

# **Bletsoe Gazette 2006**

# Contents

Parish Council .....	3
Tree Planting .....	6
Village Hall .....	6
Bingo .....	7
Coffee Mornings .....	7
Friends of St Mary's .....	8
Message from the rector .....	8
Women's Institute .....	10
Bletsoe Fete .....	10
Notices from Bletsoe .....	12
Notices from the RCC .....	12
County Council Report .....	13
Bayleaf .....	14

# Parish Council

## Small is Beautiful

Last year's radical change from monthly to quarterly meetings – mainly undertaken for budgetary reasons – does not seem to have adversely affected the council's management of parish affairs. It may even have resulted in greater efficiency, as bureaucracy has a pernicious habit of expanding to fill the time available! The clerk and councillors still attend, as before, to all matters that arise between meetings and are always ready to follow up parishioners' immediate concerns.

Without such a reduction in the frequency of meetings and the consequent reduction in the Clerk's work-load, it would certainly not have been possible to hold the current parish precept to an increase of only 1.7% - well below the rate of inflation. Indeed, a new *statutory* requirement that all parish clerks should be remunerated at the national hourly rate would have necessitated a staggering rise of virtually 30% - purely for administrative purposes that would have produced no tangible benefit for the parish. Small may not always be beautiful, but in this case it is undoubtedly more economical!

## Bus (Dis)service

The council received no more official notice than the rest of the parish (i.e. *less than a week*) of the imminent suspension of all bus services to and from Bletsoe. A combination of private action, press publicity and pressure

from councillors resulted in a public meeting on 4<sup>th</sup> September at which a compromise solution was proposed – namely a free, bookable taxi-service,

***the parish council will continue to press for the resumption of a regular bus service ..***

financed by the County Council, to coincide with timetabled Stagecoach services to both Bedford and Sharnbrook. The situation will be kept under review, but the parish council will continue to press for the resumption of a *regular bus service* (however infrequent), as a matter of principle and sound social policy.

## Casting Light on the Parish Highways

The parish council's tenacious faith in the power of water to wear away a stone has finally borne fruit, so to speak, in that decades of lobbying for the refurbishment of the village roads has resulted this year in the resurfacing of both Memorial Lane and Coplowe Lane, as well as the extensive patching of the upper reaches of Bourne End Lane. After several years of unsatisfactory 'partnerships' with private companies, the County Council has now re-assumed prime responsibility, under the brand name 'Bedfordshire Highways, and aims to bring the condition of the county's network up to the national average by the year 2009. Under the Highways Maintenance Partnership Scheme, the

£3000 apportioned to the parish was earmarked for the replacement and adoption by the County Council of the street lighting in Memorial Lane, which will result in a reduction in electricity and maintenance charges. The old posts have still to be removed, and local reaction to the new lighting has not been entirely favourable, so the council is not intending at present to pursue the adoption of the rest of the parish's lighting stock, which would inevitably result in a proliferation of poles, since current regulations do not permit telephone wires and lighting to share the same standards. It is therefore likely that the allocation for the coming year will be spent on the resurfacing of further stretches of footway, but the council will be pleased, as always, to receive specific suggestions from parishioners.

### **Play Area Refurbishment**

Thanks are due to David Martin and other public-spirited villagers for substantially rebuilding the Wendy House that continues to serve as a shelter and play-room for the younger children. In addition, two of the swings have recently been renewed by Wicksteed Leisure and repairs have been undertaken to the climbing wall

***parents are asked to ensure, as far as possible, that their youngsters treat the play area with respect.***

and perimeter fence. Damage to the fence and the incidence of hazardous litter, such as broken glass, continue to be a concern, and parents are asked to ensure, as far as possible,

that their youngsters treat the play area with respect. The council is still pursuing the possibility of providing a hard surface, or at least a basketball facility, for the older children.

