

# PITCOMBE

## *news*



## May 2020

In this issue:

Eight war time memories

Colours everywhere pg 6

Lockdown information update pg 20

MONTHLY MAGAZINE FOR THE PARISH OF PITCOMBE

# What's on... May 2020

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Friday 1st	Black bin collection
Friday 8th	VE Day Bank Holiday
Tuesday 12th	7.30 Zoom Parish Council Meeting
Friday 15th	Black bin collection
Monday 25th	Spring Bank Holiday
Saturday 30th	Black bin collection

EVENT ...weekly

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...later

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# welcome

## PITCOMBE NEWS

The Pitcombe News does not lock down for Covid, as our editors edit, contributors contribute, printers print and distributors distribute, all within the bounds of the rules of isolation. Huge thanks to all those involved. Hooray!

Our theme this month is War Memories, to coincide with VE Day on 8<sup>th</sup> May, commemorating 75 years since the end of WW2 in Europe. It is most unfortunate that fitting celebrations cannot be taking place, but following a plea to Parish residents to record their memories, or those of their parents and relatives of the War years, we have been delighted with the responses and are proud to reproduce them here. Please keep the stories coming in, as we will run them each month.

We are indebted to Max Doughty for providing an update of our Mid-Month publication, which detailed information on local services and deliveries in Bruton, Castle Cary and elsewhere.

Our indefatigable and enterprising Parish Council held its first ever '*virtual meeting*' on 14<sup>th</sup> April. Mastering new technology and with dogged determination, the isolating assembly went smoothly, and the results are recorded here in the form of the Minutes. Nice work team! Thank you to The Parish Council for supporting the printing of the Pitcombe News, while we await the resumption of our normal arrangements.

Finally, a lovely piece by Joa Studholme of Pitcombe, which brings a touch of additional colour to our quarantined lifestyle.

**The next edition will be June 2020. All contributions from you are very welcome. Please send any articles or advertising to the Editors by 15<sup>th</sup> May. Our contact details can be found in the Parish Directory in the centrefold of the magazine.**

*contribute*

Editors: Jane and Anthony Hodges

# ST LEONARD'S MAY 2020

The Church continues to be active, but to prevent the spread of Covid 19 we must distance ourselves from one another.

Therefore, as well as public worship being suspended, St Leonards as well as all church buildings in the Church of England are now closed.

The Bath and Wells website contains details of how to join others on-line for prayer, worship, study and community life,

see [www.bathandwells.org.uk](http://www.bathandwells.org.uk).

***Philip Pidsley Churchwarden***

## **St Patrick's Breastplate:**

**Christ be with me, Christ within me,  
Christ behind me, Christ before me,  
Christ beside me, Christ to win me,  
Christ to comfort and restore me,  
Christ beneath me, Christ above me,  
Christ in quiet, Christ in danger,  
Christ in hearts of all that love me,  
Christ in mouth of friend and stranger.**

***Mark Ellis***

# THE PARSON'S PULPIT

## **A Message from Prebendary Mark Ellis, Benefice Associate Priest.**

I was so sorry that we were ordered to close all our church buildings, but I think we have a responsibility in setting a good example by following the government advice while this pandemic continues to cause such harm. I must admit that I really miss the opportunity to join with you in worshipping together – especially in the beautiful and greatly loved churches of our Benefice. Let us hope it is not too long before we can ensure those precious buildings ring out with praise once more.

During this long Easter season, I have been able to take more time in meditating and studying what the Four Gospels tell us about the Resurrection appearances of Our Lord. One of the most striking features about those accounts, I discover, is that the Risen Lord was found in the most ordinary, everyday, common place situations. Those first disciples were just going about their way of life when they suddenly experienced the presence of the Risen Lord.

A bereaved woman weeping in the garden.

Two of them walking back to their home village of Emmaus.

A group of them meeting in the Upper Room.

Some of them carrying on with their old job of fishing.

In all these routine situations they were made aware that they were not alone because the Risen Lord was with them.

I think we can learn so much from what took place then. For the Good News of the Lord's Resurrection is for all of us here and now. At what point do we bring the Risen Lord into our lives? Remember Jesus said "I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." However difficult we may find life at this moment with the corona pandemic, let us remember that the Risen Lord is with us, not simply as an idea but as a living presence. I think it is well expressed in the well-known words of St Patrick's Breastplate, printed **opposite on page 4**.

