

# Whatlington News

OCTOBER 2024

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## WHATLINGTON'S PACKED SUMMER OF EVENTS

# THE PARTY'S OVER

## Wedding guests make way for pupils as school takeover of hotel goes ahead

Rother planners have given the green light for the conversion of Leeford Place Hotel into a boarding facility for pupils of Battle Abbey School

Work to change the inside of the building off Mill Lane will begin in November, with the first boarding students due to arrive in September next year.

In a statement the school said the existing building requires 'relatively little refurbishment' to allow for up to 32 pupils and 12 staff to

be housed there by converting the hotel's 17 bedrooms.

It will mean all boarding students can be accommodated on one site, instead of the present three.

Rother Council imposed conditions on planning permission that sufficient car parking and secure covered places for cycles will be provided.

*Continues page 3*

**YES TO A21 FOOTWAY BUT NO TO JUNCTION IMPROVEMENTS: P3**




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# Plans drawn up for A21 footway

## But no Whatlington Road junction improvements

The plan to install a footway alongside the A21 is set to go ahead.

As part of its £20m+ A21 safety package, National Highways has confirmed it is looking to implement the footway proposal from Hoath Lane to Whatlington Garage.

It is also planning a pedestrian crossing between White Chapel and the garage.

However, a parish council request to improve the A21 junction with Whatlington Road won't happen.

The highways authority's Sergio Dosti explained to the council: "The team has investigated possible solutions for the area. Unfortunately, due to several constraints including visibility and verge width, we are currently unable to provide a workable solution for this junction."

To install the footway will require overcoming several obstacles including the width of the current verge, the fact there are mature trees and tree

roots in the way and the need to stick to land owned by National Highways to avoid ownership conflicts.

The site for the crossing was based on the point where most pedestrians cross the road.

The need for improvements to the Riccards/Stream and Park Lane junctions with the A21 were recognised but there's is not enough money in the authority's budget, council chair Roger Fisher told last week's meeting after discussing the plan with highways officials.

Similarly the prospect of extending the footpath south from the pub was a non-starter due to finances and the width of the verges.

A planned public meeting to discuss the proposals would not go ahead, said Roger, as the plans were already in place. Instead comments can be made by email at [info@nationalhighways.co.uk](mailto:info@nationalhighways.co.uk) or call **0300 123 5000**.

**The Parish Council is to press East Sussex County Council to reduce the speed limit in Whatlington Road from 40 to 30mph.**

**It follows a plea by road resident Tim Underhill who said he knew of no other village in the area with roads that have no pavements but a 40mph limit.**

**Councillors agreed the road has become a rat-run to and from Battle after drivers 'discovered' it during traffic diversions in the area.**

### From page 1

The application to convert the hotel, which was converted from a dwelling house in 1984, had been submitted to Rother in January.

The school estimated the building required urgent repairs, including rainwater pipes and gutters, roof structure, ceilings and chimneys totalling £166,000.

Some residents had objected to the plan on the grounds that it would create extra traffic onto Whatlington Road and would increase noise and light pollution in comparison with the hotel, which was used primarily for weddings.

However Rother planners concluded this was not the case and that the new use would result in reduced traffic.

Planning officers stated: "It is considered that the existing hotel is in decline and that there is no reasonable prospect of a continued hotel

## The party's over

use in the long-term. The change to school boarding accommodation is acceptable, as it would support a longstanding independent school based in the area and the impacts on the surrounding area would not be dissimilar to the existing use."

Following planning approval Footpath Warden Bev Marks said: "I was pleased to see the county's Principal Rights of Way Officer highlighted concerns I had raised for non-motorised users on Mill Lane and suggestion that official 'SLOW' signs should be installed.

"However, disappointingly, Rother has not taken up this suggestion or recognised that suitable conditions to secure the existing passing place were necessary."

# Something for everyone as church plans historic celebration

There will be plenty of opportunities for everyone to join the celebrations marking Whatlington Church's 750th anniversary.

The celebrations will be focused in and around the church, and will include the traditional festivals of Christmas, Easter, Harvest Festival and Rogation, for which a village walk was suggested.

Other ideas discussed at a brainstorming meeting included:

- the Patronal Festival as the major event featuring flowers, art, literature and music
- talks about 750 years of the church including its more recent history, such as the fire and subsequent restoration
- activities for children, a quiz and competitions for all ages

**WHATLINGTON CHURCH**

# 750

**ANNIVERSARY**

■ a community memory project inviting local families with strong or particular connections to the church to share their personal stories and mementos.

As these proposals become more concrete, volunteers will be needed to lead on some of these events and help with publicity.