### **Dog-Fouling**

The council has investigated the provision of Dog Litter Bins, but the reported cost of £300 per bin would seem to be prohibitive, especially as the emptying service would involve an additional charge. We therefore continue to rely on the good offices of responsible dog-owners to ensure that deposits are hygienically disposed of. Apart from the health hazard, fouling is both unpleasant and anti-social, and is legally an offence that can incur a fine of £50.

### **Tree Warden**

Apart from some nibbling by neighbouring horses and a few losses through drought, the hedge planted by volunteers along the western boundary of the Parish Field is establishing well. It was the final initiative of our Tree Warden, Richard Day, before he moved from the village and handed over the baton/bough to Paul Forster, who has kindly agreed to continue this valuable work.

### **On Your Bikes**

Prompted by the withdrawal of the Stagecoach bus service, the council has urgently renewed an earlier request for a cycle-track/footway between Bletsoe and Milton Ernest to complete the pedestrian/cycle link between Sharnbrook and Bedford.

County Councillor Tom Wootton, who has cabinet responsibility for Highways, has undertaken to pursue the matter on our behalf when priorities for extending the cycle network are considered.

### **Conservation Area**

Appropriately perhaps, conservation is not an issue that progresses with any speed! However, after a lapse of more than a year, there now seems to be some movement by the Borough Council to follow up David Baker's offer to draw up proposals for establishing a 'Conservation Area' within the village of Bletsoe. If all goes according to present plans, residents should receive a consultative letter within the next few weeks, to be followed by a public meeting on Monday 4<sup>th</sup> December, when the extent and implications of the Conservation Area will be fully considered.

### **Thanks**

A special vote of thanks is again due to those parishioners who have freely undertaken work on behalf of the parish, especially Mick O'Connor, Jonathan Eames, David Baker, Matthew Cox, Mark Abraham, Richard Hales and Joyce & Nick Crocker. Summer bedding plants for the War Memorial were kindly donated by Peter Jacques of Ivy Lodge Nurseries. The Parish Council is also grateful to our County Councillor, Jane Walker, who conscientiously attends all our meetings and provides invaluable encouragement and support.

### **Parish Council Details**

As the chairmanship of the Council continues to rotate, all councillors have the valuable experience of taking the chair and conducting meetings. Names and telephone numbers of present members of the Council are:

Edward Bean	781372
Richard Day	01480 861647
Ann Gibbons	781161
Michael Grimes	781183
Peter Hetherington	781851
David Martin	782579
Jocelyn Wallis	781604

*Clerk: Malcolm Rowland 781646*

If you wish to raise any parish issues, please contact any of the above.

Council meetings are open to members of the public, who have the opportunity to speak on parish concerns. Agendas are posted at least one week in advance on the parish notice boards, and minutes of the previous meeting are displayed in the church porch.

### **Parish Council Elections**

Parish Council elections are due to be held in May 2007, when several members of the present council will not be standing again. New blood - the fresher the better - is always welcome, so please think about offering your services. It is an interesting job and not too onerous, and the Clerk is guaranteed to keep you entertained!

*Peter Hetherington*

# Tree Planting

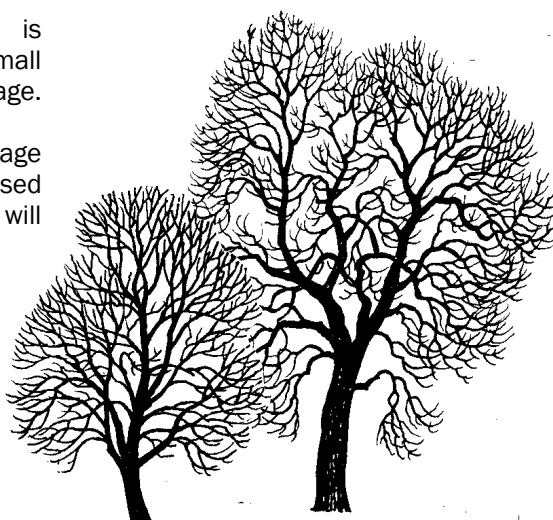
Once again the County Council is offering tree and hedge plants for small or large schemes within the village.