Please feel free to call me at any time – I always have call minder on the telephone – sadly our normal parochial visiting is not possible at the present, but we can always have a chat on the phone. I would be particularly glad to hear of any names for my intercessions.

With my prayers and blessing.

# Colours Everywhere

As I sit in The Old School House in Pitcombe, and start to work on new colours for the Farrow & Ball range, it struck me that colour can work miracles in boosting your mood, so why not use the opportunity of being confined at home to add some bursts of magic into your home.

In these troubling times we can enhance our lives with the use of happy tones, even if only in the smallest of spaces. If you open a cupboard to get a mug, or grab your coat, discovering some unexpected colour cannot fail to make you smile. And don't forget that you don't have to look at it all the time – most of the time the door will probably be firmly shut!

Many of us are craving the comfort of nostalgia, wanting to use colours that remind us of our childhood as well as creating a feeling of security. Deep shades can be a little scary in rooms we spend a lot of time in, but are great in a hallway (which you just pass through), and have the added benefit of making every room off it feel bigger and lighter. I favour deep greens in the hall so that it has a great connection with the exterior.

While confined to your home it may be a good time to think about how you use the space and the light that Nature provides. Most of us prefer to be in light rooms during the day and darker spaces in the evening, subconsciously working with the natural light. Nature feels like a dependable force in our topsy-turvy world, so use light enhancing colours in kitchens and earthier, more protective colours in sitting rooms used at night. The change from light spaces to darker spaces follows the natural rhythm of the day and will enhance your sleeping.

Rooms that feel grounded give us a feeling of security so painting a strong colour centrally and low down can benefit a space hugely. Strong colours are much easier to live with when they are used below the eyeline, so introduce something adventurous on a kitchen island or on the underside of the bath. These are classic ways to add a little bit of excitement without overpowering a room. An alternative way to add small amounts of cheerful colour is in the back of bookcases. This adds depth to your joinery and a new dimension to the room. Stronger tones work particularly well and should be painted over the three vertical surfaces of the bookcase, but not on the shelves themselves. This technique works just as well on a kitchen dresser, but in this case should only be used on the back.

Pitcombe and its surrounding hills couldn't be more inspiring when it comes to colour – Farrow & Ball already have School House White, but who knows what new colours will be born from this isolation! **Joa Studholme**

**Jacqueline Maude, Sarah Maude's mother , twice torpedoed during the war and whose story appeared in our April Edition**



# Henry 'Titch' Taylor

My uncle Henry was an ordinary Somerset young man who grew up in Stoke St Michael, with his two sisters my Mum, Cynthia and Shirley, my auntie. Like many ordinary men and women of that generation they played an important part in the war although they rarely talked about it. Henry was vertically challenged being a mere 4'10" tall, but this stature leant him to be ideal for his role in the RAF. That role, at twenty years of age, was mid upper gunner in a Lancaster 3 bomber being attached to 514 squadron based at Waterbeach, with Flight Officer Parks in command of his flight.

He was part of several bombing raids, including Dortmund, Duisburg and Stuttgart, with the Dortmund and Duisburg raids having over 1,000 planes!

One of his flights was to bomb the dikes at Walcheren as part of Operation Infatuate. His flight book confirms his participation with a note 'we did it'.

In the Google search on Walcheren, I came across an account of a 12 year old boy Kees Pouwelse, who became aware of the forthcoming raid on his town when pamphlets were dropped telling the locals to leave the area, but there was nowhere to go. The following day some 240 waves of bombers attacked the dikes and were successful in their objective. Kees would witness two more attacks on the 17 and 29 October. These attacks destroyed the house of the Kees' family, along with all their possessions, but Kees managed to survive the war physically unscathed. I am pleased to find Henry was not involved in these two latter raids.

On the 19th October 1944 during a raid on the marshalling yards of Stuttgart, Henry's plane was attacked by a FW190 and his flight book mentions 'hits noticed'. These 'hits' resulted him being wounded in the leg, a long spell in hospital recovering and a life-long limp! The discharge certificate of service and release refers to Henry as "A useful and reliable type of man. Has behaved well and worked efficiently and competently whilst in the service"!

