

Hurst Village Society

The object of the Society shall be to preserve and enhance the character of the Parish of Hurst as a living community

Newsletter No 87

www.hvs.org.uk

September 2003

VILLAGE CAMPAIGNS FOR: CHURCH WALL RESTORATION AGAINST: SANDFORD FARM WASTE REMOVAL

Campaigners in the village have been busy this summer, and are gearing up for a hectic autumn.

Church wardens from St. Nicholas launched the **Sponsor a Flint** campaign when BBC Radio Berkshire broadcast the Andrew Peach show during the BBC Restoration project in August. Read Mary Langdown's account inside this Newsletter, and find out how you can Sponsor a Flint to help restore this Grade 1 listed church.

HVS members have been campaigning against the proposals to remove 300,000 cubic metres of waste from **Sandford Farm** and dump it into Lea Farm and Whistley Court Farm so that 450 homes can be built on the re-filled land at Sandford Farm.

More than 2,000 leaflets detailing reasons for objecting were delivered in Hurst, Charvil, and Twyford by HVS members, and hundreds of letters of objection have been received by Wokingham Unitary Authority.

The Woodley residents' campaign group, Loddon Valley Action, has joined forces with the Hurst Village Society to pool resources for researching the environmental and waste management issues. There is more about the campaign inside this Newsletter.

The Sandford Farm proposals are likely to be discussed by the council's Development Control Committee on 12 November when the HVS will present the reasons why the proposals should be refused.

SPONSOR A FLINT

HURST'S OWN RESTORATION PROJECT

Everyone can help to restore St. Nicholas Church by taking part in the Sponsor a Flint appeal, to ensure that the church will be enjoyed by generations to come.

A professional flint napper will be employed to remove, re-face and re-set each flint in the East Wall by hand. People who donate £5 towards the costs of replacing each flint will receive a badge stating 'I have sponsored a flint for St. Nicholas' which is written on a picture on the East Wall flints.

We can all keep track of the Sponsor a Flint appeal on the specially-designed Flintometer which is to be put up at the church. Currently the badges are available only at the church, but they will be on sale at the Christmas Fayre on 29 November, and through other outlets in the village. Contact Mary Langdown on 0118 934 5751 for more information.

Progress on the East Wall

Further reports, required by English Heritage before their grant is made, are being prepared so that a programme of work for 2004 can be developed. Fund-raising continues to be a major project. In addition to the appeal leaflet in this Newsletter, funds have come in from local firms, the sale of produce each Sunday, and donations given to Sponsor a Flint during the Radio Berkshire day.

Extracts from Mary Langdown's Diary

28 June: Gill Gatehouse hears of the appeal for anyone involved in a conservation or restoration project to contact the BBC, and we do!

4 July: Radio Berkshire carry out a successful signal test from the church.

21 July: BBC Restoration project launched. Peter (my husband) and I are interviewed 'live' throughout the morning, we appeal for Portaloos!

4 August: Final planning meeting, I have found people who are prepared to be interviewed, and we have Portaloos. During the next two weeks we arrange car parking (thank you Mr Belcher), a marquee (thank you Number One club), create posters and signs and put them up around the village. There's just time for a quiet few moments in prayer the day before the road show.

15 August: It all flies by in a flash. All the interviewees turn up and are delighted to talk about their subjects, Sponsor a Flint is launched, the BBC is happy, and so are we with £440 profit from the event which with Gift Aid will grow to £495.

Later: We give more interviews to Andrew Peach, and take part in the Nicole Russell 'Lunch Time Jury'.

For more information look at www.hvs.org.uk and follow the link to the BBC Berkshire website.

SHELTER IN RECREATION GROUND

Hurst Parish Council is putting a community shelter on the School Road recreation ground which will be used by parents who take their children to the play area, and young people.

“We have asked for quotes to build the shelter and hope that it will be available for people to use this winter,” explained Jan Martin, chairman of Hurst Parish Council.

