

BLETSOE

GAZETTE

2004

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# PARISH COUNCIL

Since the circulation of the chairman's report following the Annual Parish Meeting, several developments are worthy of note:

## **Parish Plan**

In the light of the limited support expressed by electors for proceeding with the Parish Plan, it has been decided to place the matter on hold, allowing it to be resurrected if future circumstances change.

The initial exercise was certainly worthwhile, and responses to the parish questionnaire have clearly highlighted concerns and priorities that the Council will seek to address.

## **Coplowe Lane**

Consultations with the county and borough councils have resulted in the tidying and fencing of the fly-tipping site at the top of Coplowe Lane. A locked gateway allows joint access to the highways depot and to Bedfordia's land, but should deter illicit parking and dumping. The unsightly mounds of earth are due to be removed.

## **Parish Paths Partnership (P3)**

In response to widespread concern amongst parish walkers and horse-riders over the closing of hitherto permitted access to some of Bedfordia's fields, the Council has assisted with the formation of a local Parish Paths Partnership (P3) group, which will work with Ed Burnett of the County Council with the object of restoring some

permitted routes. (For further information about the group, please contact Ian Jones, the co-ordinator, or Ann Gibbons, the secretary.)

The Parish Council is still pressing for the establishment of a permissive footpath to create a circular walk to Radwell, but matters are currently bogged down in the hands of solicitors!

## **Quiet Lanes**

The attempt to have some of the parish roads designated as Quiet Lanes is making equally slow progress, and currently awaits the publication of the County Council's pilot study, promised Spring 2005.

## **Telephone Box at Bourne End**

With the support of our local MP, the Council has been contesting BT's proposal to close the telephone box on the A6 at Bourne End Lane. BT has not yet communicated its final decision, but repeated vandalism does not help the case for retention.

## **Bletsoe Turn**

In view of continued concern about road safety at Bletsoe Turn, the Council is making a further attempt to raise with the relevant authority (now Bedfordshire County Council since the de-trunking of the A6) the possibility of installing refuge islands at this dangerous junction.

## **Thanks**

The Council wishes to thank those

parishioners who have freely undertaken work on behalf of the parish, especially Mick OConnor, David Baker, Richard Hales and Joyce and Nick Crocker. Congratulations as well to Jonathan Eames for so lovingly maintaining the War Memorial triangle as an extension of his own immaculate garden!

### **Parish Council Details**

The Council has yet to elect a permanent chairman and vice-chairman, following Peter Hetherington's retirement from the chairmanship. Names and telephone numbers of present members of the Council are:

Edward Bean	781372
Richard Day (Tree Warden)	783184
Ann Gibbons	781161
Michael Grimes	781183
Peter Hetherington	781851
David Martin	782579

Jocelyn Wallis 781604

Clerk:  
Malcolm 'Bill' Rowland 781646

If you wish to raise parish issues, do not hesitate to contact any of the above.

The Parish Council meets monthly (except in August) in the Village Hall, usually on the first Monday of the month at 7.30 pm. Meetings are open to the public who have the opportunity to speak on parish concerns. Agendas are posted a week in advance on the parish notice boards, and minutes of the previous months meeting are displayed in the church.

## **TREE AND HEDGE PLANTING**

If you require any trees or hedge plants, we can get them from the Council.

These can be made available for small or large schemes within the village and they are free of charge so long as they have some amenity value or can be seen from a road or footpath.



If anyone is interested or needs any help or advice, please contact:

*The Tree Warden,  
Richard Day  
on 781262 / 783184*

## *The Good Dog-owner's Guide to Bletsoe*

*Because of its rural setting, Bletsoe is a dog-owner's paradise, but please don't spoil it for others.*

*Always observe these simple guide-lines:*

- 1. No dogs in the Children's Play Area or the Memorial Garden.*
- 2. Keep dogs on lead in the Parish Field.*
- 3. Clear up and dispose of any fouling in public places..*



***Good Dogs!***



## **PARISH PATHS PARTNERSHIP**

Bletsoe is surrounded by some wonderful countryside which has until recently has been readily accessible to both local walkers and horse riders. This year unfortunately has seen the disappearance of broad headland/set aside land that had allowed walkers to complete a circular walk from the village.

It was decided to initiate a local Parish Partnership Group, as this would give us considerable support in our attempts to retain and extend walks around the village. There were two well-attended meetings to discuss the safe access to existing and traditional paths and bridleways.

