

# Eastington Community News

May / June 2010

Nº. 121

The chilly, wet Easter weekend marked the end of a long cold winter but I hope you have been able to take advantage of the fine, dry April weather that followed. It seemed as if all the blossom had been waiting patiently for the chance to greet the long awaited warm spring sunshine and then to rush along with life. Let's hope it survives the cold, wet weather that returned for May Bank holiday, and let's hope it is only a brief interruption on the journey into summer.

There are many issues affecting our community, and to better know what you, in the "community" wants, a Parish Plan is in process. Some of you attended the exhibitions run back in March. There was a very high standard of presentation exhibited by several Village organisations, and those who attended discovered a lot about many local opportunities and activities. The next stage is to run 'mini Parish Plan' exhibitions within Village groups when they meet. This will lead to the stage when each of you in the Parish will receive a questionnaire to find out the most important issues to you; what you would like to see improved, protected or removed; how fast things should change; or not.

It is interesting to see how Eastington has altered since the Village Appraisal of 1989. Children from that time have become adults and some are themselves parents. So it would be good to include views of young people this time, since they will become adults during the next 21 years to 2031.

Eastington is being entering for the Vibrant Village award, organised by Gloucestershire Rural Community Council (GRCC). Our Village is among the most active and vibrant villages in the County, and we now have a chance to share our many great achievements with others.

It has been a tremendous year for Eastington and this year's Annual Parish Meeting will be an evening to congratulate achievements and the huge efforts made, and also to consider ideas for the future of this Parish. You are warmly invited to the meeting and to talk about what has been going on in your community group, and your plans for the future.

Annual Parish Meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> May @ 7p.m. in the new Eastington Community Centre at Snaky Lane.

If you enjoy working with people and making things happen then why not become a Parish Councillor? (See inside for details of a 'Casual Vacancy'.)

To celebrate the first birthday of Eastington Community Centre, a Late Summer Family Fun-day will be held on Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> September. Everyone in the Parish is invited, and Village groups are also invited to show off their wares and to entertain us.

At this busy and verdant time of year it is very easy to overlook how far your hedge might have grown out across the pavement. We have people who use mobility scooters, and mothers with pushchairs, who find it difficult to pass by in some places. Of course it is even worse when it is wet and the passer by gets soaked from the foliage! Please find the time to look at the boundaries of your property and ask yourself if you could you get by easily with a buggy or wheelchair?

Your help is still needed for ECN to continue, so please don't leave it to someone else; Job 1 is preparing the 'blue' advertising pages for next year – it occurs once a year and can be spread over a couple of months to fit your available time; Job 2 is to assist with laying out and formatting these pages from the electronic files sent in for each issue (every 2 months)

In this edition is a Village Organisation table of contacts. It has proved very difficult to find the latest accurate information, as people move from one group to another. So, there are gaps and there will be some errors. May I ask for your understanding and help to send me updates please.

It is very pleasing to see such great developments and activity at the Allotments and you can read more about progress in Stephen Gribble's article inside. Close by is the newly restored Community Pond, and Nadine has included an update for us in this edition. Recently, we met with representatives from Eastington School at the Community Pond, and I am delighted that the children will have the opportunity to study the area as a Biodiversity and Environmental Project. I am sure you will join me in thanking our regular contributors for their interesting articles inside.

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

New address! Tom Low (Distributor) 823425 ([tom@hazelcottage.eu](mailto:tom@hazelcottage.eu))

View the "Community News" at : [www.stroud.gov.uk/eastington](http://www.stroud.gov.uk/eastington)

**Next Deadline:-** All articles by **Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2010** please!

**Next Delivery:-** by Monday 19<sup>th</sup> July 2010 please!

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

# Eastington Slimming World Group

So here we are at the beginning of the summer. Lets hope its a good one! For the past 10 weeks we have been working towards the community challenge to lose as much weight as the group can in a twelve week period. So by the next issue of the news we will have finished and I will be able to share with you the amazing losses the group has achieved!

Slimming World now offer the choice of 3 main eating plans. The xtra easy plan which was launched in January has proved to be very popular.