“The Parish Council has been committed to creating a space for younger people to use in this part of the village for some time. We don’t need planning permission for the shelter, and we have taken advice from the police and youth service on where it should be located.”

The Mobile Youth Facility was popular during the term-time at the Village Hall, Martineau Green and the School Road recreation ground. Although the numbers dropped off during the summer holidays, it is likely to be well-used this autumn when the skateboard ramps are out.

CHRISTMAS DINNER DANCE

The annual HVS Dinner Dance will be held in the Village Hall on Saturday 6 December. By popular demand, the seasonally festive meal will be provided by Penny Curry, and we welcome live musician Pete Lincoln who will entertain with music from the past three decades.

This is a popular event which gives everyone in the village the opportunity to shake a leg, enjoy good company and excellent food and drink, and gets the party season off to a flying start.

Tickets for the Dinner Dance will be £20 each and will be on sale from the beginning of November. To order in advance, contact any of the HVS Committee members, details on the back cover of this newsletter. You can also book on-line through the HVS website: www.hvs.org.uk

HAVE YOU REGISTERED YOUR SKILLS?

There is still time, just, for people to add their names to the Village Skills Register before it is distributed later this autumn. This invaluable leaflet provides details of skills and services made available by people living within Hurst, and is delivered free of charge to all households in the village.

Entries in the register are free to members of the Village Society; non-members can be included for a fee of £5. All we need is your name, address, and contact details and a brief description (20 words) of your skill or service. To be included please contact Duncan Kendall on 0118 934 2852.

Biodiversity and Wildlife News

Barn Owls breeding in Hurst

Barn Owl nest boxes were installed at three locations in Hurst last year, to give the birds a helping hand, as suitable nest sites were in short supply. On 30 June this summer, Colin Shawyer, the Barn Owl expert from the Hawk and Owl Trust, came to Wokingham District to open up the boxes and record the results for the national survey, *writes Janet Spiller*.

In spite of the lack of prey this year which leads to the adult birds being too underweight to breed, we were very pleased to find an adult female and three chicks at one location, and at another there was an adult female who, in a good year, Colin said would have bred because the habitat was ideal. It is encouraging that the two females were last year's birds. This proves that it is possible to extend the range of Barn Owls by providing nest boxes in new areas with good habitat.

There were a few pellets inside the third box, but unfortunately, the bird had not stayed. It may be several years before Barn Owls take new nest sites and once they do, they use it for life. Colin was extremely pleased with the results and said they were as good as we could have hoped for! Future plans involve trying to extend the Barn Owl's range into new areas of Hurst, building on the breeding success of the original nest boxes; monitoring will be done by a Barn Owl volunteer group.

Return of the Native!

Otters are back on the River Loddon. Experts have verified the first confirmed evidence of otters in Berkshire since their disappearance in the 1970s. Local volunteers have recently been trained to look for the otter droppings, known as spraints, so that the re-colonisation of the River Loddon can be charted. This is likely to be a slow process, but in the future we should have confirmation of otters in Hurst.

Know your Vole

Water Voles may be the UK's fastest declining mammal but they seem to be surviving in Hurst! It is estimated that the water vole has vanished from 96% of known sites. The decline is due to predation by mink and the loss of their riverbank homes. It seems that in Hurst they are able to survive in the ditches, many of which stay wet all year.

The 'Water Vole Recovery Project' launched by BBOWT, the local wildlife trust, has trained local volunteers to survey Hurst and the surrounding area this autumn. This is the first step towards their protection. As Hurst is a sensitive area for Water Voles, the Environment Agency is now only clearing vegetation on one side of the main ditches. This leaves enough vegetation for the voles to eat through the winter. Many people mistake water voles for brown rats and accidentally poison them or disturb their homes. Water Voles have a blunt nose, small hidden ears, silky mid-brown fur and a short furry tail.

ST. NICHOLAS SCHOOL IMPROVEMENTS

Many of you will have noticed the construction work during this year at the School. This work has enabled us to complete the commissioning of a new, enlarged library, a disabled toilet and a storage room for the main hall, *writes School Governor John Edwards*. The new furniture has arrived and the children will all benefit significantly from the increased space and facilities.

