



The Croxley Green RESIDENT

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The Committee meets approximately six times a year and all meetings are open to the public. It is represented on many other local committees where it can make its voice heard and can bring back valuable information .

Please send advertisements to:-

Rosemary Hanscomb
22 Dickinson Avenue - 449945
and letters and contributions to:-
John Hedges
44 Ludlow Way - 222715
by September 1st 2003 if possible.

Articles from local groups and societies are especially welcome but remember next publishing date is October.

Our advertisers make the publication of this Newsletter possible and we would urge you to support them if at all possible.

CROXLEY GREEN RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

Editor: John Hedges
Assisted by: Molly Hedges

Published by
**CROXLEY GREEN RESIDENTS'
ASSOCIATION**

No. 186
Spring 2003

REVELS ON THE GREEN Saturday 21 June 2003

The Revels on the Green will take place on 21st June 2003, despite rumours to the contrary. **HOWEVER** -

We have an AGM on 25 March at the Parish Council Offices at 8.00 pm where we need to elect a new Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Secretary as the current holders of these posts are retiring after long and faithful service.

In addition the current organising committee is gradually dwindling as long-serving members begin to move on to other things. Though we have had some small success in recruiting new members there is still a need for more willing volunteers. In fact, the more the merrier.

Over the years, the Revels has grown to the scale that we have today and, despite the well planned efforts of the team, a bigger Revels means that we need more and more people. In any case, there is always a need to try to lighten the load on existing members by introducing new blood. This does not mean that any task is too onerous as all actions are a team effort and everyone helps each other. But, to have a team one needs new members to understudy tasks with a view to taking them over when necessary.

Perhaps, despite my protestations, this still sounds onerous but it is not so. Organising activity, by starting immediately following one Revels, is spread over the year and only becomes busy at the crucial week of the Revels. We have less than six meetings a year which are all light-hearted events which are as social as they are effective. All those involved enjoy it and the reward is in finding so many happy people on our midsummer celebration.

The Revels on the Green has been celebrated for many years and, with your help, will continue to do so for many more. It all depends on you!!!

No, the Revels is not under immediate threat but it could become so if those already involved find that they are called upon to do too much. Don't leave it too long - come to our AGM and offer your help - you'd be surprised at your own capabilities when once put to the test.

Alternatively, ring John Hedges on 01923 222715 now.

**ANNUAL GENERAL
MEETING**
at the LIBRARY, New Road
on Monday 24th March 2003
at 8.00 pm

Following the short meeting
GEOFF PAIN
will entertain with an illustrated talk
on
THE WOMEN'S LAND ARMY
We hope to see you there.

EDITORIAL

My thanks are due to all our contributors who only make my job difficult by supplying enough copy to make it hard to find enough space. It is good when I hear from some of you how much you enjoy certain contributions but it would be good to hear from more of you so that we can have a better idea of how the Resident is meeting your approval.

This time John Perry has provided us with a short story but it is based on real history and is not just a fairy story. We have a relatively new resident who has quickly established himself in the community with his interest in Archaeology and other historical matters. His article should be thought provoking and your support is important to the saving of our heritage.

Our medical correspondent tells a somewhat lurid tale, full of humour, which should be read by our younger generation. How, about drawing their attention to it, Mums and Dads. They might like other articles too.

My family are keen members of the RSPB and our regular correspondent manages to combine his deep fascination with our feathered friends with a unique ability in informing us of how we can derive so much pleasure in their presence in our gardens whether they are models of horticultural perfection or just the patch at the back of our house where we can play and hang out the washing.

I wish you all happy reading and if you have anything to say please let me know for the next edition.

