

Eastington Community News

September /October 2009

Nº. 117

The grand opening of the brand new Eastington Community Centre on Owen Harris Memorial Ground (OHMG) and the Autumn Flower Show in the Village Hall, certainly made the busiest late summer weekend Eastington has known in a long while. How wonderful it was to see so many people supporting the opening and enjoying themselves. Congratulations to everyone who worked so hard to make this dream come true. Inside you can read more about those who made it possible, plus an interesting account of the great day. And how touching it was to have Mrs. Shirley Harris to cut the ceremonial ribbon. I know she thoroughly enjoyed herself too, because she sent flowers and her appreciation of the wonderful day that she, and indeed all of us, will never forget.

I found it fascinating to listen to the tape of Owen Harris, that Mrs. Harris sent me. In it he spoke about his treasured Gloucester Old Spot pigs. Sadly, Owen died just days after that recording (20 years ago,) and it was never broadcast. This was the time that Eastington was under threat of 1000 houses and I persuaded Laurie Lee to release 1000 protest balloons at the King's Head to publicise our plight. At that time I was a 'newcomer' – all the way from Stanley Downton – it was made clear to me that nothing ever happened in Eastington and a playing field had been sought for over 30 years. Eventually, I plucked up the courage to ask Mrs. Harris if we could acquire some of Owen's land for a playing field. I was overjoyed when I heard her say, "I'll do better than that, I'll give the Parish 8 acres". And that was the start of the Owen Harris Memorial Ground. (For the rest of the history see inside.)

By this selfless gift, not only did Shirley Harris provide us with a recreation ground for future generations to enjoy, but it also removed the incentive to accept the developer's carrot; a small piece of ground in return for building 1000+ houses. We, and future generations in Eastington, will have enduring gratitude to Mrs. Harris. It was a delight to see her in sprightly step and sharing in our enjoyment at the opening ceremony of Eastington Community Centre.

Of course it would be foolish to suppose that the threat of large-scale development will ever go away from Eastington. If you go the website of Keep Eastington Rural, (KER,) you can see that sufficient land for around 3000 houses in this Parish has recently been recommended to Stroud District Council by developers. This is for inclusion in the next update of (what used to be called) the Local Plan. In these modern times, new wording has been devised for this process, which may take significant effort to comprehend. The *Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment* (SHLAA) will open for public consultation shortly; so stay alert!

The 27th Autumn Flower Show was a success again this year, and it's good to hear about renewed interest in this regular Village event. When the allotments are cultivated, there should be even more produce competing in future shows. Visitors to OHMG will have seen the additional 2 acres that were purchased by the Parish Council (EPC,) from Mrs. Harris at the beginning of this year. With help from the Ecology department of Gloucestershire County Council's Environment Directorate, we plan to restore the old pond in a way to encourage and reintroduce wildlife to this habitat. This Parish pond will be a valuable educational amenity and a place to relax. The most popular proposal so far for the remaining acre, is for a children's play area.

You can see inside more details from the Parish Council; there is so much happening. At last, the land held by EPC from the Charlie Bullock Trust, has been converted into hard cash. The money could be used to help start up new clubs, activities, or projects providing these are of direct benefit to residents of this Parish. There are many possibilities, not least of which would be something for the young people of Eastington. **Your** ideas, suggestions and assistance are eagerly awaited.

If you are interested in joining the **Parish Council**, to take part in supporting the needs of this Village, there is now a **Casual Vacancy**. Please apply to EPC Clerk, Mary Gribble 01453 825279 (mgribble@btinternet.com).

Flood Group Co-ordinator: we now have flood wardens, but this important post remains open. For this Parish to take advantage of flood alleviation measures on offer it is important to fill this position.

Andrew Niblett (Editor) 824841 (niblett.parish@talktalk.net)

Tom Low (Distributor) 823425 (tom@millend.demon.co.uk)

Next Deadline:- All articles by **Friday 6th November 2009** please!

Next Delivery:- by **Monday 23rd November 2009** please!

Eastington Community Centre News



Eastington Fete

What a fantastic day this was and brilliant kick-start for the centre. On 5th September, hoards of people wandered down to see the new building and enjoy the craft-fair and stalls on display. To top it all, Mrs Shirley Harris came all the way from Selsey to open the building and was delighted with what she saw. She and two of the youngest members of playgroup (Martha Cozens and Sophie Fudge) were delighted to officially cut the ribbon and 'press the button' which opened the front-door and officially marked the centre as open. We would like to thank Mrs Harris, Martha and Sophie for their help. It was good to see some of the older folk visit the site and re-acquaint themselves with Mrs Harris. We do know everyone had a memorable and (for some) moving day.

Also, many thanks go to all the helpers in the village (and beyond) who came and gave their time both on Friday night and Saturday in helping get the site ready for such a wonderful event. To donate time organising and running something like this is not easy but everyone pulled together and created something for the village to be proud of.

Similarly, we were delighted that the (*first?*) tug-of-war was run between Alkerton Rangers Football Club and Eastington Cricket Club. The winners by a long shot, were ECC. Suffice to say, ARFC... you need to beef-up a bit! It was also good to see some veteran tug-of-war specialists pay a visit and show ECC how it really should be done. Thanks chaps. We don't know much about the history of the original Eastington tug-of-war team but would love to find out. Perhaps someone would like to write-in and enlighten us with their background knowledge?

We would like to thank **Stephen** and **Linda Broomhall** most wholeheartedly for the generous donation of deliciously roasted prime pork joints for the pig-roast. The succulent savouries wowed the crowds and satisfied a great deal of hungry stomachs.

Here's to an exciting and prosperous fete in 2010!!

**Eastington
Community
Centre**

**NOW available for weddings, parties,
regular bookings, sports events, clubs.**

*to discuss your requirements and dates
Telephone Vanessa on 828557.*

This is now your chance.....

...to set up a user group or sports group for benefit of the children and adults of the village. Support, help and a beautiful new building are available to anyone wishing start a club or society within *our village!*

Contact Vanessa on 828557 for a friendly chat.