Because of the difficulty of combining footpaths and bridleways throughout the route, a footpath only route has been proposed and submitted to the County Council in the first instance.

### **Footpaths**

Since the closing of the set aside land, the only access from the Parish Field is the public footpath which goes through the middle of three fields and is either too muddy in winter or obscured by crops in spring and summer, making access impossible to all but the hardiest walkers. We are therefore trying to obtain access through the field neighbouring the Parish Field. This would be the most logical and safe entry point to the circular walk round the remaining broad headland and if access could be gained, would allow the linking up of routes along the River Ouse to Radwell.

### **Bridleways**

The parish has a thriving horse community and many of the riders are young girls who, as with the walkers, have until recently enjoyed safe riding on the broad headland/set aside around the Bedfordia Estate. The closure has meant that horses are now being lead and ridden along the A6 and village High

Street, towards the very busy and dangerous Riseley Road junction to gain access to bridleways on the other side of the village. It is an accident waiting to happen and therefore an urgent plea has been made for safe access which would also allow the 'linking' of the extensive and safe bridleways at Thurleigh Airfield complex, otherwise inaccessible due to the busy and fast roads.

It has been acknowledged that horses can cause damage to crops and it is understood that this has been a possible reason for Bedfordia closing access to all. The local Parish Path Partnership would work very hard to ensure strict and responsible use of the land and possibly introduce a permit scheme to regulate future use.

### **Map and information**

Unfortunately it has not been possible to reproduce the map here, but one will be displayed on the notice board very shortly. In the meantime, if you would like to see a copy, or discuss any matters relating to the scheme, please contact Ian Jones (782382)

## **MATCH OF THE DAY COMES TO BLETSOE**

Our village football pitch has seen action recently with two matches played in beautiful sunshine and watched by a small, but well behaved, knowledgeable crowd.

Both matches were organised by two local lads, Craig Richards and James Handy. They did a great job in encouraging the younger players to get involved and a truly outstanding job of 'press ganging' some of the 'elder



statesmen' into making an appearance. In all, eighteen players were available with ages ranging from 11 years to, hum...a little more than that. Some players were even recruited from as far away as Lower Dean and Riseley.

There is no doubt we have some very decent football talent in the village with two goal keeping displays from David Hetherington that put England's David 'Calamity' James firmly in the shade. Craig himself showed us all how to score goals and if were not for David in goal, would have seen double figures. The officials did a grand job, keeping everyone on the straight and narrow, especially one of the older players who hadn't realised just how slow he had become.

Fun and participation were the main objectives and judging by the smiling, if somewhat red faces, everyone had a great time and stated that they would be available for another encounter. The older players were noted for lobbying for more time between matches for additional 'quality' recovery time, but

Craig and James showed little sympathy for this view.

There was one injury marring all the fun, with best wishes from all concerned going to Phillip Davis for a speedy and full recovery from his broken wrist. But, please don't let this put anyone off getting enlisted for the next match. Note the new goal net and the marked out pitch. The game must go on and as the legendary Bill Shankley once said, 'Football is not a religion, it's far more important than that'.

Additional thanks go to:

Peter Hetherington. Referee and Groundsman.

Patrick Brooks. Referee.

April Jones. Half-time water lady.

Craig and James. Enthusiasm and coordination.

If you would like a copy of the above photo, please contact Esther Baxter (arcusiridis@yahoo.co.uk)

# VILLAGE HALL

## Events

Last year's Christmas Dance, with Millstream, was very good and the roast beef dinner delicious. This year it is to be held on Saturday 11th December with the Dave Stott trio. Tickets, which include dinner, will cost £12 as we have engaged a quality band.

The Family Social is on the following Saturday, the 18th December. Christmas draw tickets will be on sale. This is an opportunity to win a cash prize and many other prizes (which are donated) and support the Village Hall.

We try to arrange one social event a month during spring and autumn and many of you have enjoyed the wide range of entertainment. However we were disappointed that there was insufficient interest to cover the cost of the Unison band engaged for 9th October and we had to cancel for the first time in living memory.

Please help us to keep the Village Hall serving the needs of the community in Bletsoe by coming to these events and bringing friends from other villages.