There is also the choice of following the original plan as well as the green plan which is suitable for vegetarians, vegans and those of us who prefer to eat only a little or no meat. So there is definitely a plan that you can enjoy. Even within the plans themselves there is plenty of choice, so its your choice to eat the foods that fit in with your lifestyle, whether you are out at work or based at home, cook for yourself or a family.

So summer is almost here and the t-shirts and shorts are being unpacked from there winter storage. Our thoughts turn towards booking our summer holidays and then the swimming costumes. If this sends a shiver down your spine and you are thinking oh dear! Maybe now is the time to come along to Slimming World and shed those extra pounds before the swimming costume is needed. We meet every week at the Village Hall. 7pm on Wednesdays and you can join any week of the year. The group is friendly and fun and yet your weight remains confidential and humiliation is banned. Come along this week and find out for yourself. Hope to meet you soon.

Best wishes

Lorna

We meet in the village hall at 7pm every Wednesday. If you would like more details please call Lorna 01453821751 or just come along any Wednesday. Lorna 01453821751

QuickTime™ and a  
decompressor  
are needed to see this picture.

## EASTINGTON PARISH COUNCIL MATTERS

It has been a tremendous year for Eastington and we very much hope this year's Annual Parish Meeting will be an evening for congratulations on the huge efforts and achievements in Eastington over the last year, and to consider ideas for the future of our Parish. You are warmly invited to come to the meeting and talk about what has been going on in your community group, and your plans for the future. Please come to the Annual Parish Meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> May @ 7p.m. in the new Eastington Community Centre at Snakey Lane.

If you enjoy working with people and making things happen then why not become a Parish Councillor? A "Casual Vacancy" exists on the Parish Council and you may like to contact EPC Clerk, Mary Gribble, to discuss details.

At this busy and verdant time of year it is very easy to overlook how far your hedge might have grown out across the pavement. We have people who use mobility scooters, and mothers with pushchairs, who find it difficult to pass by in some places. Of course it is worse when it is wet and the passer by gets soaked from the foliage! Please find the time to look at the boundaries of your property and ask yourself if you could you get by easily with a buggy or wheelchair?

Parking on pavements and in bus stops continues to be a problem along Alkerton Road. This is likely to pose problems in a number of areas. From our local businesses perspective, they will lose trade if cars are unable to find short stay parking spaces. Disabled people, and those less steady on their feet, are significantly inconvenienced by the above obstructions. Serious parking congestion in Churchend also continues to present high risk to road users. If we cannot get voluntary solution to this problem, then formal parking restrictions will become the next step.

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

**Casual Vacancy**  
**Eastington Parish Council**  
(To Apply to be a Parish Councillor)  
Please contact the Clerk  
Mary Gribble  
01453 825279  
mgribble@btinternet.com

## Eastington Community Centre

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

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

***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*

## TEAS (The Eastington Allotment Society)

Preparing this article always offers the opportunity to look back over the previous two months and to be yet again amazed at the changes that have taken place in that short period.

From a distance, a certain level of order and structure can now be appreciated in the rows and columns formed by the individual plots. Within this apparent uniformity, though, can be seen a remarkable variety of ideas and approaches.

Earth mounds and raised beds of various shapes and sizes have appeared. Some of these have been encompassed in what look like large rabbit runs although their purpose is to keep the furry (but maybe now, not so cute) co-tenants out rather than in.

What appears to be long abandoned, bamboo tents have also been spotted. Hopefully these structures will soon be obscured and overrun by green foliage and covered in the small red flowers of *Phaseolus Coccineus*, Fabaceae.

Congratulations and well done to all the allotmenters for the efforts they have put into the last six months in transforming a not out of the ordinary field into a lively fruit and vegetable society.

