



Next Editors: Stephen and Kate Banks: herald@hunton.org.uk
All items for the next edition of the Herald to the Editors by 15th February

Snowdrop Sunday, 6th February

An invitation to the whole village to come and enjoy the abundance of beautiful snowdrops in Hunton churchyard on 'Snowdrop Sunday.' The day will start at 9.30am with a family service. With the help of the children from Hunton School, the snowdrop theme will be set. The pupils will have collaborated with members of our community, in the days leading up to 'Snowdrop Sunday,' to take part in different art activities, conduct research, explore symbolism and write poetry. So, do come along and enjoy this community event.

For those wishing to arrive anytime between 10.30am and 3.30pm, we will be serving hot chocolate and a variety of refreshments. Donations of homemade cakes would be most welcome. 01622 820875.

Wendy Simmons

Hunton Gardening Club Social & Supper, Saturday 19th February

Members of Hunton Gardening Club last met in November 2019 so this is a long overdue opportunity to enjoy an evening together but non-members will be welcome too. The event will be held at Hunton Club and start at 6.30pm with a pre-booked supper for £10 each. Closing date for bookings is Monday 14th February so the catering team can organise enough food. As the Hunton Herald goes to press we are hoping that there will be a speaker from the Kent Wildlife Trust. Email: Lesley.a.lee@btinternet.com to book places – do tell her if you have special dietary requirements.

And then there were more!

Two months ago I asked for a volunteer to join the Fabric Committee of St Mary's Church to help with the maintenance of our Grade 1 listed building. I am delighted that we have had three further offers, all of which we intend to accept. I am very grateful to Roger Lee, Astrid Cunningham, Jonny Aucamp and Mike Dixon for their interest and support.

We are about to have our next 5 yearly assessment (or Quinquennial) which will recommend actions that need to be taken. We know that the outstanding roof repairs will be high on the list but, having repaired the boundary wall, replaced the failing south aisle beam, and carried out a number of other less material repairs, as well as the installation of our new compost loo, we hope we will find ourselves in reasonable shape. None of this would be possible if we didn't enjoy the continued financial support and encouragement of both village volunteers and the Friends of St Mary's.

James Forster

Sarah McQuaid at Hunton Village Club, Thursday 3rd February

Singer-songwriter Sarah McQuaid is performing at Hunton Club on Thursday, February 3rd. Sarah, who has played at Hunton before, has six solo albums to her credit and her music has been described as "Shades of Joni Mitchell in a jam with Karen Carpenter".

Applause Rural Touring are helping sponsor Sarah's visit, as they did in 2013. They use Arts Council and charitable funding to subsidise rural music and events so that smaller groups can see international artists locally. We are keeping the numbers down to 40 recognising that we need to keep spaces between tables.

Tickets are £10 and can be pre-booked online at www.applause.org.uk/whats-on or reserved by emailing me on huntontreewarden@btinternet.com texting on 07779-367412, and pay cash on the door. The Club Bar will take cards for drinks and snacks. Doors open at 7.30 pm. Music 8-10 pm.

Mike Summersgill

Your Local Contacts:			
School: Secretary/Head Teacher	820360	Maidstone Police	690690 or 101
Under 5's Pre-School:	820309	Village Hall Booking:	www.huntonvillagehall.co.uk
Pond and Tree Warden: Mike Summersgill	820429	Huntonwatch: huntonwatch@gmail.com	07907 019996
Rector: vacant		'Potholes' Hotline (KCC)	03000 418181
Hon Associate Rector: Revd. David Jones	741474*	Community Warden: James Watson	07811 271021
Curate: Revd. Iornafaulkner@gmail.com	439304*	PCSO - Paul Vasey	101
Hunton Bell Ringers: Jeff Young	746541	Helen Grant MP helen.grant.mp@parliament.uk	0207 219 7107
Village Club: Roger Lee	820210	WI President: Ann Sawtell	820731
*not available on Fridays			
Contact details for other village clubs and organisations are available at www.huntonparishcouncil.org.uk			
Parish Council Contacts			
Parish Clerk: Sharon Goodwin - 681238, huntonnpc@googlegmail.com		Chairman: David Heaton - 820678, dhhuntonnpc@gmail.com	
Clr Jonny Goddard - 820096, jonny@cheveneyfarm.co.uk		Clr Tony Stanbridge - 820721, tshuntonnpc@gmail.com	
Clr Annette Trought - 820448, annette@trought.com		Clr Mike Summersgill - 820429, mshuntonnpc@btinternet.com	
Clr Iain Simmons - 820875, ishuntonnpc@btinternet.com			

