



The Wheel



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We are also having a Pub Quiz and Live music on 26th January - Quiz £2 per person and cash prize

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Friday and Saturday 11am – Midnight

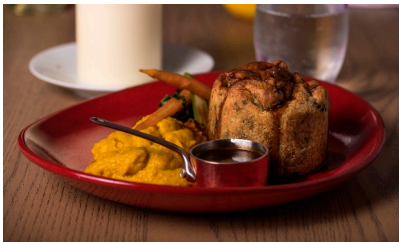
Kitchen: Monday – Friday 12noon – 3pm and 6pm – 9.30pm

Saturday 12noon – 9.30pm Sunday 12noon – 4.30pm

Contact: 01233 712223 / info@thewheelinnwestwell.uk

Pub Menu and A La Carte available during Kitchen hours.

Sunday: Roast 12noon – 4.30pm



THE WESTWELL EYE

179

January

2018



Left: top + bottom
Decoration workshop.

Right: top + middle
Christmas bazaar

Right: bottom
Chris Pitt's memorial
christmas tree



5th January

7th January

15th, 29th January

26th January

10.30am Coffee in The Wheel - all welcome

3.30pm Messy Church - in Westwell Church

1.30pm Painting Group

Quiz - The Wheel

January 2018

SUNDAY	MON	TUES	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT
	1	2	3	4 **No Dustbins** 9.15am Plates 10.30 Dog Training	5 10am Iona Eucharist 10.30 Coffee Wheel	6 **DUSTBINS** R.F.W.
7 Epiphany 8am Holy Communion St. Mary Westwell Messy Church	8 7pm Fitness	9 7pm Parish Council Parish Hall Players (Cole room)	10	11 Re.F.T 9.15am Plates 10am Mobile Library 10.30 Dog training 7.30pm WI Meeting	12	13
14 2nd Sunday of Epiphany 11am Iona Eucharist St. Mary Westwell	15 7pm Fitness 1.30pm WI painting	16	17 11am Fists - Dance as U Co	18 R.F.W 9.15am Plates 10.30 Dog Training	19	20
21 3rd Sunday of Epiphany 11am Family Service St. Mary Westwell	22 7pm Fitness	23 Players	24 11am Fists - Dance as U Co	25 Re.F.T 9.15am Plates 10am Mobile Library 10.30 Dog Training	26	27
28 4th Sunday of Epiphany 11am Eucharist St. Mary Westwell	29 7pm Fitness 1.30pm WI painting	30	31	Feb 1	2	3

From the Editor's desk!...

Yet another sadness in the village, Denzil Wood died unexpectedly in November and I am sure that once again you would like to join me in sending condolences to his family, Sue, Jane and James. Obituary page 3

I hope you all had a good Christmas and celebrated New Year the way you wanted; we grew out of doing anything years ago!

Westwell has a Christmas tree in memory of Chris Pitt planted on Church Green - see page 5 and front cover.

There were lots of people at the carol service and also the Christingle, which was attended by many families and enormously enjoyed by the younger children in particular.

The Christmas Bazaar was the usual success, with those attending enjoying breakfast and shopping - see page 13.

Heather Lister's Christmas workshop saw many beautiful wreaths etc. made - see front cover.

New Year's Eve saw the beacon lit and many villagers enjoying the hospitality at The Wheel.

The back page has reverted to an advertisement for The Wheel; so watch out for monthly changes to the text.

I wish all my readers a happy and fulfilling 2018.

Carolyn Thorneloe 

The views of any contributor to this publication may not necessarily be those of the editor and team, nor can the Westwell Eye accept any responsibility in connection with any companies or organisations mentioned or any advertiser.

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Useful Contacts

Telephone Numbers

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Larry Krause	01233 643497
CAB	626185
Carers Support Group	664393
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Cruse Bereavement Counselling	878225
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Hospital (William Harvey)	633331
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MS Therapy Centre	01227 470876
NHS Direct	0845 4647
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	doriscackett@btinternet.com
Parish Council (clerk, Sue Wood)	623902
Pilgrims' Hospice (Admin)	504100
(Patient enquiries)	504112
PCC Secretary (Heather Lister)	712981
PCSO	angie.burden@kent.pnn.police.uk
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Denzil Wood

Denzil was born in Dartford on January 21st 1941. He had an elder sister, June and was educated at Dartford grammar school where he became a prefect and gave a detention to a naughty Mike (Mick) Jagger.