Eastington's New Community Centre

If you wander down Snakey Lane to the Owen Harris Memorial Ground, you will see an extraordinary building. This is our new community centre for Eastington and is the result of thousands of hours of hard work by volunteers within the village.

It could be argued that this building really started some 20 years ago when the very first attempt to create a centre on the grounds suffered from runaway costs and lack of funding, despite a huge goodwill effort from the village and some rather superb efforts for raising funds by several individuals. Sadly, ESCA (Eastington Sports and Community Association) never made it far enough to see the fruition of their efforts.

However, some seven years ago a few members of the village re-visited the idea of building a new centre on the grounds and sowed the seeds of re-fundraising and starting again, despite reservations of many who had unfortunately experienced the misfortunes of the previous attempt. And so, the *Eastington Community Project Working Group* (ECPWG) was created and a new charity formed to undertake the challenge of building a new centre before the existing one fell apart.

The ECPWG worked tirelessly on fundraising and appointed an architect who had an existing design for a building that had previously been used for a carbon-zero house. This was to scale-up perfectly as a blueprint for the new centre.

As time went by, Gill Glover, who managed the ECPWG, had some wonderful successes with fundraising. She worked extraordinarily hard in her personal time, filling-in grant applications and securing the funds for construction of the building. Equally, Jayne Elder was also giving a serious amount of her own time, building a business plan to assist Gill, doing formal housekeeping tasks and securing the status of the new Owen Harris Memorial Ground Charity - No mean feat in itself!

Coupled with all of this, much local fundraising was done by Gill, Jayne and others in securing donations from individuals. This came from printer cartridge recycling, collection boxes and writing to companies to ask for donations. Slowly, but surely, the pot of funds gradually increased.

During this process, the design of the building morphed time and again to eventually encompass a multi-use centre which could accommodate early-years youngsters, right up to sports clubs such as cricket and football. As a result, a dual use design was created with a large meeting hall and sports changing facilities. However, as the layout settled on to something useable and accurate, so the cost rose from an estimated £250,000 to a more realistic £450,000! Such a target was daunting. At this point, members of the committee could have easily turned away and allowed the project to collapse. After some deliberation, the key players agreed to continue working on it for a further six months to try to achieve the goal of obtaining enough funds to start construction.

And so, a second wave of fundraising began. The ECPWG merged with the Owen Harris Memorial Ground Management Committee which maintained the existing (old) building and oversaw the running of the grounds. Gill again worked tirelessly and managed to gain national grants to increase the amount of funds available for the build. By then we had secured grants from local, district and national funders. At its most local, Alan Smith (who as you know, runs Smiths opposite the Owen Harris Grounds) probably secured the build by donating a large cost of constructing the foundations towards the budget. This was the turning point for us.

By May 2008 the 'go, no-go' decision had to be made. At the time, costs of plant and materials were rising rapidly and grants were approaching expiry. The project was still £40,000 short of being able to fund a complete build. However, the small group of individuals who had weathered the course for six years and been through the highs and the lows of the project did not want to turn their back on what they had achieved. Nor did they want to live with the 'what if?' question. The decision was made by the trustees of the charity to build the centre as a reduced-build, which effectively consisted of just a main hall and toilets. The idea was to create a shell of a building with functional hall and then complete construction over time as funds became available.

Eastington's New Community Centre / continued...

As construction started, Gill once again took up the 'fundraising challenge' and had further wonderful successes with grants. As a result, we were delighted to be able to raise enough cash to instruct a full build, gaining the changing rooms, complete toilet blocks and upstairs rooms.

During the fundraising process, we also successfully raised a further £55,000 to allow the new building to contain green-technologies in the form of solar-photovoltaic and solar-thermal panels which subsidise the running costs. This was a last-ditch attempt to raise the required funds as two previous attempts had failed; such is the competition for these technologies.

The rain of summer 2008 delayed the project by some six weeks. The wet prevented the walls from being completed. At the same time, a re-tendering process started which allowed us to re-visit some of the quotes we had during the 'boom' time in the construction industry, which was now fast approaching bust. This re-tendering made use of more local tradesmen who were now available and allowed us to cushion the effects of additional costs which were eating into our contingency. One of the re-tendering efforts was a re-design of the roof using different materials which reduced costs dramatically. The re-tender process kept us on budget and stopped costs spiralling out of control.

The roof-redesign delayed the project a further three weeks as work could not continue until all warranties and structural sign-off had been achieved. As soon as this was obtained, the work re-started and progress was rapid.

And so, on June 20th 2009, the building was complete, exactly one year and one day after construction started. In one respect though, this was the start of the real hard work for the committee members as the outside needed sorting-out in order to make the whole site presentable and usable.

The activity on the site was to say the least 'busy' with many helpers and volunteers giving up their evenings and (in some cases) working days to donate time and labour for the demolition of the old building as well as site clearing, paving and decking the new building. This kept a lot of us very busy and away from our families for many evenings after a 'day at the office!'

It all culminated in a final site-clearance frenzy on the evening of 2nd September where some very determined volunteers braved the gales and driving rain of an ex-hurricane, in the dark to tidy everything up and make it look good for the opening ceremony that weekend.

As a result, Eastington Community Centre is complete, operational and available for hire. With under floor heating, super insulated walls and roof, kitchen, bar area, disabled access, two-team changing rooms and referees changing room. This was made possible by voluntary labour, grants, charitable companies and some very charitable members of Eastington.

In essence, Eastington now has a new building which we all should be proud of. The idea was put together by a few individuals and seen-through to conclusion by determination and cooperation, even at times when the obstacles and targets seemed insurmountable. It's not every day a village gets a new community centre and our village now has a super looking building in 8 acres of sports field which will have a positive impact on the community for many generations to come.

Thank you

Firstly, the charitable members of the entire project need a mention and a big thank you as their efforts collectively created a coherent team that worked together through thick-and-thin, putting in some very late nights and early mornings on this whole project.

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The views expressed in ECN are not necessarily those of the editor.



**NEW EASTINGTON BABY
& TODDLER GROUP**

Now Under New Management.....

