campaigners fighting to preserve the Play Meadow off Courtmead Road, with the news that Mid Sussex District Council has approved plans to allocate the field for development.

Many villagers were confronted with the news when they visited the site for walks over the Christmas holidays, only to find the gates locked and a notice announcing the council's decision.

One angry resident described the decision as "a shameful act of appropriation" and added: "It was extremely disappointing to find that the Play Meadow has now been locked and basically stolen from the residents of Cuckfield for the purpose of building a single five bedroom house by Mid Sussex District Council."

But campaigners have vowed to continue their fight and are considering various options, including a judicial review.

Campaigner Flis Irving said: "The District Council has granted itself outline planning permission on a green space used for recreation by the community for the past 25 years - a informal green space outside the Development Boundary and within a conservation area.

"It feels like a "done deal" from beginning to end. The 880 or so names on our petition were given scant weight and the e-petition, with almost 300 'signatures' and many anguished comments, was ignored altogether.

"We are also extremely disappointed that Mid Sussex District Council is rushing to push through the sale of the Play Meadow before the ratification of the Neighbourhood Plan which, after many months of consultation with local people, proposed that it stay as valuable amenity land."

The site, which is owned by Mid Sussex District Council, is well-loved and regularly used by community groups, including the Next Step Nursery, Church Youth Club and Brownies.

Cuckfield Parish Council strongly objected to the proposals, organising a Special Extraordinary Council meeting for residents to express their concerns and attended by MSDC Cabinet members.

Chairman Nigel Page described the decision as 'extremely disappointing' and has written numerous times to the council to express his concerns about the information contained in the report considered by district council cabinet members.

In his letter, Mr Page points out the 'considerable and widespread' opposition to the proposals and the evidence contained in the Cuckfield Neighbourhood Plan, when 69% of residents who took part in a consultation said they wanted to see the land retained as open space.

He added that the Play Meadow is still needed as a unique informal open space for the village gives it locations and setting, there are no viable alternative sites available and disputes the legality of the decision. "In making the land available for development, MSDC have to show that the land is no longer used for its original purpose (Appropriation). The Mid Sussex Cabinet agreed on Monday 23rd December that it was no longer being used as open space and appropriated the land. This goes against significant evidence to show the land is still being used by the community. Outline planning permission was awarded by the MSDC Planning committee on the 12th making it then possible for the land to be put up for sale."

"A lot has been said by MSDC that the Parish has spare land behind the Church, we have considered this option, but is constrained by access and is future expansion for our burial ground. It would mean children having to walk through the active burial ground and Church yard to get to the alternative space. The Play Group have told us it is simply too far away and a risk for Children to get to and play in.

"I am genuinely concerned the Cuckfield and District community has lost forever a genuine social asset for the sake of a short term financial gain."

The news has also come as a shock to members of Holy Trinity Church who were active in the fight to save the Play Meadow. Colin Sewell-Rutter, PCC Secretary, said: "The church and wider village community will be both dismayed and bemused that Mid Sussex District Council has ignored some 1,000 objections and the Cuckfield Neighbourhood Plan. Its leaders will sadly appear too many as self-serving rather than community-serving."

But as the news sinks in across the village, leading campaigners are already gearing up to continue their fight. "We are looking into taking the case to a Judicial Review," said Flis. "Mid Sussex District Council may 'think it's all over', but that's where the similarity to this famous quote ends!"



Mid Sussex District Council have issued the following statement about the Play Meadow:

"Like every Council across the country, Mid Sussex District Council is under substantial financial pressure as a result of significant and ongoing funding reductions coupled with strong demand for services" said Councillor Jonathan Ash-Edwards, Cabinet Member for Finance and Service Delivery. "The sale of the land at Courtmead Road is yet to be formally agreed, but it is a valuable asset which was considered as a building plot going back as far as the 1980s. If the Council does decide to sell, the money received will help the Council continue capital investment in valued community and leisure facilities.

"The Council is very sensitive to the concerns of some local residents and understand their views about the loss of this land, but there is a solution available. The Parish Council owns a larger area of open space immediately adjacent to this site. The District Council's landscape experts advise that this land is suitable for use by local groups which will complement the large amount of open space already available in the village. We hope the Parish Council will continue to work with the Council to ensure this land is made available to the public".