He followed his sister to work for a local law firm immortalised by Denzil as “ Sue, Grabbit and Run”. Denzil had always wanted to join the RAF but was dissuaded from doing so by his father. Denzil had qualified as a solo glider pilot with the ATC at school. Denzil found salvation in the Territorial Army (the TA): joining the Intelligence and Security volunteers in the cold war era of 1967. Denzil also found Sue, and they were married in 1976 By then Denzil had become an exceptionally well turned out officer having survived the rigours of the Mons Officer Cadet School Aldershot. Sue and Denzil exited the church under an arch of swords from Denzil’s Intelligence Corp chums. They settled first in Dartford.

In the TA Denzil trained as photographic interpreter - a 5 year training programme and much of the work related to aviation, in a small cadre of 10 trained interpreters, at the time highly sensitive – now declassified. Denzil loved it and was very proud to be awarded the Territorial Decoration, he was also much admired by his TA chums.

Alongside his secret work as a photographic interpreter, Denzil was able to be more public about his role as a member of the Corps of City Marshals, a group of 80 Commissioned officers who turn out every year to escort the Lord Mayor’s parade through the City of London, ideal for Denzil who perfected his gleaming “Blue patrol” uniform. Through this Denzil became a Freeman of the City of London in 1980.

Life at the TA meant that Denzil continued as a legal executive in parallel with his military work. After the Dartford law firm he moved to Shell Petroleum, but he retired early due to ill health only later recognised as a duodenal ulcer.

By then Sue and Denzil had moved to Sandyhurst Lane, with Jane as a baby. James was born 2 years later. Denzil became a member of the Highworth PTA.

Denzil continued in legal administrative jobs joining the civil service where he worked on VAT and then Air Passenger Duty which was closer to his passion for aviation.

Denzil was always up to date and interested in current affairs: his daily read was The Telegraph including the crossword. He had a wide general knowledge and read avidly especially about WW2. He knew all the airfields of Kent, and loved maps. He also followed the paths of airliners worldwide on FlightRadar24. Denzil’s favourite TV programmes were Time Team, the Simpsons and rugby: he had been a linesman at school (it had got him out of playing !) Denzil was not into DIY. He was a convert to dogs when Henry, the dachshund arrived, and was always a devoted grandfather to Jane and Jake’s Arrietti. Denzil was for many years a member of the Westwell’s Parochial Church Council and keeper of electoral role for St . Mary, Westwell. He will be remembered by many for his zestful wit and imitations of Kenneth Williams and the Goons.

Christine Drury
with thanks to John Hayton.

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BONET - Serves 6

This is deliciously old-fashioned and simple to make.

Ingredients

250g granulated sugar	Oil, for greasing
300ml whole milk	225ml double cream
1 tablespoon instant espresso powder	1½ tablespoons cocoa powder
60g chopped dark chocolate	3 eggs
35g golden caster sugar	1 tablespoon rum
150g amaretti biscuits, crushed	

Method

Heat the oven to 170°C/fan oven 150°C/mark 3. Make a caramel with the granulated sugar and about 8 tablespoons water by heating them gently in a saucepan until the sugar has completely dissolved. Now turn up the heat and cook until the sugar melts, turns toffee-coloured and caramelises. You will know when it is ready from the colour and smell; be careful not to burn the sugar. As soon as it reaches this point, quickly pour half the caramel into the base of a 1-litre loaf tin and the other half on to a lightly oiled baking sheet. Tilt the tin so that all of the base and some of the sides are covered. Leave this to set. Leave the caramel on the sheet to set too, then crush it to make shards (you'll use this for decoration later).

Put the milk and cream in a sauce pan and bring up to a simmer. Add the coffee powder, cocoa and chopped chocolate and stir until the chocolate is melted, then immediately remove from the heat.