Diary Dates			
5 th February - Hunton School's PTA Quiz Night;	6 th February - Snowdrop Sunday;	19 th February - Hunton Gardening Club Social & Supper	
Check out www.huntonparishcouncil.org.uk/events-list for the latest events. If you would like to add an event, email huntonnpc@gmail.com			

Pastoral Letter

February – the month of love and romance - or so the shops will have us believe!

February 14th in the Anglican calendar is indeed the day of commemoration for Saint Valentine of Rome, and St Valentine of Terni. But very little is known about either of these men. There are many speculative stories that involve priests defying the emperors' laws and marrying couples in secret, or of Valentine falling in love with his jailer's daughter and writing her a letter, but nobody really knows.

It appears that we actually owe more to the writer Geoffrey Chaucer for our modern day obsession of sending cards and gifts to our loved ones. He wrote a poem in 1382 entitled 'Parliament of Fowls' to commemorate the engagement of King Richard II to Anne of Bohemia; which was about birds choosing their mates at this time of year. By the 1400's this had translated into February 14th becoming an annual celebration of love, with lavish celebrations being recorded as happening in the courts of France – maybe starting the French reputation as the best lovers too?

Handwritten notes have changed into commercially made greetings cards that you can buy for just about anyone – from your significant other to your favourite pet!

In recent years it has been thought that over 70% of the UK population will celebrate Valentine's Day despite it not being a national holiday, spending around £30 per person! However, with the media and commercial establishments pushing this image of the perfect romance onto us it can be a difficult time for those who are on their own or suffering from a relationship breakdown. Feelings of loneliness and worthlessness can increase and even become detrimental to an individual's health.

This is where I believe having a Christian faith can help – we know we are all imperfect individuals, but God loves us anyway. It's not the mushy, romantic type of love that the shops are trying to sell us either, it's a deep, caring, lasting love that costs nothing except time. So the challenge for us in this month of romance is to try to share God's version of love with everyone we meet.

Becky Parnham

There is a balance to be had in keeping a tidy garden

Leaving gardens for wildlife is key to help maintaining our natural habitat, but that does not mean the gardens have to be a rewilding project or that we should become timid or anxious about doing some clearing up. There is a balance to be had.

For most of us with gardens, these are our outdoor spaces, a place we can design and develop to suit our whims. For some this might be formality and others, informality. Whatever our tastes these places are our own haven in which to contemplate, relax and restore, not just by seeing and looking but in the doing.

Often whilst gardening I do wonder whether I should be clearing up the borders, removing leaves and then replacing this valuable organic matter with more developed organic matter in the form of mulch, but in most cases I do think I should. We all invest in plants from time to time, or precious specimens that are gifted to us that need to be nurtured and that may require us to tidy around them, clip them back and organise them a bit. Some plant species are more susceptible to our damp climates and those that are gourmet food for slugs, do not necessarily want to be kept under damp leaves for the duration of the winter. Worms will take the fallen leaves into the soil, but large drifts of leaves on lawns causes access to light to be denied and damage the lawn.

Some plants are greedy for space and if we don't trim, they can consume their neighbouring more retiring plants, so cutting back and editing may be necessary.

It is good to have the seed heads on plants over winter for the birds, and for something to look at, but leave them too long and you can find your borders awash with unwanted seedlings.