Fun and frolics promised this February by Cuckfield Dramatic Society

Cuckfield Dramatic Society will be presenting "February Frolics" in a special performance on Saturday 15th February.

The evening will start with a performance of a short, one-act play followed by a three course meal and then some sketches. The meal will be catered by Toby (former Cuckoo Restaurant owner), with pie as the main course – please let the Society know of dietary preferences when ordering your tickets.

Doors will open at 6.30pm and the play will start at 7.15pm. There will be a licensed bar.

There are 10 tables of 8 available, of which two tables have already been reserved; be warned this is an event that sells out early, so get your order in early. There is a reason that it's so popular and being held on Valentine's Day weekend, so what is your excuse for not attending?

Tickets cost £15 per person and can be secured now by calling 01444 452911.

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Water, water everywhere and not a drop to drink!

The storms from immediately before Christmas created problems across the UK but there were some specific examples of power cuts and (ironically) water shortage in Cuckfield itself.

South East Water, the water supply company for the area, called the storms "their biggest challenge since the hurricane of 1987" with over 70 technicians, customer service staff and contractors working long hours throughout Christmas Eve and Christmas Day to restore supplies - most having cancelled their holiday.

Simon Robertson, Head of Distribution, said: "The storm caused numerous power cuts across our supply area which left many areas without water. We worked 24 hours a day throughout the Christmas period to restore supplies by attaching generators to those water treatment works, pumping stations and reservoirs affected."

Residents who discovered their taps had stopped working were able to pick up water supplies from the Football Club at Whiteman's Green or The Dolphin Centre or Sainsburys in Haywards Heath.

"I would like to take this opportunity to thank all our customers for their patience and support over the past few days while we worked to restore supplies," Simon continued. "We received a large amount of encouragement from customers who recognised the difficult situation we faced."

Stories from the water cooler....



The funniest bit was when we went to the Rose & Crown in the evening for a drink and were told "no one is allowed to use the toilet - no water to flush the loo " so we had to make sure we could wait until we got home to use the toilet! - *Rosie*



I am quite sure that the services are doing the best they possibly can. My voice comes from my dad who was at one time one of the work force that would be in charge of water supply and I know how hard he tried to rectify loss of water to users. - *Jane*



Holy Trinity Church had a brief power cut but was generally okay. Our home went off power at 1.30am on Christmas Eve and didn't come back on until 3pm on Christmas Day - just as decisions were being taken about disposing of freezer contents. - *Colin*



We had to eat the minstrels! - *Mick*



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Free lunchtime concert at Holy Trinity Church

The popular lunchtime concert series at Holy Trinity Church, Cuckfield is set to continue in 2014. Concert organiser Hannah Carter commented: "During 2013 the church hosted a range of concerts. It's been great to see how these free concerts have attracted so many different people from the community of Cuckfield from all ages and walks of life, including residents from local nursing homes, children from Next Steps Pre School, young mums with their small children, people working from home on a lunch break and the retired.

"In 2014 I am really keen to continue this series and grow this audience to include more people from all over Cuckfield. I am also hoping to work with the Mothers' Union who are considering running a lunch for the audience."

The 2014 series of concerts will include a varied programme with local musicians Ashley Beauchamp (pianist), Jane Haughton (mezzo soprano), Hannah Carter (cello) and poetry reading with Ros Thunder. Musicians from Sussex Symphony Orchestra will also be returning with performances from Alex Rider (harp) and the Herschel Quartet.

The concerts will take place on the first Friday of each month from 1pm – 2pm and the series will start on Friday 7th February with the Sussex Symphony Orchestra Harpist Alex Rider. Alex was the soloist when the orchestra performed Mozart's Flute and Harp concerto last September. This was a much acclaimed performance and this recital promises to be an excellent start to a really exciting series.

For more information about this series please contact Hannah Carter: hannah.carter@me.com

Family Concert 9th March

Ensemble Reza are also really excited to be returning to Holy Trinity Church in Cuckfield on Sunday 9th March for a concert designed for the whole family.

Tickets for this concert can be bought from Pepperbox & Wealden Stores in Cuckfield.