Using an electric mixer, beat the eggs and golden caster sugar together until fluffy. Slowly add the warm milk and cream mixture, pouring from a height to cool it as it pours, then add the rum and crushed amaretti and mix well. Pour this into the loaf tin and stand it in a roasting tin containing enough just-boiled water to come a third to halfway up the sides of the loaf tin.

Bake in the oven for 1 hour - it may need 1¼ hours. The top should feel set when you touch the centre with your index finger; but it will still tremble slightly. Remove from the water bath and leave to cool. Cover the top with cling film, put in the fridge and leave for 6 hours to set completely.

Remove the cling film. Run a knife all round the edges, between the bonet and the sides of the tin, and carefully turn out on to a plate. Decorate with caramel shards.

From the January 2014 issue of House & Garden. Recipe by Diana Henry;

Thank You

My family and I would like to say a big thank you to everyone for their kind words, cards, messages of support that we have received since Denzil unexpectedly died on 30th November. He had been admitted to the William Harvey a few days previously having suffered a mild heart attack and was expecting to be discharged on 30th; sadly this was not the case. We have been overwhelmed by everyone's generosity, kindness and friendship and are taking great comfort in it.

I am indeed blessed in having such a super family and being surrounded by so many friends.

Sue Wood, Jane and James, Jake, Arrietti and Becky

Proposed housing adjacent to The Wheel Inn

In the October edition of The Eye the Parish Council said 'we remain satisfied that their (Shepherd Neame's) intention is to open The Wheel Inn as a viable and long term community asset'. Since then as you will all be aware James and Matthew have taken over the pub and the early signs are very encouraging. There are still things to do but the place is looking much better and the new beer garden is surprisingly large. It will be interesting to see how this is developed in the Spring.

For the first time in many years the Wheel appears to have regular custom and it is often full to overflowing. There will be some that have niggles about this but to be viable the pub needs to be regularly busy and not just on a Sunday.

We feel that Shepherd Neame did the right thing for the local community by investing heavily in the refurbishment of The Wheel, then leasing the business on a very reasonable rent and signing a long term contract with two people who stand every chance of ensuring that the business is a success.

This leads to the second part of this article which is the plans for housing on the old beer garden. The plans were published for two pairs of semi detached houses, which we felt would be far more affordable for local and younger people than the original suggestion for two large detached houses. However, no decision has yet been made as the planning application is within a conservation area and the planners have, understandably, decided to engage in some further discussion with Shepherd Neame, to ensure that the new houses meet all the varied environmental requirements and sit comfortably within their setting.

If this brings changes to the proposals that we have already seen, then we will ensure that there is a further round of public consultation. In the meantime the Parish Council will be adding a comment, to the Ashford Borough Council Planning website, which sets out the need for new housing that is incremental and small scale so that the village can adapt to the evolving needs of existing and new residents.

Church Green Christmas Tree.

Kip's Christmas tree donated by Mary Anne Pitt has been planted on the Church Green by Clive and Tom of the Parish Council.

As it is a yew tree it will be possible to keep it in shape and size as it grows. Some one has already suggested a topiary star at its top.

In the meantime it will grow a little bushier.

In addition to thanks to Mary Anne, thanks also to Lucy and Michael for the lights.

Update on the Local Plan

The draft Ashford Local Plan reached its next stage in December.

It was approved by the ABC cabinet on December 7th and the Full Council on December 14th and submitted to DCLG on December 21st. DCLG is the department of Government that deals with planning. DCLG will appoint a Planning Inspector who will hold an examination in public (EiP). This is likely to be in April.

The Inspector will read the submitted plan and the comments everyone has made on the policies and sites in it. He or she will hold a round table hearing on disputed matters to hear both sides.

For Westwell Parish the submitted plan is as we commented on in August 2017: sites S44 (Watery lane) S49 (Tutt Hill) and S47 (East of Hothfield Mill) are all included. The only change is to include a reference to the Hothfield SSSI now also for S47. Adjacent sites are also unchanged. An important point about S44 is that there will now be a separate plan for gypsy and traveller sites.

In working out his List of Matters for the Examination the Inspector will have all the comments of residents, businesses and promoters.