The regular events like Bingo and Whist Drives continue to be well supported, thanks to the unsung help of the small band of organisers. These, together with the monthly Coffee Mornings not only raise a modest income but more important, provide a useful venue for villagers to get together.

## Maintenance

Much has been done this summer to

bring the Village Hall up to safety standards and it has had a thorough makeover, both inside and out at a cost of over £5,000. This has depleted our savings and we will have to work hard to build up our reserves so we remain a viable organisation.

## Funding

We are entirely self supporting, receiving no subsidies, though the Parish Council do help towards the cost of fireworks.

A large part of our income is from the summer fete, the proceeds being shared with Friends of St. Mary's. Please continue to support that and the other activities and remember that the hall is available for private hire.

## Wanted - your ideas

We are always looking for ideas on providing entertainment and facilities that the people of Bletsoe want, so please let any of the committee members know your thoughts.

Do we have too many events or too few?

Do we have the type of entertainment you want?

Let any committee member know.

*Chris Baldwin, Peter Bryer*

## Committee

It is now time to say goodbye to Chris



Baldwin, who has been the strength behind the Village Hall for 14 years. We wish him and Pat well at their new home in Essex.

The committee is looking to other members of the community to help run the hall. Please let Barbara or any other committee member know if you would be willing to help, particularly if you would take responsibility for running the bar, as Chris will be giving up as licensee. The present committee is:

Barbara Button (Secretary)  
22 The Avenue

Maria Caves (vice chair)

Peter Bryer (Treasurer)

Hazel Mitchell, Joyce Cullen,

Dave Martin and Mike Gibbons

## WHIST / BINGO

Every second Monday of the month there is a Whist Drive at 7.30pm prompt in the Village Hall.

Everyone is welcome.



Every four weeks there is a Bingo evening at the Village Hall. Entrance is 50p and this includes refreshments.

Good value for money!

The next one will be held on 12th November.

Everyone welcome.

## COFFEE MORNINGS

We have a very successful coffee morning every second Thursday of the month. Everyone is welcome including babies and young children. Why not drop in for a coffee and a chat?

We are a friendly group who would welcome you and you will get to know other people in the village. We look forward to meeting you.

The next coffee morning is on November 11th at 10.30am in the Village Hall.



*Hazel and Barbara*

# BLETSOE VILLAGE

At this time when many new families are moving into the village may we invite you to come to one of our meetings?

What better way could there be to get to know some of the other ladies than by joining us each month and listening to speakers on various subjects.

In July we invite everyone in the village to join us for a barbecue. In December we have a Christmas party with entertainment when we invite all senior citizens. If you

are a Senior Citizen and would like to come to the Christmas Party, please give me a call on 781813.

You will be made very welcome at our meetings, which are held on the second Tuesday of each month at 7.45pm in Bletsoe Village Hall. I promise no jam or Jerusalem!

*Barbara Button, President.*

# ST MARY'S CHURCH

"The Church" has a wide range of meanings depending on your outlook, your degree of involvement in the community, your faith, and your relationship with God. To many it may simply be the building itself, others may think of it as a (sometimes flawed) institution, while some think of it as the congregation with which they worship.

The building itself is important to the village for the historical focus that it provides to the village as a settlement stretching back more than 1,000 years. Culturally, it serves to remind us of our predecessors, their beliefs, their achievements, their vanity, their weakness, and their mortality.

As a wider institution, it may variously infuriate others over its apparent libertarianism, conservatism, action, inaction, interference, or lack of involvement in this or that issue of the

moment.

For others it may simply provide the rites of passage through life, while bringing comfort to the sick, the bereaved, and the anxious.

Whilst the building provides the place in which we meet, it is the congregation which forms its beating heart, bringing together people from all walks of life to hear God's word and learn the relevance of Jesus's teaching to our life today. The building bears witness to the durability of that message; the congregation bear witness to the relevance of the message in their lives.

Join us each Sunday at 10am, or at the times advertised on the notice boards for festive events.

# FRIENDS OF ST MARY'S



The 'Friends of St Mary's' are the group who raise money to ensure the maintenance and repair of the oldest and most impressive of village buildings - St Mary's Church.

## Maintenance

There is an ongoing programme of maintenance required on the fabric of the building. This is set out in a 'five-year plan' or 'quinquennial inspection' when an approved church architect produces a prioritised list of work to be done. The 'Friends' then have to arrange for this work to be done on behalf of the PCC and churchwardens, and most importantly, pay for it.