For more info see the website:
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Celebrating Scottish traditions

By Diane Johnstone, Hon Secretary

The Inaugural Meeting of the Mid Sussex Caledonian Society took place at the Queen's Hall in Cuckfield on 8th January 1926 and was attended by a Mr W.E. Mitchell, and Miss F. Mitchell, probably his daughter Frances Barbara, born 9th March 1890, both of whom were members of the initial Committee of the Society. Indeed, one of the Mitchell family's descendants, now in Australia, is trying to trace her family tree and is anxious to know of any Scots in the Cuckfield area who may be aware of that family, or indeed the Society in those early years.

This occasion, nearly some 90 years ago, was well attended and music was provided by the bagpipes and singers, one being a Scottish tenor of some repute, Mr Anderson Nicol, who had recently returned from a world tour! In these modern times we also enjoy the talents of our members and at our Burn's Night Celebration the bagpipes played by a couple of our members, will accompany the arrival of the haggis as well as the

guests. Later in the evening, after dining on the usual fare for this occasion, there will be some speeches, and songs from Burns, as well as readings from his poems. There will then be some dancing, which is enjoyed by participants as well as onlookers.

This is our first formal event of 2014 and takes place on Saturday 25th January at the Cottesmore Hotel, Golf and Country Club at Pease Pottage.

Our Society is open to all those who enjoy Scottish traditions and culture. There is a varied programme of social events throughout the year in the Sussex area, such as ceilidhs, talks, family walks, golf and our season is rounded off with a garden party. We hold several of these events at Cuckfield Old School Hall. Our main functions are, of course, St. Andrew's Night at the end of November and Burn's Night at the end of January, for which tickets are still available.

We welcome new members and for further information please contact secretary@midssussexcaledoniansociety.org.uk

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Some safe resolutions

TO THE RESCUE

By Neil Fairhall, Firefighter

Here are a few fire service New Year's resolutions. They won't all apply to everyone but maybe a few points can be taken up by a few people.

- I will check my smoke alarms once a week
- I will buy smoke alarms (if not done already) and get advice on the correct siting and fitting of the alarms
- I will close my doors at night time to protect my exit in the event of fire
- I will turn off all unnecessary electrical devices at night
- I will discuss a simple escape plan with my family or whoever I live at home with
- I will get any old (10 years +) electrical items tested (especially electric blankets)
- I won't overload my plug sockets
- I will get a qualified electrician to repair any electric issues
- I will get my chimney swept once a year
- I will use a fireguard with my open fire
- I will keep matches and lighters away from young children
- I will try not to smoke in my house
- I will take a mobile phone to bed (just in case)
- I won't use my phone (text and calls) whilst driving
- I will demist all my windows before driving
- I will maintain my car correctly in accordance with the law (ie. tyres)
- I will always wear my seatbelt and ensure all passengers do the same
- I won't drink and drive (more people are caught the morning after)
- I will not drive/ride at excessive speeds
- I will always endeavour to indicate when driving
- I will adjust my driving style for the type of weather faced
- I will make sure child seats are fitted correctly
- I will teach my children to cross the road in the appropriate places
- I will wear Hi-Vis clothing on my pushbike/motorbike
- I will wear a helmet on my pushbike/motorbike
- I will have the correct level of lighting on my push bike
- I will wear the appropriate protective clothing whilst riding my motorbike

These are a few of the resolutions that could help keep you safe in the new year. I am sure there are many more you may think of but these are a few of the resolutions that could help keep you safe in the new year. We hope you all had a great Christmas and enjoy a great 2014 – from all of us at the station.

If you have any questions about the fire service or articles of interest which you could like to see covered in this column please email Neil on Neil.Fairhall@westsussex.gov.uk



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Cuckfield Nature Village needs you!

VILLAGE GREEN

by Margaret Tyzack More, Cuckfield Local

We may be in the depths of winter but here's a quote to cheer you up: 'When Winter comes can Spring be far behind?' Spring will be full of new life, new birth and a time of hope, so here's some good news...

First, I'd like to tell you how Cuckfield Nature Village came about. Last August someone from Sussex Wildlife Trust told us about their new initiative: Nature Street. It got us thinking. With so much of our countryside being taken up by housing, what's going to happen to the natural world? 'There is no economy on a dead planet.'

There's a vast store of possible wildlife habitats in the gardens of villages, town and cities, so why not harness what we have and create wildlife havens throughout our whole village? Looking at a map of Cuckfield you might notice that it has a loose hourglass shape. Our idea is to maintain a wildlife corridor through the village, so that New England Wood and our open spaces are not isolated by building works but are safe havens for birds, insects, flowers, frogs, toads, small mammals and all the rest of our wonderful wildlife. It would also raise awareness of the importance of the natural world and our place in it.