The submission plan is a large file of 378 pages which you can find on the ABC website at "Ashford Borough Council Planning Policy"

More news when we know the EiP process and timing for further comments. Any questions contact the Parish Clerk, Sue Wood

Planning applications

The following application was supported by the Parish Council and approved by ABC:

17/01379/AS Swinford Cottage, The Street, Westwell

The following applications will be discussed at the Parish Council meeting on 9th January:

17/01805/AS 102 Sandyhurst Lane Installation of rooflights and velux style roof terrace/balcony to rear elevation to facilitate loft conversion

17/01836/AS St Mary's Church Single storey extension to north elevation to provide boiler room/WC facilities; new oak door to north elevation

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Unfortunately last month was dominated by the run up to Ashford Council accepting the draft Local Plan, overnight lorry parking and public consultations on new, greenfield sites adjoining our area being put forward for even more housing development; sites over and above those already proposed in the Local Plan.

So I was unable to write for the December Eye and missed the opportunity to wish you all seasons greetings, as by the time you read this we will be into 2018. So may I now wish you all a peaceful and healthy year ahead.

Sadly, crime doesn't stop for Christmas and the month of December saw a spate of thefts of goods, credit cards and even cash, from vehicles parked on residents drives around the Kennington area. Even though the nights will slowly get shorter these types of crimes will continue. Make sure your car is locked and EMPTY of attractive disposable or useful items. Solar powered PIR lighting to illuminate intruders on your drive is an inexpensive, easily installed, deterrent. If YOU see anything suspicious call 999 (if urgent) or use Country Eye or 101 to report it. Visit: westwell.community.watch@gmail.com

Also indicate whether you would like to get Westwell Events news including updates from the Parish Council

2-WATCH-4

Whilst advances in technology can help in the fight against crime, it can also make it easier for the bad guys. Almost all new debit and credit cards are now contactless, with 92 million currently in use. The technology allows you to pay a bill of up to £30 without typing in your PIN at the checkout. You just tap the card against the reader.

But fraud using the technology of these cards has risen from £516,500 in the first six months of 2015 to £2.9 million in the same period this year.

Whilst you may think you have to actually touch the card to the reader the technology lets the payment go ahead if you are a few inches away, so all the fraudster has to do is get a mobile reader (or increasingly a mobile phone) close to your card to take up to £30 from your account without you even knowing.

Tests have shown that a card can be read at a distance even if it's in your wallet, purse or both inside and outside pockets. But the test also showed that two or more contactless cards next to each other confused the reader and no payment was taken.

So either keep two or more cards together or consider putting a single card in a protector sleeve. These are available on-line but following many enquiries into how to obtain them Ashford Neighbourhood Watch has purchased a number of contactless bank/credit card minder sleeves which will prevent any unauthorised scanning of your card details. These sleeves cover your card completely and will fit neatly in your wallets or purses. These are available from Reception at Ashford (Tufton Road) Police Station. Ask for Neighbourhood Watch. A donation of £1 will be appreciated.

To report suspicious activity call 101 or use Country Eye – in an emergency call 999

Keep Vigilant - Tony Bartlett – WCWS Co-ordinator

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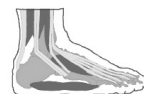
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Letter to the Parishes

By the time most of you will be reading this, you will have turned over the page of your calendar into the New Year. I wonder how many New Year's resolutions will have been made and already broken. Thresholds can be exciting places and for me, the threshold between the old and the new year is one of these. We move into a land not yet visited, a chapter waiting to be written, an opportunity to put right the wrongs of last year, a place of optimism and new starts. As Alfred Lord Tennyson says, "Hope smiles from the threshold of the year to come, whispering 'it will be happier'".