The Churches in Croxley Green warmly invite you to share in our Sunday worship:

The Baptist Church, Baldwins Lane

9.15 am Morning Worship

11.00 am Family Service

6.30 pm Evening Worship

Revd David Walker - 231403

Associate Minister: Steve Moody - 244029

All Saints (C of E), The Green

8.00 am Holy Communion

9.40 am Junior Church (Except 3rd Sunday)

9.45 am Parish Eucharist

11.30 am Family Service (3rd Sunday in month)

2.00 pm Baptism (2nd & 4th Sunday)

6.00 pm Evensong

Revd Luke Lee - 772109

St Bede's (RC), Baldwins Lane

Saturday 6.00 pm Vigil Mass

Sunday 10.00 am Mass

6.00 pm Mass

Father Philip Cross - 231969



The Methodist Church, New Road

10.30 am Morning Worship

6.30 pm Evening Service

Revd César A Guidi - 774011

Bookings John Rowe - 234920

St Oswald's (C of E), Malvern Way

8.00 am Holy Communion

10.00 am Family Service (1st Sunday in month)

Family Eucharist & children's

groups (on other Sundays)

Evening services as advertised

For contact information ring 232387

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Firstly, on behalf of the committee of the Residents Association, may we wish all members of our community a Happy and Healthy New Year. I am sure that the older one becomes the quicker that the festive celebrations seem to pass. My particular reason for making this point became more relevant whilst attending a function after Christmas where a fellow member of the party was asked whether they had a good Christmas, and the answer was "a quiet one, Christmas isn't the same without the children". That comment stayed in my thoughts and was put into context with the events that are now unfolding in the community. It certainly begs the question of what would our village be without children. The future of any community can only go forward with the younger generations. It is also very important that the environment, in which the children are brought up, allows them to be able to mix and enjoy activities within and outside the home. It is with regret that another activity within the village has been withdrawn. I relate to the junior division of the Red Cross, which has now been closed due to the concerns raised by head office. We appreciate the need and vigilance within these organisations where our children are concerned but the new legislation has now started to take its toll. Many youth groups are now having problems recruiting senior members to assist in supervision due to the need to be verified and certificated. There are many admirable leisure organisations in Croxley Green for our youth and it would be sad to see a decline in external activities for our younger generations.

In the last newsletter I brought to your attention the excessive decline in adult participation in many well established leisure activities here in Croxley Green. It is important that this apathy does not continue so if there is anybody locally who is willing to help any of these organisations or other minor activities that contribute to the future life of Croxley Green then please make yourselves known to the relevant bodies.

No, it is not sour grapes, but we seem to have fireworks going off for whatever occasion. I, for one, enjoy a good firework display as and when appropriate but the annual event of November 5th seems to start as soon as the darker evenings come (October) and now continues through to the New Year, some being heard on Christmas day. Like all good things, if continually practised, they lose their appeal. Likewise, one needs to consider the care of our pets who are not always so inclined, especially where extreme fireworks are used within a residential area. A little thought and consideration would be appreciated.

Brian Norman

**CROXLEY GREEN SOCIETY
REVELS ON THE GREEN
Saturday 21 June 2003**

If you would like to help, in any way, or need more information on stalls and floats please contact:-

John Hedges - 01923 222715

If you took part last year you will receive details in the post.

**F(e)ASTING
A DIET FOR ALL OCCASIONS.**

The festive feasting is now all but over and one's mind now turns to the barrage of specialised diet programmes that are put forward in the media to arrest some of these extra pounds that one may have gained in weight. I can recommend a good programme that is not expensive to the pocket; allows any or all of the family to participate; has no strict regime and you can even obtain a small prize at the end of your endeavours and this can be obtained locally. The only health warning that I can give is a little fresh air and re-activation of those dominant muscles.

If you have read so far and I have intrigued your interest then I will proceed further and enlighten you that spring is just around the corner and on our patch we have a few spare plots available. Barton Way Allotments has numerous different sized plots for those with an inclination to grow fresh vegetables. An early seasonal start preparing the ground makes for early spring cultivation. We have many accomplished gardeners who would be willing to pass on their experience or just socialise. Another important facility is the Horticultural Hut in which you will be able to buy those seeds and fertilisers. This would perhaps lead to showing your prize vegetables in the Autumn Horticultural Show. So, can you refuse this diet plan???

Please contact our secretary

Pam Morgan - 01923 773079

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The Ornithologist's Excuse-Me

You know how it is I'm sure. You're caught on the hop. Something unexpected happens. You utter an unprepared response - and have that powerful feeling that the situation demanded a smarter turn of phrase. Something that would have exactly fitted the situation, but with wit, elegance and style. If only you had been prepared (more on being prepared later).