Some of us from Cuckfield Local have been exploring this idea and, with help from others, have already started making connections with the inspiring work being done for nature in Holy Trinity School grounds, and a series of Spring Talks are being planned for February, March and April. You can find out more and buy your tickets from Wealden Stores and Sussex Craft Shop.

We've also created a local map at the monthly market to record gardens with ponds, bird boxes and feeders, wild flower borders and so on. Come and chat with us and put yourself on the map.

You may also spot the pictures of TV wildlife presenter Chris Packham with our stylish reusable cotton and jute bags - just imagine the number of plastic bags all of us using the Cuckfield Local bags have saved from killing wildlife, going to landfill or ending up in the sea. Give yourself a pat on the back!

Our collective creativity is unlimited and the hope of growing something good can counterbalance the despair we feel each time yet another new housing estate is proposed. After all, a house martin can build its nest just as well under the eaves of a new house. Night scented flowers can entice insects for bats in any garden.

Are you getting the picture? The seed is planted, the roots are taking hold. It's up to us to make the project bloom.

If you'd like to help, come and talk to us at the market (next is 8th February, 9.30am-12.30pm) or you can email makaet@yahoo.co.uk



Tree Festival celebrates record year

HOLY TRINITY CHURCH

Organisers of Cuckfield Christmas Tree Festival are celebrating a record breaking year.

This year's event, held over the second weekend in December, raised well over £10,000 for charity which has been shared between Holy Trinity Church and this year's partner charity Action for Deafness.

Paul Goldfinch, a member of the planning committee, said: "It was a fantastic festival and we are delighted to have raised more money than ever before. This year we had 77 trees decorated by a wide range of schools, shops, businesses, clubs and societies, including several new sponsors.

"The event was so successful that we ran out of quizzes for the children and mulled wine after the closing concert. We apologise to those affected and promise to get it right next year!"

The festival is now in its 11th year and has become a popular addition to the village calendar, attracting thousands of visitors. "Every year we welcome visitors from further afield as word has spread about this special event," said Paul. "This year they included visitors from East Grinstead, Horsham and one lady from Guildford who had made the trip especially to see the trees."

Visitors were entertained by a range of performers including gospel singers, handbell ringers, school choirs and a saxophone quartet. Performers from the village included Holy Trinity vicar Nick Wetherall and his wife Ruth who delighted visitors with an oboe and piano duet.

"We are very grateful to our performers who show such commitment," said Paul "Every year we are approached by new performers and are able to offer a wider and more varied programme."

The event is run by a committee of volunteers from Holy Trinity. "I'd like to thank everyone who helps to make this event such a success, from setting up, decorating trees and providing refreshments to dismantling and cleaning up the church. It's their effort that makes it such a lovely community event that people want to be part of."

He added that any trees left at the end of the weekend were sold to raise further funds.

Plans are already being made for next year's event, which will raise funds for the church and the Kent, Surrey and Sussex Air Ambulance Fund.



Above photo: Nick Wetherall presents a cheque for £5,800 to Chief executive of Action for Deafness Jane Shaw. The remaining £5,120 has been added to the Holy Trinity Church funds.



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Tom partys with the stars

VILLAGE PEOPLE

By Claire Cooper

Christmas came early for Cuckfield schoolboy Tom George when he partied with TV, film and sporting stars at Number 11 Downing Street.

Tom, 10, a pupil at Holy Trinity School, travelled to London with his mum Sarah to join the party, hosted by the Chancellor of the Exchequer George Osborne. He was one of a group of 40 children invited to the event by the Starlight Children's Foundation, a charity that grants wishes to seriously ill children.

The children were greeted by celebrities and sporting stars, including Chelsea Football Club's Frank Lampard, rugby star and Strictly Come Dancing contestant Ben Cohen, former Spice Girl Geri Halliwell and Harry Potter actor Rupert Grint.

But Tom's personal favourites were childrens' TV stars Dick and Dom (pictured).

"They were really good fun," said Tom, who added that entering 11 Downing Street was "a bit like going into the Tardis!"