**Monday & Wednesday Mornings
10:00 till 11:30am.
Eastington Methodist Church.
opposite butchers.**



We welcome parents, grandparents, child minders, aunts, uncles and anyone else who wants their little ones to have fun in a creative learning environment.
Co-ordinator: Clare – 07748 015034 – please phone for details.

**Come and Enjoy - First Session
Free !**



Eastington's New Community Centre Heartfelt thanks go to...

Gill Glover for moving the project forward from initial discussions to a tangible building design and achieving the mammoth and time consuming task of raising the majority of funds required to build the centre. Gill's drive, determination and successes with fundraising have been outstanding.

Jayne Elder for working tirelessly with Gill in producing the project plan, working hard to gain charity status and keeping all documents in order over the years, as well as attending just about every meeting and writing all those minutes.

Andrew Cozens for being about seven days a week to solve problems, come rain or shine and helping out with plant and labour, despite a serious health-scare mid-project. His *JCB* and *LoadAll* have proved very useful over the build lifetime and deserve a medal themselves!

Martin Elliot and Mark Whitehead for mooted the original idea (with others) of a new building and also being available most weekends and evenings for general work required on the site, year-in, year-out. Also, thanks to Martin for all those cups of tea.

Mike Hadley and Tom Low for the extraordinary amount of donated daytime and evening labour they gave by installing an absolutely first-rate kitchen and superb external decking.

Chris Hayes, Martin Gregory and Joe Fudge for the brute-force required in getting the old building demolished and the site ready for use.

Smith's for lending the safety fencing for so long and helping out in times of need!

Alan and Joe Loveridge for the work on the mini-digger, helping prepare the site for the opening.

Brendan O'Neil for all the external paving and last-day site-management.

Stonehouse Accessories for cutting so many copies of keys for us.

Vic Lord for original building images and graphics used on the website

Marc Freebrey for additional graphics and new logo design.

Chris Smith for additional electrics and PAT testing the electrical equipment.

The bulk of the funding came from grants from councils, landfill tax-credits and private trust funds. The larger funders (alphabetic order) were:

Biffaward, Cory Environmental, Eastington Parish Council, Garfield Weston Foundation, Gloucestershire Environmental Trust, Ibstock Cory, Stroud District Council, The Charlie Bullock Trust

Additionally, the green technologies were funded by **The Big Lottery** and **The Low Carbon Buildings Programme**.

Many local companies also donated either financially or directly with materials, labour or a free service. These included:

Arc Energy, Geotechnical Engineering, Lafarge Plasterboard, Renishaw, Sanctus, Smiths, Spencers, Stroud and Swindon Building Society.

Equally though, many private individuals and smaller groups also donated cash in one way or another. Not wanting to embarrass anyone, we haven't named them here as some of these donations were anonymous. We extend thanks to everyone, no matter how small the donation was.

This project came in at about £5,000 over original budget. The final cost for the build is £530,000 of which, £20,000 was spent in getting to the build stage which included design fees, structural engineering and build preparation. The building was designed by *Peter Holmes of Potter & Holmes* who project-managed the site and oversaw the build. Peter gave us a lot of his own personal time to the project and spent many late nights and Saturday mornings attending meetings and patiently designing and re-designing the interior, until we had what we needed.

Much of the build work was using local contractors who have done an excellent job with the construction. The *local* contractors used are as follows (and many can be found advertising in the ECN)...

Groundworks and Foundations - *Smiths*

Plumbing and Heating System - Fred Clifford of *FW Clifford & Son*

Electrical, Alarm and CCTV - Steve Gallagher of *Electrical & Alarm Services*

Plastering - Kev Cook of *KC Plastering*

External Paths - Brendan O'Neil of *Brendan O'Neil Ground Work Services*

Kitchen - Mike Hadley of *Hadley's Plumbing/Kitchens/Bathrooms*

Decking - Tom Low

Flooring and Tiling - Mark Churchill of *D&D Flooring*

Carpentry, General Build and Site Management - *TADCL Ltd*

Painting & Decorating - Alan Laurence

Eastington's New Community Centre Heartfelt thanks go to... continued.....

The lists above are probably not complete. Many others have helped us during the years with activities ranging from fundraising through to providing design advice, time and labour for the build. Some of these were our own committee members and trustees not mentioned here but have stuck with us through thick and thin and been there when we needed them.

Thank you all very much for your help.

This centre is now available for hire. It's a perfect venue for parties, clubs or events with a beautiful view across the hills. If you are interested in a party at the site, or are thinking of starting a regular club, please call Vanessa (828557) for a friendly chat and further details.

Footnote

It was with great sadness that we heard of the death of Sue Jones recently. Sue was one of the earlier committee members and raised £1000's with the '100 club' that she ran for many years. The money kept the 'dream' going as it was so important for the running of the old terrapin building. We owe a great deal of thanks to Sue. Her memory should not and will not be forgotten.

Sponsor a chair for 'Posteriority'

Now that do we have our fabulous new building we have realised that we haven't got anything to sit on!

Therefore we are asking if you would like to sponsor a chair. We will label your chair with the name of the person who sponsored it such as a child or someone close to you. Or you can buy a chair in memory of a loved one. We have already had over 70 pledges for chairs for the opening fete which is fantastic.

Each labelled chair will cost £15. 200 chair pledges will enable us to get a cost price chair storage trolley from Zoot Office Furniture Brokers Ltd.

If you would like to sponsor a chair you can enclose your chair payment (cheques payable to OHMG please) in an envelope with your contact details, the details of how many chairs you would like to sponsor and who you would like to name on your chairs and send it to:

Gill Glover, Lynton House, Alkerton, Eastington, Glos. GL10 3AA

Contact Details for the Owen Harris Committee:

Mark Cousins (Chair)	828557	Gill Glover (Funding Manager)	828782
Jayne Elder (Secretary)	828027	Andrew Cozens (Treasurer)	824793
Vanessa Cousins (Bookings Clerk)	828557		

Eastington's Amateur Running Club - The Jolly Joggers!!

**Meeting Tuesday's 9.15am for 9.30am start (term time) and
Sundays 5.30pm for 5.45pm start (all year).**

**We meet at the New Community Centre, The Owen Harris Memorial Ground,
Eastington.**

Fantastic new facilities!