My most vivid recollection of verbal inadequacy when faced with the unexpected happened some years ago. In days gone by (B.C. - before children) I used to enjoy a solitary stroll around Stocker's Lake indulging in what Bill Oddie nowadays almost trendily calls birding, but which used to be simple bird-watching. It was a steamy July afternoon and there was not much wildlife about - or so I thought. But I had started out, and so methodically walked the circuit checking all the hides as I went. You can probably picture the scene. The lone figure moving silently, binoculars at the ready, earnest, hopeful expression. Not a bird in sight. And then I looked into the last hide - and that was the moment when my verbal reflexes let me down.

I did not stay in the hide for long. "Excuse me" I muttered in the way a properly brought-up British ornithologist does in these situations, turned on my heel and shot back out the door. I was pretty quick. But the teenage couple having sex up against the wall moved even faster. There was a flash of disappearing buttocks as jeans shot up, and I remember sensing, rather than seeing, a frantic fumbling with clothes and a sort of angry hopping about behind me as I left.

In the embarrassment stakes, I'm sure I far outstripped the young couple. They may have worked up quite a sweat, but I would say my cheeks were redder than theirs as I strode away.

Fortunately I don't think they were my patients - at least I didn't recognise the buttocks. But what really left me smarting was the feebleness of that rather limp "excuse me". Surely I could have risen to the occasion and come up with something better than that.

But as I walked on round the lake, wiping the steam off my binoculars, it struck me that perhaps I had after all done my young friends a good turn. For years I had been providing contraceptive advice as part of my job, but this remains the only time that I have found myself acting as the contraceptive. What dedication I hear you cry! Coitus interruptus may be a pretty hopeless form of contraception, but I had done my bit and perhaps on this occasion the girl was lucky and did not end up pregnant.

It's a true story. Hopefully the young couple were better prepared than I supposed and had used effective contraception. But judging by the steady stream of young girls at GPs' surgeries requesting terminations, there is a chance they may not have done. And even if the girl had been prescribed the pill, and was taking it correctly, if they had sex without using a condom, then either of them could unwittingly have caught a sexually transmitted disease from the other. Without having a clue that anything was wrong.

Sexually transmitted diseases are sinister because the symptoms they cause are often trivial and seem to get better on their own. Indeed, particularly in women, there may be no symptoms at all. Yet sadly these sex diseases can do a lot of damage. They may persist unnoticed for years. They can prevent people from having babies. And they can even kill. The old truism really applies - prevention is better than cure.

My suspicion is that not too many Croxley Green teenagers spend their free time reading the *Resident*.

But you, dear reader, may be the parent of a teenager or even a grandparent. Do you think the teenagers you care about have got all this sorted out? Have you considered the possibility that your teenagers are taking risks they could avoid. You may be thinking that your youngsters don't do this sort of thing - but the staff in the GUM clinic (who see 17,000 patients a year) and the doctors who perform terminations know that a lot do. Would your teenage daughter be able to talk to you about contraception? Would you give her the condoms to keep her safe?

I am sorry the last two paragraphs were a bit serious. Let's get back to where we started, in the hide at Stocker's Lake. Ideally the two young people concerned had thought carefully about their actions. Hopefully they had decided to use a condom after all, and perhaps the girl had even taken other contraceptive measures to guarantee she did not become pregnant until she chose to.

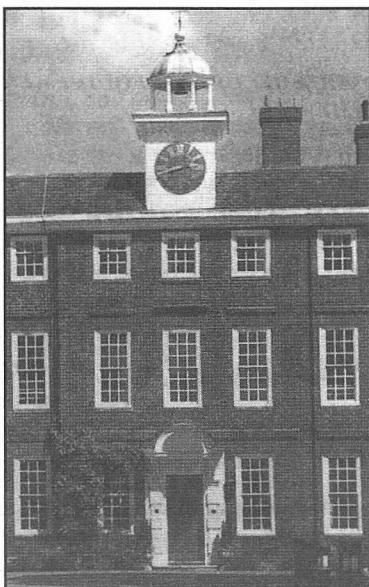
I'm not sure if the young man was a boy scout (I didn't stay long enough to notice his woggle), but "be prepared" would indeed have been a good motto. Maybe they didn't need my interruption after all. But if I ever find myself in a similar situation again I think I will have to adopt my professional tone and say "Now you are using a condom, aren't you". I will then run very fast indeed.