Another special moment for Tom was having his face painted by one of London theatre's top make up artists. Tom chose a dramatic tiger. "It was brilliant - so good he was reluctant to wash it off at the end of the day," said dad Philip.

Tom is currently in remission after undergoing more than three years of treatment for acute lymphoblastic leukaemia. He is one of hundreds of children who have had wishes granted by the Starlight Foundation and last year was delighted to receive a dream trip to the original Legoland in Denmark.

Tom, his parents and older sister Ellie enjoyed a three day stay at the official Legoland hotel and were escorted around the park by Lars, their personal guide and 'professional queue-jumper!' "It was brilliant," said Tom, whose collection of lego models has grown over Christmas to include more Stars Wars Galaxy Squad sets. "Lars took us to the front of all the queues for all the rides. My favourite ride was the pirate boats where we got really soaked!

"The lego shop was massive too!"

Luckily for Tom, he didn't have to part with any pocket money in the shop as Lars presented him with a huge lego set as a parting gift.

"It was wonderful to be able to wander in and out of the park whenever we chose," said Sarah. "We were able to make the most of our three days without being too exhausted."

It's been a tough few years for the family, with life revolving around hospital stays, chemotherapy treatment and endless blood tests. "We did manage to get away on



holiday to Wales and Cornwall, but always had to make sure we had a hospital nearby just in case," said Sarah. "Fortunately, Tom was able to have most of his treatment at the Royal Alex by the same wonderful team of doctors and nurses and it became a sort of second home for us. We also had a wonderful nurse who came to our house every week to do blood tests which saved Tom from spending even more time in hospital."

Tom's treatment has meant he has missed nearly a year and half of schooling but, since returning to Holy Trinity full time, he has worked hard to catch up. "The staff at Holy Trinity were wonderfully flexible in allowing Tom to attend school whenever he felt well enough," said Sarah.

The family has also received huge support from family, friends and the community, including customers of the Bay Tree café in Haywards Heath which is owned and run by Philip and Sarah.

Customers have been snapping up hand-knitted and crocheted mug cosies being sold to raise funds for CLIC Sargent, a charity which provided practical help and support for the George family.

The colourful cosies were knitted by Siobhan Callan, a customer at the Bay Tree and by a group from Sussex Crafts in Cuckfield High Street led by shop owners Philip Turner and Sebastien Laveyrie (above).

"When Sarah called in to ask if we could have a go at knitting the cosies we were delighted to help," said Philip. "When she returned a couple of weeks later, we handed over a large bag full!"

The pair knitted and crocheted many of the cosies themselves, with customers and knitting club members also boosting the numbers. "We have one customer who lives in Rottingdean who knitted a bag full and dropped them off at our home in Brighton," said Philip.

Sebastian's mother, who lives in France also knitted a few and posted them to Cuckfield.

"We are really grateful to Philip, Sebastien and their knitters for taking the time and effort to produce these wonderful little mug jackets," said Sarah. "We sold them in the Bay Tree over the Christmas period and have raised £505 which is really fantastic!"

Philip and Sebastien are no strangers to fund-raising. Last summer they and their team knitted dozens of woolly hats for the tops of Innocent Smoothie bottles which helped raise money for Age UK.

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Freshen up your decor for 2014

DESIGN AT HOME

By Fiona Evans, Limited Editions

The Christmas decorations are gone, the tree recycled or packed away and your home is back to normal. Perhaps now that all the sparkle has gone and the rooms look treeless and bare, it's a good time to freshen up your living room or make the entrance and hall more inviting and welcoming. Here are a few simple ideas to create the best effect with minimum effort.

Firstly, to achieve a fresher space the most important thing you can do is to de-clutter. It can be a bit daunting and you need to be in the mood but it's worth the work and once you get going it becomes quite satisfying. Clear away objects you don't use or don't like any more, the charity shops will love you! The resulting clear space can really stimulate those creative juices to generate ideas for a new look.

If your living area needs attention, sometimes merely changing the position of your sofa can create a more successful social space. If possible, move the sofa away from the wall to the centre of the room opposite other seating with a coffee table between. This arrangement will encourage cosy conversation. If you are keen enough, it's a good idea to draw a scaled plan first using squared paper to explore your options, remembering to include additional lighting and TV position.

