

# WHILTON SPRING NEWSLETTER



Whilton Marina

**MARCH – MAY**  
**2021**

## *Spring 2021*

### *Editors' Letter*

*This is the Spring Newsletter so it is good to see photos of Easter eggs and spring bulbs. The snowdrops in and around the village have done well this year and there are more bulbs to come up in private gardens and common areas. New lambs will soon be out in the fields and the prospect of warmer days will give us more opportunities to get outside.*

*Once again village activities have been limited by lockdown restrictions. It is interesting to see how residents have adapted to this. We have seen many more people out and about walking despite the weather. We have also been pleased to meet a number of new puppies out on their walks. Judging by the number of Amazon and other delivery vans, many of you have adapted by shopping on line.*

*What is also good is that a number of you have used your time to produce material for the Newsletter so thank you to everyone who has contributed. We may not have many events planned but we are able to keep villagers linked up and informed. Hopefully there will be opportunities later in the summer to hold some events and all meet up again or in some cases for the first time.*

*The Editors*

### *Waiting for spring*



*Sheep on a freezing morning in February.  
Photographed by Richard Oliver.*

## Parish Council News

As we are seeing the Covid vaccination scheme rolling out through the age groups, we are at last hopefully seeing a light at the end of the tunnel. With the warmer weather on the horizon, and life slowly getting back to some form of normality, there will be better days to come.

So what has your Parish Council been up to?

- **National Census Day 21 March 2021.** Information regarding the next National Census Day on 21 March 2021 will start dropping through people's doors soon to detail how you can take part and what you need to do. It is a legal requirement for everyone to complete the census because the data is used to ensure that the community gets the services it needs. More information is available at the government website [www.census.gov.uk](http://www.census.gov.uk).
  
- **Interested in Joining the Whilton Parish Council? May 2021 Elections – Your chance to join!**
  - It is anticipated that the elections for the Whilton Parish Council will take place in May 2021 and the nomination forms will be available from the Clerk in early March. You must be willing to fully participate in our meetings, which are held bi-monthly (2nd Wednesday of the month) and have time to spare to carry out some duties in between meetings.
  - Eligibility to become a Parish Councillor (one of the following):
    - (a) Is registered as a local government elector for the parish; or
    - (b) Or has during the whole of the preceding twelve months occupied as owner or tenant, any land or premises in the parish; or
    - (c) His/her principal or only place of work during the preceding twelve months has been in the parish; or
    - (d) Had, during the whole of the preceding twelve months, resided in the parish or within 4.8 km thereof. If you are interested or would like to see what the Parish Council does, all of our meetings are open to members of the public over Zoom in the current Covid-19 crisis.

For more information please contact: Sue Porter – Parish Clerk.

E-mail: [clerk@whiltonpc.co.uk](mailto:clerk@whiltonpc.co.uk)

- **Irresponsible Dog Owners Around Whilton Village – Again!!** This has become a regular feature from myself in the Newsletter, but it is a regular issue around the village for which the Parish Council receives the most complaints. We seem to get on top of the problem for a while, with dog owners cleaning up after their dogs, and then some owners get complacent and the issue starts to grow again. I recently walked my dogs down the path at the end of Buckby Lane leading to the fields and counted 10 incidents of dog foulings along a path just over a meter wide and about 100 metres long. Why are owners so lazy that they don't clean up after their dogs? Around the Church also seems to get a number regular foulings, as does the pavement area running from Manor Lane up towards the Church Gate.

I would once again urge everyone, if anyone sees a dog fouling around the village in a public area, and the owner failing to pick the mess up afterwards, please pass on any details you have either to myself or the Parish Council Clerk at [clerk@whiltonpc.co.uk](mailto:clerk@whiltonpc.co.uk). Any information will be treated in the strictest confidence, and we will then forward the details onto the Daventry District Council to deal with the individual accordingly. Together, let's eradicate this problem of irresponsible dog owners in our village.

- **Church Clock.** Some of you may have noticed over the past few months that the Church Clock has had a few issues, in that it is not at the correct time, or it has stopped altogether. The original mechanism itself dates back to the mid-1750s, and it had a major facelift in 1875, and a full refurbishment in 1995, at which time an auto winding mechanism was also installed. But something of this antiquity is always going to develop a few issues through age. The Clock Specialists have now recently been out on a number of occasions to carry out repairs and improvements to the mechanism and the clock is now working again. So hopefully, we should see it running correctly now for many years to come.
- **Gigaclear.** Superfast broadband is here, and there is a growing number of residents connecting to the network. Generally the feedback that I receive from people who have connected is that the connection and the service for many has been great with no problems, and everyone appreciates the greater speed offered.
  - **Connecting to the Gigaclear Network – Hints and Tips.** It's probably worthwhile reiterating the following for those who have yet to connect to the network.
    - **Packages.** The packages that Gigaclear offer can be found at [www.Gigaclear.com/home-broadband](http://www.Gigaclear.com/home-broadband). Some of the details are a little confusing, but each package will come with a standard router which also broadcasts wifi around your house. If you want a wifi extender for better coverage, or what they call a mesh system, the 300 and 900 mbps packages come with an additional router as part of the package which can be used to extend your wifi into other areas of your home.
    - **Discounts.** Through social media, there have been various discount offers from Gigaclear, and these can also be found at [www.rural.gigaclear.com](http://www.rural.gigaclear.com). Note that these also appear to change quite frequently. So it is worthwhile keeping an eye out for the latest offers.
- **Daventry Area Community Transport (DACT) Service.** The Parish Council recently worked with the Brington Parish Council to successfully establish a DACT bus service for residents to provide regular trips to Daventry and Northampton. However, with the current health crisis, the decision was taken to cancel the service until further notice. Further updates will be notified on the village notice board and through the Parish e-mail distribution list.
- **Defibrillators.** There are 2 defibrillators located within the Parish - in Whilton (by the Village Hall) and Whilton Locks (next to the BT phone box on the canal bridge). Each cabinet is locked with a code, which can be obtained from the emergency services when you dial 999 should they be required.
- **Whilton Parish E-Mail Distribution List.** **The Parish e-mail distribution list is a closed list to keep people informed of the latest issues and information concerning the Parish. If you are interested in being added to the list to find out what is going on in your Parish, please send your e-mail address to [clerk@whiltonpc.co.uk](mailto:clerk@whiltonpc.co.uk).**
- **Parish Council Website.** The Whilton Parish Council also do have a website at [www.parish-council.com/whilton/](http://www.parish-council.com/whilton/) which details all the work that they are doing for the community, together with any notices of interest for the Parish. There are also details of who your councillors are, and how to contact them about any matters relating to the Parish. Of note, the e-mail address is [councillors@whiltonpc.co.uk](mailto:councillors@whiltonpc.co.uk).