**Neville Hartnell**



# Hand-me-down Memories

‘My main recollections from stories I heard as a very young child at the end of the second World War, relate to my father and Mr Golledge (father’s business partner of Hadspen Farm). As farmers they were required to produce food for the war effort rather than enlist. They were however both in the Home Guard and did nightly vigils on Lodge Hill above Castle Cary where there was an observation post.

On sorting the loft some years ago, we found we still had my father’s Home Guard helmet and gas mask in a box, together with a small child’s gas mask which I always assumed was for my older brother who would have been three or four years of age at the time. These have been used on numerous occasions by our grandchildren at School to exhibit in ‘show and tell’ sessions when doing WW2 topics!

The large barn here at Grove Farm was taken over by the Ministry of Food. After making improvements to ensure it was dry, it was used to store 400 tons of sugar during the war years and to this day is known as the ‘Sugar Barn’. Indeed, they made such a good job of renovating it that nothing else had to be done for forty years.

As far as Hadspen is concerned, two bombs were dropped in the middle of the field in the middle of the village known as Plashups. They were dropped by the

Luftwaffe one night presumably to lighten their load before returning home after a raid on Bristol. Fortunately, neither of the bombs exploded, either because the soil is so very deep, or due to faulty detonators being fitted by forced labour in the bomb factories.

It wasn’t until the 1950s that the MOD came to dig them up and remove them and found they were about 20 feet deep in the ground. In doing this they messed up the field drainage system which had originally been put in by the monks and this resulted in a pond appearing in the far corner under Rodge Hill.

The Green Lane to Stump Cross was used by the Americans to store Army Supplies in preparation for D Day and they reached from the Quarry to Stump Cross on either side of the lane which in those days was very wide.

According to my father, the most exciting thing to happen in the area was when a bomb was dropped on Cary Station albeit unfortunately killing one person. My mother was pregnant with me at the time and always maintained that the shock of this had affected me. I’ll leave you to decide whether you think she was right or not!

**Peter Wyatt**

# Twenty miles of water

In a broadcast to the nation at 11.15am 3 September 1939, Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain announced that Britain was at war with Germany. We all knew that we were not in any way ready to face the German Army. The people did not panic but the whole atmosphere was incredibly tense. Everyone knew that the radio would come alive for a short report from a lookout position on the South coast describing how things looked. Whole families including mine got-together next to the radio to hear what he had to say.

Meanwhile, Hitler had looked at the situation and seen that to succeed his army would have to execute a very difficult military operation, launched across at least 20 miles of water followed by a landing on a fortified and desperately defended coastline. He and his High Command were of the opinion that an attack should not be attempted until the Royal Navy had been cleared out of the Channel and the Royal Air Force defeated.

Instead, Hitler created a bluff invasion to see whether, when the British realised what was coming their way, he could break their will to resist.

Hitler stepped up the military pressure by announcing Operation Seaborne. This commanded the Luftwaffe to tighten the screws by attempting to clear the channel of British warships, attack the channel ports and establish command of the Straits of Dover. German heavy guns were installed around Calais to bombard the Dover area where the first shells had already started to fall during the second week of August.

Operation Seaborne, his bluff attack, did not work. The British will to fight was not broken and Hitler was left to execute what he had called a very difficult military operation with at least 20 miles of water to cross and a difficult landing.

On 16 September Hitler met with the German High Command and decided the problems with the British operation had not improved and the resources should be diverted to the East in preparation for the invasion of the Soviet Union, something he had been keen to start.

**Ken Chamberlain**

# THE HAPPY COOKER



## Chickpea Mayonnaise

A vegan mayonnaise which is a delicious accompaniment to all salads and burgers (Veg/Vegan /Meat) of any kind. Very useful when eggs are in short supply.

## INGREDIENTS

1 tin of chickpeas

Chilli flakes and crushed garlic optional

Dijon mustard

Salt and pepper

Lemon juice

## METHOD

Take the water from a tin of drained chickpeas and put in a blender with tsp Dijon mustard, salt & pepper, lemon juice, and if you like some spice add some chilli and also crushed garlic for garlic lovers.

With the motor running slowly, add approx. 250 mls olive/sunflower oil, until it thickens.

Serve with aplomb!