The past year has seen the removal, due to age and disease, of one of the pair of magnificent horse chestnuts which stood on either side of the Lych Gate. Records show these as being planted in 1863. A replacement will be planted this winter.

Worrying cracks have appeared in the

west end due to the complex geology and the cumulative effect of dry summers. A structural engineer has carried out trial excavations and soil tests around the foundations at the north and south corners of the west end. These revealed that the north corner had long ago been underpinned with brick, while the south corner had not, leading to the south corner tilting to the south and causing the cracks in the west wall. At present these cracks are not sufficiently serious to require intervention, but are being closely monitored for further movement.

Meanwhile work will soon start on repair and conservation to some of the windows and stained glass.

There has also been exploratory excavation of the floor collapse in the StJohn chapel. We await the architect's recommendations and costings, but any work in the chapel will be funded by the StJohn family who are responsible for it's upkeep.

## Fundraising

The nature of the work involved means we have to employ specialist craftsmen so costs are high. We are very grateful for our regular contributors and also those who attend our fundraising events.

We appreciate very much our share of the fete proceeds, this gives us an annual injection of much need cash and we would like to thank the fete committee for all their hard work in raising such a wonderful sum of money. We would also like to thank all those who, very generously, make regular donations through 'gift aid'. It helps a lot to get this regular flow of money, and is even better when we can get some back from the taxman! If anyone would like to help in this way please contact any of the committee members.

We hold a variety of events during the year, to try to appeal to all tastes. This last year has been very successful, ranging from a concert by the excellent local choral group 'Cantamus' to an evening of rock/blues/folk by the extremely talented and inspirational 'Bonas Brothers'. We hope to repeat both events, 'Cantamus' will be singing in the church on 27th November, so book the date now. We haven't yet set a date for the 'Bonas Brothers' but keep your eyes peeled because tickets are likely to go fast.

We also held our annual plant sale and after a lapse of many years a 'Safari Supper' where participants had to walk off each course before going on to the next. We would like to thank those who so generously opened their homes and made everyone so welcome.



### PLEA FOR PLANTS

Next year, as in the previous years, we will be holding our own 'home-grown' stall. If you can provide anything in the way of plants - seedlings, divided perennials or any rooted cuttings these would all be gratefully received - the more variety the better.

We would like to thank all those who have supported us through the year and would encourage anyone who has never been to one of our events to come along and give it a try!

We would also like to thank Evelyn Baker who after many years as an excellent chairman (and before that, as secretary) stepped down last year, but remains a valuable member of the committee.

If you have any ideas or comments please contact any of us:

Alison Bean (Chairman)	781179
Ray Franklin (Treasurer)	782305
June Jones (Secretary)	781824
Edward Bean	781372
Mike Gibbons	781161
Pauline Hamill	0787 6450810
David Martin	782579

# THE BIG HOLE

Some months past, I (the thinner churchwarden) was not a little worried to find a hole, about the size of a large foot, had appeared in the floor of the StJohn chapel of St Mary's, Bletsoe. My immediate instincts led me to believe that a certain large individual in our congregation had again put his foot in it, but literally. However, this was obviously not the case as I could move my forearm in almost any direction without my hand touching the sides of the underlying cavity.

We decided that an urgent investigation was required to determine the cause of the collapse, and the full force of the diocesan conservation process was fired into action at full speed! Six months later, with all the paperwork completed, the builders have been and we now have a big hole some six feet long and four feet deep by the east wall of the chapel.

To some it may just be a hole in the floor, but it is a very important hole inasmuch as it tells us a lot about the construction of the building, its history, and Victorian standards of workmanship.

Beneath the balustrade at the western side of the chapel, there is a large slate slab covering steps leading down to the vaulted crypt occupying the western half of the space beneath the raised floor area - we know this from an inspection of the crypt carried out ten or more years ago.

However, we knew nothing about what occupied the space beneath the eastern side of the chapel, other than a vague

reference on the Cavendish memorial referring to Lady Lucy Cavendish being 'interred in the vault'.

As the builders set to work excavating the hole, the cause of the collapse was readily apparent; the Victorian contractors responsible for laying the floor and installing the balustrade had filled the void beneath with a loose mix of clay, sand, and building rubble. Over this they had laid a layer of sharp sand and a thick layer of hard lime cement on which the encaustic tiles were bedded. As the loose infill had settled over time a large void was created over which the floor remained suspended but unsupported.