- **Parish Council Meetings.** The Parish Council hold a regular meeting in the Whilton Village Hall every 2 months, which is open to the public to attend and raise any issues. However, in the current health crisis, all meetings are now being held virtually via Zoom, to which everyone is invited from the comfort of their own homes. Virtual coffee and biscuits will be served during the meeting.
- **The Spinney.** Some of you may be aware that that we have a special place towards the bottom of Whilton village known as The Spinney, comprising of 2.25 acres of mainly wet woodland, with several walkways throughout the area. It was gifted to the people of Whilton as a millennium gift and is free for anyone to visit. The management of the area now comes under the Parish Council, where a separate work party of volunteers are responsible for the general maintenance of the area and the completion of safety checks on a monthly basis. However, following periods of inclement weather, there can be occasions where trees or branches may have fallen and have yet to be cleared away. Hence, I would urge you all to visit and enjoy the Spinney, but also to be vigilant of any hazards that may be in the area. If you do notice anything that may be a danger, please report it to the Parish Council clerk at [clerk@whiltonpc.co.uk](mailto:clerk@whiltonpc.co.uk).

Randal Smith  
 Rose Briar  
 Chair of the Whilton Parish Council

### **WHILTON VILLAGE HALL**

As I write this, the news of continuing increases of daily vaccinations finally may be a precursor of the day we re-open the hall for general use. The Pre-School are the only organisation who have use of the building . This was also the case last year between lockdowns, owing to government regulations. We did plan to re-open in a limited way in early September. But a further tightening of restrictions made this plan untenable.

Financially we are still in a good position thanks to receiving some government funding via DDC. We have also received interest from an out of village organisation to utilise the building once lockdown ends.

People may have noticed we have a new front door and sign. The old ones were becoming rather tired.

In March we will begin contacting members of the 200 Club for the coming year's subscriptions. Hopefully it will not be too long before meetings and functions can start again.

Nick Busby

### **Northamptonshire walks**

As we write, we are all still encouraged to stay within our very local area for walks, but perhaps as the spring arrives, we may be able to be more adventurous

Walking in Northamptonshire, [www.walkinginengland.co.uk/northants](http://www.walkinginengland.co.uk/northants) may then be a useful website for us. With walks from half a mile to twelve miles plus long, and a note of suitability for pushchairs and wheelchairs, everyone can find a walk to enjoy.



***Jessie Carter from Little Brington, a trainee vet, sends us this message....***

Did you know that not picking up your dog's poo can **KILL** livestock??  
*Neospora Caninum* is a parasite that your dog could potentially be a carrier of (even if they show no signs or symptoms of having it) and it causes **abortions in livestock** - cattle, sheep, horses, goats and camelids.

**What are the dangers of this parasite?**

It is the **most commonly diagnosed cause of abortion** in dairy cattle in the UK and is potentially responsible for 25% of infectious abortions. If a dam becomes infected by eating grass contaminated with parasite eggs from dog faeces:-

- she remains persistently infected **for life!**
- all her pregnancies will result in the neonate either aborting or being extremely weak with neurological problems
- the neonate will also be infected with *Neospora Caninum* for life.

**How is it Transmitted?**

**DOGS' POO!!! Your DOG's POO!!**

Dogs are the definitive hosts of this awful parasite and shed infectious eggs in their faeces to the environment. These eggs can survive for prolonged periods in water and soil, for a LONG time after the faeces has decomposed.

So please don't think it is ok to leave your dog's poo in a field where there are no animals or crops at that point, because it really is not ok!

**There's no cure**

The worst thing is that currently there is NO treatment for this awful parasite. The only way we can help is by reducing the amount of canine faeces that contaminate fields and grazing areas.

It only takes a few seconds to pick up your dog's poo and doing this will save the lives of both baby and adult livestock. So **always pick up your dog's poo wherever you are!**

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**What more can we do?**

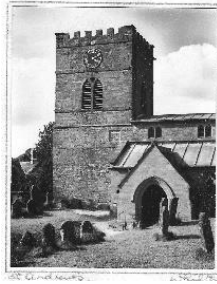
On Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> February we walked to the Spinney. Between the Green and Manor Lane we saw these two large dog faeces on the pavement, and then two more inside the field by the footpath.



All four were within a few yards of the new dog mess bin at the field gate, erected at your cost by the concerned Parish Council. A danger to the Pre-School youngsters and village children, and a known danger to livestock.