We are also very pleased to report that the School was successful in its application to obtain some of the planning-gain money resulting from the Bonhomie Court development. This money, £32,000, has been spent on enlarging and redeveloping both the classroom behind the school hall and also the main office. In addition a completely new servery has been constructed and equipped off the main hall so we will still be able to provide hot school dinners.

These improvements will significantly benefit the school for staff and pupils, and we would like to thank staff, parents and children for their patience and consideration during the inevitable disruption caused by the building work.

Finally, the Governors and Staff would especially like to thank all of the parents for their continuing interest and support for St Nicholas in making it such a successful and happy school. Support through the various activities of the Parents Association in its many fund raising events has meant that you have contributed in excess of £15,000 towards the cost of these improvements which is a magnificent achievement.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN TAPE LANE?

Warden Housing Association, one of Wokingham Unitary Authority's housing partner organisations, has been offered a piece of land in Tape Lane for 14 affordable housing units and 21 car spaces for people who currently live in Hurst.

The area of land is 60 metres by 50 metres, immediately next to the Meadows, and is part of the field between Lodge Road and Tape Lane owned by Luff Farms Ltd where several failed planning applications have been made for residential and business development over many years.

At Hurst Parish Council's August meeting representatives from Warden Housing and Wokingham Unitary discussed the proposal with parish councillors and members of the public. At this stage there is no planning application, but the housing association wanted to gauge reaction to the scheme from the councillors and public.

The representatives heard about the planning history for the land, and the widespread objections that such a proposal on that site could attract. Wokingham Unitary and Warden Housing propose to carry out a survey of the need for affordable housing in Hurst and the levels of which could be met before considering the next steps. Hurst Village Society awaits the outcome of the survey with interest.

THE CAMPAIGN AGAINST SANDFORD FARM WASTE REMOVAL TO HURST

During the summer Hurst Village Society has been campaigning on behalf of residents against the Hicks-Persimmon proposals to remove 300,000 cubic metres of hazardous and non-hazardous waste from Sandford Farm in Woodley and dump it in Lea Farm and Whistley Court Farm, Lodge Road, Hurst so that 450 houses can be built on Sandford Farm.

The key motivation behind this proposal is an EU Landfill Directive which will come into force on 16 July 2004. It means that hazardous waste can only be disposed of in specific sites outside the Thames Valley because there will be no provision within the area.

HVS joined forces with Woodley residents campaigning under the banner Loddon Valley Action. In 1999 Loddon Valley Action and HVS helped to ensure that the Planning Inspector dismissed Hicks-Persimmon's proposal to extract the waste and build 250 homes.

More than 2,200 leaflets "Smell, Dust, Noise, Flies - they could all come your way if the proposed development at Sandford Farm goes ahead" were delivered through the areas of Hurst, Twyford and Charvil that are most likely to be affected by the waste extraction.

As a result of that publicity, and extensive coverage in the local media, more than 400 people have written letters of objection to Wokingham Unitary Authority. Thank you to everyone who has written to the council, and offered to support the campaign.

Several residents have also contacted other interested groups such as Friends of the Earth, the Green Party, and RSPB. HVS has also contacted English Nature, and alerted local fishermen and owners of the fishing lakes around Whistley Mill and Land's End.

Environment Agency concerns

The impact of the proposals is also of concern to the Environment Agency which has a statutory role in planning and provides advice to the council.

The Environment Agency's concerns include:

- The plans do not give enough information about what the developers would do if there is not enough space at Lea Farm and Whistley Court Farm to accommodate all the waste.