## Memories of a Lancaster Girl - Joan Waller

We had already had national registration for conscription at the Munich crisis in 1938. Gas masks had been issued and arrangements made for the evacuation of children and expectant mothers from target areas. Now blackout regulations were immediately brought in and all windows had to be crisscrossed with tape to minimise the danger of flying glass when the expected bombs dropped. Food rationing began and everyone was exhorted to keep a small supply of emergency rations and prepare a safe place in the house to go to in case of a raid – ours was under the ping-pong table propped up in the hall. Having seen on cinema newsreel the devastation of air raids in the Spanish Civil War, no one had any doubt that this would be the first line of attack and we used to have gas mask and air raid drill regularly at school.

The evacuation began and things changed for us both at school and at home. A Manchester girls' school was evacuated to Lancaster and we had to share our school with them. They had brought their own teachers with them but as you can imagine there was not really room for two schools in one premises. We had to be taught in corridors, corners of the Assembly Hall, the gym, dining room and book

storerooms – any space that could be found.

Mum had taken on an allotment and was digging for victory. We were glad to have the fresh veg. but she truly shocked Dad by actually wearing a pair of slacks for gardening. Trousers had become very popular and practical for girls after the war started, but I think he considered them too daring. Like all households we had to give up aluminium saucepans to make Spitfires and our wrought iron fencing was cut down and taken away – I wonder what happened to it? Tanks?

We all soon got used to the food rationing. We eked out the meat with an occasional rabbit which was 'off ration' and sometimes got some extra sausage under the counter. Of course, there were no pork pies at Christmas (a family tradition). We made do with an improvised version made from tinned spam, a life-saving import from America that formed a staple part of our diet, because you could cook it in so many ways. We also had occasional food parcels from Canada (Mum's sister) and Australia (Dad's cousin) which were a great treat. They contained fruit cakes, coffee and tinned jams. We really managed very well in spite of the

the shortages and became very adept at inventing new dishes made from dried egg.

We also grew very used to improvisation regarding clothes, when they were rationed. Furnishing fabrics were exempt from coupons so I had a housecoat made from green velvet upholstery fabric that lasted me for years. For special occasions people would save up their coupons or beg, borrow or buy them from friends and relations. Fashion regulations were brought in; for instance, skirts had to be short and no more than three pleats were allowed.

(This is an excerpt from my mother's reminiscences which she wrote down for us before she passed away).

**Richard Waller**



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### Parish Council

Chairman	Richard Waller	01749 812754 <a href="mailto:rjtwaller@hotmail.com">rjtwaller@hotmail.com</a>
Parish Clerk	Zoe Godden	<a href="mailto:clerk@pitcombepc.org.uk">clerk@pitcombepc.org.uk</a> 07742 930521

### St Leonard's Church

The Rector	Justin Bailey	01749 812616 <a href="mailto:frjustin@btinternet.com">frjustin@btinternet.com</a>
Benefice Office Secretary	Asiong Crombie	<a href="mailto:benefice@stmarysbruton.org">benefice@stmarysbruton.org</a>
Bell-ringing	Tina Harley	01749 813262 <a href="mailto:tina.harley@btinternet.com">tina.harley@btinternet.com</a>
Church Flowers roster	Tina Harley	01749 813262 <a href="mailto:tina.harley@btinternet.com">tina.harley@btinternet.com</a>
Church Wardens	Philip Pidsley	01749 813842 <a href="mailto:philip.pidsley@btinternet.com">philip.pidsley@btinternet.com</a>
	Wendy Crane	017499813005 <a href="mailto:wendycrane@btinternet.com">wendycrane@btinternet.com</a>
PPC Secretary	Carole Wyatt	01963 350222 <a href="mailto:carolewyatt@btinternet.com">carolewyatt@btinternet.com</a>

### Friends of St Leonards

Secretary	Cathie Brook	01963 351492 <a href="mailto:catherinebrook@aol.com">catherinebrook@aol.com</a>
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### Hadspen Village Hall

