

Easton Village Newsletter

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NATURE NOTES 55



specimens of all small mammals, in reasonable condition and *with head*, especially from anyone living near the Easton brook; I will send all records to the British Mammal Society. The other interesting record this month is of a Woodcock seen skulking along the hedge in The Lane by both Gill and Richard Burton. Did anyone else see it? Although this species is quite often put up during shoots, it is essentially a secretive woodland bird so this is quite an unusual sighting near habitation.

With the intense cold of early January, we have been hard pressed to keep our nut and seed feeders topped up for birds. The seed tray on our kitchen window received a constant stream of Great and Blue tits, with an occasional Robin, Chaffinch and Greenfinch. I counted the number of visits over six 3-minute periods taken on three successive days and obtained an average of 16 per minute, or more than one every four seconds. For each individual bird is that equivalent to our eating a whole packet of muesli for breakfast?



A MESSAGE FROM THE RECTOR

Readers probably know that the contractors started the building work in the church on 4th January. Because of the bitterly cold weather and the considerable upheaval of the first stage of the work we decided not to hold services in the church for the rest of the month. Brian and Beth Davis kindly provided hospitality for Evensong around their piano and on the other Sundays members of the congregation went to services at Ellington or Spaldwick. Morning Prayer on Saturdays has moved temporarily to Jenny and David Hyde's. By the beginning of February we expect that the services can be held in the church again, but please look at the notice board for any changes.

I would like to thank parishioners for accepting the interruption to our services with cheerfulness and co-operation. I am confident that this short-lived and comparatively small inconvenience will soon be forgotten when the new facilities are completed and we are able to enjoy using the church again for both worship and many other community activities. We hope that the Bishop of Huntingdon will be able to fit us into his busy schedule for an official opening ceremony during the summer.

Jonathan Young

QUIZ NIGHT

If you haven't already got your tickets for the Quiz Night on 6th February there is still time to do so from any member of the PCC (Peter Gould, Mike Baker, Beth Davis or Jenny Hyde). Even if you cannot attend, please could you consider donating a raffle prize? This can be given to any of the above or direct to Stephanie Silcock at Crown Cottage. In addition to providing extra entertainment for the evening, the raffle always raises a worthwhile sum for the Church Fabric Fund so your help in making it a good one would be very much appreciated!

IT'S BEHIND YOU!!!

This year Melodramatics are performing *Hansel and Gretel* but also introducing Snow White, Red Riding Hood, a couple of witches and a Wolf to give the traditional panto a number of twists. Once again some members of the village are involved in various capacities, including "postmistress Pam with a black and white pram". Performances are at the Mandeville Hall Kimbolton from Wednesday Feb 24th through to Saturday Feb 27th (3 performances on Saturday). Tickets are bookable through Watsons of Kimbolton on 860444 or ask John Hill to reserve a place for you (3 Broadweir or 896444).

CHURCH NEWS

The builders started work on the Church alterations on 4th January and began by removing the old brick floor in the tower. Underneath the floor they have found the remains of a medieval bell pit thought to date back to the 14th century. Beth Davis is monitoring the work from an archaeological point of view and she says "This was a time when itinerant bell makers would cast bells in the Church, bringing with them all the bell metal that they needed for the work. The method of casting was called the 'lost wax method'. The evidence on the ground is of a scorched ring that measures 34 inches in diameter". According to Rob Walker, former Diocesan Advisor and Conservation Officer who has carried out a survey of all the belfries in Cambridgeshire, the bell that was cast could have been one of four and may have been a treble; he remembers seeing a similar bell pit at Hamerton Church. The



existing bells are 16th century, however, and were cast at a Leicester foundry. The find has caused excitement in archaeological/bell ringing circles and the fire pit was excavated on 11th January by Dr Tim Reynolds, who is the archaeological advisor to Ely Diocese. He removed a lot of black sandy waste from the pit with some lumps of bell metal and clay and bright orange burnt clay. Some clay lining to the tiles of the fire pit was uncovered. In the top layer of the infill we found three pieces of 18th century pottery which may mean the pit was in use at that time, but may also be the date of the backfill when the last red brick floor was laid. The date of the fire pit is still uncertain, but could be later than the 14th century - it depends on which expert you are talking to! The pit will be carefully covered with the original backfill before the new floor is laid and will be there for everyone to see when the floor is re-laid in another two hundred years!

The drawing on the right shows the process of founding a bell, possibly in the 14th century. We do not know the date of the Easton fire pit as most of the evidence was destroyed when the bell was cast. The bell makers may have brought all the materials they needed with them; sometimes the villagers supplied old pots and pans for the bell metal which was made from tin and bronze. The core of the bell was formed first and covered with fine clay carefully moulded to a bell shape with a template, then the 'cope', a metal bell shape with a clay lining inside, was placed over the core. The heat of the charcoal fire in the fire pit baked the clay to a biscuit hardness and then the molten bell metal was poured into it filling the cavity between the cope and the core. Bells were designed to ring different tones depending on their size and weight. Several specialists have visited the church each with their own opinions, some dating the pit from the 14th century and others to the early 18th. Chris Higgins of the Huntingdon Bell Ringing Association believes the pit to be early, possibly dating with the construction of the tower in the 14th century.



In addition to this find, a former position of the font has been discovered against a pillar in the south aisle; the pillar has been carved away on the north side to accommodate the font and the measurements there match the bowl of the font exactly. The font stood on large limestone blocks that had been partly removed, leaving some that had been covered up. Fr. Jonathan said that he had seen fonts in this position in a number of other churches and Dr. Reynolds thought that it could have been put there in the 18th century; where was it originally sited, we wonder?

If you would like to see what has been going on and how the alterations are progressing, everyone is invited to the Church during the morning of Sunday 7th February – obviously to attend the service if you wish but the Church will remain open until 12.30 p.m. and someone will be there to answer any questions. The doors will be open.

Services during February will be:

7 th February	-	9.30 a.m.	Sunday Worship
14 th February	-	6.00 p.m.	Evensong
21 st February	-	9.30 a.m.	Eucharist
28 th February	-	8.00 a.m.	Eucharist



The original site of the Font

ROYAL BRITISH LEGION

The Kimbolton Branch of the RBL is planning a "D Day Remembered" trip to the beaches and memorabilia of Normandy from 12th to 16th August this year. The trip is by coach and will include all four of the D Day beaches (Utah, Sword, Omaha and Juno) plus the battles at Merville, Pegasus Bridge, St Mere Eglise, the Arromanches story and many more. It will include how a number of local servicemen and women won medals for bravery. The American and British cemeteries close to the battlefields are also included in the tour. The hotel is situated close to the centre of Caen. Depending on numbers, the **cost will be less than £400** and most meals are included. We will have a Poppy Travel guide with us throughout the tour. You do not have to be a RBL member to come and join us. If you need further details please contact John Hill at 3 Broadweir or on 896444.

49 CLUB

The winner of the last draw for 2009 (December) was Sue Walker.