© Nigel Corp, General Practitioner

P.S. Condoms are available free on request five days a week from Skidmore Way Clinic, Rickmansworth, and from Family Planning Clinics. If you are concerned about sexually transmitted diseases contact the GUM clinic in Watford on 217206 which provides an excellent confidential service.

REVELS - for information on stalls and floats please contact:

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ARCHAEOLOGY IN CROXLEY GREEN

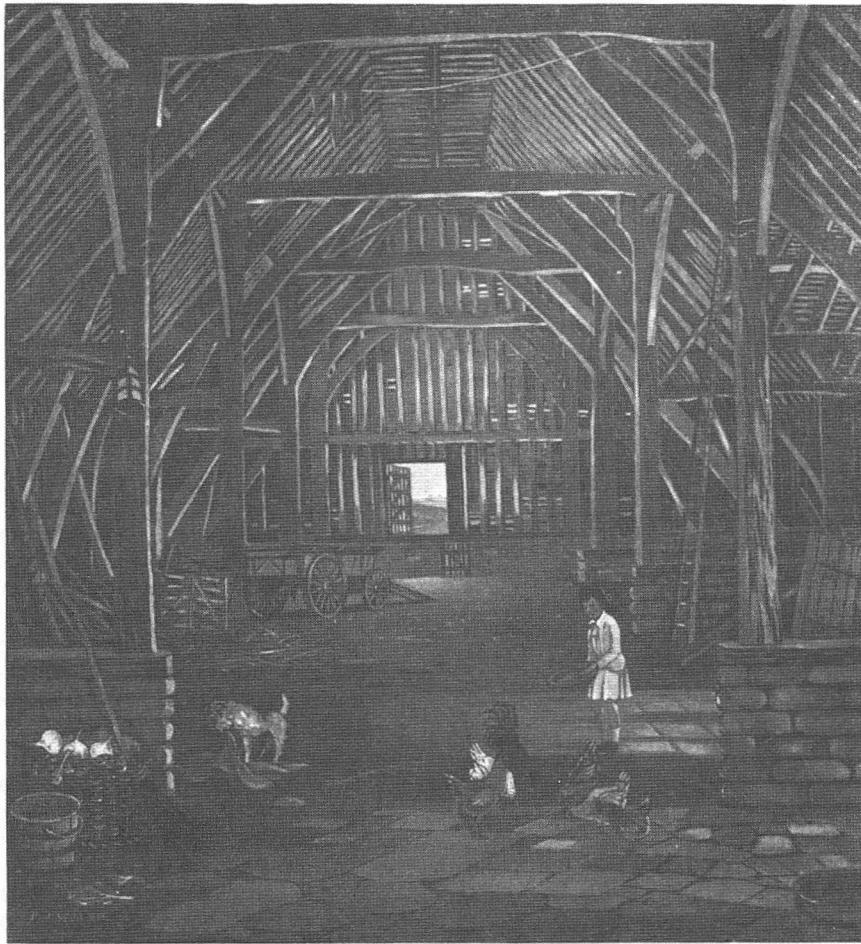
Following the article in the last issue of the *Resident*, a lady in Links Way (at the back of Rouse barn Lane - known to be a very ancient highway) reported finding a group of small, odd-shaped flints in the garden bed of a small plum tree. These have now been identified, by Dr Lee Prosser of Herts Archaeological Trust, as stone-age tools from the time following the last ice-age, used by people living thereabouts perhaps 6000 years ago in the Neolithic period.

Further down Links Way another resident found an oval bronze "badge-like" object with the numbers 1531 inscribed very ornamentally on it, which has not been definitely identified/dated, but may well be mediaeval.

Who knows what else may yet be turned up by a sharp-eyed resident?