For further information email [chris.clarke47@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:chris.clarke47@hotmail.co.uk)

■ **The next planning and ideas meeting is on 4**

**November at 2.30pm in the church and all are encouraged to join the discussion.**

# Appeal for volunteers to join speeding crackdown

Even more speeding drivers face being reported to the police as the village Speedwatch Group returns to the roadside.

Equipped with a more accurate, hi-tech speed measuring device and the promise of regular police support, the group is set to play its part in the current campaign to make it safer to live and drive in Whatlington.

But to make a real impact extra volunteers are needed to join the team.

Regular roadside sessions send a message to local drivers that if they break the speed limit their details are more likely to be sent to the police for further action.

Speedwatchers only need to attend one hour-long session a month, training will be given and hi-vis jackets supplied. Sessions are arranged to suit volunteers' availability in groups of two or three.

Sussex Police have recognised the importance of the village Speedwatch group due to the speed of traffic along the A21 and its record of being one of the region's worst accident blackspots.

■ **If you'd like to know more contact Anne Smith on 07771 994389 or [info@whatlington.com](mailto:info@whatlington.com)**



## Sink hole causes chaos

Traffic chaos caused by work to the access between the A21 and The Ridge (opposite Dunelm) was made worse when a large sink hole appeared on the main road south of the Royal Oak.

The crater was caused by a burst water main, which led to properties in the vicinity losing their water supply on the same day many suffered power cuts.

The hole appeared on the morning of Friday 6 September and the road was closed for two days.

The closure coincided with overnight roadworks on both days for improvements as part of a £20m+ A21 safety scheme.

It meant vehicles arriving at the Whatlington Road junction with the A21 found the main road closed in both directions.





# Blues gig success prompts more Oak live music dates

Royal Oak landlord Hasan Fikret is to stage further live music events at the pub following the success of the 'King Blues Band gig last month.

The pub was packed for the appearance of the four-piece band, led by Sedlescombe drummer Dave Reece.

Two sets of rock and blues standards,

including a tribute to the late John Mayall, were enjoyed on one of the pub's busiest nights for a couple of years.

Hasan said: "It was a really good night and I've arranged for the band to become our resident group with some guest vocalists on the first Friday of every month." See page 2 for details.



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## Fete fun for all on two, four and six legs!



This year's village fete proved a big success for children, grown-ups . . . and dogs.

Among the traditional summer event's big hits on a sunny day were the hoopla where lots of prizes were won, the crockery smash where plenty of plates were demolished, and the wine or water challenge, where some people won wine but plenty more had to settle for water.

Faces were splashed with sponges, a rat was splatted, the number of sweets in a jar guessed and there was a book stall, dog agility course, vegetables, eggs and other local produce for sale from a farm trailer, and a BBQ.

Strawberries and cream, ice-creams and Pimm's also proved popular on one of the hottest days of the summer.

A new feature was a fruit, flower and veg show,



with rosettes awarded for the best on show, which later became prizes for the raffle.

Linda Walker, chair of the Village Hall Committee which organised the event, said: "I'd like to thank Yvonne Underhill for organising, and doing some of the baking, for the tea and cake stall, raising money for Whatlington Church. Lots of people contributed sweet goodies for the stall which proved very popular.

"Thanks to Hasan and all at the Royal Oak for the donation of the barrel of beer – another popular stall!

"Thanks to Helen of Helen's Hounds for judging the dog show and for everyone for bringing their dogs along to take part on such a warm day.

"Finally my thanks to all of the hall committee and their families and other volunteers for their time and incredibly hard work in making the fete a success."

**Overall the fete raised around £500 for the upkeep of the Whatlington Village Hall and the church raised more than £200 towards essential repairs.**





Best in show finalists



**DOG SHOW WINNERS**

- Waggiest Tail – Pip
- Prettiest Bitch – Milly
- Most Handsome Boy – Tango
- Champion Pup – Kodiak
- Clever Sausage – Pip
- Victorious Veteran – Shadow (who was 14 years old on the day)
- Junior Handler – Boogie with Raf
- Best Six Legs – Scooby & Doug, Ralph & Meg
- Dog Judge Most Wants to Take Home – Milly
- Best in Show – Pip
- Reserve Best in Show – Boogie



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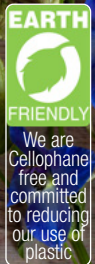
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# Farming life was tough in our Victorian village

**It was standing room only at a packed Royal Oak for Charlotte Moore's talk about life on her family's Whatlington farm in Victorian times. Around 50 people attended the event, which was arranged by Whatlington Connectors. Here are some extracts from her talk.**

**F** Stored away in a trunk at Hancox, the house where my family has lived since the 1880s, I found two battered volumes of 'The Farmer's Labour and Team Journal', one for 1896-7, the other 1899-1900.