And of course, if you are not out there in it 'doing' you will miss the day-by-day emergence of new growth, the scents that come to meet you and the hue of the colours that vary in the different lights of the day. You will miss the spider's webs on seed heads, the bees on the early flowering Mahonias, the Robins and Blackbirds following you round the garden and racing you to the compost heap and the frogs and toads hunkering nearby ready to leap. With your hands around the soil what better way to see a large variety of small insects you never knew existed. There is a secret world out there and you may need to be in it if you want to see it. So I think, tidy enough to look after your objective for the garden and the needs of the plants you have invested in, but tread lightly.

Sue Heaton

Bellringer crosses the boundaries

What do you get if you cross a bellringer from Devon with a bell tower from Kent? The answer – a very confused bellringer.

You may be relieved to hear this isn't a belated Christmas cracker joke but alludes to my own recent experience when I had the great pleasure to be welcomed by the Bellringing Team at St Mary's, Hunton.

Having not been part of a ringing team since I left Devon many years ago I was relieved to find I could still tell the difference between my Sally and my Tail-End, whilst the call to 'Look to, Trebles Going, She's gone', felt like a homecoming of sorts, and one I hadn't realised how much I'd missed.

As with any skill, there's been lots to relearn and quite a few bad habits to unlearn, as I've tried to improve my ringing technique. However, once I regained sufficient skill to ring in simple rounds, I soon discovered there was now a lot more for me to learn... The music of bellringing doesn't use scales or notes but rather Changes – that is, the ringers change the order in which the bells are being rung to create the varied sounds of the bells.

In Devon, (and some parts of Cornwall), they use a system of Call-Changes. One person regularly calls out pairs of bells to indicate to the rest of the team who needs to change the order in the round.

Almost everywhere else, Bellringers rely on 'Methods', each having a different name such as 'Grandsires', 'Kent Treble Bob' and 'Percy's Tea Strainer'. When the Method is called, it indicates to multiple ringers that they need to change their ringing position in the round. After several months I am proud to report I can keep up with 'Plain Hunt on Five' – as long as I'm ringing Bell 2.

The upshot of this, is that I have to say a huge thankyou to the ringers at St. Mary's for their time, patience and welcome. The only thing better than returning to a previous skill is learning something new with it. They say you can't teach an old dog new tricks – but I'm hoping you can teach a former Devonian how to ring a Reverse Canterbury.

Lavinia Thompson

Notes from Hunton School

Despite its being winter we are delighted to have been given the opportunity through 'A Chance to Shine' cricket charity for free weekly cricket coaching from Kent Cricket and Adrian Crust. As you will have seen in previous Hunton Herald editions we are very proud of the sporting achievements for a small school like ours. The children's fitness and skills become even more apparent when we compete against much larger schools than ours. Thank you to everyone in the community for supporting us at the Quiz Night in the village hall. The school is very much part of the village and we do appreciate your support at our events as well as those of you who kindly volunteer helping us with reading, clubs or work hard on our governing body. We look forward to our involvement with Snowdrop Sunday. What a very special event that will be.



Hurry for a Hunton Club discount

Hunton Club members who renew their £20 annual subscription before the end of February can benefit from a £5 discount. And volunteers are needed for future club events which include a Gardening Group Supper, Quiz Night, The Queen's Platinum Jubilee Celebration and a Beer and Gin Festival.

The club has been busy with a number of events over the festive period. Sam Andrews, fresh from his Pantomime success, led carol singing, supported by The Neil Davis Trio. The doors were also open for Christmas and New Year's Eve events and a local walk and lunch on 30th December.

At the first AGM for two years Chairman, Gil Robertson stepped down for health reasons but he continues on the committee and is joined by Mike Dixon, Roger Lee and Peter Bishop with Roger taking over the helm. Members gave a vote of thanks to Doug Redfarn and Phil Nichols, who had been mainly responsible for manning the bar and enabling the Club to reopen after lock-downs. Application forms to become members are available at the Club during opening hours (Wednesday and Sunday evenings from 8 p.m.) or e-mail Phil at pk.nichols@btinternet.com.