Turning the page of the liturgical calendar into January reveals many important staging posts. On January 1st we celebrate the 'Naming and Circumcision of Jesus' and a few days later we celebrate the great Feast of the Epiphany. Towards the end of the month on January 25th, we commemorate the Conversion of St. Paul and in the previous seven days, we are called to devote ourselves the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. The festival of the Naming and Circumcision of Jesus is full of symbolism. Perhaps the most significant of these in the gospels is the name itself, 'Jesus', which means 'Yahweh (God) saves', Jesus, the name that the Angel Gabriel commanded Mary to give him, Jesus, 'God saves', who links us to the covenant made between God and Abraham and also to the hope that is to come. Yes. Names are important. They are the things that shape our identity, that differentiate ourselves from others, that link us to generations past, present and future. In baptisms, marriages and funerals our names are used in place of the anonymous 'n' which crops up frequently in liturgy, distilling the general into the personal. To His people who have gone through challenging times, God speaks through the prophet Isaiah these comforting words, "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name, you are mine." Through Jesus, our saviour and redeemer, we too can enjoy a personal relationship with God.

We are reminded on the feast of the Epiphany that this news is too good to keep to ourselves. The word 'Epiphany' itself speaks of "The manifestation of God; a sudden revelation or insight into the nature, essence or meaning of something." In Jesus, God was breaking into the world making his saving grace known to all people, irrespective of race, of creed or colour.

For some, this good news is hard to swallow, perhaps none more so than the apostle Paul. Well known for his persecution of Christians, Paul speaks of a revelation by God of his Son, Jesus Christ, a revelation that dramatically changed this most ferocious enemy of the Church to one of its most zealous spokespersons. It didn't happen immediately. Paul, writing to the Galatians, speaks of a three year period out of the public eye when no doubt he wrestled with his changing viewpoint. Then a further fourteen years passed about which we know little but can speculate that God was shaping him for the task to which he had been called.

In amongst the January list of feasts and festivals and commemorations of important people stand some lesser-known people. On the 2nd of January, for example, we are invited to remember Abbot Munchin, a seventh century monk affectionately known as 'the wise'. I'm sure I'm not alone in knowing nothing of this man who is remembered for inaugurating a tradition of prayer and study in Celtic monastic life. And who knows of Kentigern who we are called to remember on the 13th January, known affectionately as 'Mungo', seventh century Bishop and evangelist working to spread the Gospel even under great persecution? We don't need to be famous to respond to God who calls us by our name, who, through his grace, longs to reveal his son to us so that we too might go out to declare the Good News of Jesus Christ to all we meet.

Contd on page 12

Etc

Coffee at The Wheel Inn

Coffee at The Wheel, Friday 5th January from 10.30 - 11.45am. All welcome.



Book Club December 2017

Our last meeting of the year. The book, *The Aftermath*, is about a British Colonel's family settling in post-war Hamburg. The extent of devastation, structural and human, is very well described. The German family are able to remain in their home and share part of it with the British family. What begins as a cool and detached coexistence evolves into an appreciation of how much both sides had lost and suffered in the war, and how hard it would be to recover. A vivid description of hunger, homelessness and black market dealings for survival, as well as fear of suffering by those who found themselves in the East Germany in Soviet hands is very real.

There were 12 of us at the meeting and the Wheel Inn seemed accommodating even though they were booked to host an event that afternoon. We had a coffee and followed with a small lunch. Some of us had had family members who were in Hamburg after the war and had first hand accounts of the situation there. This is a very good story with autobiographical flavour as the writer's father had lived in Hamburg and shared the house with its German owners. The author, Rhidian Brook, is also a screen writer and the film has just been made of the book...perhaps we will go when it is released.

Our next meeting is a lunch to celebrate the new year. And in **February**, we discuss **My Brilliant Friend**, by Elena Ferrante. Happy holidays.

Charing & District Local History Society

A Schoolgirl's War: Speaker: *Mary Smith*
A fascinating story of school life in Kent during World War 11 using an exquisite and unique set of pictures and drawings created by an art teacher.

11th January at Charing Parish Hall. 7.45pm for prompt start at 8pm



WAGS

15th, 29th January
12th, 26th February



Christmas Bazaar 2017

Thank you everyone for another successful Christmas Bazaar. It's always a team effort and a lovely way to get involved in the community. We really rely on your kind donations and every year I am bowled over with your generosity and help. I had lots of compliments about the wonderful atmosphere helped with the smell of cooking bacon and lovely Christmas music. The local shoot came early and ate breakfast and Santa came and surprised the children and some adults too! We raised just over a thousand pounds to be used for the new Loo and Kitchen project in the Church.