- The Agency would expect alternative sites to be identified and licensed by the Agency to receive this waste before Wokingham council considers the proposals.
- Hicks-Persimmon propose to sort and de-water the waste at Sandford Farm. The Agency believes this would increase the risk of pollution, and would like to see that work done at Lea Farm under a controlled and safe environment, which would mean transporting wet sludge across the Loddon.
- Currently, there is no Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control (IPPC) permit for hazardous waste from Sandford Farm to be deposited at Whistley Court Farm. This permit would have to be granted by the Agency to Summerleaze, the company which manages the Whistley Court and Lea Farm sites. The Agency would expect Wokingham council to confirm the permit has been granted before considering the Hicks-Persimmon proposals.

Wetland habitats at risk

HVS and Loddon Valley Action have contacted environmental organisations to encourage them to assess the likely impact of removing and transporting the waste across the River Loddon on nationally-important and protected species such as the Loddon Lily, and barn owls which are known to feed in the area.

A Landscape Character Assessment of the Loddon river valley, currently being undertaken by Land Use Consultants on behalf of Wokingham council, refers to the wetland habitats of the middle Loddon valley, which includes Hurst, as “of national importance due to the scarcity of the flora and fauna present”. The final report by Land Use Consultants will be used by the council as Supplementary Planning Guidance.

Next steps in the process

HVS has been told that Hicks-Persimmon’s proposals are likely to be considered at the Development Control Committee meeting on 12 November where HVS will speak against the plans. It also means that there is still time for people to write and object to the development.

Quote application numbers **MIN/2003/9638** and **O/2003/9639** on your letters, and send them to Jenifer Jackson and Ted Clover, Planning Services, Wokingham Unitary Authority, PO Box 157, Shute End, Wokingham RG40 1WR.

During the coming weeks HVS will continue to campaign by lobbying decision-makers in Wokingham, and discussing the issues with Hurst MP, the Rt. Hon. Theresa May, and Caroline Lucas, Green Party MEP for the South East, so that they can lobby on our behalf too.

Hurst Village Society

Membership Application/Renewal Form

Hurst Village Society was formed in 1971 to preserve and enhance the rural character of the parish. The current annual subscription is £5.00 per household. Membership of the Hurst Village Society is renewable on 1st January every year.

To join the HVS please complete Section A, then **either** Section B, **or** Section C. If you choose to pay by Standing Order, please consider making a donation as well, thank you. Send the completed form to Eddie Coe, Membership Secretary, 4 Lodge Road, Whistley Green, Hurst RG10 0EH.

Section A

Name.....
Address.....
.....
Postcode..... Telephone.....
E-mail

Section B

I enclose £5.00 cash / cheque for £5.00 payable to **Hurst Village Society**, being my subscription for 2003. I also enclose a donation of £

Section C

To: My Bank:
The Manager,Bank
Address.....
.....
Sort Code

Please debit my account, number
with the sum of £5.00, being my subscription to the Hurst Village Society,
and credit Account Number 1349706 (Hurst Village Society No 1 Account)
at Lloyds Bank plc, High Street, Bracknell, Berkshire RG12 1BT. Sort Code
30-91-11.

Date of first payment: immediately; and thereafter annually on 1st January

Signature.....Date.....

NEWLY PROMOTED TEAMS MAKE GOOD START FOR HURST FC

Hurst Football Club has made a good start to the new season, with three teams playing in the Reading League on the Cantley Manor pitches in Wokingham.

The first team was promoted for the second year running, and kicked off this season in the Senior Division. The Reserves were also promoted, to Division One, after another successful season, and neither team has been disgraced since the start of the new season in September.

Hurst FC has a third team, which like all new teams, is starting off in Division Four where they have played with mixed fortunes as they have come up against some of the best new entrants in the League. This team features several of the older players and some of the young newcomers to the club.

Win a trip to Brazil

The club is busy fund-raising to develop the new pitch and a pavilion on Hinton Road. In addition to Jazz in the Park and the Valentine's Dinner Dance, the club is holding a raffle with top prize of a trip for two people to Brazil. Tickets are available in the village shops and from members of the club.

Reserves goalkeeper David Lynch is celebrating the start of his 30th season for the club. This significant achievement is no mean feat and at the time of writing the Reserves had not lost a match.