Aiming at beginners but all abilities welcome!

Contact Laura on 07855 289 159 for more details!



EASTINGTON PLAYGROUP

Tel 07977 342742

Charity number 1084981

Eastington Playgroup is due to reopen for the new term on Friday 4th September and we are really excited about using the new community building to hold our sessions from Monday's through to Friday's every morning and most afternoons, depending on the demand.

We will initially start the term with settling both the children and the staff into the new building and we will then look at the children's interests to plan their activities.

We currently have spaces available and anyone interested in their child attending our Playgroup, the minimum age that children can start is 2 years and 6 months.

Nursery vouchers are available for children subject to the minimum age criteria - for more information please phone 07977 342 742 where you can speak to the friendly staff for an information pack.

Remember you don't have to live in Eastington to come to Eastington Playgroup.

Autumn Flower Show Update.....

Last Saturday was certainly a full day for those who live in Eastington! Not only was it the opening of the new Community Centre, the Autumn Fruit, Flower & Vegetable Show also took place in the Village Hall. This year was the 27th Autumn show and it was really encouraging to see so many new and familiar faces taking part in the event. There were 28 exhibitors & 170 entries, which was a great improvement on last years numbers, which is excellent – it would seem the trend towards 'growing your own' has really caught on in Eastington. We are hopeful, that with the allotments now about to "Dig" that the Spring show, which takes place at the end of March, will continue to build on this local tradition. We may well have competition though. The pupils at Eastington Primary School now have their own raised beds, so watch this space!

There was a note of sadness to the day. Sadly Mr C Haines the show Vice Chairman had recently passed away. Our thoughts and best wishes go to Liz and her family during this time.

If you would like to find out more about the Autumn & Spring Flower show, please contact Sarah Underdown on: 01453 823285

Letter from John Merrishaw

Southfield
Park Rd.,
Stroud, Glos

Dear All,

Thank you to all those people who signed my birthday card (14). I did not know I had so many friends.

I will always remember you all. I hope the new owners, Jayne and Keith will be happy there.

John Merrishaw

EASTINGTON PARISH COUNCIL MATTERS

OHMG Community Centre

I am extremely proud of the selfless efforts of the OHMG committee in bringing the building of our new Community Centre to fruition. The dedication of the few key players together with a small band of regular helpers have been able, with other helpers and financial support from within and outside the village, to bring to us a superb environmentally friendly building on time and within budget. Everyone concerned should feel justifiably proud.

Sale of land behind Fox House

The sale of our Fox House Land has been progressing over the past few weeks, with a few unplanned and lengthy delays but will, hopefully, have reached completion by the time this edition of ECN is in your letterbox.

Completion will mean the next stage of complying with the terms of the endowment, so we will need your suggestions, ideas, thoughts and plans as to what we (every Eastington Parishioner - young and old) can best do to give benefit to our village and its inhabitants. Please do not sit on your hands and think that someone else will respond, because they probably won't, so write, phone or email me with your suggestions. Please, this means all of you.

Update on Javelin Park Incinerator

I have also been to meetings, a photo opportunity and a demonstration at Shire Hall regarding the County Councils proposal to build a PHI funded 10 storey high large residual domestic waste incinerator on Javelin Park, Haresfield.

Although it was stated at the GCC meeting on the 9th Oct that no final decision has been made, the tendering process is continuing unchanged even though various criteria are now known to be exaggerated or faulty. We are still in the process of learning about this proposal but indications are increasingly adverse.

Reducing motorway noise around Eastington

Unfortunately there is little chance of Gloucestershire Highways doing anything to reduce motorway noise around Eastington as following the article in the last ECN only two responses were received. It is therefore apparent that out of over 1200 inhabitants there is little concern and any campaign would be useless with such a small mandate.

Cllr Colin Frith

colby.ivycottage@virgin.net 01453 792929 / 07979810006

ROADS AND TRANSPORT

Cllr. Nigel Souster, Chairman of your EPC Roads and Transport Committee writes:

For a long time, our village has had some major road safety issues. – notably the school traffic at Church End, a number of problems around the Alkerton Cross roundabout and speeding vehicles along all three main roads through our village.

Gloucestershire County Council has the responsibility, and budget, for implementing traffic solutions. So, it has been with considerable frustration over the years that your EPC councillors have recommended some obvious road safety improvements to GCC, for example extending the 30 mph zone, with no response from the GCC.

No longer! In recent months, the 30 mph zone has been extended down Springhill – perhaps not as far as we would like – and a flashing speeding sign installed.

In addition, a heavy lorry ban has been implemented along Springhill.

And, now GCC has proposed some traffic calming measures around, and approaching the Alkerton Cross roundabout. GCC will soon distribute their plan to all the village for general consultation.

In summary, the plan is to install traffic islands, some improvements to the roundabout layout and speed cushions on two of the three main roads.

These plans were discussed with the GCC representative at special EPC meeting in August. There was some lively debate!

All councillors were concerned that the GCC recommendations did not address the school/Churchend issue, nor the speeding traffic along the Bath Road and towards Claypits.

Some councillors wanted alternative methods to slow the traffic instead of the speed cushions. Others wanted to move ahead with the plans in order to avoid further delay, and to change the cushions later if they were unsuccessful.

On a split vote, your EPC council decided to recommend the GCC proposals.

Your EPC council is now working with our County Councillor, Tony Blackburn, to bring pressure on GCC to find solutions, and budgets, for our outstanding road safety issues.

Meanwhile, if you see a heavy lorry using Springhill, please report the lorry registration, time and date to our EPC Clerk, Mary Gribble (mgribble@btinternet.com). She will then take this up with our Lorry Watch contact at GCC.

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The views expressed in ECN are not necessarily those of the editor.

From the Chairman

We were greatly saddened to hear of the death of Chris Haines. When I first joined the Parish Council, Chris was often a moderating influence during controversial Parish Council debates. We would like to give our heartfelt condolences to both Liz and Dale.