Volunteers and those with suggestions for the type of events you would like to see at the club should contact a Committee Member or leave a note in the Suggestions Box in the entrance way.

Phil Nichols

Two Winter Walks

I was not over-enthusiastic to learn that the village walking group's forthcoming winter ramble was to be in Mote Park. It didn't really appeal. Were we going to walk round and round the lake on tarmac paths avoiding the mud? My only association with Mote Park had been trips to the swimming pool with our children and, much later, considerably preferable (for me) concert visits. But as a fellow walker pointed out, that was at the Leisure Centre, not in the park.

I was still not convinced that we would have our usual stimulating 2-hour, 4 mile walk. I was humbled when, on arrival, I saw a large placard informing visitors that the park was 450 acres with a 30 acre lake. I also noticed another energetic-looking walking group, complete with sturdy boots and walking poles all ready to get going.

We set off and within yards Mike (Hunton's tree warden) had pointed out the largest tulip tree in the UK and an impressive Siberian Elm, which had not succumbed to Dutch Elm disease. We crossed a wooden bridge over a small stream before approaching the lake which was tranquil in its seasonal stillness, the pedalo swans discreetly huddled in a distant corner resting from the summer crowds.

As always with our walks, we talked with friends, becoming absorbed in conversations and not necessarily noticing all the scenery around us. But we climbed a steep hill, slid down a muddy bank, walked through carpets of copper-coloured leaves and emerged into large fields, not so very different from the Hunton countryside. The swimming-pool roof could be seen in the distance but so could many trees, stripped of their leaves but looking magnificent in their winter skeletons.

We arrived back at the car park after our 2 hour walk. We had only walked three miles as we hadn't been walking fast enough to cover the whole of the planned route. But we had had fun, we had walked through woods and fields and on woodland footpaths. And I had learnt that Mote Park has far more to offer than I had realised.

More information about the walking group from Ann Sawtell at ann.sawtell@btinternet.com

Liz Oliver

And another...

On the 30th December 38 people met at the club, suitably booted for the anticipated mud, and we set off for a walk around Hunton. As on other village walks it was a pleasant, chatty affair and people and dogs enjoyed meeting up with friends. The weather was good as we made our way up West Street and headed across to Lughorse Lane and the views were clear as we walked through Buston Manor. We were still chatting when we arrived back at the club.

Some headed homeward whilst others arrived to have lunch at the club where 48 people were served with copious amounts of soup and rolls followed by a wondrous selection of cakes. I doubt very much that anyone left the club feeling hungry!

I think this comment received afterwards was echoed by many – 'thank you for the lovely food. The walk was muddy and the dogs had to be rubbed down before going into the club but a nice walk. Hope to do it again next year.'

Fay Joyce



Hunton Village Club Opening Hours

Wednesdays 8 - 11.00pm & Sundays 8 - 10.30 pm

Awe and Wonder-Candlelit Christmas Carol Service

By the time you read this, Christmas may seem a distant memory. However, for many, the Christmas Eve Candlelit Carol Service at St Mary's, remains a special memory. Due to the increase in national Covid cases, the decision to go ahead with the service was only taken by Hunton on December 22nd. As a result, a team of eager volunteers worked in haste to make the church look stunning. The last-minute addition of a six-foot Christmas tree (costing just 1p!) and many lanterns, kindly loaned to us from Linton Church, set the scene. Nonetheless, we were uncertain if anyone would attend, as several local church services had been cancelled.

To our joy, 110 people came and sang with energy and enthusiasm. We even had to delay the start due to the continuing arrival of the congregation! The atmosphere was filled with awe and wonder! St Mary's church was embellished by the glittering light of over one hundred candles, beautiful greenery and seasonal flowers. As each lesson was read, the Christmas story unfolded around the crib to reflect the quiet holiness of God's gift of the Christ child. The bell ringing, organ playing, together with the carefully chosen carols, created a very joyful and moving experience. The much practised 'Christmas Lullaby,' by John Rutter and sung by the choir, was gentle and powerfully sung. Many thanks go to Revered David Jones, Marion Greensill (organist), and all who helped to organise and take part in the many elements of this service. As one member of the congregation put it, "Hunton at its best! The atmosphere was very special."

