

SOUTH WILLINGHAM NEWS

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Special points of interest:

- Next stage of Parish Hall renovation due soon
- South Willingham connection with art
- Thatched cottage almost thatched
- Parish Hall celebrations of one sort or another

Parish Hall Makeover

The Parish Hall has had a “reasonably successful” year of social events and a very successful year with the renovation of the building.

In his Annual Report at the AGM, Chairman Mel Montgomery spoke of Jill Lacey’s legacy that had provided over half the money for new double-glazed windows and doors. Her husband Frank had seen them installed before he died in January. And now he in turn has left a legacy of £50,000 which will be used to insulate walls and ceilings and provide new



Waiting for the AGM to start – deep concentration on the decisions to come!

toilets.

Mel thanked all the Committee for all the work invested in preparation for the events, especially the two catering officers Ann and Glynis for their splendid meals. John Sturgeon was also thanked for run-

ning the Willingham Winner for seven years and signing up new members plus regularly cutting the grass.

There were a number of changes to the Committee. John Sturgeon and Betty Coulson did not stand for re-election; nor did James Miller who has been Treasurer for the past year. The rest of the Committee was re-elected *en bloc* with the addition of Virginia Knyvett. At the subsequent Committee meeting, Mel Montgomery continued as Chairman, Maureen Ferguson

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Behind the Plaque

Monuments and plaques in public places and churches often have interesting stories behind them.

On the south side of St Martin’s Church (outside) there is a plaque and this is the life of the man concerned:

MATTHEW RIDLEY CORBET (1850-1902)

Matthew Ridley Corbet was born on 20 May 1850 at South Willingham, Lincolnshire. He was the son of the Rev. Andrew Corbet and his wife, Mariane formerly Ridley. His fa-

ther was connected to the Shropshire family being a descendant of Robert of Humfreston (died 1644) and Bridget, the daughter of Sir James Pryse of Ynasmaengwyn. (She later married Sir Walter

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The Thatch

You all must have noticed by now that 'The Thatch' on Station Road is being re-thatched! It has been fascinating to watch Andrew Bramley at work with this age old skill. Andrew decided to learn the trade of thatching about 19 years ago, he says 'When my Mother's place needed re-doing!' He contacted the late John Scoley from Woodhall Spa and became apprenticed to him.

Norfolk reed from Cley next the Sea is being used on The Thatch, and by the time Andrew has finished he will have used between 1600 and 2000 bundles, which is approximately 6 to 7 tons. By the time it is finished it will have taken about eleven months to do. The thatch on the original house is approximately fifty years old, and the extension was thatched when it was built, approximately 1974. The Saxons called any type of roofing material *thac*, and the art of applying it was *theccan*. The materials used were wheat or rye straw, reed, heather, marram grass, bracken or turf.

The word thatch eventually came to signify such roofing. Straw thatch was the most widely used material for roofing in England, apart from East Anglia and Lincolnshire where the waterways and fens provided an abundant supply of water reed. This reed was most

commonly found in marshy estuaries, in Norfolk, the Fenland and a little in Dorset. The best reed was found

stand in ever thickening bunches over a number of years. After cutting, the reed is tied into bundles twelve inches (30cm) in diameter and stacked in 'fathoms' or groups of six. Wading through the icy water to cut the reed with a scythe or sickle was an uninviting and slow job, and areas of potentially useful reed sometimes remained uncut. Following mechanisation in farming, machines were used to cut reed, which greatly increased productivity. Since the 1970s water

reed from eastern Europe has been imported, as Norfolk has not been able to supply enough.

Unlike long straw, water reed is laid so that only the butt ends of the stalks are exposed, bristling outwards so that water is shed from tip to tip on its way down the roof. The reed is secured very tightly under tension – otherwise fine stems would slip out – and spars and liggers secure the traditional

block-cut ridge, usually formed from sedge, a tough marsh plant, as reed cannot be bent over to form the ridge. Thatch was particularly useful for small build-



Andrew Bramley hard at work on the back of The Thatch
Picture: Liz Noblet

in salt water. It grows from four to eight feet tall and cannot be harvested until the frost has killed the long leaves or 'flag' on the main stem. The reed is not usually cut until December and harvesting continues throughout the winter months until the young shoots begin to appear in March or April. Regular cutting is the only method of cultivation, as the straight sturdy structure of the reed is impaired if it is allowed to



Front of The Thatch almost complete Picture: Liz Noblet

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**“by the time
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bundles”**

Nature: Identifying Owls

A practical guide to owls and other birds of prey and their pellets.

What are owl pellets?

Owl pellets are small, sausage-shaped objects, usually formed of compressed fur of feathers and containing small bones, skulls and insect parts from a whole range of prey species. Often much gritty material can be found which is evidence of earthworms.