It would be easy and an expression of real alarm and concern to sign this DISGUSTED OF WHILTON, but more importantly, how do we stop these signs of a dangerous, uncaring indifference to the health of children and livestock? *Keith Hiscock, Parish Councillor and long term resident.*

## NEWS FROM ST ANDREWS



Back in lockdown again, so little to report in terms of services and in view of the high infection rates we have kept the building closed just to be on the safe side.

Now infection rates falling and with people receiving vaccinations we will re-open for private prayer hopefully soon. If anyone can help unlock and then lock up please let me know. When we can, we will begin holding services on a regular basis – hopefully starting with one a month. Last year we were able to hold socially distanced services quite safely so we look forward to being able to do this again soon.

In the meanwhile services continue on line. Details are set out below.

Lockdown has also seen an increase in the number of people making use of the bookstall in the porch. There is usually a good selection of paperback fiction plus some coffee table books so have a browse when you are passing. We welcome any donations to refresh the selection if you have surplus books, but as space is limited please not too many at once! If anyone would like to volunteer to help out by keeping the books tidy that would be much appreciated. Please let Jon know.

There have been some problems with the clock over the past few months. The Parish Council view the clock as a community asset so on your behalf we thank them for their financial support for this repair.

Churchwardens

Jon Brierley 07759 443178 [Jbrierley1@aol.com](mailto:Jbrierley1@aol.com)

Linda Treacy 07752 885900 [lindahalltreacy@gmail.com](mailto:lindahalltreacy@gmail.com)

### **New Zoom links**

Sunday morning worship at 10am

Simply click:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87321834309?pwd=czR4bktuS3NGSUJxMUUY0eGZuZlFVQT09>

Or go to the zoom website and enter:

Meeting ID: 873 2183 4309

Passcode: 882020

Coffee and Chat, Mondays at 10:30am

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83807565255?pwd=Qkc1dy9Kait6N0N5VWpaSW9udWh6UT09>

Meeting ID: 838 0756 5255

Passcode: 747089

For more information contact Revd. Kathryn Evans, Assistant Curate, Spencer Benefice of Churches 01604842953

## 2021 Census

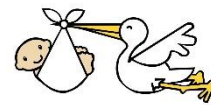
The census is a survey that happens every 10 years and gives us a picture of all the people and households in England and Wales.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) runs the census in England and Wales and the next one will happen on Sunday 21 March 2021.

And Whilton has one more to add to the Census



The poster features a purple background with the text 'census 2021' at the top left. Below it, the main headline reads 'Be a part of Census 2021'. A sub-headline states 'Census day is 21 March 2021.' The body text says 'By taking part and encouraging others to do the same, you'll help make sure your community gets the services it needs.' In the center is a colorful illustration of a town with various buildings, a bus, and a moon. At the bottom, it says 'Find out more at [www.census.gov.uk](http://www.census.gov.uk)' and 'Follow @Census2021' with social media icons. The footer includes 'Office for National Statistics' and 'www.census.gov.uk'.



**Congratulations**  
to Kerry and Chris  
at 8 Southview,

and

**welcome**  
to **Mason Richard Dixon**  
born 9 February at 4.04 a.m.  
weighing 8lbs 2oz .

### From Jon Brierley

I am a big fan of Bletchley Park. A fascinating place and well worth a visit in the future if you have not been.

They are closed but offer interesting activities on their website.

We have just completed the Bird Wordsearch. It is very hard and has taken hours but good fun. You might want to have a go to while away some lockdown time.

<https://bletchleypark.org.uk/cms/2021/01/Week-one-Bird-word-search.pdf>



## **In memoriam**

### **Nora Swinford**

**28 November 1938 - 2 February 2021**

Nora Lilian Swinford came to Whilton with her parents and younger brother in 1956. Percy Swinford had been a farm labourer living in a small tied cottage in Norton, but his asthma and bronchitis meant that he had been unable to work. He had just got a new job with Daventry District Council and the opportunity of a council house in Whilton. The family moved in on Friday, 14<sup>th</sup> December and Percy started his new job on the following Monday. On the Tuesday he and another worker were lifting a manhole cover, when it fell on Percy. He was taken to Northampton Hospital, where he died on Christmas Day, aged 47.

Nora was 18. It was a white Christmas. Nora's older brother was away in the RAF. Her sister and her husband brought them coal by sledge from Long Buckby, and her workmates collected enough for two weeks' rent and some groceries.

This was Nora's introduction to Whilton. She was working at British Timken, sometimes being called at work to cycle home to her mother, Florence who was not well. Life was hard, although 1 South View was a big improvement on their previous home which lacked a bathroom.

Nora had a variety of jobs, working to keep the home going after her son Marcus was born in 1958, cooking at the Blue Boar, working at a garage in Rugby and at Holborn House Prep School at Whilton Lodge, while Marcus grew up, singing in Betty Pride's church choir, progressing to Daventry Grammar School and then to work for Roy Carpenter at Tudor House.

Her mother, Florence, died in 1972 and Nora arranged that a seat be erected in the churchyard in memory of her parents.

After these difficult years, Nora was able to take a more active part in the community. With Max, her companion of over 40 years, she was able to experience foreign holidays and making new friends and with his encouragement she served as a Parish Councillor for 20 years before retiring in 2016.

We send our condolences to Max and the family



## A golden celebration



If we could step back in time and visit Whilton Locks in the 1960s, it would be hard to recognise where we are. 50 years ago the landscape of this area was fundamentally changed by the vision and ambition of one man.