If anyone feels they would like to have a go themselves and be part of this energetic community, then get your name on the waiting list by calling Angela Kitson

Angela Kitson on 01453 826914 sec.teasallotments09@googlemail.com

## Eastington Brownies

*The Brownies meet on Monday evenings in Eastington Village Hall from 6.45pm to 8pm, during term time.*

*We have another busy term ahead, including learning first aid and gaining points towards our centenary badges. There is a trip to Cattle Country planned with the Guide District, and the opportunity to attend a watersports day at South Cerney in July, which is a County event, so lots of chance to meet Brownies from other packs.*

*Brownies are girls aged 7 to 10 years and if you would like more information, please contact us.*

*Sarah Mannings 01453 826850*

*Kate Taylor 01453 821184*

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decompressor  
are needed to see this picture.

Gas Guard Ad

## **THE VILLAGE HALL**

### **1. A brief history**

The Hall was built in 1927 to a design by a Stroud architect, Mr Vernon Barnes LRIBA on land donated by Mr James Warner of Alkerton. A Trust was formed, the building and land vested in that trust and registered with the Charity Commission. The original trustees were Claude D'Arcy Stratton De Lisle Bush of Eastington Park, James Hargreaves Turner of Alkerton Grange, John Langston Warner of Millend, Joseph Moore of Eastington, Frank Broomhall of Eastington and Octavius Hulbert of Claypits. The funding for the construction of the Hall was by subscription which amounted to the princely sum of £990.13s.01d at the date of the execution of the deeds.

The Trust was created to provide for the education and mental improvement, recreation and general benefit of the inhabitants of the Parish of Eastington.

Like most community facilities the Hall has had its ups and downs but has emerged looking better than ever.

### **2. A recent development**

A very interesting print of an engraving by Kip entitled "Eastington Estate of Nathaniel Stevens" has recently resurfaced after being missing presumed lost for many years. The print was apparently donated to the Village Hall in October 1932 by H E Hawker of Stonehouse. The print is currently being framed and will be hung in the Hall for all to see.

### **3. Our Refurbishment**

As previously reported the Hall has been undergoing extensive improvement and refurbishment work over the past two years and this is now complete. We would like all parishioners to witness the transformation and will be organising an open event in the near future.

The Hall now ranks among the best in Gloucestershire and is a building of which you can all be proud.

### **4. Use of Hall**

Whilst the Hall is regularly used there are some free slots when it can be hired for regular or one off events. To talk about hiring the Hall please contact Mrs Queenie Jones on (01453) 824340.

## **Stroud & Stonehouse Round Table**

### **Round Table – What is it? What do they do? How do I find out more?**

Round Table is a social organisation for all young men aged between 18 and 45. We do not have any funny rituals or handshakes but instead have a great deal of fun in and around Stroud.

We meet on the 1st, 3rd and 5th Tuesday each month and do various social activities. Last week we played snooker, next week we are going to Cheltenham Races, the meeting after we are playing an evening game of cricket, then watching a world cup game together in a local pub and so on. We also help out local organisations with their fund raising, such as the Frampton Cider Race (obviously carefully managing the cider ...) and each year we jointly organise the Ebley Fireworks. We have raised over £6,000 for local charities in the past couple of years simply by having a good time together.

If this sounds like something you would like to know more about and to get out and meet like minded people, then call Paul Mannings on 01453 826850.

## Eastington gets Medical Help!

Ebley based practitioner Christopher Handbury is now able to provide his unique medical therapies to Eastington residents as from May 11th. Joining the team at The Hair and Beauty House, he has arranged time for one day per week to treat patients. Christopher treats conditions that you would require you to visit a Chiropractor, Physiotherapist or Osteopath here in the west. His main system of work is called 'tuina' (twee-nah), a physical therapy used in hospitals and clinics throughout China. In addition he uses Acupuncture, Oriental Reflexology, Cupping and Qigong to treat a wide variety of chronic illness and ailments that often respond poorly to western drugs, he says, "The only thing I can say is to try it, you'll be pleasantly surprised".