Chairman	Robin Currie	01749 814899 <a href="mailto:arctheduke@gmail.com">arctheduke@gmail.com</a>
Bookings Secretaries	Penny Mounsey	01963 359488 <a href="mailto:penny.mounsey345@btinternet.com">penny.mounsey345@btinternet.com</a>
	Jan James	01963 350464 <a href="mailto:janet.james945@btinternet.com">janet.james945@btinternet.com</a>
Secretary	Sheelagh Douglas	07733 102819. <a href="mailto:sdmdouglas7@gmail.com">sdmdouglas7@gmail.com</a>

### Neighbourhood Watch

Co-ordinating Officer	Sue Chamberlain	01963 350616 <a href="mailto:sechamberlain@btinternet.com">sechamberlain@btinternet.com</a>
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## S H D I R E C T O R Y

**Pitcombe News**

Co-editors	Jane Hodges	01963 351429 <a href="mailto:janeamelahodges@hotmail.com">janeamelahodges@hotmail.com</a>
	Anthony Hodges	<a href="mailto:anthony.hodges@hodesassociates.org">anthony.hodges@hodesassociates.org</a>

**Short Mat Bowls Club**

Secretary	Carole Wyatt	01963 350222 <a href="mailto:carolewyatt@btinternet.com">carolewyatt@btinternet.com</a>
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**Bruton Art Class**

Jane Onslow	01963 362369 <a href="mailto:janeonslow@theretreatsc.co.uk">janeonslow@theretreatsc.co.uk</a>
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**U3A**

Bridge	Kate Mair	01963 351544 <a href="mailto:kateandbillmair@hotmail.com">kateandbillmair@hotmail.com</a>
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Patchwork	Jan Wilcox	01747 840335 <a href="mailto:mail@janwilcox.plus.com">mail@janwilcox.plus.com</a>
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History	Bruce Bower	01747 840335 <a href="mailto:bowersxb@btinternet.com">bowersxb@btinternet.com</a>
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<b><u>Pilates</u></b>	Shirley Rutter	<a href="mailto:shirley.rutter@outlook.com">shirley.rutter@outlook.com</a> <a href="tel:0773085077">0773085077</a>
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**Avon and Somerset Police**

Emergencies	999
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Non Emergencies	101
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**Healthcare**

Bruton Surgery	01749 812 310
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Wincanton Health Centre	01963 435700
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Shepton Mallet Treatment Centre	01749 333600
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**Local Government**

District Councillor,	Mike Beech	01749 812335 <a href="mailto:mike.beech@southsomerset.gov.uk">mike.beech@southsomerset.gov.uk</a>
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County Councillor	Anna Groskop.	01749 812520 <a href="mailto:anna.groskop@southsomerset.gov.uk">anna.groskop@southsomerset.gov.uk</a>
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Roads and Transport	0845 345 9155 <a href="mailto:roadsandtransportSD@somerset.gov.uk">roadsandtransportSD@somerset.gov.uk</a>
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# Neighbourhood Watch



## 22/04/20 9788 Somerset: Another Covid-19 Scam

Trading Standards have told us that a number of residents have been called on their landline from a fake 01225 number, claiming to be from the Government. The automated voice said that the Government is instructing them to wear a facemask and to press a number on the keypad to make a purchase. Fortunately, the residents have recognised this as a scam.

Although these calls were made to residents in the Bath area at present, it is likely that this will become far more widespread and will no doubt include our area. Please remain alert to any potential scam calls.

**Avon and Somerset Constabulary**

## Eurovision Word Search

Unfortunately Eurovision won't be taking place this year, but there will still be a show from the organisers of the contest, the EBU, streamed on iPlayer on 16 May. But before that, can you find the 5 most recent host cities and the winning artists in the word search below?

For an extra challenge: try and match the artists with the host cities they won in!

S	N	V	K	Z	W	K	V	F	Z	D	A	Q	M	Z
K	A	E	I	S	L	I	S	B	O	N	N	Å	P	D
K	I	L	T	V	S	Q	M	Y	M	O	N	E	V	U
O	O	M	V	T	A	P	Q	B	B	S	E	H	I	N
V	N	X	U	A	A	L	X	J	Z	S	I	Z	V	C
E	U	I	B	Y	D	I	E	E	I	P	V	Y	R	A
Q	A	T	A	I	R	O	L	T	T	K	L	B	T	N
K	S	O	U	X	A	M	R	N	L	L	J	I	A	L
B	R	A	D	L	E	M	M	S	T	U	X	D	B	A
F	B	R	A	R	V	Z	N	H	O	F	L	L	K	U
P	B	M	L	O	K	B	C	S	N	B	G	D	Y	R
Z	A	Ö	X	Z	Q	O	F	G	L	M	R	Q	I	E
J	W	M	L	O	H	K	C	O	T	S	P	A	V	N
U	P	Z	Q	P	S	D	X	Z	D	N	B	Y	L	C
H	E	Z	N	R	X	O	Z	D	L	J	G	G	K	E