David Steele was the son of a Coventry miner, but spent part of his youth in the Whilton area, married Lucy Poole from Whilton and built their home at the Locks.

As one of 12 children he learned early how to diversify in earning money with paper rounds, as a butcher's delivery boy, and gardening. In the first part of his career he had a variety of occupations from poultry keeping, to salesman and house building. He acquired skills and qualifications in building and civil engineering, and as he himself said in 1970:

"I work really hard, and I have no hobbies. I am empire-building. I am looking all the time for business opportunities."



He dreamed of a number of such opportunities, some of which fell by the wayside, and some of which proved highly successful. Among these was Whilton Marina on the site of a field between the canal and the railway. Here he saw an opening for an entrepreneur, stating: "There is a great future for the catering and leisure trades. People are getting more and more leisure time."



Using huge earth-moving equipment he carried out a 6 acre excavation, moving the earth across the road to the site of the modern Garden Centre and car park.

The whole process was a focus of interest for the parish. Here Bob and Mary Emery are seen visiting the excavations in about 1970. The canal is in the background. The picture helps to make clear the enormous scale of this project.

In May 1971 the excavation was flooded with a million gallons of water, replacing the 68,000 cubic yards of earth removed.

It was one of the first inland marinas on the waterways and took a while to establish, but David was always confident that it would flourish. By the end of his life, David Steele had moved to southern France, but the business remained in the hands of his wife and children. Today it is still owned and operated by the Steele family with the third generation now actively involved.

Over the years the Marina has expanded, with the acquisition of their motorised lifting hoist in 2018. The new crane which is affectionately known as ‘Hercules’ is capable of lifting 40 tonne narrowboats and wide-beams. In addition to the hoist, a 9,000sq ft narrowboat workshop was built to enable three 70ft boats to be worked on out of the water and under cover. This has helped Whilton Marina become a ‘one stop shop’ on the canal network where you can buy, sell, moor and maintain your narrowboat all in one place without leaving the Marina.

Despite the setbacks of the current pandemic, Robert Steele says: “Over the past 50 years we have been the pioneers of the boating industry, we have always adapted to the current climate, worked hard and put in the time and effort to thrive as a company.”



To help celebrate the anniversary Whilton Marina are going to be holding competitions and giveaways throughout the anniversary year for everyone to take part in; keep an eye on their website ([www.whiltonmarina.co.uk](http://www.whiltonmarina.co.uk)) and social media pages for a chance to win some amazing prizes including a narrowboat holiday.

To commemorate the 50<sup>th</sup> year celebration every boat sold will be fitted with a polished brass plaque, this will be engraved with Whilton Marina’s signature bridge that is situated at the entrance of the marina.

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Our Garden Centre and Pet Food Shop remain open for essential supplies.

We are online for you, your pets and your garden.  
Whilton Locks Garden Village: [booking@wlgv.co.uk](mailto:booking@wlgv.co.uk)

### Extracts from the Whilton and Buckby Locks Association News

Although WBLA has not been meeting socially (or indeed for painting during previous lockdowns), our maintenance group has been able to carry out some activity between times. The towpath repairs involved a good number of volunteers.

Two of our members have also attended a hedge-laying course and, as there is a great movement within the Canal Trust to get lots of hedges laid, they are keen to be involved helping out other local volunteer groups. When the good weather arrives we shall be starting on lock painting again when the Trust allows.  
Geoff and Sue Woodward

## The Countryside in Lockdown

Have you been walking the footpaths over fields over the last year so? I bet the answer in many local households is a resounding yes, evidenced by the many muddy boots on village doorsteps! It certainly is in mine. We live in a wonderful rural location and being able to get our exercise in fresh air at negligible health risk is an enormous benefit. Compared to so many we are truly fortunate.

I'm sure many of us have learned or re-learned to love the countryside and over the changing seasons, we have had the opportunity to monitor the commitment of our local farmers, working the land to raise their crops or tending to their livestock whatever the weather even when the rest of us are enjoying Bank holidays! And let's not forget their role as stewards of our countryside, something I know is understood and taken seriously by all farming families in our village, which we should be thankful for.

This brings me to a key point: the potential conflict between the concept of 'our' countryside and 'someone else's' farmland. I reiterate, I don't believe there is any such problem within our parish boundary. But beyond the boundary, one of my routes and that of others too no doubt, crosses the Roman Road broadly in the Flore direction, tracking diagonally crossing fields down to the Diana memorial bridge on the Brockhall byway. The last few weeks have seen the total elimination of all hedging around the fields, the roadside and the watercourses. The hedges have all been razed to the ground.

At the time of writing the effect of this is not apparent, as the waste material has been left in place presumably too wet for burning just yet. Next spring and summer will reveal the scale and impact of what has actually been done. The person responsible even saw fit to create an obstacle course on the footpath, having left branches (now removed) across the footbridge.

Why should we care? Do we have a right to care? Who really takes responsibility for what 'our' countryside looks like, or should look like? If someone pollutes a watercourse, there are legal remedies and agencies to enforce them, but if someone does something unacceptable (a moot concept, of course...) to the countryside, where is the authority to take some action? Is there a debate to be had and if so by whom, especially when the issue is outside our own parish and someone seems intent on creating a naturally-impooverished prairie landscape. And this, while all talk elsewhere is about re-wilding and creating a healthy and diverse environment.

Two final points: firstly, we all know there is no such thing as a 'natural' countryside – that disappeared a thousand years ago – but how can/should continued change be managed for the benefit of all stakeholders (and who are those stakeholders)?; secondly, the land owner across the Roman Road may be planning to spend thousands to re-plant the hedges and create an improved environment promoting diverse wildlife, and for all of us to appreciate. If so, then I apologise unreservedly.