A meeting addressed by Martin Bridge at the library about tree-ring dating to 1397 of some of the ancient timbers of the Croxley Green Tithe Barn, has led to the formation of the "Friends of the Croxley Great Barn" whose objectives are to:-

- PROMOTE A SECURE FUTURE FOR THIS FINE 14TH CENTURY STRUCTURE FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE COMMUNITY.
- SEEK FUNDING SUPPORT FROM STATUTORY/CHARITABLE BODIES.
- ENSURE CONTINUED ACCESS TO AND GIVE CONSIDERATION TO POSSIBLE PUBLIC USES OF THIS BUILDING.



The Tithe Barn,
Croxley Hall Farm

From the painting
by R. J. Walsh

Reproduced by permission of his grandson Richard Potter.

The Barn: five bay, timber-framed (100ft x 40ft) aisled with crown-post roof (35ft high) was built during the abbacy of John Moote at St. Albans (1396-1401) with some timbers felled in the winter of 1397/8, at a cost of 100 marks. (Geoffrey Chaucer died in 1400). Purchased from Gonville and Caius College and then restored by Herts County Council in 1975, after a long local campaign, it now languishes obscurely within the grounds of a local school.

Dr Martin Bridge of the Institute of Archaeology at UCL dated this barn for English Heritage (Report No 25/2000).

Please join us in this task (membership £1 per year).

David Harding 01923 779284 - drh@hazlitt.freeserve.co.uk

Library Column

In response to surveys carried out last year there have been some minor changes to the Library opening hours since early January. We have reverted to 9.30 opening on Monday mornings and made minor adjustments to the closing times in the evenings. The opening hours on Saturdays remain unchanged. The new hours are:-

Monday	9.30 – 7.00
Tuesday	9.30 – 7.00
Wednesday	closed
Thursday	9.30 – 6.00
Friday	9.30 – 7.00
Saturday	9.30 - 1.00

If you're starting to plan your holidays why not browse through the library's selection of travel guides. Travel is one of our most popular areas of stock and we've got a wide range covering destinations in the British Isles and much further afield. From Cornwall to Cuba or the Channel Islands to China, you'll find a guide to help you plan your trip. Don't forget that if you'll be away on holiday when your books are due for return you can ask to have them issued for a longer loan period than the usual three weeks. This doesn't apply to items in heavy demand or required by other borrowers but it's often possible to take travel guides for longer loans.

Other increasingly popular areas of stock are 'armchair travel' and memoirs written by people who've moved abroad to start a new life. Peter Mayle's "*A Year in Provence*" started a trend in publishing that has continued through to Chris Stewart's enjoyable "*Driving over Lemons*" and "*A Parrot in the Pepper Tree*".

We've also noticed that tales of 'ordinary' people's lives seem to be gaining in popularity over memoirs of the rich and famous. Gervase Phinn's recollections of his life as a school inspector in North Yorkshire has been a recent hit and now runs to three very entertaining volumes. "*A Child called It*", a harrowing account of his own childhood by Dave Pelzer, has been a bestseller too.

Now that spring is on the way we're often inspired to re-vamp our homes both inside and out. We have plenty of books full of design ideas and others packed with practical advice on DIY, decorating projects and soft furnishings.

It's also time to think about what you'll be doing in the garden this year and we have a great selection of gardening books, including design and planting ideas, water gardening, and flower identification guides.

Sue Durham - Librarian

REVELS ON THE GREEN
Saturday 21st June 2003

"You won't have it long my lads!!!"

The boats were tied up in Portsmouth harbour, or Pompey as it has been known for hundreds of years, the sailors were scuttling ashore after getting their share of the booty from 2 foreign vessels captured off Spain, one of these a French Warship being captured and brought back to Portsmouth.

The officers said as they distributed the money "here it is lads you won't have it for long I'll be bound - when it's gone come back and we'll sail together again!!"

The crew had been at sea for almost two years, but right now they could think of a thousand things to do rather than sail again on that rotten ship with its sadistic Captain and officers.

A lone seaman hurried along the dock, with his pigtail and tarred hat, which gave the name Jack Tar - he could not believe his luck, at last he was free and rich. His hand strayed to his trusty knife and vengeance was uppermost in his mind, if he could just get a decent hiding place he might be able to plunge his knife into the sadistic Captain as he came ashore. He was in reality shaking in his boots at the thought of even approaching the Master of any vessel because of his schooling in the maxim that the Captain was at all times in total charge - even to life and death while at sea.