When the furniture is in place, enhance a neutral interior by adding accessories in different textures which will create depth and interest. Knitted, woven or sculpted cushions or throws, shaggy or fake fur rugs, all will melt together adding body to the space.

You may want to add a bit of colour to your white interior instead by using a stunning piece of wallpaper as a framed panel or accent wall. Just using a touch of colour can add dimension. Indian embroidered fabrics or printed designs are a great choice, for example, using rich colours beautifully crafted.

If re-decorating is the plan, how about being brave enough to choose purple? Pantone 18-3224 'Radiant Orchid' is the colour for 2014, at least in the fashion industry. A white interior with a small splash of purple could be striking. Used as an accent it would be fabulous against grey, cream or white. An idea for a glamorous bedroom perhaps?

Inspiration might come from a Christmas present you were given, such as an unusual picture frame, brightly coloured mug or stunning photograph. If that's the case, use the object as the focal point and take the colour, shape or style for further inspiration.

The entrance to your home is the first glimpse to your lifestyle and it's important to make it as light, airy and welcoming as possible. Allocate one corner for coats, boots etc. Try and organise the space perhaps with a shoe and coat rack. A large mirror will help a narrow hallway look larger by reflecting the light and use a pale colour or white for the walls.



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The poster features a photograph of a dark green vase with greenery on a wooden table, next to a small round clock and a white object.

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Tell us about your special someone this Valentine's Day

Is there someone special in your life who deserves a Valentine's Day treat?

Are you looking for the perfect way to show your mother, partner, friend, relative or neighbour just how much you love them?

Then look no further.

Cuckfield Life has teamed up with Chez Fleur to offer one lucky reader a chance to surprise their loved one with a beautiful Valentine's bouquet.

Village florist Belinda Campopiano will create an exclusive bouquet of red roses to make this Valentine's Day extra special.

"Valentine's Day provides the perfect opportunity to show someone just how much you care and what better way than to say it with flowers," said Belinda. "I'm really looking forward to reading the nominations, helping to choose a winner and creating the perfect bouquet for them."

To nominate the special person in your life, just send us an email telling us why you think they deserve to be surprised this Valentine's Day.

Don't forget to include an address where you would like the flowers to be delivered. (Recipients must live in the RH16/RH17 postal area.)

Entries must be emailed to competition@cuckfieldlife.co.uk by Monday 3rd February.

The lucky winner will be presented with the flowers on the morning of 14th February.

For those not lucky enough to win, Belinda is still happy to take orders for Valentine's Day and create and deliver the perfect bouquet. Orders must be placed by Friday 7th February.

Since starting her business two years ago Belinda has been delighting customers with her floral creations, from dazzling wedding bouquets, arrangements for the home, as well as churches and corporate events.

She is also well known in the village for her demonstrations and workshops, where she shares her tips with those wanting to have a go at creating their own displays and arrangements.

For more information about Chez Fleur visit www.chezfleur.co.uk

*We hope to feature the lucky winner in a future edition of Cuckfield Life, so it's important the nominees aren't camera shy!





Spring Chicken

ON YOUR TABLE

Prepare the Chicken – The day before

Remove the legs from the chicken, leaving the crown. Keep the legs aside for later.

Put the crown in a hot pan to colour the skin and then place in the oven at 180C for 8 to 10 minutes.

Cassoulet

Soak the beans in warm water for 1 to 2 hours. Wash them well and then cook for 1 to 2 hours in a chicken stock until soft. Do not salt until cooked as it will make it hard to cook them.

Confit the Legs

Take the legs left from earlier and cover with the parsley, garlic and salt and leave in the fridge overnight.

Next morning, wash the legs and cover in duck fat and then cook in the oven for 4 to 5 hours at 140C.

When they are cooked and have cooled down a little, remove the drumstick from the leg and chill in the fridge.

With the thigh, remove the bone, take off the skin and put aside for later in the fridge, shred the meat and also put in the fridge.



Next Food Market

8th February at the Talbot

9:30am-12:30pm

Note that there is *** NO MARKET *** in JANUARY
so we'll see you next in February

For market updates follow us on Twitter @Cuckfield Local

www.cuckfieldlocal.wordpress.com



Ingredients (serves 4):

- | | |
|--------------------|--------------------------|
| 4 baby chicken | 200g white beans |
| Bunch of parsley | 1 litre of chicken stock |
| Salt | 1 Litre of duck Fat |
| 1 butternut squash | 2 garlic heads chopped |
| ½ carrot | 200g breadcrumbs |
| ½ swede | 200ml demi glace |
| ½ celeriac | 25ml madeira |
| 300g broccoli | |
| 250g butter | |

Drumsticks

When the drumsticks are cold, pané in breadcrumbs.