But whatever the answer, let's be grateful for the continuing helpful and positive approach of the farmers in our own community.

Meantime, happy walking!

Richard Bunce



# Aperture Photography Group

Photography is wonderful and now that most of us have a camera with us at all times in our phones, there is no longer any excuse for not capturing an image of that special person, moment, or place. As our collection of photos grows on our phones, how often do we look back on our old images; what happens if we lost all of our data, and with it the precious images on our phones. How do we pass on our photos to future generations? The printed image is still an important way to preserve our memories for the future.

What set me off down this line of thought? I happened to see someone in the village, as I was off for my regular lockdown walk, who I had not seen in years. Years? It so happens that it was over 8 years! How can that be? We live in a small village and it is easy to get to know our neighbours. Well, I know it was 8 years because I photographed this person in 2012 for a book which Anthea Hiscock, Richard Patching, Richard Oliver and I produced to celebrate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. That set me off searching for the book and a chance to look back at what Whilton was like in 2012.

Some things hadn't changed. Our houses and the church looked the same, so did the fields and Whilton Locks. What had changed was us, the people, and some of the things we used to see in the village. Some of the

2012 residents have left the village, some have sadly died, but many of us are still here and still look the same, if just a little greyer and older. We now have new faces delivering our mail, the mobile library has long since vanished and our social lunches are a victim of the current pandemic.

What was good, was the chance to remember what the village was like just eight years ago and to ponder what has changed in that time. It is the photographs, in printed form, that bring back those memories and make me wonder what we've lost in that time and how our lives are currently constrained. It is a printed book that can be passed down to future generations as both a personal and an historical document and so, as time moves on, it gains greater value.

Please don't let your photographs be lost. Just think of the pleasure you have gained by looking back on your old family photos and the happy memories they can instantly bring back. Your latest phone will be long obsolete, and perhaps your images will be lost as well. So do think about printing some of your photos, perhaps like me that will be in books. There are plenty of companies able to produce bespoke books for a reasonable amount and once you have your photos in a book they become more permanent, they can be shared with your children and grandchildren. In 20 or 30 years time, they will look at the images and think how strange we looked, how our clothes looked old fashioned and we were still driving cars powered by petrol. Give it a go - print your photos for the future.



If you would like more information about the group, visit our website ([www.aperturephotographygroup.co.uk](http://www.aperturephotographygroup.co.uk)), or contact Neil Phillips via email ([neilp.apg@gmail.com](mailto:neilp.apg@gmail.com)).



## In the steps of John James Surridge

John James Surridge, son of John James and Ann Surridge was born in 1884. His family lived at Rose Briar in the late 1930s and 40s. Known as Jack, he became a carpenter and worked for most of his life at the Royal Ordnance Depot in Weedon, where his carpentry skills were important for maintenance.

It is about 4 miles to Weedon from Whilton Locks. Jack may have cycled along the Watling Street, or possibly along the canal towpath. At Weedon he would then have left the canal at the basin where the military canal once joined, then entered the Depot at the beginning of Harmans Way.

To follow Jack's daily journey, join the towpath at Whilton Locks and keep going as the canal runs parallel with the old Roman Watling Street, passing Brockhall Hall on your left. Continue under the new flyover at the outskirts of Weedon, until you reach the basin, now used for narrow boat repairs.

Immediately after this leave the canal following the steps to the left. At the road turn right under the railway and canal bridges and proceed a few yards to Harmans Way on the right. Across the road is the entrance to the Depot, with a portcullis over the entrance canal.

At the time of writing the museum here is closed, but it is possible to walk through the gates and follow part of the military canal. On either side of the canal are the huge storerooms built to house arms in readiness for an invasion by Napoleon.



*The portcullis*



*A view of the storehouses*

The building was begun in 1804 and ended in 1816. Brick-built with some stonework to lighten their façades, the storehouses have large sash windows. These could be opened to allow air circulation which would discourage the rusting of muskets and other arms. The light they gave also enabled the regular inspection of weapons, to make sure they were always ready for immediate use. Even after Napoleonic times the arms stores were kept in readiness to suppress expected insurrections around the country. Weedon's good access by road and canal made it a strategic position.

Beyond the fortified entrance at the west end of these buildings the canal continues for a similar distance. On either side of this part are still the great magazines built to house 10,000 barrels of gunpowder. This part is privately owned and not open to the public.

The Horse Artillery Barracks, which later became the School of Equitation, have been demolished, but this whole depot did have some links with Whilton's past. It is possible that some of the labourers who built the depot between 1804 and 1816 were from Whilton, or were related to Whilton families. Surnames such as Butlin, Humphreys, Judkins and Labrum are local, but there is no proof of a direct Whilton link yet. Certainly many of the building materials arrived in Weedon by canal, and would have passed through Whilton Locks on their way.

If you decide to walk along this route, spare a thought for the horses and men who toiled along here in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the Ordnance Depot was being built. Stone came from Attleborough after being loaded on the Ashby de la Zouche Canal, and from Wharton via the Coventry Canal. Light coloured bricks came from Brinklow on the Oxford Canal. All eventually came through Braunston Junction and then down the Grand Junction Canal to Weedon. That meant that, in 1804, 31 boatloads of stone from Attleborough and 18 from Wharton passed through Whilton Locks.