Christopher David Handbury  
Registered Professional  
UK Oriental Medicine  
Member of CThA

# Acu-Therapy

Sports Injury & Rehabilitation	Tui Na Medical Massage
Chronic Pain & Illness	Chinese Acupuncture
Energy Work & Health Care	Indonesian Bodywork
Therapeutic Balancing	Oriental Reflexology
Emotional Stress (ESR)	Qigong for Health

*"Get the treatment you deserve and unlock your full potential!"*



Hair & Beauty House, Eastington Tel: 791251  
or visit us at [www.orientalbodyworks.co.uk](http://www.orientalbodyworks.co.uk)



Christopher specialises in Whiplash and Neck injuries, along with treating social and professional athletes for sport related injury and conditioning. He runs exercise classes called 'Essence' using Qigong (chi kung) and various gentle techniques to help and improve mobility, reduce neck and back pain, and build internal energy which has been proven to help in conditions such as, ME, chronic fatigue, anxiety and promote well-being and longevity.

If there is an interest in a local class for residents, please let Christopher know and he will make arrangements to bring a class to Eastington soon.

A £10 discount is available for all new patient and customer registration at The Hair and Beauty House who can be contacted on 01453 791251 if you requires further information you can contact Christopher himself on 07813 921336, drop in at Eastington or visit [www.orientalbodyworks.co.uk](http://www.orientalbodyworks.co.uk)

## Stroud Valleys Project- Biodiversity Update

Eastington is lucky to have a few protected species in the parish. Now is a good time to observe one of them, the Great Crested Newt *Triturus cristatus*. This is the biggest of Britain's three newt species and is the only one that is protected by law, as their numbers are dwindling. Adult newts are back from their hibernation place on land in ponds and the females lay their eggs on leaves, which they fold over carefully. If you want to know whether you have Great Crested Newts in your pond, the best way to find out is to go out with a torch in the dark and check whether you can see any newts in your pond, as they are most active at night. If you do find any, make sure you don't shine your torch on them for too long, as this may disturb them.

You will recognize the Great Crested Newt by its size (up to 16 cm long, both other species are up to 10 cm long), and males have a crest on their back, that dips at the end of the body and starts again over the tail (male smooth newts also have a crest, but theirs is continuous one). You can also look for their eggs on leafy water plants like water mint or Brooklime and often you can see the folded leaves. It would be great to hear from you if you find them in your garden. You can e-mail me at [Nadine@stroudvalleysproject.org](mailto:Nadine@stroudvalleysproject.org).

We would also like to get a group of people together who would be willing to manage the new Community Pond area at the allotment site as a thriving wildlife area. This would involve an hour work twice or three times a year. If you are willing to help with this, we will make a start on **Thursday 17th June at 7pm** at the pond on the allotment. There will also be some pond dipping for the children. If you can't make this date, but are interested to help in the future, please get in touch at the e-mail above or call Stroud Valleys Project on 01453 753358.

If you are interested in more wildlife events, please visit our website at: [www.stroudvalleysproject.org](http://www.stroudvalleysproject.org) and click on events.

Caption for picture: "A male Great Crested Newt"

Nadine Smykatz-Kloss

*Sorry the picture could not be reproduced here; it can be viewed [www.stroud.gov.uk/eastington](http://www.stroud.gov.uk/eastington)*

# **Eastington Methodist Church**

One of the things we know about God is that he expects change. He expects us to change as individuals and for the church to change too. At Eastington Methodist Church, there have been many changes over the years and what we do changes from time to time to adapt to new circumstances and opportunities.

Some truths are eternal and there has been friction between the many parts of the church and some of the politicians and pressure groups who have tried to impose their own views of right and wrong upon deeply held beliefs of many Christians. There are standards which we, as Christians, are called to uphold even if we struggle at times or fail to always meet them ourselves. Just because one section of the community doesn't like some of them or even if these standards are regarded as old fashioned, we cannot accept that such views can turn wrong into right.

If you want to understand better where the church is coming from or even want the opportunity to debate it and put forward your own thoughts, there is something called the Alpha Course which could be just right for you. We are anticipating running the course of 10 Alpha sessions in the autumn on Tuesday evenings. Please look out for the details later in the year.