Happy New Year to you all
Penny Knatchbull

Parish News

Contd from page 8

We are living through times where the bad news seems to outweigh the good news. This year, let us pray that God will give us the courage to be heralds of good news in a bad news world, light-bearers in the dark places, bringers of hope to the despairing and companions to those in need.

May God bless you and all whom you love in this New Year. *Sheila*

Westwell Church Services for January

www.g7benefice.org

Friday 5th:

10am Iona Eucharist

Sunday 7th: Epiphany

8am Holy Communion

Sunday 14th: 2nd Sunday of Epiphany

11am Iona Eucharist

Sunday 21st: 3rd Sunday of Epiphany

8am Family Service

Sunday 28th: 4th Sunday of Epiphany

11am Eucharist

Tuesdays:

9am Charing – The Eucharist

7pm Charing Heath – Prayer and Bible Study

Funerals

Joseph Merriam Stuart-Smith died on Friday 20th October 2017 aged 82. His funeral took place at Charing Crematorium on Thursday 9th November and a service of thanksgiving took place immediately afterwards at St. Mary, Westwell.

*May God enfold Joseph
in his tender love and care.*

Family Church for January



Messy Church 7th January at 3.30pm in Westwell Church. Learn about the Three Wise Camels and enjoy other camel related activities to end with Snacks.

All children welcome with an accompanying adult.

All Age service Sunday 21st January 11am

This month's Charity collections will be for Ashford Children's Nursery



We collected £40 for Water Aid in September; £68 for Food Bank in October/ November and £30 for local Homeless charities at the Carol service.

Greenery Galore.

We worked our way through 6 giant trugs of Greenery to make evergreen wreaths and kissing balls replete with mistletoe. We also consumed a small amount of coffee, mince pie spirals and brownies. A good time was had by all. We collected £120 for the Church Loo fund.

Church Cleaning Rota.

Cleaning etc. Christmas Team



January - Poem by Edith Nesbit

WHILE yet the air is keen, and no bird sings,
Nor any vaguest thrills of heart declare
The presence of the springtime in the air,
Through the raw dawn the shepherd homeward brings
The wee white lambs--the little helpless things--
For shelter, warmth, and comfortable care.
Without his help how hardly lambs would fare--
How hardly live through winter's hours to spring's!

So let me tend and minister apart
To my new hope, which some day you shall know:
It could not live in January wind
Of your disdain; but when within your heart
The bud and bloom of tenderness shall grow,
Amid the flowers my hope may welcome find.

January - Poem by John Updike

The days are short,
The sun a spark,
Hung thin between
The dark and dark.

Fat snowy footsteps
Track the floor.
Milk bottles burst
Outside the door.

The river is
A frozen place
Held still beneath
The trees of lace.

The sky is low.
The wind is gray.
The radiator
Purrs all day.



Westwell Players

Westwell Players are all 'resting' and enjoying the Festive Season with the usual mad dash to get cards written and presents wrapped as well as attending Church services to remember what Christmas is really all about. Wonderful service in Westwell with delicious mulled wine and mince pies afterwards and so good to watch the nativity scene come to life. The 'flower team' had done a wonderful job in the church with seasonal displays that looked lovely, I love all the work that goes on in the background, rather like at The Players – there's the organist, the sidespeople, those who arrange flowers, those who clean and clean brasses, printing the service sheets, etc, etc, the list goes on and on not to mention the Vicar(s) and other people who take charge of the service or readers who spend hours getting their reading ready! This year we have – at last – a tree planted on the green covered in festive lights, many thanks to all those who worked at the planting and the placing of the lights and just the hard work of ordering and arranging it all, I am sure the whole village is thrilled to have a real yew tree that will grow each year. Kip would have been so thrilled to have it bought in his name to live on to celebrate Christmas for generations to come! Thanks so much for all those who helped in the realisation of the dream.

Players are busy reading scripts and discussing the next show which we are hoping will be in May to go back to our old schedule of two productions a year. A Murder Mystery has been discussed or maybe an old time music hall. Has anyone out there any ideas on what you would like, either this year or next? let me know. My new phone number is 714241.