Following the service, families and friends enjoyed mulled wine, mince pies and convivial chat.

Wendy Simmons

Winter Birdwatching in Hunton

Sitting in my conservatory, there was a thud and scuffling sound. I looked up to see the silhouette of a bird on the roof. My cat, Talli, (safely inside) was also very interested! It looked a bit large for a blackbird, so I rushed upstairs to look from above. It was a beautiful sparrowhawk – I suspected a male and was later able to confirm this because of the bold rufous markings on its breast and throat. I only managed a quick snapshot through the upstairs window, in poor light before it flew into my neighbours' garden.

Sparrowhawks are not specifically winter visitors; they can strike swiftly and virtually silently at any time and do often visit gardens – I'm sure many of you have also had visits! Have any of you had any other surprise visitors of the feathered variety, I wonder?!

Around West Street, currently, we have at least one large mixed flock of fieldfares and starlings, with possibly a few redwings amongst them, although I've not yet identified any of the latter yet this year. I love the 'chuntering' sounds that fieldfares make when they fly noisily overhead. Fieldfares, aptly named, do favour fields, but venture into gardens in harsher, colder weather in search of food. Redwings, also aptly named, come into gardens in harsher weather in search of berries.

A winter visitor I am hoping to see one year in Hunton is a brambling! There have been sightings this year in Marden, and I've seen them on Birding trips elsewhere, they're not even particularly rare, but I've yet to see one here, so if anyone does spot any, please let me know! Due to their orange-tinged colouring and the white on their rump they can easily be confused with their close relative, the chaffinch, although they don't have white on the sides of their tail and they tend to be darker, with speckles. I also checked with the RSPB website, which suggests listening out for their *nasal tones*. Of course, they are not in full song in winter. I was told by an expert Birder that a chaffinch's song (in the spring/summer) sounds like, "I'm ever so pleased to meet you!" and in my experience it really does sound like this, albeit with a few variations!

Some Previous Sightings in Hunton: Spotted flycatchers – seen one year in my garden and also by the river (these are now rare and I haven't seen any for a few years; hobbies (quite rare now), nightingales, treecreepers, kingfishers, barn owls, tawny owls ... etc.

I am sure many of you could add to this list!

Having just watched the latest David Attenborough's film, The Wonder of Song, it has made me sad to think of some of the wonderful wildlife we have had here, some of which disappearing. I fear we may have lost our nightingales and some other bird species and I am left wondering what we can do to protect our wildlife in Hunton. Any ideas?

Jacqui Frances

Benefice Service Rota – February 2022

	6 th	13 th	20 th	27 th
Coxheath 11:00 am	Communion (1+2+3) <i>LF</i>	Morning Worship (Preacher's choice) <i>LF/SE</i>	Communion (1+2+3) <i>DJ</i>	Bishop Simon (TBC)
East Farleigh 9:30 am	Morning Worship <i>LF</i>		Communion <i>DJ</i>	
West Farleigh 9:30 am		Communion <i>LF</i>		Morning Worship <i>SE/LF</i>
Hunton 9:30 am	Communion <i>DJ</i>		Morning Worship <i>LF</i>	
Linton 9:30 am		Morning Worship <i>BP</i>		Communion <i>DJ</i>
Coxheath	Every Thursday, 10:00 - BCP Holy Communion			
Linton	Last Wednesday of each month, 12:00 noon, BCP Holy Communion (followed by Lunch)			
HC Holy Communion, MP Morning Prayer, FS Family Service, LF – Lorna Faulkner, DJ– David Jones, BP - Becky Parnham, SE - Sue Elliott				

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