Duncan Laurence  
Jamala  
Måns Zelmerlöw  
Netta  
Salvador Sobral

Kyiv  
Lisbon  
Stockholm  
Tel Aviv  
Vienna

# World War I I—and a sting in the tail

January 1940 was the coldest month in England since February 1895 and the water in the lavatory was frozen when I was born in Hampshire. My first encounter with the enemy was in 1941 when the ceiling fell on my cot because, as it turned out, our house in Belfast (where my father was a Group Captain preparing for the possibility that de Valera would welcome Hitler) was on the flight path to the Harland and Wolff shipyards. My brothers and I were packed off with our nanny to friends in Eire for the next 6 months, our parents remaining in Belfast.

Later in 1941, my father was a Bomber Base Commander in Yorkshire regularly flying sorties over Germany but in 1943 he was sent to be Air Officer Commanding (AOC) in Ceylon. At home in Yorkshire, I remember Dick Barton Special Agent, 'Hello children everywhere' (Uncle Mac with Children's hour on the Home Service), friendly (no doubt relieved) German prisoners of war working on the farms and isinglass eggs (a method of preserving raw eggs in a substance like wallpaper paste). We were not hungry because the diet was designed by science and enforced by rationing (which may explain our generation's longevity). My brothers were sent to a prep school in Devon, so Nanny and I were on our own with my mother. Two carers were not permitted

but my mother didn't hesitate: she went out to work driving lorries to build aerodromes.

VE day came and went and my father was still in Ceylon. After 15 August 1945 his return to UK was expected and my mother booked a room in the Rubens Hotel to welcome him home. It was not to be because Lord Mountbatten, then in Singapore, instructed him to go immediately to be AOC Hong Kong. There he remained for 18 months liberating Hong Kong from the Japanese occupation and, amongst other things, opening Kai Tak airport to commercial flights. Thus, he was away from the family for 4 years. Nobody complained.

And the sting in the tail? We had six happy years in London, France and Suffolk but, in 1953, after all his wartime service, my father was killed learning to fly a Meteor because he felt that, as the incoming Vice-Chief of the Air Staff, he should know what he was going to be asking his pilots to do.

**Charles Brook**

# An update to our April mini-monthly edition

## Updated useful local lockdown information

### Local Shops and Deliveries

#### Bruton

**Bruton Convenience Store** - 07402 326301 or Facebook Messenger

Monday - Sunday 08:00 - 18:00, free deliveries available to people who are self-isolating and people who cannot leave their homes if needed. This is especially for the elderly.

**Akbar's Kitchen at the Sun Inn** - 01749 813777, [akbarsitchen.com](http://akbarsitchen.com)

Monday - Thursday 18:00 - 21:00, Friday 17:30 - 21:00

Saturday 12:00 - 21:00, Sunday 12:00 - 20:00

Deliveries and takeaway

**Matt's Kitchen** - 01749 812027, [mattskitchen.co.uk](http://mattskitchen.co.uk)

Available for collection Thursday - Saturday 17:00 - 19:00

Deliveries and takeaway to self-isolating people. See website for menu. Also doing deliveries to those who genuinely need it.

#### Supermarkets

##### Aldi - Shepton Mallet

Monday - Saturday 08:00 - 22:00, Sunday 10:00 - 16:00

For the elderly (over 70) and vulnerable: opening 30 minutes early Monday - Saturday (for browsing). 'Key workers in the NHS, Police and Fire Service' and 'all groups entitled to a Blue Light card': 30 minutes access before opening on Sundays.

##### Morrisons - Wincanton

Monday - Saturday 07:00 - 22:00, Sunday 10:00 - 16:00

With 'NHS badge': Monday - Saturday 06:00 - 07:00, Sunday 09:00 - 10:00.