It is a good scheme and advantage should be taken of it. The less it is used the more likely it is that the Council will close the scheme.

Planting needs to be seen from the road or footpath, or have some amenity value.

Anyone who is interested or needs advice, please contact me on 01234 781320 or 07979596913.

*Paul Forster, Tree Warden*



# Village Hall

## Maintenance

This year has been a particularly busy one because we have replaced all the Village Hall windows and the outside doors with UPVC double-glazing. We received a grant that paid the majority of the cost with the rest coming from the Village Hall funds. We have also started replacing some of the hall's kitchen equipment. So far we have installed a replacement cooker and had a fridge donated. We have purchased new cutlery and tablecloths to smarten up the tables. The old piano that hadn't had much use for many years has been replaced with an electric keyboard. This will mean a lot more variety of sound and it won't need retuning each year! Another

project that is under way is the replacement of the storage shed that has been rotting away and so has been removed. A concrete base will soon be in place and then we will have a new one put up.

## Regular Events

This year there has been a large increase in the number of people at the Bingo nights, which makes for

***we have revived the Friday night  
social evenings on the fourth  
Friday of each month***

more of a fun evening and means the prize money has gone up also! The whist drive is still popular with its

regulars and we have revived the Friday night social evenings on the fourth Friday of each month. Snooker, bowls, board and card games are available or you may just prefer to chat whilst having a drink. Some people bring their children with them and this makes it a real family night.

### **Forthcoming events**

Our next big event will be the bonfire on November 4<sup>th</sup>. The field gate will be open on Saturday, October 28<sup>th</sup> and Saturday, November 4<sup>th</sup> so you can use this entrance if you have anything to add to the fire. There will be lots of fireworks to see and drinks and hot dogs will be on sale.

Our Christmas dance this year is on Saturday, December 9<sup>th</sup>, with music from Dave Stott and the Family Social is on Saturday, December 16<sup>th</sup> (don't

forget F/C needs to know the numbers and ages of under tens).

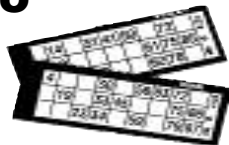
On New Year's Eve we have booked "Fair Exchange" (we thought they were very good when they came earlier in the year). We can dance as well as eat with family and friends whilst seeing the New Year in.

Lastly, keep Saturday, February 24<sup>th</sup> free for "Time of your Life". It's taken over three years to get them booked and it promises to be a really good night! For any of these events, phone Barbara on 781813 to book your tickets. If you wish to use the hall for any occasion please get in touch with Edna, 781646, to make a booking.

We are hoping to organise a monthly afternoon Tea Dance and possibly an evening yoga class. When we have more information, posters and flyers will go round the village.

*Maria Caves*

### **Bingo**



We now have a good following for our Bingo evenings on the second Friday every month at 7.30pm. If you fancy trying your luck with "legs eleven" etc., why not come along? Children are welcome accompanied by an adult. The bar is open at the start and during the interval. We look forward to seeing you.

*Hazel and Barbara*

### **Coffee Mornings**

Held on the second Thursday of each month, our coffee mornings are well attended. If you would like to come along at 10.30pm to enjoy a coffee and a chat, also a raffle, you will be very welcome. This is open to everyone from birth to one hundred plus.

*Barbara and Hazel*



# **Friends of St Mary's**

The Friends of St Mary's, Bletsoe has continued to raise money this year for the upkeep of the church building, helped massively by the Village Fete proceeds which have once again given us a major boost.

Via the various events in the Village Hall, concerts in the church, with food, music of many types and lots of support, we have been trying to amass enough money for the inevitable programme of work that is needed to keep St Mary's in good condition.