The canal was really busy here, as stone and bricks were not the only materials passing through this main artery for transport. Canal boats were frequently being used to transport officers, soldiers, arms and baggage heading towards Ireland being drafted in to deal with unrest after the Acts of Union. In fact the traffic was so heavy that the Canal Company was having difficulty in maintaining enough water to work the locks.

Once the Weedon arsenal was finished the small arms began to arrive by canal. The upper floors of the great storehouses were prepared with racks for holding arms. By 1812, over 200,000 muskets and small arms had been delivered, mostly from Birmingham, packed in boxes of 20 and loaded into narrow boats. Imagine the quantities of boats and horses required, all passing through Whilton.

Such an important military centre brought leading characters to the area, and some chose to live away from the barracks and the village. One such was Captain George Samuel Jenkinson, Governor of the Military Prison. He acquired Whilton Lodge in 1853. He and his family lived here for a short while, the Captain becoming a member of Whilton Vestry, precursor of the Parish Council. It was probably through his influence that the name "Inkerman" was given to a field on Whilton Hill following the Battle of Inkerman on 5<sup>th</sup> November 1854. By 1855, however, he inherited the title of 11<sup>th</sup> Earl of Liverpool and moved to his seat in Gloucestershire.

Much later in its history, the Weedon School of Equitation provided a polo team to play against Colonel Shaw's Whilton Lodge team in the 1930s. The School of Equitation also boasted a football team between the wars. Despite their enthusiasm, Whilton men and boys were no match for them! No doubt Jack Surridge would have supported the village team, but there is no record that he played.

If you prefer to avoid the towpath walk, it is possible to park in Weedon village and explore the Royal Ordnance Depot as much as you wish. Perhaps its Museum and shop will soon be open again.

*I am indebted to Beryl Williams, whose research into "The Great Works at Weedon" provided much of this information. Beryl, a chemist and local historian, lived for some years in "Sira", now "Birches".*

*Anthea Hiscock*

## May Day in the 1930s



*Annie Bindley, May Queen, 1937*

The celebration of May Day almost certainly began thousands of years ago as a fertility festival and celebration of the return of spring. Chaucer mentioned the use of woodbine and hawthorn, and “bringing in the May” remained a tradition for centuries, when flowers and greenery were prepared the night before. Although the customs were stopped in Cromwellian times, they were reintroduced and continued after the restoration of Charles II.

The interest in the tradition was fuelled by Cecil Sharp, a musician and teacher, who collected folk songs and dances in both Britain and America. Although he died in 1924, his influence in sharing folk dance and songs with the next generation carried on. The 1930s witnessed rural schools reviving the May Day pattern and creating a focus for whole community involvement.



*The community interest is reflected in this photo when Phyllis Essen was May Queen in 1931.*



*May Queen, Phyllis Dunkley in 1933. Parts of the Rector, since demolished, can be seen in the background.*

Whilton and many Northamptonshire villages entered whole-heartedly into this movement. It was an occasion for both girls and boys to dress up and frequently to have their photos taken too, as a professional photographer usually attended. If you were lucky your group might appear in the local paper.

Villages had their own traditions and Whilton was no exception. The local customs were adjusted according to the number of children required to be involved and the weather. The first mention of this half-holiday occurs in the Whilton School Managers Minute Book in 1928. The school teacher here throughout this period was Hilda Osborn, who not only taught the dances and songs but organised the whole event.



The May Queen was an older girl, usually crowned by another child in Whilton. Even as an old man, Harold Haynes remembered being teased afterwards, when he put the crown on backwards! The crown appears to have been a floral design based on the crown used at the king's coronation. There were lots of flowers and mothers must have been involved in producing these arrangements. The Queen and her attendants carried bunches or wreaths of flowers and wore flowers in their hair. The flowers on the sceptre included crown imperials, known in Whilton as "crown o' pearls". Sometimes an older boy presented the Queen with her sceptre. As this was thickly decorated with real flowers it must have been a heavy load.

If the weather was fine, which was far from guaranteed, the children sang May songs around the village, sometimes on a wagon. Old memories suggest that Whilton's maypole was erected sometimes in the school playground and sometimes at the Green. It would appear that most of the village turned out to watch the procession, the crowning and the dancing.



*Eileen Noon as May Queen .The crown imperials can be seen on her sceptre. The group is in the school grounds in 1934.*



*In 1936 Grace Poole was crowned as Queen and her sceptre was presented by Charlie Wright, who stands beside her in this photo.*

Accounts frequently record inclement weather, which meant some crownings had to take place in the school room. Photos in 1931 show the surrounding crowd in warm hats and coats. Stan Haynes remembered shivering in a white blouse, while Mrs Osborn wore her winter coat with fur lined collar. In 1932 Olive Clements was crowned by Marjorie Adams in the schoolroom while the rain poured down. Grace Poole was crowned indoors on another wet day in 1936 and in 1935 they had cancelled the procession because of the bad weather.

After these ceremonies there was the holiday afternoon. The schoolchildren were treated to a tea, mostly on a farm. In 1931 they walked to Norton to the Emery farmhouse there. In some years this was followed by sports with prizes. Mrs Osborn recorded: *"We visited neighbouring farms and were refreshed at Norton Lodge with wine and cake. Mr and Mrs W Emery gave the children a splendid tea – followed by Sports with prizes for all."*

These elaborate events came to an end with the Second World War, but there was a later revival of interest, especially following the coronation of Elizabeth II, and some schools and communities still have dancing round a maypole at this time of year.

**There is further information on the Local History website: [whiltonlhs.org](http://whiltonlhs.org)**

## Brington and Whilton Pre-School



We re-opened in January and have continued to open safely for all of our children. This term we are learning all about animals, living things and their habitats looking at jungle animals, farm animals, birds, sea life, polar regions and animals who live in very hot climates.