One of the more recent changes has been to start the main Sunday Morning services with a time of worship music led by the young people. Many village churches have no young people at all and often no children either with some closing due to ageing and dwindling congregations. We are so grateful that this has not happened here and believe that God has special plans for Eastington.

In another rather more mundane change, the daytime Bible Study has moved from Thursdays to 1pm on Tuesdays.

As we approach summer, a programme of activities is being prepared for families, children and young people. This will include various outings, sleepovers and other events. Ones of particular note are:

**Funday - Saturday 26th June at 2pm**

**CY - MoO Youth Study Group Sleepover and Youth Service - 3rd & 4th July**

**Family Day out to Southerndown Beach in Wales - Saturday 17th July**

The young people are also intending to raise money by producing custom T shirts to raise money for HopeHIV which helps children and young people in Africa whose lives have been affected by AIDS. Please make contact if you would like to find out more about ordering one.

*Praise the LORD! How joyful are those who fear the LORD and delight in obeying his commands.....They share freely and give generously to those in need. Their good deeds will be remembered forever. They will have influence and honour. Psalm 112 verses 1&9*

**Ken & Beck Burgin 01453 827414**

**[www.EastingtonMethodists.org.uk](http://www.EastingtonMethodists.org.uk)**

**GLOUCESTERSHIRE CONSTABULARY**  
**Serving for a Safer Gloucestershire**

Stonehouse Police Station  
High Street  
Stonehouse  
Gloucestershire  
GL10 2NJ

**STONEHOUSE SAFER COMMUNITY TEAM**  
**COMMUNITY PRIORITY PROFORMA**

Date: .....

Name: .....

Address : ( optional )

.....  
.....  
.....

Occupation ( if applicable )

Age group

11-20	
21-40	
41-60	
Over 60	

**Please highlight to us any concerns or issues within your area you would like to be addressed from a multi-agency approach:**

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**STC NCG Priorities**

Your Safer Communities Team at Stonehouse Police Station would like your help. Every three months we hold a meeting of the Neighbourhood Co-ordination Group at which we discuss current and future priorities for us and our partner agencies. Our partners include the District and County Council, Fire and Rescue, and the NHS, and the priorities can be addressed jointly by a multi-agency approach. Prior to the meeting we ask members of the community to raise any concerns they may have about the area in which they live, and any matters raised may be considered as priorities.

You can have your say and assist us in our efforts to concentrate on the problems that matter most to the community, by completing the form and returning it to Stonehouse Police Station before the **19th of June 2010**.

If you have any questions, please contact a member of the Stonehouse Safer Communities Team by ringing 0845 090 1234 or send us an e-mail at [stonehouse-sct@gloucestershire.police.uk](mailto:stonehouse-sct@gloucestershire.police.uk)

You can also e-mail PCSO Liz Ward

[elizabeth.ward@gloucestershire.police.uk](mailto:elizabeth.ward@gloucestershire.police.uk)





## EASTINGTON PLAYGROUP

Charity number 1084981

May 2010

We have been busy making the most of the sunny weather and have been playing both inside and out in supervised free-flow play. The children have been very interested in finding bugs and insects outside and we have been looking at snail trails, slime, patterns and where insects live and what they like to eat.

We have also been digging, filling and emptying containers with compost, planting sunflower seeds to enable us to see how a seed grows, what it needs to promote this growth, and then we will be able to measure the plants, take photographs and record how big our flowers grow. Our children will then take the sunflowers home to look after and return to playgroup to tell us how big their plant has grown! We will also be visiting our 'garden' to plant and grow other seeds, and also to play in 'Percy's Hut' which the children love.

We are also linking our sessions to the children's other interests at Playgroup which at present is super heroes. We will be supporting this by offering a box of props for the children to use which encourages their imaginations. The box may contain different materials of colours and sizes, maps, clips boards with paper and pens, tubes, shells, beads and jewellery. The box contents will be varied to promote social skills, communication literacy and language, knowledge and understanding, creativity as well as their problem solving and numeracy skills.