The club is on the look out for new players, especially older teenagers, and would like to create a youth development programme as well as a ladies soccer team. Anyone interested in either playing, coaching or in the administration of the club should contact Ty Bolton on 07957 844569.

YOGA CLASSES AT THE VILLAGE HALL

Rona Noble's Yoga Classes re-started on Sunday 14 September in the Large Village Hall from 6.15 to 7.30 pm during school term times. This class is ideal for beginners and people with experience. Please wear loose comfortable clothes and bring a yoga mat and/or rug. Ring Rona Noble for further details 0118 934 1200.

SUCCESSFUL TENNIS CLUB RESUMES IN APRIL

The Tennis Club at Dolphin School this summer attracted players on a regular basis, and Pippa Boyd plans to resume the club in April next year. Anyone interested in playing during the winter should contact Pippa on 0118 934 5034.

The View from Shute End ...

Wokingham Unitary Councillor Annette Drake reports

Safety on The Street Cast iron bollards are to be installed on the footway in The Street (also known as Wards Cross and Wokingham Road) to prevent cars mounting the kerb and crashing into the new houses. Although the highways officers had recommended no action to be taken after the accident last year, commonsense prevailed and councillors on the Highways Board agreed that the bollards should be put in place. The nearby grass verge into Tape Lane will also be protected by bollards.

Tape Lane The Access Only signs at each end of Tape Lane are to be relocated so that they are more prominent, and visible to drivers who persist in using this quiet lane as a rat-run. Tape Lane is used frequently by horse riders, dog-walkers and parents with children, and should not be used by motorists as a short-cut.

SID is on the move Speeding motorists may be caught by SID, the speed indicator device, which will be on Davis Street, School Road and Hinton Road during the coming weeks – so watch out!

Sandford Farm Thank you for the many letters of objection to the proposals by Hicks-Persimmon for Sandford Farm, and your support for the HVS campaign to get these applications refused. If you haven't written yet, then please do so – it's not too late to send in your letter to Wokingham's planners.

Keep up with what's happening in Hurst

You can find out about what's happening in the village by signing up to the free monthly e-mail service. Hurst Village Society's Internet information service has been a great success with more than 50 events and activities in Hurst listed in the past three months.

Mailings are normally sent out monthly, although they may be more frequent when there is specific news. Subscribers to the service also receive an electronic copy of the newsletter and other news about the village.

The easiest way to subscribe to the service is to send a blank e-mail to: "HurstVS-subscribe@yahoo.com". You will receive a confirmation e-mail from Yahoo Groups (who host the service for us) and you need to respond to this in order to complete the subscription process.

If you are organising an event or activity in Hurst, then let us know and we can include the details in a future mailing. If you are interested to know more about what is going on in your village, and have access to e-mail, then subscribe today.

Men wanted by Reading Male Voice Choir

Reading Male Voice Choir has started its 32nd season and is looking for new voices. Rehearsals are held on Fridays at 7.30 pm in Southlake School, Woodley, and men of all ages who would like to sample the pleasures of male choral singing and support a wide variety of charities are warmly invited to attend, *writes Ted Jenkins*.

There's no audition, and the inability to read music is no bar to singing with the choir. The choir gives one concert a month from October to July, every concert is in support of a charity, and the choir raises about £15,000 per year.

If you enjoy good music and good company then turn up at Southlake School where you can be sure of a warm welcome. The repertoire is wide and varied and the emphasis is on entertaining audiences. You will undoubtedly enjoy the experience of working under the direction of two talented musicians - Gwyn Arch and Clive Waterman.

The choir is both successful and active, tours widely, has links in the Netherlands, Germany, and Lithuania, and makes regular visits abroad. Further information can be obtained from the Secretary, Allan Appleby, who can be contacted on 0118 940 3837 or by e-mail aappleby_oxon@yahoo.com

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## **Hurst Gospel Hall News**

Now that the summer holidays are over, Christians at the Gospel Hall in Whistley Green are busy preparing for the event of the year: the Half Term Holiday Bible Club.