Meanwhile – Happy New Year To All - From All At Westwell Players.

Mary Anne Pitt 



WESTWELL WI

December and it's the party season, and WI is no exception. More than 30 members met together for our annual Christmas Party, sitting down to a meal prepared by Committee members. This consisted of creamy chicken topped with a puff pastry star, new potatoes and mixed veg, followed by individual flavoured cheesecakes (beautifully prepared by Tracy) and rounded off by tea, coffee and After Eight mints. Everyone seemed to have a good time, judging by the chatter which only paused as members were served and they tucked into their meal.

Following the meal, we were entertained by a duo who sang and played old English folk-type songs.

The highlight of the evening was a visit from Santa accompanied by one of his Elves. Elf entertained us with some magic, before helping Santa distribute gifts to all the members.

The evening was a great way to start the Christmas celebrations.

Next Meeting: Thursday 11th January 2018

Talk: Work of the CPRE by Christine Drury

Hostesses: Mesdames G Bortoli, C Fuller and D Cackett

Vote of thanks: Joan Richards **Competition:** Perfume Bottle



January on Hothfield Heathland

Happy New Wildlife Year. Aren't we lucky to have this fragile SSSI close by, cared for and protected by Kent Wildlife Trust staff and so many loyal volunteers.

Walkers in late winter last year may have seen birch and sycamore tree stumps weeping quantities of slightly sticky sap which soaked back into the ground. In places the tree stumps looked like candles, as the sap dried into a waxy layer. This astonishing sight is slightly disturbing to humans associating the sap with our finite blood supply. But the roots of the cut trees had continued to make new sap drawing water and minerals from the soil by osmosis, ready to feed the surge of springtime growth, and the resulting physical root pressure pumped the sap upwards and out of the cut trunk.

The sap is the concentrate of nutrients which with shortening days and lower temperatures, has been withdrawn from twigs and thin branches and pulled down into the trunk and roots. This is the trees' defence against winter extremes; sap freezing in thinly protected cells will expand, burst through cell walls killing them. Pulled into the roots and tree trunk by the tree's circulation system the sap, source of next year's energy for spring growth, is protected by a thick layer of bark. In a similar way, biennial root vegetables such as parsnips and carrots store and protect the nutrients needed to power the flowering and seed production of the second year of their life-cycle.

Humans first dipped fingers into tree sap, tasted it and found uses for it centuries ago. Raw sap doesn't keep so the first fermented or concentrated products may well have been natural accidents, and tasting mistakes along the way horrible or fatal. Ash, birch and elmsap are useful, each with their distinctive flavour.

The raw sap of some maples, principally *Acer saccharum* actually tastes mildly saccharine. Sugar content is very low, 1 litre of maple syrup takes 40 litres of raw sap. In all cases the window of opportunity for tapping sap is short, a few weeks as it starts to pump back into the tree crown to support spring growth; after that it is too bitter to use.

Tree felling on the heathland is a carefully considered conservation measure. A large tree can take over 200 litres of water from the soil in a day in summer, and the peak sap flow in springtime can be 70kg/hour. So self-seeded trees on the slopes above the lower bog will quickly stop water draining into the bog and create very dry shade; trees in the bog will suck it dry, alter the nature of the site, and deprive all weaker specialised plants, animals, birds and insects of this rare habitat.

If weather, wine, paper bags or maple syrup waffles keep you from exploring the heathland look at out the regular postings of photos and comments by Val Butcher and others on the Hothfield Heathland's flora and fauna facebook page. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/360156841000304/>

The KWT talks, courses and guided walks I mentioned last month are open to non-KWT members as is Hothfield Heathland, visit www.kentwildlifetrust.org.uk for more information. Keep dogs in check and clean up. Various trails are signposted and indicated on the maps at entrances, which also give the location of the livestock. The noticeboard down the main slope from the Cade Road car park gives recent wildlife sightings. For email alerts on the location of the livestock on Hothfield, or to join the volunteers to help maintain the reserve or check the cattle contact the Warden on 01622 662012 or at ian.rickards@kentwildlife.org.uk.

Margery Thomas