We have started our Pre-School sessions at Eastington Primary School which are on Wednesday afternoons which helps the children prepare for school in September. By holding this session at the school the children get used to their new surroundings, meet the older children and their new teachers.

If you would like your child to enjoy a stimulating, fun and safe environment to learn and play in then we would love to hear from you - we take children from 2  $\frac{1}{2}$  years to 4 years 11 months and we accept government nursery vouchers and other types of employer supported childcare vouchers.

You don't have to live in Eastington to access our facilities!

For details on spaces, prices and hours then please call one of the staff on 07977 342 742 or Claire (Administration Manager) 0845 391 8941, or you can email [claire@eastingtonplaygroup.co.uk](mailto:claire@eastingtonplaygroup.co.uk) or take a look at our new website [www.eastingtonplaygroup.co.uk](http://www.eastingtonplaygroup.co.uk)

Our playgroup offers care and education for all children in a well established community based group.

We offer your children a safe and stimulating environment in which they can grow and blossom into self confident, self reliant and positive little people.

Our ultimate goal is to enable the children to have fun, explore and have the freedom to express their individuality, while forming the basis of their education.

We accept children from the age of 2yrs 6months and operate 5 days a week offering full and half day sessions.

If you would like more details please contact Claire Thomas, Administration Officer

Tel: 0845 391 8941

## St Michael & All Angels Church

# Roy Kirby & his Paragon Jazz Band come to Eastington.

**Friday 11<sup>th</sup> June 2010**

The election will be over, come and celebrate or wash away your blues at a Jazz concert in the wonderful acoustics of St Michael and All Angels Church Eastington.

Roy Kirby and his Band will be staging a concert of Gospels, Spirituals, Blues and Jazz Classics in the New Orleans style on Friday 11<sup>th</sup> June. Concert starts at 7.30pm, doors open at 7.00pm.

Tickets, £10.00 (including light refreshment) are available from Stroud Tourist Information

Office, call in or telephone 01453 760960 to book your place at this exciting event.

Tickets are also available from outlets in Stonehouse and Eastington.

These are:- Stonehouse Accessories and Whole Hearted in Stonehouse and in Eastington Hair and Beauty and Bond and Co.

Children under 12 free.

Wine and soft drinks will be available during the interval.

Profits from this concert will go to Church funds. (Philip Williams.)

**Further details from:- Lt Commander Robin Harris 01453 823433**

## Birder in the Parish

28/02. For the first time in a month, no sign of my spider in the window. Possibly the increased daylight and temperature have sent her off to set up her web for the spring and summer. A queen wasp came into the conservatory last week, more gnat clouds are in nuptial flight, and a skylark flew over the cottages this morning in song, heading for the top Eastington meadows out towards the A38, all very good signs of improving weather. Chiff Chaffs also singing and a male Blackcap in sub-song.

Slowly but surely, spring plants are emerging, including some very early crocuses but which were unfortunately knocked back by still very cold nights. Lot of hazel catkins showing.

Can't wait for warm, late summer nights, when it will be time to get the moth trap out. Compiling a very respectable Parish list after less than a year as a novice trapper, with some very handsome moth species as the highlights, including two superb Poplar Hawkmoths and a delightful creature called a Canary-shouldered Flame. Fascinating pastime, made all the more interesting because of its nocturnal nature and never knowing what might turn up in the trap. Still aware that a brilliantly bright mercury vapour lamp could be classed as anti-social, but no complaints so far, and anyway, it's all in the furtherance of science!

01/03. Fantastic day, clear blue sky, temperatures somewhere over at least 10C - relatively balmy! Early crocuses completely open in the garden, attracting two hover flies, species not known. Ladybirds on the move everywhere, a caterpillar on the hellebore (looks like Muslin Moth) and clouds of gnats.



## Yoga Classes

Leonard Stanley Village Hall

Wednesdays and Thursdays

8.00 – 9.30 p.m

£5 per session, first session free.