We have extended our Friday hours and currently open Monday, Wednesday and Friday- 9.15 am -2.45pm. On a Friday afternoon we have started our fun fitness sessions and the children have started learning football skills. We hope to invite in some ballet, rugby and yoga professionals to pre-school to teach the children after half term.

This term we have begun talking about 'People who have changed the world' learning all about amazing individuals who have changed our world for the better such as Martin Luther King Jr and David Attenborough. We will carry this on over the next few terms too learning about Marie Curie, Albert Einstein and many different artists and inventors.

The children have enjoyed lots of outdoor fun so far this term. They have had some muddy nature walks, pond visits, they have explored the fields looking for different farm animals, they have moved around like jungle animals and have continued to look after and feed the birds at the allotment and took part in the RSBP big birdwatch.







The children have also started to plant flower and vegetable seeds in our propagator to sow at our allotment later in the year.

If you have a child aged between 2-4 years old and are looking for a small rural pre-school with amazing outdoor spaces with a forest school ethos, lots of fantastic resources and a great place for your child to experience new activities, learn and grow in a warm nurturing environment- please contact Trisha at: [managerbandwpreschool@gmail.com](mailto:managerbandwpreschool@gmail.com) or ring on 07546 440572, or for more information about our pre-school activities find us on Facebook at Brington and Whilton Preschool.

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## Having a clear out?

Have you got old clothes, towels, blankets, curtains or pairs of shoes you no longer need...and can't take them to the charity shop? We can help.



The pre-school have a clothes bank located outside Brington Primary School, Little Brington. NN7 4GF. All proceeds go to support Brington and Whilton pre-school and Brington primary school.

Thank you for your help.

## Easter family traditions in Whilton



For Christians Easter is a time of remembrance of the death of Jesus and celebration of his resurrection. Easter eggs are seen as a symbol of the closed tomb, then opened to new life, and churches are decorated with flowers as a sign of the triumph of life over death, and of good over evil. The symbolism and activities are shared with those of other beliefs and none. Springtime is a time of hope and renewal of life, light and colour after the dark winter. Eggs, rabbits, lambs, new bonnets and flowers celebrate spring and a fresh start.

Until last year Easter was a time for gatherings and social events. Once again we shall not have this amount of freedom in 2021, but some families will be keeping up their own traditions, often involving a hunt for chocolate eggs, or plastic eggs, in the hope that they might contain chocolates, sweets or small toys.

Here Slaw from Southview and Myra from Manor Lane share some of their traditions.

## Easter in Poland

The earliest recorded observance of an Easter celebration, a very significant date on the Christian calendar, comes from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century. The festivities may look a little different this year, but the reason for the season remains the same.

I shall make the most of my time this year to improve my culinary skills and try to replicate the magical Easter atmosphere I remember from my home country, Poland. Poles have a series of unique rituals connected to Easter, ranging from joyful to spiritual, and of course always including stacks of home-made delicacies.

### **Palm Sunday- *niedziela palmowa***

Exactly seven days before the main celebrations take place, people gather for a procession with palms in their hands to commemorate Christ's entry into Jerusalem.

As palm trees don't naturally grow in Poland, they are usually made from branches of native trees, including box, willow, yew and are decorated with artificial flowers and ribbons.

Some of the Polish villages and small towns organise palm competitions with the highest palm so far, created in 2013, measuring over 32 meters!



### **Easter eggs- *pisanki***

On the Saturday before Easter Sunday, Poles paint intricate, bright designs onto hard-boiled eggs known as *pisanki*. They are named after the verb *писаć* which in contemporary Polish means *to write*. The designs are drawn on the surface of an egg with liquid wax. The egg is then put into a solution of colourant and after a while, when the colourant has dyed the eggshell well enough, it is taken out and heated, so that the wax gets removed. This way, you get a light decoration on a coloured background.

Growing up in a small village near Częstochowa, I only used natural and easily accessible materials to dye eggs such as onion skins (brown), beetroot juice (pink), bark of young apple tree (golden), nutshell of walnut (black) or shoots of young rye (green). The final results were still extremely satisfying.



### **Easter baskets- *święconka***

On Saturday morning, right before Easter, my mum would prepare a mysterious basket full of various foodstuffs: sausages, Easter eggs, mixed salt and pepper, horseradish, bread, butter, home-made cake and Easter Lamb made of sugar.

This heavy load of food in a pretty basket, lined with a white lace napkin and decorated with twigs of periwinkle, was taken by my entire family to church, where it got blessed by a priest.

After that it was put back in the fridge and eaten on the next day, Easter Sunday, as a promise of good luck in months to come. I will never forget the smell and taste of Easter eggs with horseradish. This combination of food would never taste the same on any other day of the year.



### **Wet Monday- *Śmigus-Dyngus***

Last but not least is the craziest Polish Easter tradition, *Śmigus-Dyngus*. Reaching back to its pagan roots, it involves people throwing copious amounts of water at each other. In the past, taking part in *Śmigus-Dyngus* celebrations showed that you found the other person attractive and worthy of teasing. Today, this originally harmless set of rituals has turned into a full-blown national water fight. It no longer only involves just young people; anybody, including an innocent passer-by, could be soaked from head to toe!



Plenty of food, plenty of drink and plenty of family. These three are the best definition of a Polish Easter celebration. As family gatherings and international flights are currently banned, I have no choice but to roll up my sleeves, bake my very favourite *Babka* and *Mazurek* cake and make my *mama* proud.