The five-yearly compulsory inspection in 2005 was encouraging in many ways and was a credit to all the efforts over the past twenty years to keep on top of all the maintenance issues.

***there is one problem that has been threatening to become a major issue ... the growing cracks in the West End.***

Most of the work that we have to do is now underway and comes into the category of essential maintenance of a routine nature.

However there is one problem that has been threatening to become a major issue for the church, whether those in the congregation or supporting the fabric, which is the growing cracks in the West End. These have been getting worse over the past couple of years and are probably caused by dry weather, clay soil and the Victorians who didn't underpin one side of the church.

For the past six months, we have been monitoring the cracks and will shortly have a final report on the movement which may well lead to full proposals for work to remedy the problem. That will be very expensive, way beyond the village's means and will require grant applications plus extra fundraising, should this be the case.

For the moment we wait to see what the position is, whilst saying thank you to everyone who has been so helpful by supporting our events over the past year. We hope to see you at the next event, a concert by Cantamus on 9 December!

*Mike Gibbons*

## **... and a message from the new rector**

Of course I always pay perfect attention to what my wife says but on this occasion I could not be sure I had got it right. Had she said, "An extraordinary mix of accomplished people." or was it "An accomplished mix of extraordinary people." ? Having spent a few months finding my way around and meeting people I have decided both are equally applicable.

Bletsoe has an amazing capacity for enjoying itself and I was very impressed by the Jazz evening at the Village Hall: a bar, a band and a buffet and my daughter even persuaded me to have a bop. The Harvest Thanksgiving was a very happy time followed by a wonderful meal of cheese and pickled onions and apple pies and chocolate cake and good



conversation in the St John Chapel. However, the new Rector was expected to continue the ancient tradition of offering hospitality to the marrow. There was no escape for me or the marrow which was devoured with due ceremony.

Family services (3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of the month, for the time being) have revealed that Mike Gibbons extends beyond church organist to honky-tonk piano and guitar. Following my first Bletsoe PCC meeting I am looking forward to all the Christmas services and a church packed with people of all ages. We hope to deliver a card with the details of services.

At the Induction and Institution on the 23<sup>rd</sup> July I was invited to lay my hand upon the keys of both churches. They are very large keys and suggested to me a great sense of responsibility.



Intriguingly I have not seen them since though I have no doubt that Edward Bean and Mike Gibbons (you may have heard of them) have them safely stored away. The sense of responsibility is still very much with me.

Along with the excitement and the good fun of meeting new people it is in the nature of a minister's work to be alongside in the trials and sadnesses of life and already there have been quite a number of bereavements in both parishes. At such times it is my privilege to be able to share the

content of the Christian's hope and the powerful relevance of Christian faith. Yet one of the challenges of being a man with **two** titles - Rector of Bletsoe, Vicar of Riseley - is to be in two places at once. Please do let me know directly or via the churchwardens if we can be of help to you and we will do our best.

***Please come  
and introduce  
yourself to me  
one Sunday***



Possibly the greatest invitation ever given was this one issued by Jesus Christ: - "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." and one of the best declarations of purpose, also spoken by Jesus, "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."

My prayer is that St Mary's in Bletsoe will be closely identified with the warmth and compassion of Christ's invitation and the vitality of Christ's mission. Please come and introduce yourself to me one Sunday. (10.00am!) Until then...

I am 49; I've been ordained for 15 years. My wife, Nicky, is a GP in Bedford. We have five children. Two boys are away from home, two boys are studying for A levels and our daughter is in the top year of Margaret Beaufort Middle School.

Thank you for the wonderful welcome we have received so far. Looking forward to seeing you.

*Martin Bailey*

# **Bletsoe Women's Institute**

New to the village? Why not come along to one of our monthly meetings? We meet in the village hall on the second Tuesday of each month at 7.45pm. We have a speaker on various subjects and a cup of tea or coffee.

Perhaps you have an interesting occupation you may like to come and talk to us about. We also welcome men to Open Meetings if the talk is of general interest.