For further details, and booking, contact:

Carol Maguire on 01453 791484

## Birder in the Parish continued /

Only two Longtailed Tits left now from the winter gang of up to twenty that visited the feeders twice a day from early December; these two are obviously a pair and will have already started their nest building. Only two male Blackbirds left from the continental birds which were also here at the feeders all through the winter; these two are resident birds and will soon start to breed. No sign of Song Thrushes.

Strands of spider silk glisten on every plant, the slightest breeze betraying their presence with shimmers of iridescence - it's that kind of early Spring day when I suddenly want to do so many things outdoors, but am resisting the temptation to zoom off with the telescope to the Severn at Fretherne for a big spring tide of over ten metres!

06/03. Saw a dead Barn Owl roadside just up the A38 from Cambridge. Got out of the car at the lay-by and went to investigate. Barn Owls are uncommon in the County and it is distressing to find one recently dead. From the strong ochre colouring on the upperparts, this was a female. She is very light, and there is no substance to her body, showing malnutrition. Such a beautiful bird, but her tail, rump, under tail coverts and her white 'stockinged' legs were messy - she had obviously been hunting in long, wet grass and without much success. Barn Owls depend heavily on the field vole population to survive, a particular link in the food chain which was badly hit by the prolonged winter.

11/03. First Common Frog this year in the garden pond, croaking well into the night.

On the 12th, nipped over to Clearwater Drive in Quedgley to look for Jack Snipe and flushed a single bird at 6.40 a.m. before heading into work. This bird made a quiet call as it flew which is unusual for this species. Good to see them at last turning up in the County this early Spring on their way north to their breeding haunts. There are migrants slowly but surely making their way here on their northerly migration, the pager showing records of a Sand Martin in the water park and the first Swallow and Wheatear on the south coast.

Next morning, away at 5.30 a.m. with John down to The Fleet to twitch the Bufflehead. Arrived just after 7.30, a cloudy start turning into a beautiful early Spring day, cloud pushed west by a north easterly. Cracking bird and very good views as it dived to feed on flat calm. The Bufflehead is an exotic looking north American duck, with striking black and white plumage and a very rare bird for the UK and would normally be considered an 'escape' - a bird from a collection that has gone feral - but this one was behaving like a wild bird, getting very twitchy indeed about some kayakers coming up the Fleet and taking wing when they were hundreds of yards away.

15/03. New moon. Early day with veiled sunshine turning cloudy. First honey bees taking pollen from crocuses. First queen bumble bee of the year. Blue tit investigating nest box on shed, but not going in. Checked it out and found three decayed chicks from last year and nest material crawling with fleas. Thorough clean out. At least three chicks fledged last year so probably starvation took its toll during the heat wave in June. Chiff Chaff singing - incoming migrant.

### *EASTINGTON HORSE SHOW*

*Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> August 2010*



***At Claypits Farm, Eastington.***

*By kind permission of the Spencer Family*

Dressage, Show jumping, Showing,

Gymkhana & Fancy Dress with various stands.

Classes for all ages.

***Proceeds donated to village  
organisations.***

***PLEASE COME AND SUPPORT OUR***

## Birder in the Parish continued /

19/03. Winds at last from the south west with mild rain and sudden influx of migrants with first Sand Martins and a Swallow in the county. Pallid Swift, Hoopoe, Alpine Swift and Black Kite in the south of UK.

20/03. Male spider feeding on a large Ladybird on the window frame; not sure where such a small spider puts all that body fluid!

Chaffinch flock still at the feeders including the white headed bird.

21/03. Woke to the sonorous chimes of a Collared Dove. Two Brimstone butterflies today and a female Blackbird carrying nest material. Carrion Crows nest building in the back willows, and two Roe Deer across the meadow. Cuckoo reported at Roel Gate - earliest ever County record.

24/03. Sudden weather change from the south. This will definitely bring birds into the Parish and am expecting the first Swallows soon, and singing Willow Warblers - my touchstone bird for start of summer!