Like all sea Captains who had started as a "Snotty" or Midshipman at age twelve with a position purchased by his parents, this Captain had learned the hard way rising by his own ability to Officer rank and eventually to command his own vessel.

After waiting for some time the seaman realised that the Captain, as crafty as ever, was not coming ashore until later and then only with an escort of Marines. Slowly the thought of a sip of rum or brandy became uppermost in his brain. Press-ganged while on an errand for his parents, he had turned a corner to be laid low by a blow to the head almost two years previously. He had finally awoken locked in the stinking hold with many others. Only fifteen years old, he wished he had been smaller at that time, but he had always been a big lad, the press gang cared not - getting paid by result.

All around he could hear sobbing and retching, as the same sobering thought came to all of them, where am I? Some, being older and wiser, had worked this out and a dreadful fear took hold of them. The rumour had gone around Portsmouth like wildfire, a certain ship was in port and anyone venturing out on the streets while She was in dock did so at their peril. "But we are Portsmouth born and bred" they said "we know the streets like the back of our hands they cannot take us!!"

Alcohol however is a great leveller and the pressgang on this Ship was ruthlessly efficient, visiting taverns or hiding in the back alleys until some poor devil made his way home the worse for drink. Then a blow with a cudgel and away to be dropped unceremoniously into the hold from where, the next morning after the ship had set sail, they were kicked up the ladder into the daylight to have their worse fears realised, each sentence of their new orders being reinforced with either a kick or a lash with a ropes end aimed with deadly accuracy.

Now their learning process began in earnest, there was one rule for all pressed men, learn and learn quick or the Coxswain's rope end would flog your back raw!! With his finger nails constantly being torn out while reefing the sails during many a blow he shed tears alone at night as he slept where he fell, but gradually his young frame responded to the harsh regime. He became toughened and brutalised until he could watch with indifference as others were punished while lashed to a hatch cover and, as the drums rolled, punishment was carried out with the cat-o-nine tails - Guilty or not. Then a friend was needed to rub salt into the wounds made by the "cat", the scars would be there for life, but then they did not get infected which would probably have meant death - slowly and agonisingly.

Even worse was to be keel hauled, then the poor unfortunate sailor had to rely on the speed of his fellows for if the hauling was slow then he would surely drown before surfacing again. A rope was slung beneath the ship and the poor sailor to be punished was hauled along the complete length of the underside of the ship, next to the keel, then he hoped for fast feet of his fellow seamen to get him up to the other end before he drowned.

The sadistic Captain would have this punishment meted out at any time and it was said to be his only real pleasure next to watching a flogging!!

The young sailors, one thought as he came ashore, had been revenge on the rotten Captain who had sent a poor cabin boy aloft in a storm where he fell to his death from the yards, sometimes he could hear the sound of his body striking the deck below in his dreams. But all he longed for now was a drink and food without weevils or maggots, so he entered the first hostelry that he encountered and ordered a Brandy and some food - now a lone sailor with money for ordering Brandy caught the attention of a certain woman sitting just out of sight. Her ears and eyes quickly took in the scene, a young seaman alone and ordering brandy, seemed too good an opportunity to miss and Pompey Lil did not miss many.

"How about a drink for Lil?" she whined, her face set in what passed for a smile. The sailor had not seen many women during his voyage and, starved for company, he motioned her to join him. She sat close to him and he could feel her breast pressing against him and her hands caressing him under the table as he ate and drank again and again. As he paid, his hand entered his clothing and came out clutching a gold coin. Now Lil could smell that there was more where that came from, and started on the softening up process.

"Where have you been then Jack?" she asked; "at sea for nigh on two years" he began. Her eyes widened, she seemed to be enthralled by his every word, so he told of the capture of a French ship and the booty that She carried. Chest after chest of diamonds and precious stones, barrels of Brandy and Rum with special wines destined for a grand table, but to capture this prize they had shadowed her into enemy waters. Then one night, when the moon was behind the clouds, they rowed over to take her into British hands. He described the fights on the deck and of seeing his mates killed and how he ran a "Frenchie" through. A frenzy of work soon had all the booty transferred to the British ship, after which the "Frenchie" was set ablaze and adrift, the crew put into their long boats - not having spare men meant that the ship had to be abandoned - "we will soon be spotted in these waters" was

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the opinion of the officers, all the time exhorting the look-outs to keep their eyes peeled.