Contrary to popular belief we do not make jam or sing Jerusalem. We

haven't yet posed for a calendar as the Yorkshire ladies did, we don't think Bletsoe is ready for that!

Please be assured of a warm welcome.

In December we have a Christmas party and we invite all the Senior Citizens in the village to join us. If you are eligible to attend (that is of pensionable age) and you would like to join us, please contact Barbara on 781604.

*Barbara Button, President*

## **Bletsoe Fete 2006**

We ballsed it up and had a ball!

This was my first year as Chair – never been chair of anything in my life before!!! I didn't need to worry as I had the best committee to support me! It was no small committee and each one of them contributed to make the fete the amazing success it was.

What with the World Cup and an opening by Radio 2's Alan Dedicoat, the voice of the balls on the BBC Lottery Show, we had to use balls as our main theme for this year's fete! It was almost obvious and helped us to raise an extra amount by selling balls for a prize draw as the public arrived for the fete! Alan opened this year's fete by giving his audience advice on what numbers to chose to stand a better chance of winning the lottery – I

wonder if anyone took his advice and won!!!! He had to leave in a rush to get back to TV Centre for the evening's lottery programme, and he left clutching a bottle of Pinot Grigio which Barbara (his number one Bletsoe fan!) had kindly given him.

We were blessed with absolutely superb weather – how lucky Bletsoe was again! This year we included an arena in the layout and much entertainment happened there - the dog show, expertly organised by Sophie and our first attempt at an inter-village games competition. Despite a shortage in teams, the games proved a hugely entertaining attraction. The whole afternoon was interspersed with music from the Ouse Valley Swing Band. Vintage cars and



bikes were in abundance and have become an integral part of the fete thanks to the efforts of Mike Grimes. There were all the usual stalls which make the fete the traditional event it has become. Pets' corner was really busy and was a lovely place for the children to spend some time. There was plenty to do – slippery pole, plate smashing, bash the rat etc etc!!! During the afternoon we caught the sight of a passing jet, there were some aeronautical acrobatics and in the evening we had a hot air balloon land in the field to add to the coincidental entertainment of the day!

My thanks to a great committee for all their hard work –

Jean - teas & draw

Chris - children's area

Jane T & Simon - inter-village games competition

Yvonne & Ann B - stalls organisation

Jane D – tasks too numerous to mention including pets corner & pony rides

Sophie – the dog show & extremely efficient treasurer

Mike Grimes - vintage cars, bikes & publicity

Evelyn – the wonderful hanging baskets

Thanks also to the two Alison's in the village – Alison Bean for her expert programme and Alison Foster for her outstanding efforts gathering all the advertisers for the programme.

It is always great to raise a large amount of money (£1800 to each organisation this year) for the FOSM and the Village Hall, but the fete is also really important as an annual community event in the village which brings everyone together and makes us all realise what a great place this is to live.

If you have any ideas or suggestions for next year please let me know (781161)! I am sure the committee will turn any idea into reality on Saturday 16 June 2007!

*Ann Gibbons*

## Notices from Bletsoe

### Missing

The two books of Bletsoe memories and Memorabilia have not been seen since the fête. If anyone has them, please return them to me, Jo Wallis, at The Spinney, 9, The Avenue. If I am not around the books may be left in the porch.

### New editor needed

A volunteer will be needed to edit the Gazette next year. Anyone interested should contact me (781604) or get in touch with Bill Rowland, the Parish Clerk (781646).

Jo Wallis

## Notices from the Rural Community Council

### Bobby Van Scheme

Bedfordshire Police run a Bobby Van Scheme for the elderly where fully trained carpenters carry out a home survey and fit security devices such as locks and door viewers free of charge.

If you would like to benefit from the scheme, or you know a neighbour who could benefit from a visit, contact Police Headquarters on 841212 and ask for the Bobby Van Administrator.