Make a mixture of flour and water (to the consistency of double cream). Drop the drumstick in the flour mixture and then roll in the breadcrumbs. When done, deep fry in hot oil at 180C until golden.

Butternut Squash

Dice the squash into 2cm cubes and roast in an oven at 200C until golden.

With the trimmings, cook in a little water and when cooked, blitz in a food processor until smooth, season with the salt, sugar and a little bit of salted butter, this will be your purée.

Root Vegetables

Dice the carrot, swede, celeriac to 1cm cubes and cook them separately in a little butter, salt, sugar and just enough to cover them and cook until soft.

Jus

Reduce the demi glace by half and add 25ml madeira.

Broccoli

Cook the broccoli in boiling salted water for about 4 minutes.

To Plate

Make a line of the purée and place the diced butternut squash on it. Finish the cassoulet by putting in a pan with the root vegetable, the shredded confit thigh and a knob of butter. When it is heated through add the chopped parsley. Serve it in a small bowl and place on the plate.

Remove the breasts from the chicken crown and put them on the purée and serve with a little bit of the jus.

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Happy New Year

FROM THE MAYOR'S TABLE



By Mike Schlup

With a busy and stormy December behind us we can now look forward to a new year and hopefully some new mayoral candidates. More of that later.

The main event in December on the mayoral calendar was the Senior Citizens' Christmas dinner organised by the Independent State of Cuckfield. The Queen's Hall was packed with the finest members of our community who tucked into a lovely three course turkey dinner. This was followed by some excellent entertainment from the Holy Trinity School Choir and the Singing Allsorts plus friends. A big thank you to the many volunteers who cooked, served and washed up in order to make the event a success.

The same day saw the Cuckfield High Street Christmas shopping festival. All the shops had once again decorated their windows very nicely and it was a difficult task trying to choose the best displays. Good weather brought the crowds out in force to browse the many seasonal stalls set up by the various organisations in and around Cuckfield. The shopping festival also coincides with Holy Trinity's Christmas Tree Festival, another great fundraising event which now attracts many visitors from outside Cuckfield.

Unfortunately December saw the passing of Joe Mitchell, who was famously the first ever Mayor of Cuckfield back in 1966 and who paved the way for all of us who followed in his footsteps. As a result the mayoral election is now firmly established in the Cuckfield calendar and now is the time to start thinking if you would like to take part in the 2014 campaign. To find out more visit www.cuckfield.org

Next month I will report on how last year's funds have been distributed to the various organisations around the Parish. In the meantime keep sticking to those New Year's resolutions!

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WWI 'ditty box' on display when museum re-opens

Cuckfield Museum is closed now for its annual cleaning and refurbishment but will re-open on 15th February with a display about Cuckfield and WWI.

The display, which will commemorate the 100 year anniversary of the start of WWI, will include many items from the museum collections, along with memorabilia telling the stories of both the men at the Front and capturing civilian life in the village.

But the jewel in the crown will be the unique 'Ditty Box' which belonged to Cuckfield soldier Lance Corporal George Botting. Here we tell his story...

George Botting was born in Cuckfield in 1888 and worked as a nurseryman at Charlesworth Orchids in Haywards Heath. He was a keen sportsman and appears in early Cuckfield Football Club photos held in the Museum. He was also a well known local athlete, winning events at Haywards Heath Athletics Club.

In December 1915 he joined the Royal Marines Light Infantry and two months later, in February 1916, he married a Cuckfield girl, May Wells, who worked as a dressmaker and they made their home at 4 Jubilee Cottages in Broad Street.

By the summer of 1917, George had been serving on the Western Front for eight months and had been made a Lance Corporal. At the beginning of August he started working behind the lines as an instructor - a place of relative safety after the trenches - but on 23rd August he was tragically killed when a faulty grenade exploded prematurely. The wooden 'ditty box' in which he kept his most personal belongings was sent home to May and was passed down through the family. It was given to the Museum by his nephew Tom Wells and is one of the jewels of the collection. Largely intact from when it was sent home, it contains all May's letters and postcards, George's diary, his writing and wash things, pipe and tobacco pouch still with shards of tobacco and a case with his last two cigarettes.