##### Sainsbury's - Frome

Monday - Saturday 08:00 - 22:00, Sunday 10:00 - 16:00

'Elderly customers, disabled customers and their carers' priority: Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays 08:00 - 09:00. 'NHS and social care workers' priority: Monday - Saturday 07:30 - 08:00.

# PARISH COUNCIL



In this time of great challenges and adapting to new ways of doing things, the Parish Council has held its *first virtual meeting*, by Zoom. You may have been trying these new forms of meetings with relatives and friends or to carry on your work. We found it to be effective for its purpose and will continue our monthly meetings by this system until the situation improves. Details of how you can join the next meeting will be published with the agenda on the notice boards and the Parish Council website.

The business conducted is fully reported in the minutes available on the PPC website. The main concern we addressed is the ongoing COVID 19 pandemic and the response of our community to support one another. Firstly, the Council wishes to express how grateful we all are to the work of numerous helpers and organizers who have come forward to offer and deliver practical help. It would be disastrous to try and thank everyone individually as I would miss someone out but I do think it needs to be said that the Pitcombe News team (Ant and Jane Hodges) supported by Lucie Donahue and the talented Max Doughty have played a blinder. Please refer to the special edition leaflet for all sorts of useful contact details and offers of support.

The Council has agreed to support financially the special edition in April and to provide ongoing support to the Pitcombe News to offset increased costs of production.

We recognised the success of the three organic contact groups which have sprung up in Hadpsen, Pitcombe and Cole, which have been offering valuable support to one another. If you have not been able to join one and would like to do so, the contact details are in the special edition of the PN previously published and you can always ring me if in doubt on 07741464850. We agreed that at this stage the community is well-supported but if anyone out there has a suggestion about how we can improve things then please let one of your Councillors hear about it.

We agreed that in the circumstances, the Annual Meeting in May cannot take place, but we will continue to be open for business by phone or email contact.

The general business of the Council, such as considering planning applications, will continue and I am delighted to report that potholes between the Village Hall and Lime Kiln lane have been filled in!

Thank you all and stay safe.

**Richard Waller, Chair**



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# Snatching at History

Oh, those missed opportunities, questions not asked. When I was growing up in Scotland, family Christmases with a variety of generations often moved on to wartime reminiscences after lunch. We youngest would roll our eyes, rather keener to get on with the serious business of opening presents than hearing fond memories of Kurt and Wilhelm, the German prisoners of war who worked on the Lanarkshire farm next door to where my father spent his childhood.

Looking back now, who can blame them, and I kick myself for not paying attention. I was born less than 20 years after the war had ended and such a huge event was felt in all their lives still - my aunt's husband bore the physical scars on his face, burnt in a fire in his tank out in the Western desert.

When we would visit London in the 1960s and 1970s, there were still bomb sites all around the place, like lost teeth among the streets. My grandfather and step grandmother were among the first tenants in the newly built Barbican, in the City of London, in an area that had been flattened. Their wartime marriage had been at the expense of grandpa's first, to my maternal grandmother, who worked in Edinburgh as a driver mechanic, then officer in the Auxiliary Territorial Service. We have a photograph of her in uniform, neat as nine pins and sporting a sausage-roll-at-the-nape-of-the-neck hairdo that she never henceforth abandoned: both she and my step grandmother had impressively upright military posture well into their nineties.

My grandfather glided into a field near Ranville, Normandy on D-Day, 6 June 1945, as a major in the Royal Army Medical Corps, 95 Air-Landing Field Ambulance, part of the 6th Airborne division. His job was to set up a Medical Dressing Station in the town, which

would be the first to be liberated by the Allies - by the end of 8 June, he was a Lieutenant Colonel, as his superior officer had been injured. My brother went to Ranville a few years ago and wrote a long piece about the events, largely taken from my grandfather's diaries, and notes that he also treated German casualties. "One SS officer was so badly wounded that he needed a blood transfusion. He asked my grandfather for a guarantee that there was no Jewish blood in what he was about to be given. My grandfather could not: blood was taken from all the troops in the medical unit, and his sergeant was Jewish. The Nazi officer refused the transfusion and died of his wounds."