I would like to thank Rob Gothard for his enthusiasm and drive during his short time as a councillor. Rob has been responsible for pushing EPC into the 21st century with its website, and has led the Allotment Group to the verge of digging. We wish Rob and his family much happiness in their new home at Slimbridge. Rob's departure creates a 'Casual Vacancy' on EPC, so please consider joining the Parish Council. There remains much to be done!

In answer to an unpleasant problem, three smart new Dog 'Poop' Bins have been installed in the Village. The majority of dog owners are already cleaning up after their pets, however, it is important that all dog owners carry bags and clean up after their dogs.

Cllr. Andrew Niblett

Eastington Parish Council meetings are held on 2nd Tuesday of each month at 19:00 in the Methodist Hall. All Parishioners are welcome to attend.

Watercourse Wardens

Unfortunately the hoped for predictions of a BBQ summer did not materialise and yet again it has been another year for raincoats and umbrellas. On particular bad days we expect some of you were wondering, as we were, if there was going to be a repeat of the floods of 2007. Fortunately it was not the case and no doubt the measures that various authorities have implemented, including the clearing of many ditches by Highways and landowners, since that fateful day helped to some degree. Stroud District Council (SDC) have created a network of Watercourse Wardens for the region and we have volunteered to take on this role for Eastington. The idea behind the scheme is for the wardens to be the 'eyes and ears' of SDC and report back instances of watercourse blockages, e.g. trees or branches that may have fallen into a watercourse and which may potentially cause flooding.

As we have only recently moved to the village we do not have a clear understanding of all the properties in the parish that actually flooded. We would therefore be grateful if you could take the time to let us know if you were so that we can at least pay particular attention to your vicinity. Whilst we will aim to be out and about on a regular basis we are obviously unable to cover the entire parish all of the time. We would therefore also be grateful if you could report to us any potential problems so that we can investigate further and forward on for action as appropriate.

If you are interested in a more hands-on approach then you are more than welcome to volunteer as an additional warden or even a Flood Group leader, which the parish is currently lacking and is actively seeking, not least to interact with nearby Bridgend. They have a particular strong and well organised group called BARFF [Bridgend Against River Frome Flooding] and they are well aware that what they do can impact significantly downstream on Eastington. We have been to a couple of their meetings and have been made very welcome. However the parish does really need someone who has the time to commit more fully not just to BARFF but to the flood issues of the parish as a whole thereby ensuring that we do not see a repeat of 2007.

Jan & Phil Davis Watercourse Wardens

philjan@virgin.net – please start email title any correspondence with the word 'Flood'



MEMBERSHIP OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Standards Committees have been established to promote high standards of conduct by elected members of public authorities. The work of these Committees includes advising on a Code of Conduct, raising awareness of ethical standards, determining allegations of alleged breaches of the Code and providing advice and training.

The Stroud Standards Committee deals with the ethical standards regime not only for the Stroud District Council but also for all 49 Town and Parish Councils within the District.

There will shortly be 3 vacancies on the Stroud Standards Committee for Independent Members. If you are interested in applying, further information is available at www.stroud.gov.uk/standards or from the Council's Interim Monitoring Officer Patricia Adley (telephone number 01453 754386).

Applications should be submitted on or before 5 October 2009

Patricia Adley, Interim Head of Legal Services & Monitoring Officer
Ebley Mill. Stroud. Glos, GL5 4UB

Eastington Methodist Church

One of our greatest encouragements is when people really "get it" for the first time and this is particularly so when it is young people. If you haven't "got it" yet, do what you can to "get it" and we will be more than happy to help you find it.

Last year we took a group on a day trip to Soul Survivor, a major Christian youth festival held at Shepton Mallett over a 3 week period each summer. They had such an interesting time (in spite of atrocious weather) that we booked in for a week this August.

The accommodation was in tents (except for Ken & Beck who took their hybrid boat/caravan). We grouped ourselves together in a small area amongst hundreds of other tents accommodating many thousands of young people and their leaders.

The scale of the whole thing is vast and the big top can hold about 10,000 people for the main meetings. At other times, there were seminars and events running at a dozen or more venues.

The highlight of Soul Survivor are the main meetings and there was one in the morning and another in the evening each lasting a couple of hours or more. These started with an hour or so of worship, sometimes lead by young worship leaders in their teens. These were followed by a time of preaching and these were followed by an invitation to respond or have needs met and was a time when the Holy Spirit was invited to minister to those present. This latter phase in the meeting was most powerful and difficult to describe without potentially causing alarm to those who have not come across this sort of thing before. If you are curious come and talk to us about it.

Anyway, our young people found it all "awesome" and want to go again with most, if not all, coming away having encountered God in a very real way either for the first time or as part of their ongoing journey of faith.

Ken Burgin - Senior Steward

Meetings are back to the normal routine following the summer holidays and there is something for everybody to come along to. There is line dancing at 10:30am on Tuesdays, Kidzone on Wednesdays for the 7-11 year olds at 6:15pm, youth club on Fridays with two 2 hour sessions starting at 7pm & 8pm depending on age, and daytime and evening Bible studies for adults. This is all in addition to the regular Sunday services.

Two young people's study groups are now running on alternate Mondays at 7pm at The Pike Lock House. CY (see why) is for those wanting to find out about the key aspects of the Christian Faith and MoO (Moving On) is for those who have the basics and want to go in deeper. Refreshments and a time to chill out with friends are a key aspect of both.

CY took the form of 3 activity days over the summer including two littler picking sessions around the village followed by shooting video at Keynes Park in the Cotswold Water Park and at the Purton Hulks to make a video about Jonah and the Whale. It will be a while before the video will be ready to show but we hope to put it in the church website when it is. On the final day, we went on a walk in Wales where there are waterfalls you can walk under.

Please see the web page for details of these and all the other things going on or contact Ken & Beck Burgin on 01453 827414

info@EastingtonMethodists.org.uk

www.EastingtonMethodists.org.uk

Eastington Village History display at the opening of the new Community Centre

I would like to thank all of the villagers who took such a keen interest in the display of old photographs and memorabilia at the recent official opening of the new community centre. It was remarkable how many memories from way back were triggered by those old images. We were even able to add dates and names to individuals in several pictures. Overall, we learnt a lot about the village's past and some of our forefathers. Several people mentioned that they had old pictures that might be of interest – we can't wait to see these and what might come to light!