It is important to realise that these pellets are not droppings and care must be taken not to confuse them with the numerous similar shapes that can be found during a country walk!! The following guide should help to enable you to find the right spot to find these interesting and valuable objects.

How are they produced?

An owl will often swallow its prey whole, particularly if a small mammal is caught. Larger prey, if too large will be pulled apart using the bird's beak.

Once the food is swallowed, it passes down to the stomach. In the portion of the stomach known as the gizzard, the soft parts are rapidly digested. Other parts are not; they include fur, feather, bones, scales, the hard parts of insects, and grit from earthworms.

The liquid products of digestion now pass further along the gut, while the solid remains are squeezed in the gizzard into a compact mass

generally wrapped in the fur of the prey. This pellet is then regurgitated, through the beak as a casting or pellet. These pellets have not

identify what the owl has been feeding on. This is difficult enough with any bird, and impossible with a night time hunter like the owl.

Owl pellets make this possible.

We are able to discover more about the owl's hunting habits from the prey it has taken.

It is possible to estimate the numbers of different kinds of prey it takes.

By finding out about the prey animals themselves, we learn a great deal about food chains and webs, and the exact part the owl plays in them.

A great deal of information about the presence and distribution of the species of small mammals in the area can be discovered.

Finding and Recognising

Finding owl pellets means knowing a little about the habits of the owl. The easiest way is to find a roosting place. Knowing the species of the owl involved will make the results from a collection more valuable.

Here is a rough guide:

Barn Owl

Barn owls often roost in old, derelict or isolated buildings on farmland. Sometimes old trees with holes in them are also used. Look out for dense white droppings on walls,

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The Chinese New Year at the Parish Hall

passed through the intestines of the owl, and are quite different from droppings. They do not smell and are not unpleasant to work with. However good hygiene is important and some adult input would be good to ensure no fingers are put in mouth whilst examining your pellet!

The solid remains found in owl pellets can easily be separated with care, and they can generally be identified very precisely. The advantage of owl pellets is that the bones within are little affected by digestion. Owls seem to produce two pellets each twenty-four hours, and it takes about six to eight hours between prey being eaten and a pellet produced.

With a bit of detective work much interesting information can be gained :-

It is possible to





“We are able to discover more about the owl's hunting habits from the prey it has taken”

Owl Pellets (continued)

(Continued from page 3)
 beams and floor. These give clues to the presence of an owl. Searching the floor or ledges will often result in pellets being found. Barn owl pellets are quite easy to recognise. They are about 5cms long and 2cms deep, cigar shaped and black in appearance often with a varnish like gloss when fresh. These pellets are the best for pellet studies, many can be found at the same site, they are generally dry, and the bones they contain are remarkably intact.

All owls are protected by law and it is a serious offence to disturb them at or near the nest. Please avoid sites where you think they may be nesting during the nesting season March to September. Barn owls can often be observed in fields, particularly rough pasture and hedgerows in all areas around South Willingham and Hainton.

Tawny Owl

This is our commonest owl and can often be heard calling within the village at night. They live in wooded areas throughout the Wolds. Daytime roosts are usually close to a tree trunk, so a good place to look for pellets is around the ground within a metre or so of the trunk. Once again white droppings give a clue to a possible site. Tawny owl pellets are usually more grey in colour and not shiny like

Barn owl pellets. Because they are dropped in the open they tend to be quickly weathered.



Arthur and Joan Wilson work out the answers to the Chinese puzzle

Tawny owls seem to change their roost site frequently, and they sometimes produce pellets while they are out hunting so pellets can be found almost anywhere. This makes them difficult to collect in quantity. This habit means that it is possible to find this owls pellets beneath fence posts and along country paths, you need to be keen-eyed and switched on !

Little Owl

Little Owls can often be seen perching on dead branches of trees, overhead wires and posts, and often on the surface of roads. Several have been killed along the Barkwith Road in the past doing just that. However there

is a pair once again around East Barkwith. The pellets are small about 2.5cms long, showing obvious insect remains. The ones that I found sparkled from the wing cases of the ground violet beetle. The pellets are hard to find unless you are able to observe a regular roosting site and a careful search is made beneath the site.

Long-eared Owl

Like Tawny Owl pellets, these are normally found in woodland particularly conifer plantations, they tend to roost regularly in the same tree so the signs to look for are white droppings down the tree and pellets on the floor. Large numbers of pellets can be found if you can find the roosting tree. In the past I have had several injured birds brought to me that were injured around this parish.

Short-eared Owl

This owl can often be observed during the winter months hunting over the Wolds, they tend to move inland from the coast during this time. The Bluestone Heath Road is a favourite haunt, but you need to be lucky. They have been known to roost communally in bushes. The pellets of these owls are hard to find. A good spot to see Short-eared



If only we'd stuck to our first answer!