My step grandmother was first based at Rosyth, on the Firth of the Forth, as a cypher officer for the WRNS, but spent the latter part of the war in London, working as a First Officer at the Wrens' headquarters in the Admiralty, where she dealt with officers' appointments. When I moved here, she told me she would come down by train to Yeovilton, always nervous she would fall asleep and miss her stop, as there were of course no signs and you had to count the stations. She always said she had tracked submarines at Rosyth, but we suspect her war work went rather deeper; whenever we showed any curiosity, she would cite signing the Official Secrets Act and that was that.

Perhaps it is better we don't know but there is always regret that I didn't ask more. It's too late now.

**Caroline Donald**

# Picking Apples with a German

My family was living in Birmingham when the war broke out in 1939. I very nearly became an American citizen in 1940. Our Mother had arranged for my sister and I to go to America to stay with a family there. We had obtained Passports and were due to sail in a matter of days when the Child evacuation Scheme was stopped after a German U Boat sank the ATHENIA, a passenger Ship with children aboard.

I joined the 'Harborne Collegiate School' in Birmingham in 1940 but it became damaged by German bombs and some of the schoolboys, including myself, were evacuated to the Manor House in Pershore, Worcestershire as boarders.

At one point in 1943 we used to work at various farms in the area picking potatoes and fruit and stacking hay instead of school work, such was the shortage of manpower. In the autumn volunteers were needed on the fruit farms and I went to Chipping Camden in Gloucestershire and joined a team picking apples. I put my ladder against a tree and started climbing and then realised that another ladder had been placed on the other side of the tree and someone was climbing up as I was. We both reached the top at the same time and to my amazement I found myself looking at a young German soldier prisoner of war! Fortunately, I had started learning German at Grammar school where I had to choose between Latin or German. They used German and Italian prisoners for these jobs. We spent an amusing morning, with him teaching me German and picking apples at the same time

We occasionally went to Pershore Abbey and one of us would volunteer to pump the organ. On one occasion, after the Service, the Organist took me to the side of the Church and showed me a huge wooden structure which was the Organ of Birmingham Cathedral in storage there, because of the German bombing.

In Birmingham, the German Bombers used to come over in the late evening and early morning hours and we would sit under the stairs and have tea and biscuits listening to the 'crump' noise from Anti- Aircraft guns and the thump of the occasional bomb. In the morning we used to collect bits of shrapnel from the Anti- Aircraft guns and show them off at school. The German bombers were trying to damage the AUSTIN Motor Works (later known as Longbridge), which were about 5 miles from where we lived. They never hit them.

The day the European war ended in 1945, there was great rejoicing. I tried to go into Birmingham City, but the roads were choked by people trying to walk into the City Centre. The Buses could not move for bodies.

In the days following there were feasts in the streets. Happy times!

**Willie Constantine**



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# The Burma Campaign WWII

The Burma Campaign during WWII was the longest and toughest campaign of the entire war, being fought in dense jungle, without infrastructure and plagued by disease. More soldiers died from disease, on both sides, than were killed in the prosecution of the war. The Burmese Army was known as 'The Forgotten Army', with the main thrust of the War being put into defeating Germany in Europe. As a result, it was under-resourced in terms of troops and outmoded aircraft and weapons.

The Japanese invaded Burma at the end of 1941, swiftly overrunning the capital, Rangoon, and forcing the combined Indian, British and Chinese army into retreat. The Allied troops were pushed back to the Indian border, where the line was held, following important victories at Imphal and Kohima.

There followed a period of consolidation. General Slim was put in charge of the 14<sup>th</sup> Army and vowed that he would not counterattack until his Army was properly re-sourced with sufficient, well- trained troops, air support and up to date transport and weaponry. So, it was not until late 1944 that a series of offensive operations were launched, and early successes achieved. Within a matter of months, Allied Forces were in control of Central Burma and the drive towards Rangoon had commenced. Rangoon was taken in April 1945, assisted by an amphibious assault by XV Corps.

My father, Col. John Hodges MC, was a professional soldier before the war, graduating from Sandhurst in 1936, joined the Indian Army as an officer in the Guides Regiment, and posted to the North West Frontier, bordering Afghanistan. He was therefore involved in the Burma Campaign from beginning to end, fighting on the front line during the retreat and subsequent advance on Rangoon.

**Anthony Hodges**



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