Stephen Mills Tel: 01453-824139

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Birder in the Parish

Middle summer into early Autumn is generally a quiet period for birding. The Spring migration has long gone, when a birder is not quite sure what might turn up on his patch, and once the breeding season gets under way, it really is a question of whether or not a rarity might just find itself off course, and make landfall in the UK.

There are a number of ways this can happen. Some rarities become annual, but very scarce migrants, making use of our islands as a feeding station on their journey, and therefore deliberately spending time here on their way back north, south, east or west, whichever direction will take them to their breeding habitats. These birds can tend to use particular areas of the UK year after year, knowing that the food they specialise in is waiting for them there.

Birders are now eagerly awaiting the autumn migration, which actually starts in August, when birds breeding in the far north start to make their way south to escape winter weather which would certainly kill them. As the prevailing weather in the UK is from the west, then autumn is the best time in Britain for North American migrants to make landfall here, particularly on our western coasts and islands - Fair Isle bird observatory for example, should very soon be getting some 'megs' dropping in, as will western Ireland. It is these very rare vagrants that every birder dreams of having on his patch; unfortunately, our little Parish is too far east to play host to one of these, but is more likely to get rarities from the east, who are wind-blown here by strong easterlies on the Spring migration.

Autumn western vagrants are driven across the Atlantic by low pressure systems, which they pick up early in an effort to help them make their journey from north eastern North America down to north eastern South America. If they latch on to the depression too late, when a cold front develops, with winds turning briskly from all points west, they can be 'assisted' across the Atlantic and come to ground on our western edges. If the winds blowing them towards us are very strong, these birds can quickly use up energy and will land on the first convenient 'solid' ground, which can often be a ship heading to one of our ports, generally those that take larger vessels such as liners and tankers. As they near our shoreline, they take off and make landfall here. One such bird was found in Hampshire this new year, a White Throated Sparrow from North America, being found some way inland from Southampton, and subsequently found to have been here since October of last year! Interestingly, in early new year 2008, its cousin, a White Crowned Sparrow, was found at Cley in Norfolk and stayed, and was watched by hundreds of birders, for so long that the local church did a daily collection, and filled so many buckets that thousands of pounds were raised for church restoration, including a new stained glass window into which a depiction of the sparrow was included as part of the design! Again, this bird was quite definitely ship assisted.

I have always been interested in moths - useful when sleep comes with difficulty, as it does with me! And I have now acquired my first moth trap. This simple, but effective piece of equipment basically consists of a box filled with egg cartons and fitted with a mercury vapour lamp, which is left on through the night to the early hours, attracting insects of all kinds. The powerful light given off by the bulb is irresistible to moths and I have had some exciting finds the next morning, when I carefully go through the egg cartons to see what might have turned up - best yet being two huge Poplar Hawkmoths. But whatever is in the trap has to then be identified and recorded, and this can take the best part of the next day, difficult moths being contained in jars whilst I study the guides. It's the tiny ones, the 'micros' that are the most challenging, and all have to be recorded by their Latin name, as many of them do not have common names; it's a fascinating activity and an important addition to the Parish wildlife map, particularly as this area of the County is poorly surveyed for insects.

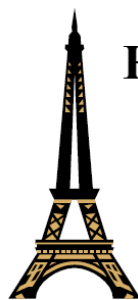
Look out for Hummingbird Hawkmoths now. These amazing, migrant insects, literally do behave just like humming birds, moving at high speed from flower to flower, hovering to take the high energy nectar.

Birder

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The Leaze - Eastington Park

Introduction

As most readers will be aware, the former Eastington Park old people's home is in the process of being converted for use as a wedding venue. After nearly 60 years as a retirement home, there is a lot to do, and the Georgian house is undergoing a tremendous amount of renovation and restoration, aimed at returning it to its days as one of the most important residences in the parish. It seemed an appropriate time to look back at its history, to the days when it was inhabited by wealthy families, all of whom left their mark on the village in some way. If anyone has memories or pictures of the house or its former residents and would like to share them, I would be very grateful if they would contact me.

But, to return to the house. Throughout its lifetime as a residence, only four families lived there. All of them achieved their wealthy lifestyles largely through industry and commerce, as opposed to via the privilege and patronage that tended to accompany those with their roots in the landed gentry. Two families were influential in the local woollen cloth making trade, one was engaged in brewing, and the fourth had a long background of trade and commerce in Bristol. Of these families, the one that had the most profound influence on Eastington was the Hicks family. Between 1800 and the 1830s, the head of the household, Henry Hicks, was largely responsible for developing and expanding the woollen cloth trade in and around the parish. He bought and rebuilt the two existing village mills and added a third one, in the process, guaranteeing employment for several generations of the local population not engaged in agriculture. Henry Hicks was also responsible for the building of Eastington Park, an important visual reminder of his success. The family lived there until after his death in 1836.

The owners that followed Hicks maintained the traditions of their respective times. All appear to have maintained a paternalistic attitude towards the parish, and to have supported various village institutions and organisations. These families, like many country families of the time, remained engaged in a variety of spheres such as farming, politics, and the military. And like so many others, family members went to fight in the Boer War and both World Wars. Two families lost sons and husbands as a result.

Some individuals were well connected in circles outside their immediate locale or sphere of commercial activities. For instance, Henry Hicks was a personal friend of Dr Jenner, famous for introducing inoculation as a safeguard against smallpox. Similarly, members of the de Lisle Bush family were great friends with the fabled cricketer, W G Grace. The focus for these four families remained Eastington Park, long described as one of the 'principal residences' in the village. In this first part of the story, we will look at the first two families who made Eastington Park their home.

The Hicks family

At its peak in the 19th century, Eastington became a thriving mini mill town, with virtually all of its social and industrial life inextricably bound up with the woollen cloth trade. Much of this industry's development during the first half of the 19th century occurred as a direct result of the influence of the Hicks. For several generations, they came to dominate virtually every aspect of village life.