Filled in by the farm overseer, Charles Sellens, who lived on site with his family, these ledgers record daily life on Hancox farm: the labourers' names, the hours they worked, the tasks they undertook and their wages, building up a picture of a vanished way of life on a typical Wealden mixed farm before mechanisation.

All the labourers were local, from Whatlington or Sedlescombe. Whatlington, with a population of around 350, was not much smaller than it is now.

About 70 per cent of the adult males recorded their occupation on the census as 'ag.lab.' – agricultural labourer. The pool of surnames is small – there are distinctive local names such as Apps, Bengé, Guy, Avann, Dann – and there was much intermarrying between the farming families.

The layout of the farm, smallish fields divided by mixed hedgerows and interspersed with patches of ancient woodland, remains almost unchanged. The old names of fields and woods



**Above: Hop poles stacked in cones after the harvest**

**Left: Horses were extremely important before mechanisation – including Prince.**



are still mainly in use.

In the 1890s there were usually seven men working six days a week, plus extra help, often from their wives, at peak times like haymaking. Now it is worked by one man – James Tassell.

Charles Sellens' handwriting is elegant but his spelling is idiosyncratic.

The tasks he lists include Thiseling, Rakeing up Rubish, Getting Water for Ploughing, Roleing the Oats, Dredging, Dicking, Moleing, Brisking, Weading, Tare Cutting, Scuffeling, and many more.

Horses were all-important, both for working the land and for fetching and carrying; the men often take a horse and cart 'to Battle for Mayse and Corn' or 'to Boadium for Beach [gravel]'

**Continues opposite**



**From previous page**

In the first ledger, the top rate of pay was 16 shillings (80p) a week, rising to £1 three years later. The lowest paid was the 'carter boy' on seven shillings (35p).

The men worked hard and with little respite – only Good Friday, Christmas Day and New Year are recorded as 'holardy'. Days off for sickness are rare.

Some of the workers lived in cottages on the farm, others walked to work from the village. It's not possible to judge the quality of life from these records, but what does emerge is a sense of continuity and social stability.

Those Victorian workers, the Sellens family (Raymond, Frank, and two Charleses), Fred Playford, Henery Thomas, James Guy, George Bengé – would have been astonished

by the changes brought about by 20th century technology and the impact of the World Wars.



***Villager Tracey Hunter, pictured left with Charlotte, attended the talk to find out more about her Sellens family link to Hancox Farm. She discovered an illegitimate son of Harriet Sellens – Charles – worked at Hancox. His great grandfather and great grandmother are her great, great, great, great grandparents!***



***Millicent Moore, owner of Hancox Farm, with grandchildren Hilary and Norman***

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# Never mind the roadworks, Rachel's art classes prove a real diversion for kids

After roadworks virtually blocked access to the Village Hall, causing the first of two art classes for children to be cancelled, some quick rescheduling was needed to keep the project on track.

And it proved a real success with everyone enjoying experimenting with different paints and techniques, says local artist Rachel Lister who organised and led the sessions.

She said: "Despite some panicked faces when greeted with the task ahead, the children all went on to create some masterpieces, so much so that a number of parents felt the need to buy picture frames to display their works!"

More than 20 children attended over the two days and Rachel added: "A big thank you to all the parents who took the time to bring their children along.

"It's thoroughly refreshing in this digital age to see that both parents and children still want to participate in traditional activities. Now we know it's wanted we'll plan ahead for more sessions in the future and keep everyone posted."



**Rachel's classes are not only for children. You can join her to learn some art skills at two Village Hall sessions organised by the Whatlington Connectors. They take place on 16 and 23 October at 10am-12noon. See previous page Art & Craft poster for more details.**





## Set free from the school syllabus



Rachel's Art Room in Whatlington was set up to give anyone who wants it a space to experiment with techniques and ideas and support their creativity.

She says: "This is especially relevant for children as I try to free them from school syllabuses and let them try different styles using their

own ideas.

"The Art Room is becoming more popular now, and I've branched out into supporting some after-school clubs where I follow the same mantra."

■ Find out more at [www.rachelsartroom.co.uk](http://www.rachelsartroom.co.uk)

### A21 FLOODING DEMAND

National Highways is being urged by the parish council to do more to prevent flooding on the A21 near its junction with Marley Lane. The fairly rare occurrence has now happened six times in the past 12 months, putting pressure on roads through Whatlington as drivers follow diversions. Sedlescombe Parish and Battle Town councils are to be asked to support the demand.

### MP INVITED TO PUBLIC MEETING

New Conservative MP Kieran Mullan is to be invited to the village for a public meeting to hear residents' views of the problems facing Whatlington. The meeting will be scheduled for the new year.

### FLEXIBUS NOW MORE FLEXIBLE

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# Sunlight Serenade

Good weather,  
good music,  
good food

The Twilight Serenade took place on a fine summer evening that saw around 70 people enjoy the music of the Bodiam Concert Band while consuming their picnics.