25/03. Ten Swallows at Millend with their astonishing, exuberant, indulgent flight, so completely different from any flight pattern of our wintering birds - just love 'em! They are so fast, in and out of willows, skimming, twisting, then their sudden alarm call as a Sparrowhawk makes a stoop with short pursuit and misses. The group rises, calling their Sparrowhawk alarm. Only three of our raptors can catch them, the Sparrowhawk struggles but has the ability to pounce from cover and snatch the unwary; the Hobby is a master hirundine catcher, perfectly agile enough to pursue and take Swifts also, and bats; and the magician - the Merlin, which pursues relentlessly and is agile and fast enough to easily take a Swallow.

QuickTime™ and a decompressor are needed to see this picture.

28/03. Nipped down to Saul Warth to tick Garganey pair, and next day, a further eighteen Swallows at Millend.

31/03. First Willow Warbler of the year, and now twenty Swallows, then next day, twenty five Swallows and two House Martins, with three White Wagtails at Claypits and a Little Gull on Townfield Lake.

03/04. With John, Mike and Paul to twitch the Pallid Swift at Kessingland and possible Lesser Kestrel at Minsmere. Left pub at 11.05 pm Friday evening, driving through the night with all passengers in snoring mode, arriving Kessingland at 03.20. Fantastic close views of hunting Barn Owls until the bird showed beautifully at just after 8 am. Then on to Westleton Heath/Minsmere area for Lesser Kestrel which did not show after prolonged search.

05/04. Blue Tits fumbling unwieldy nest material into nest box.

09/04. Lovely weather! Migration now well under way, plants growing apace. Nipped down to WWT to watch two Avocets which were making tentative nest building attempts.

10/04. Watched five Ring Ouzels on Cleeve, with Grasshopper Warbler, Cuckoo and an immaculate male Redstart. Very warm in the sun but still cold breeze from the north. By the 13th, the wind had turned bone-chillingly cold but birds still struggling on migration, with reports of Arctic Skuas moving up the Severn estuary.

## Cotswold Canals Update

The Phase 1A project to restore the 6 miles of canal between the Ocean at Stonehouse and Brimscombe Port is beginning to manifest itself in the form of works on the ground. The contract to build the new A46 bridge in the middle of Stroud was let recently and work should be starting at about the time you read this.

The reeds that were growing right across the canal in several places in Stonehouse which were choking off the water supply to the section of canal here in Eastington were removed over the winter. Works are also proceeding to upgrade the towpath starting near St Cyr's church and working eastwards.

Other projects should start soon with the new Upper Mills Bridge awaiting relocation scheme for some badgers which took up residence on the site over the winter. Dredging between The Ocean and Ryeford Double Lock should start soon as well as the restoration of that lock.

At the Eastington Depot, the Cotswold Canals Trust volunteers are well advanced in the building of a new public trip boat. This is in preparation for the resumption of trip operations at Eastington this summer for the first time in quite a while.

As the locks have not been used for a couple of years, it was thought wise to check them out. When the volunteers tried to use Blunder Lock, the heel post of one of the top gates split revealing that the wood inside has been well chewed by wood boring insects. These gates are made of English Oak and it has deteriorated far quicker than the type of timber used in the gates at Newtown Lock. It is unlikely that the other Blunder Lock gates are in a much better state so it looks like the whole set will need to be replaced at an anticipated cost of £30,000. Finding this amount of money in the context of the existing commitments given to fund the Phase 1A project is going to be a challenge.

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The CCT dredger has been refurbished and is fully working. It appeared on a recent BBC Countryfile TV programme as part of a piece about the restoration of the Cotswold Canals. Crews of volunteers are now being trained how to use it prior to its deployment elsewhere on the canal.

Prior to it leaving Eastington, it is planned to use the dredger to clear debris out of both Blunder and Newtown Locks but, as it is in the pound below Blunder Lock, it will not be able to do so until the lock is repaired.

There are many opportunities to get involved in the canal restoration project. Practical work takes place on Mondays and Wednesdays using the Eastington Depot next to Pike Bridge as the base. Other work takes place at weekends up and down the canal.

There are lots of other activities including fund raising, project management and design work, sales, promotion and PR type work as well as historical research, archaeology and archiving type projects.

If you would like to get involved, please make contact.

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