The Hicks family formed an offshoot of the notable Cotswold Hicks-Beach family, first appearing on the Eastington stage c1785. By 1798, they were living in Millend House. The family was clearly already wealthy, possibly as a result of their prior involvement in the woollen cloth trade elsewhere. Various family members had long been active in the trade in other parts of the county, although before Henry Hicks' arrival, they had no known connections with Eastington. During the ensuing years, Hicks built up a substantial empire that would ultimately encompass property, lands, farms and mills.

His initial efforts were focused mainly on the existing Churchend Mill that by around 1806, he had substantially rebuilt and enlarged (it stood immediately behind the school and was demolished c1912). In the same year, he bought the estate of Henry Stephens, along with the manorial rights. The position of Lord of the Manor was to later prove useful in a number of ways. By 1820, Henry had been joined in the business by his two sons, James Phillimore and Henry Purnell Hicks, and "H. Hicks & Sons" were adding steam engines to their Eastington mills. By now, they were also operating Bonds Mill, just over the parish boundary in Stonehouse, where they installed a further engine. The period c1810-1830 was one of great activity for Hicks, as he continued to build up his business and update and enlarge his manufacturing sites. Apart from a programme of expansion for his existing mills, c1810, he built a completely new mill in the meadows below the confluence of the two arms of the Frome than run through the parish. This was aptly named Meadow Mills.

As his wealth increased, Hicks decided a new family residence was in order and c1815, built The Leaze, to which he added a large park, a short distance from his mill at Churchend. Along with this, he systematically bought up adjoining land until eventually, he owned much of this area of the parish. Churchend was formerly linked to the Stonehouse-Alkerton road by a lane that ran from the north-east of the churchyard to a point near the entrance of the drive to Eastington Park. When this was built, the lane was stopped up and replaced by the road that now runs along the north of the churchyard, which had apparently formerly been the private drive of the (demolished) Stephens' manor-house situated adjacent to the church. Despite the fact that much of his wealth was generated through the efforts of his workers and his mills, Hicks apparently did not wish to be reminded of them from his new house and during the construction of a new chimney stack at Churchend Mills, the height was reduced so that it would not be visible from The Leaze. Likewise, a tall screen of trees was planted along the southern edge of his estate, effectively hiding Bonds Mill from his view.

There was a peculiar happening at the house in December 1829, a period of great economic hardship and social unrest in the countryside. A group of sixteen 'poachers' came to the house and shot tame pheasants that Hicks had trained to wander about on the front lawns. When Hicks came to the front door to investigate the noise, the poachers continued shooting and dared anyone to stop them. This act was clearly not about poaching, but a symbolic act of protest about worsening living conditions in the countryside. It was also a show of strength in front of a landowner and obviously meant to be intimidating, despite the fact that those involved made no specific demands of Hicks nor aired any general grievances.

Although Hicks seems to have remained fairly remote from his workforce, he nevertheless made some contributions towards their spiritual and other needs. For instance, he paid for the clock for the tower of St Michaels church (although this may have been his way of ensuring that his workforce at Churchend Mills would not be late for work!). Although there was a gulf between Hicks and his workers, he does not appear to have been deliberately antagonistic as were some of the other masters. In a time when philanthropy and business went hand in hand, he contributed in a variety of ways to the well-being of the parish. He supported the village schools, such as they were, and encouraged children employed in his mills to attend school on a half-day basis. Local education prospects were boosted further when in 1818, from his position as Lord of the Manor, he donated land adjacent to the church for the construction of a new Charity School. In addition, his grant of £50 went some way towards paying for its actual construction. The building of the new school took away the need for the teacher who had been employed for some time to instruct 30 pupils in one of his village mills.

Although the quality of the cloth produced in Hicks' mills was never in question, in March 1835, the business failed. Overall, the decade was not to be a good one for the Hicks family, as apart from the failure of the business, a spate of deaths occurred. Charlotte Hicks, Henry's wife, had already died in May 1832, to be followed in June 1836 by Hicks himself. The Hicks had previously lost one son in 1824, when Winchcomb Henry Hicks died at the tender age of 21, and in the same year that his father died, the eldest son, John Phillimore, also passed away. Immediately following this troubled period, the estate was split up amongst the other members of the family. Part of the estate passed to Eliza Phillimore-Hicks, John Phillimore's widow. This consisted of The Leaze and its park, plus Churchend and Meadow Mills. Eliza and her four daughters subsequently spent some time living in France before retiring to Clevedon. Her daughters (Emma, Fanny, Julia and Margaret) inherited the estate at Eliza's death in 1868. In that year, she was still recorded as Lady of the Manor, and The Leaze as a principal residence. Within a year or so, The Leaze had been sold to Thomas Marling, of the well known local cloth-making family. Up to the early 1890s, Emma and Julia retained ownership of Churchend and Meadow Mills. Julia died in 1896 and when the last of the four (Emma) died in 1901, ownership passed to a cousin, Cecil Hicks-Austin of London; the Hicks' long connection with Eastington effectively came to an end at this point.

Thomas Marling

Around 1870, The Leaze was sold to Thomas Marling, a member of the wealthy local cloth-making dynasty, long established in the Stroud area. Although perhaps not as well known as some of his relatives, Thomas had spent much of his life in the trade and had been appointed a juror for the 'purpose of awarding medals to articles of merit' at the Great Exhibition of 1851.

The Marling family (descended from William Marling of Stroud who died in 1859) were one of the most prominent in the cloth trade, at various times, operating a succession of important mills in and around the Stroud valleys. These included Avening, Brimscombe Upper and Lower, Brimscombe Port, Bourne, Upper Doreys, Vatch, Slad, Lightpill, Hawkers, Pitts, Ham, Fromehall, Freames, Salmons and Steanbridge. Crucially, it also included Ebley and Stanley Mills, two of the biggest and most important mills in the region.

In 1825, William Marling, Thomas's father, was running Ham Mills near Stroud and in that year, Thomas entered into a partnership with his father. Thomas's brother, Samuel Stephens Marling, joined the partnership a little later. Between 1825 and 1832, Thomas's share in the business rose from nothing to £9000. Like other family members of the period, he apparently took little cash out of the business for his own use.