Happy Easter!



## Myra's story: An Egg with Soldiers

I have an Ostrich egg that my Grandfather brought back from the Boer War. The story was that food was in short supply, so some of the men made an omelette. One Ostrich egg = about 24 hens' eggs.

The egg hung on my grandparents' wall for many years and I can remember taking it to school in Kibworth to give a little talk about it. Many years later around Easter time Hannah took it to school this time in Kilby to give her talk.

Roll forward to 2021 and because of the pandemic Mycroft couldn't have taken the egg into Whilton preschool but we did send a photo and the history.

So perhaps this is our family's Easter tradition. An Ostrich egg eaten somewhere on the Transvaal around Easter time in 1902 by members of the Coldstream Guards. The shell then transported home in a kit bag.

My Grandmother was delighted to see Grandad home safe and sound and she always treasured the egg, which future generations have used as a subject of an Easter talk.

Maybe next year Mycroft will take the egg into Brington primary.



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There are other special foods associated with this time.  
You may like to try Teresa's suggestion for a celebration cake:

### Victoria Sandwich Celebration Cake

I was inspired by watching Ed Balls on TV in the Celebrity Best Home Chef programme. Making a celebration cake he used a Victoria sandwich recipe but replaced the butter (or margarine) with double cream. The judges, including Mary Berry, were most impressed with the result: very light they all agreed.

We had a 150ml pot of pouring cream in the fridge which was a day past its sell by date so I decided to experiment. The recipe required 150g of butter which I replaced with the cream whisking it with the sugar before adding the flour and eggs. The result was a lighter colour, texture and taste; possibly an improvement on the normal version. A successful experiment and one I will repeat.

A major advantage of using cream instead of butter is not having to soften the butter before using it. I always forget to get it out of the fridge in time.

If you ice and decorate this with sugar eggs or flowers, you will have a very good cake to share at your Easter table.



The Whilton Newsletter is published quarterly and circulated to every household within the parish boundary.  
The costs are met by the Parish Council,  
and we thank all who contribute information and articles.

The Newsletter is delivered by volunteers who willingly give up their time to bring this to your door, and we thank them for their help.

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The Editors welcome material for the Newsletter.

The next issue will be the Summer Edition, covering June – August 2021.  
The last date for contributions will be 20<sup>th</sup> May 2021.

In the circumstances of the Coronavirus pandemic we are unable to produce the usual “What’s on” page, but we hope the following may be helpful.

#### USEFUL WEBSITES AND CONTACTS

WHILE REGULAR ACTIVITIES ARE CHANGED OR IN ABEYANCE

Aperture Photography Group: *844182 or via email. [neilp.apg@gmail.com](mailto:neilp.apg@gmail.com)*

Brington and Whilton Pre- School: *[www.bringtonandwhiltonpreschool.org.uk](http://www.bringtonandwhiltonpreschool.org.uk)*

Daventry District Council: *[www.daventrydc.gov.uk](http://www.daventrydc.gov.uk)*

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Curate: [revdkevans@gmail.com](mailto:revdkevans@gmail.com)*

Whilton Gardeners Association: *e-mail: [royandtricia@btinternet.com](mailto:royandtricia@btinternet.com)*

Whilton Local History Society: *<https://whiltonlhs.org>*

Whilton Locks Garden Village: *[www.wlgv.co.uk](http://www.wlgv.co.uk)*

Whilton Parish Council: *[www.parish-council.com/whilton](http://www.parish-council.com/whilton)*

Whilton Village Website: *[www.whilton-village.net](http://www.whilton-village.net)*



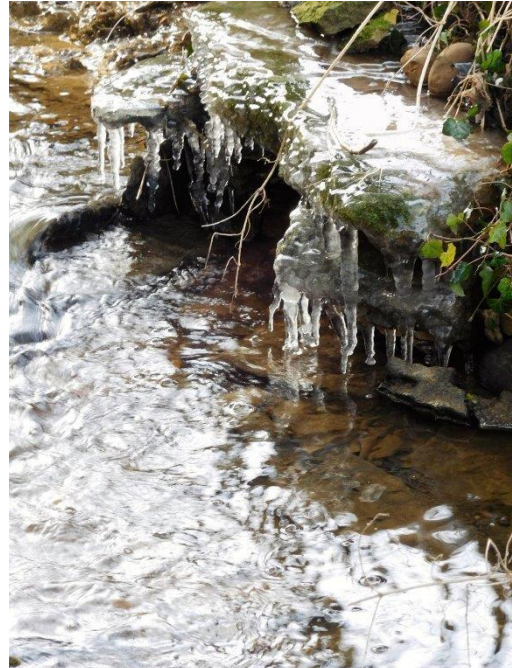
## Roughmoor Spinney

The work parties planned for this winter had to be cancelled, as they were not permitted under the pandemic regulations. However, the regular monthly risk assessment surveys have continued.

The extreme weather conditions have had an effect on this wet woodland. Whilton had 98 mm of rain in January compared with 51 mm in January 2020. The Spinney became very wet and muddy and the stream flowed strongly. Then the freezing conditions in February brought another change, as can be seen in these photos.



The raised walkway covered in unmelted icy snow.



Water freezing as it drains into the stream

Despite the crunch of icy leaves beneath our feet, the welcome presence of early snowdrops by the path is a reminder that spring is just around the corner.

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If you are interested in joining the work parties, once they resume, or for further information about the Spinney, please contact Keith Hiscock:

[councillorhiscock@whiltonpc.co.uk](mailto:councillorhiscock@whiltonpc.co.uk)