### Safe disposal of computer hard drives

90% of computers disposed of in Bedfordshire contain sensitive data that could be used to steal an individual's identity.

Bedfordshire Police run a free service to safely and securely dispose of data on old disc drives and tapes.

Call David Maxwell on 01767 626466 or email [davidm@bedsrcc.org.uk](mailto:davidm@bedsrcc.org.uk)

### Calling all carers

If you care for someone over 65 or someone under 65 who has a physical or mental disability you may be able to get support for that person which could ease the pressure on you.

You may also be able to get assistance in your caring role and help in looking after your own health and well being.

If you would like to find out more, call Beds County Council on 363222 and ask for Adult Social Services.

### Are you entitled to Pension Credit?

Pension Credit is an entitlement for people aged 60 or over and it could mean extra money for you every week.

You are likely to be entitled to Pension Credit if your weekly income is less than £114.05 if you are single (£174.05 if you have a partner).

If you are 65 or over, you may be rewarded for saving for your retirement, up to £17.88 a week (£23.58 if you have a partner).

To apply or find out more call freephone 0800 99 1234.

# County Council Report

I have now represented Bletsoe as your County Councillor for almost 18 months and I would like to take the opportunity to thank the residents of Bletsoe for the help and support they have given to me since I was elected. I am really enjoying meeting and working with you and I will continue to support and campaign for you in any way that I can.

Our most recent campaign was following the complete withdrawal by Stagecoach, of the Bletsoe bus service. With the help of County Council officers and feedback from residents I hope that I have managed to find a solution that will at least allow residents to access vital services in Bedford and Sharnbrook. Whilst not ideal I hope that it alleviates some of the problems caused by Stagecoach's decision. The County Council is now looking at registering the service as an official taxi bus and when this is completed there will be a published timetable and residents will no longer have to book their ride. Please let me know as soon as possible if there are any changes to the current timing of the taxi, or if you have any other comments or views on this service.

For your information: The County Council operates a help line for the general public to report highways problems or queries. If you see for instance, broken paving, a street light not working (or on all the time), a pothole, a water leak or a broken services cover then please report it to the County Council help desk on **01234 228661**. Your call will be

logged and you will be given a reference number which you can use if you want to track the progress of your query. You can also report potholes and streetlight problems on the County Council web-site ([www.bedfordshire.gov.uk](http://www.bedfordshire.gov.uk)) At the end of each week your Parish Council and I receive a full report of all calls and emails logged and their progress.

There is a similar system operated by the Borough Council for environmental problems. Call **0800 121 8888** if you see fly-tipping or abandoned vehicles or if you want to request a service such as pest control, bulky waste removal or report a missed refuse collection.

You can contact me at any time on 07952 879587 or 824530 (email [jane.walker@bedscc.gov.uk](mailto:jane.walker@bedscc.gov.uk)) or speak to me at your Parish Council meetings.

*Jane Walker*

*County Councillor for Bletsoe*

# Bayleaf

Bayleaf was wandering aimlessly in the Village Field since the Parish Council had disturbed his normal resting place behind the Wendy House in the Play Area which they were busy refurbishing for the next batch of youngsters. Bayleaf had grown up there, smoked his first cigarette there, drunk his first bottle of Old Peculier there and, if he could only remember, probably done a few other unprintable things there too which he was doing his best to forget. "Rather like generations of youngsters since", he thought, "and now it's their children, even grandchildren, doing the same"!

Turning behind the Village Hall, he found Auntie Button using her persuasive charms (or veiled threats) on the thin churchwarden. She had obviously been playing Bingo too often and had taken to confusing the congregation at church by putting up the wrong hymn numbers so was taking it out on the innocent..... Under duress and faced with Auntie B waving a large jemmy in one hand and a bottle of caustic drain cleaner in the other, he was on hands & knees behind the Village Hall rodding out the drains with Eric Mitchell's collection of well-used sewage poles (not available in the current 'garage sale before their impending departure though considerable amounts of Hazel's old clothes apparently are.....)