Crafts, quizzes, choruses and stories will be fine-tuned to ensure a really special week for all children who are able to attend. The Club will run from 10 am to 12 noon each weekday morning from 27 to 31 October, with a Family Fun evening on Thursday when other members of the family will be invited to join in the evening of fun followed by a fish and chip supper.

The JAM (Jesus and Me) Children's Club is held each Monday evening from 6.15 to 7.15 pm when there are quizzes, games, singing, crafts and great stories from the Bible. The Sunday School (JAM on Sunday) is held from 9.30 am.

The monthly Ladies Evenings restarted in September and take place on the first Wednesday of the month at 8 pm. There's a warm welcome to women who can join us on these evenings where we learn new skills, meet interesting people and enjoy a short talk from the Bible followed by refreshments. More information from Rachel Simms on 0118 977 2071.

Hurst Gospel Hall is creating a website at [www.hurstgospelhall.co.uk](http://www.hurstgospelhall.co.uk) where you will find contact details for all our activities. If you are not on the Internet, you can contact David and Rachel Simms on 0118 977 2071, Jon and Christina Colman (JAM) on 0118 969 4240, Jonathan and Jennifer Simms (Sunday School) on 0118 926 1134.

# Hurst Village Society Committee Members

|                                        |                                      |               |                |
|----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------|----------------|
| Val Bowman                             | Little Farm, Hogmoor Lane            | 0118 932 1420 |                |
| vbowman51@aol.com                      |                                      |               |                |
| Eddie Coe                              | 4 Lodge Road                         | 0118 934 5103 | Membership     |
| eddiecoe@talk21.com                    |                                      |               |                |
| Brian Colman                           | Aylesford Villas, Wokingham Road     |               |                |
|                                        |                                      |               |                |
| Fernando Esteve                        | Sandford, Lodge Road                 | 0118 934 4364 | Treasurer      |
| fernando.esteve@bg-group.com           |                                      |               |                |
| Trevor Gaylard                         | Gatcombe House, Forest Road          | 01344 428865  |                |
| trevorgaylard@gatcombeh.freemove.co.uk |                                      |               |                |
| Duncan Kendall                         | 6 Tape Lane                          | 0118 934 2852 | Website        |
| dk-hvs@bdksoil.co.uk                   |                                      |               |                |
| David Prince                           | Meadows, Tape Lane                   | 0118 932 0310 |                |
| david.prince1@virgin.net               |                                      |               |                |
| David Shapland                         | 1 Hurst Grove Cottages, Davis Street | 0118 934 2209 | Planning       |
| david.shapland@btinternet.com          |                                      |               |                |
| Wayne Smith                            | Woodville, Wokingham Road            | 0118 934 0840 |                |
| wayne.x.smith@centrica.co.uk           |                                      |               |                |
| Janet Spiller                          | 3 Hogmoor Lane                       | 0118 934 2438 | Environment    |
| janetspiller16@aol.com                 |                                      |               |                |
| Brian Thomas                           | The Retreat, Forest Road             | 01344 453256  | Secretary      |
| brian_thomas55@hotmail.com             |                                      |               |                |
| Wendy Tobitt                           | 17 Martineau Lane                    | 0118 934 2381 | Editor         |
| wendy_tobitt@compuserve.com            |                                      |               |                |
| Sheila Whittaker                       | Apple Tree Cottage, Hogmoor Lane     | 0118 932 1937 |                |
| frank.whittaker@lineone.net            |                                      |               |                |
| Nick Willson                           | The Gables, Wards Cross              | 0118 934 0319 | Chairman       |
| nm.willson@virgin.net                  |                                      |               |                |
| Ex-officio:                            |                                      |               |                |
| Annette Drake                          | Walden Acres, Wokingham Road         | 0118 934 1036 | WUA Councillor |
| anmed@btopenworld.com                  |                                      |               |                |

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*Chairman: Nick Willson, The Gables, Wards Cross, Hurst, RG10 0DS*  
*Tel: 0118 934 0319*  
*www.hvs.org.uk*