The letters and diary give a vivid picture of life of a young married couple separated by war. There were constant delays in the post. May writes on 15th June 1917: 'So anxiously waiting a letter. No line, nothing for a



fortnight.' George's diary recounts day to day life on the Front: '24th June 1917 - Fell in at 5.30am and after a walk of 4 miles over the open and through trenches reached our job close to Gavrelle, clearing a trench for stretchers only. Very risky job in daylight.' Being a countryman, he was interested in the life in the French countryside which somehow continued: '16th August Weather lovely and warm and all the farmers very busy harvesting, mostly women and old men working though very few young men about excepting the miners, we being in the centre of a large mining district.'

May's last letter to George on 16th August is particularly sad in her belief that he will now be safe behind the lines: 'I feel more contented over you than I've done since you've been out, fancy eight months... it hardly seems possible does it, we have been married 18 months.' She makes an extraordinary observation in this letter: 'The guns have been awful this morning. The windows are chattering away with the guns.' The bombardment in Northern France could be felt in Cuckfield.

George's last diary entry was on 20th August: 'Day of rest. Go to Auchel in the evening for a walk, quite a nice place, actually boasting a bazaar after our style. Buy a pocket wallet for a photo of the best little Girl in the World.'

After George's death, May never remarried but looked after her mother at 4 Jubilee Cottages. Mrs Wells died in 1950 at the age of 100 and May died in 1957 at the age of 70.

The ditty box is on permanent display. More information about George and May Botting and Cuckfield during the First World War can be found in the Cuckfield Museum publications, *A Small Town at War* by Alan Miller and *Cuckfield Remembered* by Shirley Bond.



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February

- 21st **Cuckfield Evening Flower Club**
(please note that this is a change from the 2nd Friday in the month)
Sue Flight with a demonstration entitled "Spring has Sprung" 7.30pm for a 7.45pm start

- 22nd **Cuckfield Vintage Emporium**

March

- 28th **NSPCC Quiz**

AND ELSEWHERE

January

- 24th **Meet the Brewer Night** at The Jolly Tanners 6pm with John from Hurst Brewery
- 25th **Robbie Burns Night** at The Jolly Tanners from 7pm – 4 course meal £17.50 per head

February

- 1st **Music at The Jolly Tanners**
Nigel Bagge/Eddie Armer/Mike Piggott playing from 9pm – booking essential -
- 6th **The National Trust Mid Sussex Association Winter Lecture** at Clair Hall. 2.30pm
"The Churches of Christopher Wren"
by David Williams
- 7th **Free lunchtime recital** at Holy Trinity Church 1-2pm. Sussex Symphony Orchestra's harpist Alex Rider starts the Church's year of FREE lunchtime recitals with an exciting programme of music. Come and join us for what will be a really lovely lunchtime concert
- 8th **Cuckfield Local Food Market**
The Talbot Courtyard, 9.30 – 12.30pm
- 15th **Snowdrop Time** 10-12pm
Come along to Gables, Courtmead Road, and enjoy over 50 variety of snowdrops in June Raburn's lovely garden - not to missed
Entrance £2 in add of NSPCC
- 19th **Mid-Sussex Decorative and Fine Arts Society Lecture** - "The Trees Wave, the Clouds Pass - Virginia Woolf on Life and Art" by Karin Fernald 10.15 for 10.45am at Clair Hall, Haywards Heath
- 27th **"The Royal Sussex Regiment in World War 1"** at Holy Trinity Church, 2.30pm
Matthew Jones, Assistant County Archivist, will talk about the role of our "local" regiment during the war. Admission £4 Members and Patrons £3
Please note that this talk is in the church so there should be room for all who wish to attend
For more information please telephone Mike Nicholson on 01444 457448
Email: events@cuckfieldmuseum.org

March

- 9th **Family Concert with Ensemble Reza**
from 4-5pm at Holy Trinity Church
Come and join Ensemble Reza for a fun afternoon for all the family exploring classical music. Tickets available from Pepperbox in Cuckfield, Wealden Stores, Whitemans Green and Carousel Music, Haywards Heath



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