The big hole, in truth, only covers a very small area of the chapel floor, but its position halfway along the eastern wall could not have been more revealing. The first thing of note that came to light was a bricked-up archway at ground level which could only have been an exterior entrance to a crypt beneath an earlier floor level. However, at the eastern end of the hole the excavations uncovered a retaining wall supporting an area of brick vaulting. This presumably covers a crypt which may contain the remains of Lady Lucy Cavendish.

We now await the architects report, an estimate of the cost of repairs, and the funds to carry them out.

*Edward Bean (Churchwarden)*

# BLETSONE FETE 2004

After a certain amount of discussion it was decided to hold the fete at the Village Hall the alternative was the Old Rectory but the insurance costs and space finally swayed the decision. Thanks to Alison and Andrew for the offer of their property.

Fete day was June 19th and the weather was mixed, just about OK but it meant that we were always unsure about how the afternoon would turn out. We just about managed to stay outside!

Chris Baldwin did his usual sterling work in getting advertising and we are going to miss him next year. We wish him and Pat all the best as they move away.

Mike managed to get even more cars this year not bad considering we clashed with the Bolnhurst Country Fair once again. Nick had a number of motorbikes on display so thanks to him.

We were entertained by the Ouse Valley  
S w i n g

Band, which created a traditional atmosphere with teas organised by Pat Baldwin and her band of helpers.

There were a number of new attractions a Bouncy Castle and a Pets Corner. Many thanks to Sue and Gort Measey for travelling from Leicestershire with two ponies. Jane Dawson provided pony rides, again a new venture.

There were lots of stalls and attractions so thanks to all the stallholders. The Draw had many valuable prizes arranged by Joyce and Jane it raised over £750 so well done.

Colin Deas again provided shirts from Rael-Brook, we really do appreciate the effort it takes to get these down from Manchester and the boost to the Fete income.

Thank you to Alison Bean who put a lot of hard work into arranging the programme with all the different shaped



adverts.

Thank you also to Sharnbrook School for the loan of crash mats essential for the greasy pole!

We had fish and chips in the evening, as we recovered, with music provided by Paul Wilmot.

Proceeds were divided between the Village Hall and The Friends of St. Marys. We managed to raise £3,200 just

beating last year!

A new committee is being formed with Ann Binder as chairman if you want to join please phone 782362 there are a number of vacant positions and next years fete depends on these being filled.

*Ann Binder, Chairman*

## THANKS

We are sorry to be losing the services of three of the village's long serving and hard working chairmen. Peter Hetherington has resigned from the chairmanship of the Parish Council, although we shall retain the benefit of his advice as a continuing member of the council. He has been tireless in following up the non-appearance of promised services and arranging on site meetings with various officials. He has made a large number of phone calls and letters at his own expense and we are indebted to him.

Chris Baldwin, Chairman of the Village Hall Committee for 14 years, will be sadly missed when he moves. He has certainly acted above and beyond the call of duty in all he has done. Without his perseverance and dogged determination we should not have the village hall extension, which has been so successful.

As barman he has often opened up the bar for both public and private celebrations at considerable personal

inconvenience and the voluntary work he has undertaken in the way of minor repairs all round the village has benefited us all.

Pat Baldwin will also leave behind a gap that is difficult to fill, as she has been WI secretary for many years and her stalwart work behind the tea urns at the Fete has kept the visitors and stallholders going through sun and rain. Our best wishes go with Chris and Pat in their new lives.

Evelyn Baker resigned as chairman of the Friends of St Mary's after many years of leading the small group of fundraisers. Her expertise in historic buildings and enthusiasm remain invaluable.

We are also sorry to lose Peter and Hester Bryer who in their quiet way have always been prepared to give help in the village. We are grateful to Peter for agreeing to continue acting as Treasurer for the Village Hall for the time being.