When the lookout had spotted a French warship closing fast, they had turned and run for their lives into a squall which almost turned them over. However, they managed to keep enough sail on to outrun the warship that dared not hoist too much sail in the storm.

Then, when they thought that their troubles were over, they were becalmed - this meant shifts of men to row the long boats towing the ship behind, this they did for two days but the wind, when it did return, blew them away from their intended course. Badly provisioned at the start their food began to rot as the temperature increased. Some of the men were showing signs of scurvy. The young sailor showed Lil where his teeth had been pulled by the ships surgeon as the scurvy took hold.

Then, the lookout had seen a ship close inshore which was, they later discovered, an enemy provision ship and, after taking it in tow, they took all the food and put the terrified crew ashore. The ship was holed and sank quickly out of sight.

Some of the men had got hold of Brandy during the transfer of provisions and, after getting drunk, had tried to take over the Ship, to get home quicker to spend their booty money. The Captain however had sailed these waters before and had the ringleaders flogged as an example to the others, their lives spared only by the shortage of men.

Now, near to the enemy shore, they had to try and evade enemy warships. This had meant a very long passage around where the enemy was thought to be lurking.

After ten days at sea they approached a supposed safe harbour to find that it was being attacked by an enemy warship, which was standing off shore firing broadsides at the fort. As darkness fell the longboats were launched and silently the crew rowed, with muffled oars, to the enemy ship. They had all boarded before a shout rang out and a fierce fight took place. Luckily, most of the men from the warship were also celebrating in the town which they had captured. The town, being small, was no match for the many broadsides that the enemy ship had fired - firing on houses as well as the fort until the inhabitants reluctantly gave in, preparing to be plundered.

After fierce hand-to-hand fighting, during which almost half of the original British crew were killed, they took the enemy ship and, when they entered the hold, they found British seamen that had been captured by the warship. Releasing them gave enough crew to bring the captured

ship home, although each with a depleted crew, and the run for home started.

They saw sails on the horizon and did not stay around to see if they were friend or foe but continued the run for home, this time with a fair wind, the thought of booty money driving them all to work hard at keeping as much sail on as possible.

At last into the English Channel, where they had an escort of Navy frigates, past the Isle of Wight then Pompey at last where, after tying up the ships, the men awaited the pay out, no thoughts of escaping now!!

The Captain of the British ship was congratulated, as if he had taken the enemy ship single-handed and sailed it home, by the Commodore of the fleet Portsmouth division!!

Their Lordships of the Admiralty gave permission for a very small portion of the booty to be distributed among the men, the officers getting the lion's share of course, but His Majesty's Treasury being the main recipient. This made the men, by their standards, fabulously wealthy and, by Lil's standards, fair game, at which she was very well accomplished.

The foolish young sailor was by now almost putty in her hands; he drank to her orders; she listening and watching to ascertain just where about his person the gold was kept. Now, maudlin and in his cups, the sailor said that Lil was pretty. This gave some seamen, sitting close by, cause for merriment - they knew what fate would bring that poor boy - but he would never learn until he grew up.

One or two had tried to get him away but the beautiful Lil was to be his, or so he thought, as he brushed all offers aside and so, was left to his fate.

The night was fast approaching as he finally rolled off his seat and on to the floor. Lil motioned with her eyes to the Innkeeper who gave assistance to get the sailor into a back room where his clothing was searched in seconds and the gold shared by Lil and her accomplice the Innkeeper.

The pressgang were waiting after being alerted by the innkeeper who got paid for every catch that they made from his hostelry. The poor unfortunate was hoisted and carried out of the back door, the whole operation going as smoothly as usual.