At this time, the partnership was also running Fromehall Mills, also near Stroud. In 1836, the brothers installed power looms at both mills, some of the first in the region. By 1840, they had moved to Ebley Mill although in the following year, Thomas may have reverted to Ham Mills and is thought to have retired from the business soon after. However, it was decided that he would receive half of the profits from Ebley Mill for 1841 and 1842, in compensation for earlier heavy outgoings. After this, Samuel carried on alone. As a result of the family's business success, the Marling family achieved considerable local importance, particularly throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Thomas's brother later became Sir Samuel Stephens Marling, 1st Baronet (1810–1883), a noted cloth manufacturer and Liberal Party politician. In 1850, he bought what became for a century the Marling family estate at Stanley Park, Selsley. Samuel was also one of those responsible for the founding of Marling School, Stroud, in 1887, contributing £10,000 to the cause. He was succeeded in 1883 by his eldest son Sir William Henry Marling who by 1888, was Sheriff of Gloucestershire. His son, the 3rd baronet, Sir Percival Scrope Marling, had a distinguished military career in Egypt, the Sudan and South Africa. Stanley Park remained the main family residence until the estate was broken up in the early 1950s. However, Ebley Mill remained in Marling family ownership until its closure in the 1970s.

Little is known of Thomas's life after his retirement around 1841 until his purchase of The Leaze c1870. His stay there was to be relatively brief, as before the end of the decade, the Marlings had been replaced by members of yet another local dynasty, the Stantons. We will look at them and their successors, the de Lisle Bushes, in Part 2 of the story.

Stephen Mills
Crest House
Cress Green

Eastington Slimming World Group

Firstly for this piece I would like to say congratulations to Tamsin and Tom the new Mr and Mrs Herbert, who were married in Stonehouse at the beginning of August. I first met Tamsin as she walked into my Slimming World Group in Eastington wanting to lose some weight for her wedding. Tamsin went on to lose a brilliant two stones eight and a half pounds. She did this with the help and support of the group and also her two close friends who joined the group a few months before. Ali has lost two stones and Rachel also lost two stones. So on her wedding day with Ali and Rachel along side her as bridesmaids the trio had lost over six and a half stones between them. They have all called Target weights and still enjoy coming to group each week and are a great source of support to other members as well as each other.

At the time of writing this piece Slimming World is preparing to celebrate its Ruby anniversary later this month. Its birthday will be on September 26th and to celebrate the last incredible forty years all the groups nationwide will be having their own birthday party. Our party night in Eastington will be taking place at the group meeting on Wednesday the 30th September. All members will be invited to bring along their friends and family. Everyone will be welcomed, so if you have been curious to find out more, just come along at 7pm with a friend or by yourself. There will be no obligation to join, but a chance to find out how Slimming World's unique weight loss plans can work for you too. I will update you in the next issue on how the celebrations went!!!

For more information call Lorna on 01453821751

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Eastington Horse Show

Saturday 1st August 2009

In spite of adverse weather condition, many competitors braved the elements to make it a successful show, with spectators vastly up on previous years.


There were some high quality horses in the Hunter classes, gaining complementary remarks from the judge, who had been employed at both Hickstead and the Wales and West Shows from the previous weeks. The overall champion being of a very high standard.

In the adjacent ring the native breeds could be seen to be strutting their stuff.

The Show jumping ring was in action all day, with some very dashing riding against the clock to decide the winners.

In a quiet corner of the field the maximum number of dressage competitors performed their exacting movements. While on the other side of the field, the children enjoyed dressing themselves and their ponies in a colourful array of original fancy dress outfits.

Many local charities and other have benefited from the show which would not take place without the generosity of the Spenser family, the sponsors and many helpers.



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County Councillor's News Letter – September 2009

Your editor has suggested that as your new County Councillor, I should write to the readers of ECN and introduce myself, explain something about my role and what the Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) does, and how I hope to get it to do more for Eastington. GCC deals with schools, social services, road repairs, traffic regulation (including speed limits see below,) fire, ambulance, and indirectly police services and strategically: planning, waste and flood alleviation, among other services.

Stroud District Council (SDC) handles planning permissions, street cleaning, rubbish collection, flooding on the ground, and other local services. Whilst I am happy to become involved with the latter, you have an established District Councillor, Ken Stephens, with whom I look forward to working to take up such matters with Stroud.

The cost of both councils, plus the cost of the police and your Parish Council, are paid by you in a single demand; your council tax bill (individuals) or rates bill (business). The larger element is the GCC's, but we have been able to hold the increase in this for 2009-2010 at 2.9%.

Since the 4th June, I and the other new councillors, have been undergoing an intensive induction course. We are learning what the 14000 people who work directly or indirectly for GCC do, and about the allocation of its £360 million budget. I have been a councillor before on the London borough of Camden in the 1980's, but the way councils' work has changed fundamentally; from Chairman and members of a committee taking decisions by vote, to the current cabinet system of lead members and the senior officers taking decisions, but subject to later scrutiny by members. Whether or not this is an improvement, I will report!

I am going to be working hard with Eastington Parish Council (EPC) to see that Eastington gets its fair share of the GCC's services. In particular, I am pleased to say that the long requested traffic control measures are about to be implemented. The GCC traffic regulation department has at last agreed to install signs and road marking as to the speed limits along Alkerton Rd., Bath Rd., and Spring Hill. However, this is not enough, and I am pressing for a 30 MPH speed limit at Claypits and a further 30 MPH restriction extended down Spring Hill and along Bath Rd. The 30 MPH sign from the south on Bath Rd., needs moving several hundred yards further out, and there should be a cushion and crossing for the residents of Orchard Leigh.

I also hope to get GCC to deal with much needed road repairs at Nupend, Nastend and Newtown and Broadfield Rd., / Cotswold Avenue. And I want to see the flood alleviation work at Middle Street and Bath Rd., go forward.

We live in difficult times, and Gloucestershire will have to, and should, share the pain of private business and our own household budgets. But there *is* scope for the GCC giving better value for money, and concentrating on the delivery of the local improvements, to which I refer above.

Cllr Tony Blackburn (GCC)

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