## ***A Final Farewell***

*After 19 years in Bletsoe we are finally on the move. It was an idea some two and a half years ago to move, something we have given a lot of thought about. After one or two disappointments on properties we have found our right property in Essex, only a few miles from the sea.*

*We both feel we have served a full apprenticeship in Bletsoe, being involved in Youth Club, WI, Parish Council, Village Hall, Fete and any other committee that was going. All these have brought many memories for us. We have enjoyed being part of village life. Of course, the village hall is the one that stands out above the others. It was often said that the village hall was my second home. After 14 years as Chairman and 10 years as licensee I feel I have given my best. I will miss organising dances and various events with the help of the committee.*

*We have made many friends in Bletsoe and I would like to thank those who have given me work over the years. I have always given my best for a fair pay as the saying goes.*

*We shall miss Bletsoe but we hope to keep in touch with many of you.*

*Chris and Pat Baldwin*

## ***A Final, Final Farewell***

*We have just received the card with all your good wishes along with the 150 garden token and the appropriately named The House Champagne. We are quite overwhelmed at everyones kindness and it gives us a warm feeling to know how many friends we have. We shall think of you all very often.*



## A JULY LAMENT

A new menace is invading the gardens of Bletsoe  
And spoiling those fleeting and (otherwise) blissful balmy days.

This creature has a grunt more menacing than a lion's roar,  
A whine more piercing than a swarm of bees in June  
And a kind of rasping grating noise - unceasing in its annoyance

It usually begins just when you've been tempted into your own garden  
For lunch under the old pear tree by the transient sunshine;  
Or perhaps an evening barbecue for visiting friends.  
No sooner is the table set, the wine glinting in the summer light,  
Smells of burning charcoal and sizzling meats begin to waft.

Then suddenly, as if by magic, this vicious thing begins its work  
The precious peace is shattered - not just for a fleeting moment but  
on and on it goes  
Groaning and grinding, slashing and whirring.  
You cannot see it, you cannot tell from whence it comes  
Just behind the hedge or several gardens away.  
It must end soon surely, but no it is indefatigable.

What is this awesome thing, this new invention that scars the  
summer?  
It's for cutting grass and is called a strimmer.

Anon

## Bayleaf - out and about in the Village

Bayleaf had been enjoying an interesting year. No longer a member of any village committee, (he'd resigned to spend more time with the wife officially but more likely at The Falcon), Bayleaf could enjoy proceedings with his usual detached eye (or both of them...).

From his vantage point underneath the window of "Bottoms" (see later) Bayleaf had overheard the following exchange at the Friends of St Mary's Committee Meeting which had confirmed all his worst fears about getting old.....

Evelyn Baker (Chairperson at that time): "What are we talking about"?

Alison Bean (current Chairperson): "Spinsters Speed Dating for Over 50s.

Whose glasses have you got?"

June Jones: "I've got Ray Franklin's"

Ray Franklin: "I've no idea. I can't see anymore"

Evelyn Baker: "David Baker has a nice botty"

The Village Hall Committee and the Friends of St Mary's had been having an outbreak of joint activity. At Cockney Pride, the chairpersons had taken the stage together - Evelyn Baker had performed an uncanny impersonation of Joyce Grenfell telling the class how to draw a raffle ticket. Chris Baldwin, currently in the throes of 'The Long Goodbye', (which will be finished first - the conveyancing of his house sale or the Village Hall fence?) was equally bemused by the Village Hall bar cooler which was apparently doing a great line in warming all the drinks rather than cooling them whilst costing a fortune in electricity.

But back to raffles, and the Village Hall Christmas Draw had been a great example of Dibley at work. The Lord of the Manor bought one book and won the top prize, the Chairman of the Parish Council won 4, the Village Hall Chairman, his Treasurer and the Churchwarden all won. The churchwarden's father won a tie which was perfect since he'd given up wearing ties when he retired and Maria's friends won the other two prizes. 'I'll have to join a committee again if I want to win anything in future', Bayleaf mused. 'Not even one prize for Chettles this year!'

Talking of Chettles, Mick O'Connor had spent most of the summer on his mower around the village keeping it spick and span. He was also able to avoid the wife's keep-fit campaign as much as possible by keeping out the way. Apparently, Paula had gone off to the health club again with June (Bletsoe's Joint Grandmas ever since June had to stand in for Paula in the maternity ward owing to a miscalculation in Paula's holiday dates left her in a Torremolinos B&B while daughter Sarah was in the stirrups).

Anyway, according to June, the last time they'd visited the health farm, this had been rather embarrassing because whilst there, June had rung hubby Dave at home and he'd been unable to hear her due to what was thought to be interference on the line. Dave had reported the noise to BT - a large bubbling - only for BT to report that there was nothing wrong with the telephone, rather that Paula had been overcome by an extraordinary, structure-threatening outbreak of flatulence whilst lying on the floor next to June on the phone - certainly puts the art into f.. thought Bayleaf!