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“Tawny owl is our commonest owl and can often be heard calling within the village at night”

(Continued from page 2)

ings as it was easy to come by and easily supported by cheap walls and rafters. Guttering and drainpipes were also unnecessary, making the building cheaper.

From the 18th Century thatching began to decline, mainly due to the fire risk, but also because of advances in Agriculture and Industry. Slates and tiles became more readily available and farm machinery such as threshers and combines damaged the wheat stalk

The Thatch looks wonderful with its new roof, and even though it has been a very long job I'm sure that Theresa and Keith think it has all been worthwhile.

Liz Noblet



Another view of Andrew Bramley showing the layers of thatch
Picture Liz Noblet

St Martin's Church

BRUNCH

Sunday 8th June 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

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Owls is Gibraltar Point near Skegness.

Kestrel

It is possible that you will find Kestrel pellets while looking for owl pellets, they also roost in similar places; eaves of buildings, below pylons, and in the dead branches of trees. Their pellets are quite distinctive. They are small 3cms long pale grey with a smooth felt-like texture with pointed ends. Kestrels digest their prey more thoroughly than owls, they also tend to tear the flesh and rarely swallow prey whole. To study Kestrel pellets is not as easy as owl's as the finds within them are fragmentary.

Other Birds

All birds of prey produce pellets but so do many other species: kingfisher, heron, gulls, crows, blackbirds and thrushes, robins and other insect eating birds. The pel-

lets from these birds may contain the remains of mammals, fish, grain, berries, amphibians, and reptiles. The remains of many invertebrates can also be found but not normally easily identified with the naked eye.

Other birds of prey

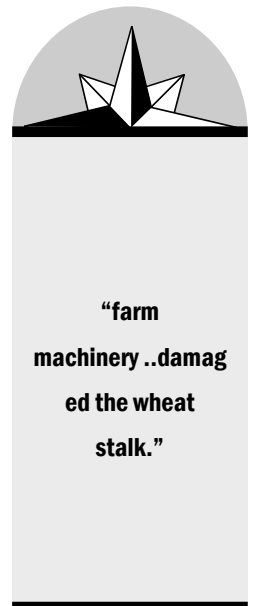
There are also Buzzards living and breeding close to South Willingham, last year five could be observed soaring above the village. They can be seen almost daily if you keep your eyes looking towards the clouds! Look for crows mobbing a larger bird. Also during 2007 a Red Kite spent some time around the village and could often be seen down the Barkwith Road. In 2006 a Hen Harrier also spent some time in the same area. It is not impossible during the autumn and winter to see a passage Merlin or Peregrine hunting



over the Wolds, you just have to be lucky and in the right place. During the summer a Hobby might be seen hawking dragonflies and swallows, they also breed quite close to the parish. Listen out for screaming and mobbing Swallows and House Martins, they often indicate a predator in the air although a Sparrow Hawk gets the same response.

Please ensure that you never disturb an owl nesting site or disturb roosting owls. They are protected by law and it is a serious offence to disturb them at or near their nest.

Avoid buildings where you think birds nest during March – September. Seek advice if in doubt.



Behind the Plaque (cont.)

(Continued from page 1)

Lloyd, kt.)

He was educated at Cheltenham College and then went to London. In 1871 he appears on the Census for 103 Green Street, St Pancras, London as an Art Student, aged 20 years. He was living in the home of Alexander D. Cooper who was an historical artist. He studied at the Slade School and the Royal Academy schools and had his first exhibit at the Royal Academy in 1875. This was the portrait of Lady Slade. He was exhibited again in 1877 (Mrs Heneage Wynne-Finch) and in 1879 (Lady Clay). He continued to paint occasional portraits but from 1883 he concentrated almost solely on landscapes. He exhibited thirty-eight works at the Royal Academy between 1875 and 1902, when he was elected an Associate. He also sent several works to the Grosvenor Gallery (1871) and the New Gallery.

He gained a bronze medal at the Paris Exhibition of 1889 for 'Sunrise'; and his 'Morning Glory' (near the Severn) (1894) and 'Val d'Arno' - Evening (1901) are in the Tate Gallery. Other works were 'Passing Storm' (1896), 'Autum Rains' (1896) and 'Florence in Spring' (1898).

He was a pupil and follower of Giovanni Costa in Rome for three years and was generally at his best when painting Italian skies.

His work displayed a sensitivity to the beauty of nature and a restful harmony of

colour. His paintings were too refined to win the support of the masses. His work was just beginning to be ap-

preciated when he died from pneumonia on 25 June 1902 at his home at 54 Circus Road, St John's Wood. His body was cremated and his ashes laid behind a tablet on the (outside south) wall of South Willingham church.