Anyway, back to the rodding-out. This dubious task was made all the more fragrant by the phonecalls coming in whilst in full rod and lying prone on the freezing cold & wet concrete slabs from the female Gibbons' who were sitting drinking wine in the Monaco sunshine.....

Whether the drain blockage was due to the Mince Pie Mountain at the Christmas Coffee Morning was unknown though deeply suspicious. Seen as a huge challenge, the Deas Family Enterprises had produced a record attendance and more mince pies than you could shake a stick at. Evelyn Baker had exhumed several old moggies, the remains of Bletsoe's Roman cesspit from the fields down by the A6 and the outflow from the Castle's mediaeval midden circa Maggie B's residency. All of that was ground into the 14<sup>th</sup> century mince pies which were served up with gay abandon to all-comers!

Talking of Christmas, the outstanding winner of the annual Bletsoe Illuminations last year had been Malna House. Bill's flashing Christmas lights were first up and last down ("Par for the course - he's not bad for his age!", said Edna). Mind you the village precept was going up to pay for them and the hunt was on by Eastern Electricity to find out how he'd managed to nick all the streetlight bulbs which had plunged The Avenue into darkness.....

Thinking of purchases from Village events like coffee mornings, last year Bayleaf had discovered that Betty Gibbons had bought the entire stock of three year's WI jam sales - 43 pots he'd had to consume from her cupboards.

This year he'd found that Betty's daughter-in-law Ann was clearly of similar mind though in her case it was lightbulbs -at last count 87 bulbs of 17 different types, "because Sainsbury's often run out of the popular ones, you know!" Next year it was going to be Joyce Crocker's amazing collection of shoelaces unless anything else intervened.....

.....such as the contents of Les Skinner's garage. Due to the imminent arrival of daughter Abi's shipping container from Hong Kong, Les had to turf out 40 years of interesting collectibles. Bayleaf passed on Les's home gym (kid you not!) but was too weak-minded to avoid the explosive mixture of 1968 pickled onions and 1993 ale collected from a visit to Winchester by Bedford Morris.

Hobbling across the Field, Bayleaf passed the Barns along the newly tarmac'd Coplowe Lane, trying and failing to avoid the various heaps of droppings along the way. "An unusual year", he mused, "and the Horse Police must have been otherwise engaged, since at least three families have managed to move into the village without owning one"!

However, given the environmental benefits of manure, be it animal or bird, Bayleaf was all for it, especially where his roses were concerned. The Beans were going to install a ledge over their front door to collect the guano from the birds nest, rather than letting it splatter all over anyone ringing the bell as currently happened for six months of the year. "Mind you, the effect of Les's pickles & pints was about to lead inexorably to the same outcome for me", thought Bayleaf.

Bayleaf was pleased to see the Bean's environmental awareness improving, given that the dust cloud which had erupted from their kitchen when Alison had disturbed her piles of paper after years had led to Bletsoe's first-ever government warning for causing global warming.

Maybe next year, Bayleaf would be at the Village Fete rather than taking his summer holidays to avoid it. He was clearly missing something, if only the chaos at the Fete Committee meetings. The committee was made up of 14 female members of the village plus two Mikes and was, apparently, chaired by 14 different people at the same time. Going on holiday had not been a good idea for him, last year, given he'd come back on crutches.

Nor indeed had it been for Malcolm Wallis who had once again gone to The Scillies despite its history of rendering him hospitalised or immobile whilst visiting. The potential rich irony of being laid out by a flying cricket ball whilst there had not gone unnoticed by his family given his reputation as Bletsoe's finest cricketer though the impending arrival of a cricket ball on his head from 300 feet up had clearly come as something of a surprise to him.....

"But then", thought Bayleaf, "there's always a surprise around every corner in Bletsoe, That's why it's such a great place to be"!