Christmas in Bletsoe had been notable for the confused look on a number of villagers faces.....Jo Wallis had risen from her bed and departed for Sainsburys at 4am on Christmas Eve. Sadly they didn't open till 7am so she went to Tesco's instead which was open all night. But Tesco's didn't have the favourite 'Oxford' marmalade that Bletsoe's greatest English scholar (him indoors) particularly likes so Jo had sat in a darkened car park for three hours, waiting for Sainsburys to open just to keep him happy.

Malcolm needed consoling because he'd predicted an England cricket win only hours before their third heaviest loss in history to Sri Lanka. Also, he'd signed on to learn about the Internet at a local college course and his first lesson had come to grief when searching for Richard 1 online had taken him to a rather dubious porn site.

Malcolm had to call for urgent assistance from the teacher though what form that assistance took is not told.....

Bayleaf's wife had developed a new culinary trick for the Christmas pudding this year - putting weights on top of the pan lid to keep the pressure in. Which is more than can be said for Bayleaf when he & Tom sat down to eat said pudding for lunch after church - the pressure never stays in for long (as those who've had the misfortune to be round the dining table with them know all too well!)

Bayleaf had been to church a lot this year and it had nothing to do with Jonathan Knights' ambition to play Postman's Knock at a PCC Meeting now he was a member! The services had been notable for the regular insults to Auntie Button by the Rector's stand-ins especially the sermon which said that the real meaning behind her surname was a woman with an enormous boil or wart. Apparently her maiden name was Sutton which means bottom so Bayleaf could only presume that this was where the boil was located.....

'That means, of course', said Bayleaf, ' that the Bakers live in somewhere called Bottoms. Evelyn & David Baker had gone to Russia for their 40th Wedding Anniversary - something to do with finding a reason to huddle together so as to keep warm. They'd left their cat Ruby in the care of the Franklin boys so were pleased to see that Ruby had been well-looked after when they came home and found her wrapped up against the cold - in the freezer.....

'Everything I ever suspected about her mediaeval mince pies is true', thought Bayleaf, 'but at least the Baker's cat isn't the culprit in the great goldfish scandal'. One villager spent most of the summer trying to find out where her cat was finding its nightly fish supper!

The village highlight last year was the outing to Bedford Autodrome in aid of the Primrose Appeal - the Skinners & the Gibbons duelled with the ex-Old Rectory Jones family in the Palmer-Jaguars. Bishop Bean's wife wanted to come but the Bishop refused so next year the other churchwarden is taking her too..... The Bishop had stayed at home because he had an important assignment on eBay He'd set the kitchen timer so he didn't miss the end of the e-Bay auction.....

'Another year passes and it's still the same', said Bayleaf. 'There's nowt so queer as folk in Bletsoe but we love them just the same'!

The editor accepts no responsibility for the scurrilous views expressed here which are entirely the responsibility of the author, who tries to remain anonymous for reasons of personal safety.

# EVENTS IN BLETSOE

## - NOVEMBER/DECEMBER

### November

Sat 6th	Bonfire and fireworks 6pm (Parish Field) (781813)
Mon 8th	Whist Drive (781813)
Tues 9th	WI (781813)
Thurs 11th	Coffee Morning (781813)
Fri 12th	Bingo (781813)
Sat 27th	Advent Concert with Cantamus (in church) (781372)
Tues 30th	Friends of St Mary AGM (in church) (781372)

### December

Sat 4th	Church coffee morning (781161)
Tues 7th	WI Senior Citizen's Christmas Party (781813)
Thurs 9th	Coffee Morning (781813)
Fri 10th	Bingo (781813)
Sat 11th	Christmas Dinner Dance with Dave Stott Trio (781813)
Mon 13th	Whist Drive (781813)
Sat 18th	Christmas Family Social and Draw (781813)
Sun 19th	Christmas Carol Service 4pm (in church) (781161)
Thurs 25th	Christmas Family Communion 9.30am (in church) (781161)
Wed 31st	New Year's Eve Party (781813)

All these events take place in the Village Hall (unless shown otherwise)

Also every Sunday there is a church service at 10 am (except those above)