On 17 March 1891 he had married Mrs Arthur Murch (formerly Edith Jane Edenborough) who was also a landscape artist whose vision and methods were similar to his. She exhibited at

the Royal Academy, the New Gallery and the Walker Art Gallery in Liverpool. Arthur Murch, Edith's first husband was also an artist. He was a pupil of Charles Gleyre in 1859 and was active as an artist between 1859-1868. He was a friend of Val Prinsep and Frederic Leighton, whom he met in Rome, where he painted views of Rome and the Campagna. It was Leighton who convinced him to go Paris to draw. At the end of 1868 Murch left London for health reasons. Whilst he was away in 1869, JW made use of his studio, which, at 62 Great Russell Street, Bloomsbury, was just opposite the British Museum, giving JW easy access to its collections

A bust portrait of Corbett was sculptured by E. Onslow-Ford and a medalion portrait by Alfred Gilbert, R.A.

Bibliography: Dictionary of National Biography 1901-1911; Bryan's Dictionary of Painters and Engravers.

Liz Noblet



Plaque to Matthew Ridley Corbet
Picture: Liz Noblet



Happy faces at the Chinese Evening - not faced the quiz yet?



"His work was just beginning to be appreciated when he died"

Snippets

Congratulations to Theresa Thomas on achieving a partnership in her law firm in Horncastle. We are sorry they intend to leave the village but they are leaving their home well thatched.

In February and March the village celebrated Chinese New Year and St Patrick's Day respectively. Good food appropriate to each occasion was provided and though there was no Chinese singing, we made up for that on St Patrick's evening accompanied by our two friends from the Lindum Accordion Club.



Chinatown in South Willingham – Chairman Mau/Mel overseeing the rice.

A superb party was held in the Parish Hall to celebrate a double 60th birthday for Chris Washer and Jan Crouch. Although a private occasion, a lot of village folk were invited and all mixed in well. Dress was 'respectable', the food was great (prepared by Mel Montgomery), the music suited people of a 'certain age' and all enthusiastically joined in the dancing. We are looking forward to their seventieth!

Terry Ringrose keeps the churchyard up to scratch these days but there are always jobs to be done so a group joined in the annual cleanup in April. Windows were cleaned, graves were weeded and tidied up, trees were lopped and coffee was drunk. Thanks to all those who took part.

John Sturgeon organized a house-to-house collection on behalf of Kidney Research UK in February and has received a letter from the Charity thanking him for the splendid sum of £70.00. It said that they were funding over 250 hospital projects throughout the country and at the same time supporting kidney patients.



Paul Fuller was de- Lacey lady - Sheila from Beijing asking for more

lighted with a totally unexpected birthday party at the Heneage Arms and wants to thank his friends in the village who helped dispatch him into his octogenarianism (if there is such a word). Not only a complete surprise but also a great evening. He intends to enjoy this decade fully before embarking on nonagenarianism.

The Editor apologises for the lateness of the South Willingham News. The May edition is usually delayed to report the Parish Council's and Parish Hall's AGMs, but a holiday delayed it further. The Parish Council did not meet so we cannot report it this time.



"collection on behalf of Kidney Research UK raised the splendid sum of £70.00"

**South Willingham Parish Council and
Community Hall**

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Parish Hall

**STRAWBERRY
TEA 22 JUNE AT
3 P.M.**

**Coffee Mornings 1st
& 3rd Wednesdays**

Parish Councillors:

Marcus Edmundson	313623
[Chairman]	
Martin Doughty	313686
[Vice-Chairman]	
Lesley Adam	313464
Rowland Crouch	313428
Paul Cutts	313486
Nikki Harris	313618
Claire Harrison	313406

Parish Clerk: John Burn 313410

Community Hall :

Mel Montgomery (Chairman)	313590
Maureen Ferguson (Secretary)	313584
Fran Kingsley (Treasurer)	313718

The Parish Council and the Parish Hall are jointly producing this paper and through the Management Committee are publishing it quarterly. As well as official news and information about the Hall, they would like stories from around the village. As they are also reporters, sub-editors, publishers and first copy printers, they hope village people will come forward with ideas and stories themselves. Their thanks to Courseware4Trainers Ltd for the printing. Thanks also to Terry and Ann Ringrose for the colour pages.

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became Secretary, Fran Kingsley Treasurer and Jan Crouch organiser of the Willingham Winner.

Through the eyes of the punters, the Parish Hall

has been very successful. Well-fed, entertained and vociferously joining in, they have, with the exception of the Italian evening, kept the Hall 'fit for purpose'. Together with the coffee mornings with their

enthusiastic following plus lettings to organisations people feel it is put to good use. Long may it continue to serve the village.



Three wise.. Officers – James Miller, Mel Montgomery and Fran Kingsley preparing for the AGM

South Willingham Parish Hall

Strawberry Tea and Photo Competition

Sunday June 22nd

At 3 p.m.

Photo theme: Sky-scape