The band played a range of music including numbers from Robbie Williams' *Swing When You're Winning* album.

And the refreshments provided to the musicians certainly struck the right note with the band, whose leader said were "much better than we're normally offered!"

He said that the Whatlington Twilight serenade was one of his favourite events and looked forward to returning next year.



**Linda Walker, chair of the Village Hall committee that organised the evening, with hall president Annette Williams, who came up with the idea of the serenade in 2016, and husband Charles**

# ST MARY MAGDALENE CHURCH

Churchwarden: Jeffrey Bridges 01424 772535/07446 903239

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# Green light for gas to keep churchgoers warm

In March the gas heating boiler in the church developed a fault, for which the repair was quoted at over £700, this shortly after it had been serviced. The PCC concluded that as the boiler was more than 10 years old it may be better to consider replacement.

Unfortunately this was not as simple as it may seem.

The Church of England has an ambition to become carbon net zero by 2030. As part of this it has become a requirement that any church wishing to install a new replacement gas or oil boiler must obtain what is known as a Faculty, essentially planning permission.

The aim of this is, of course, to direct churches towards using electric forms of heating, be it heated pew cushions, under pew heaters, radiant heating, electric boilers or air source heat pumps.

Any church wishing to install a new gas or oil boiler must make an effective case for doing so.

As Whatlington has free standing pews any form of under pew heating is not an option and given that we have a relatively new underfloor heating system we felt that we would want to retain this.

Some detailed work was done to gain estimates for electric boilers and air source heat pumps. The electric option required a new 3

By Jeffrey Bridges  
Churchwarden

Phase power supply and under-sink hot water heaters, which came in at over £7,000.

An air source heat pump worked out at more than £16,000, with the caveat that the existing three radiators would likely also need to be replaced, along with new, large-bore pipework. We were also advised that a heat pump would

struggle to heat the building, given that a medieval church has little in the way of insulation!

The cost of electricity was also a consideration. The exercise has proved both interesting and informative.

A new gas boiler was £2700 and a straight

replacement with cheaper running costs as well. Our architect was consulted and agreed that gas was the way to go as matters currently stand.

We are fortunate that the Diocese of Chichester takes a more pragmatic view of this than some others and, having made a detailed case, we were granted permission to have the new gas boiler.

All of this has of course taken some time, but the new boiler is now fitted and working, so the church will be warm for the winter!

■ Visitors to the church and churchyard will see that we have had all the grass cut now that the wild flowers are finished, so it's all tidy for next years spring bulbs! We are also hoping to get the irregular paving in the Garden of Remembrance attended to and estimates for that are in the process of being considered.

■ On Sunday 29th there will be a United Parish Communion held at Whatlington at 10.30am and again the hall car park will be open.

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Find out how you can get hold of the plan and make comments – by 21 October – at [www.rother.gov.uk](http://www.rother.gov.uk) search Council Plan 2024.





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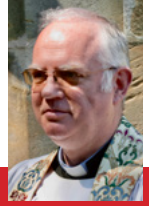
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# In a torn-apart world cohesion starts here



By Rev John Hawkins, Rector, Whatlington Church

**F** We live in a world where society seems to be torn apart by all sorts of factions. For all kinds of good patriotic reasons, we want to defend 'our' country above all others, while some want 'our' country to govern others, or even to destroy others.

Many would like to keep our country separate from others as it's a bit overcrowded, and others set off to find pastures new. Even the church is being torn apart (again) by different factions who think 'their' way of doing church is the only way. Sadly, this is nothing new. It has been the same all down the ages.

Jesus prayed to the Father that we might be one, even as He and the Father are one. On Sundays, we have been looking at some of the letters of St Paul who says that the Christian family should be different. There should be unity and harmony, with no distinction on the grounds of colour, race or gender.

A few brave churches in the cities are attempting to model this in what they call 'inclusive church'. For us, I think we have to start in a small way within our own community, learning to accept one another as we are and without judgment. Affirming that God, who is love, loves each and every one of his children equally.

I also have to see that we are one parish together with our sisters and brothers in Sedlescombe. In that context, as I looked at the history of Sedlescombe, I found a lot of references to the well-known house, Hancox, as if it were part of that parish. But surely it is in Whatlington?

Of course, the boundaries have moved around a bit. But I dug a bit further and found that house had been built on the boundary in such a way that the property actually fell into both parishes. Charlotte tells me that villagers used to go through the dining room when 'beating the bounds'. Some far-seeing builder in the 16th century must have known that the two would become one!

That doesn't mean we have to change our allegiance. Of course, we love our own church



and I know that the community supports St Mary's when it can. That's as it should be. Our church has played an important part in the cohesion of the community of Whatlington. I hope it will continue to do so for many years to come.

John

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