The sailor was unknowingly retracing the two hundred or so steps that he had walked that morning, feeling free at last - and rich. He started to come round as the ship prepared to sail on the morning tide, he could feel the motion of the sea beneath him, every bone seemed to ache and his head was reeling. Overhead, through a hatch grating, he heard the sailors singing. The singing

sounded far away as the crew pulled on their oars in the long boats towing the ship into the main channel. There, the sails would be hoisted.

Tears rolled down his cheeks as the realisation of his present condition told him that he had been pressed again, after less than a day ashore. His hands frantically searched his clothing but the gold had gone. How many fools, he thought, had ended up laying in the stench and vomit in the scuppers of a British Navy ship because of loneliness and stupidity?

Then another thought - what Ship was He on? Then that voice, surely not, but then again - it was the sadistic Captain, who had killed his one true friend the poor cabin boy.

From above, the words of the sailors song came to him "Beware, Jack Tars who take your fill - drink you not with Pompey Lil".

© John Perry

Mr Hazell and Mr Hazell!

The surname of Hazell resounded, for several decades of the second half of the 20th century, in the circles of Croxley Green Primary Education. I taught with Harold at Little Green in the 60's. Harold had been brought to Little Green by Ron Watson after stints of teaching at Chater and Cassiobury. Harold, like his son John, was a remarkable teacher. His strong sense of discipline was mixed with equal measure of affection for the children in his care. He was equally at home in every area of the curriculum and inspired so many children (and colleagues) to reach their potential.

When I was fortunate enough to become Joan Bridge's deputy at Yorke Mead her next appointment, in 1975, was John Hazell. In those days appointments were less rigorous than they were to become and I think the major negotiations took place between Joan and John's mother under the driers of the local salon! John, wonderfully, was able to walk in the teaching footsteps of his father. I cannot recall one child who did not benefit from their time with John or failed to be inspired in some area of the curriculum.

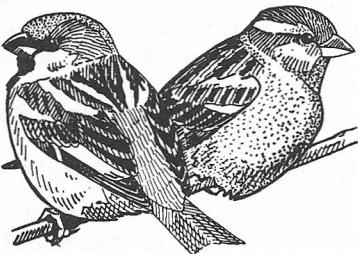
In 2002, John completed the transformation of a barn, on his property in deepest Shropshire, into magnificent self-catering accommodation. At Easter my wife and I were fortunate enough to sample both the barn and the delightful area of our country in which it is placed. Unprompted, I said I would pass on information to interested residents in Croxley Green. I have a sheet of facts and figures available for anyone who gets in contact. Many good memories were re-awakened by those few days and the names of so many former pupils, and their families, were mentioned!

Brian Sears - 770233.

"Then let them eat cake...."

These words, famously attributed to Marie Antoinette when told that the peasants had no bread, indicated her lack of awareness of matters beyond the confines of her royal palace.

Today we are much more knowledgeable about things around us, including the world of nature. Many of us take an active part in caring for wildlife - particularly the birds that visit our gardens at this time of year. We often throw out bread crumbs and other scraps for them, to supplement their natural diet when foraging becomes difficult. But as a change from bread, why not do as Marie Antoinette suggested, and let them eat cake instead?



I don't necessarily mean that we should throw out pieces of Christmas Cake, but rather that we should make up a rich and nutritious bird cake with ingredients which help the birds to survive the cold weather. Making a bird cake is very easy, as unlike our own cake it requires no baking. The main constituent should be fat of some sort, and so it can be a little messy to produce - but it's a job which young children will take to with enthusiasm, and inviting them to help will get them involved in bird feeding from an early age. The fat serves two purposes; firstly of course it is very nutritious and an excellent source of energy, helping the birds to maintain body heat, and secondly the fat acts a 'binder' to hold together all the other ingredients which help the cake to provide proteins and vitamins. These other ingredients can be almost anything from the kitchen cupboard - for example fruits, oatmeal, nuts, meats, biscuits, cheese, cereals etc., - or of course a good quality bird seed mixture.

The fat should be one which is solid at room temperatures - suet and lard are ideal but the fats from roasted meats are usually too soft. Using about one part fat to two parts of the other ingredients, add the softened fat to the mixture of nuts, crumbs etc. and stir well. Then either wait until the whole thing solidifies, and turn it out onto the bird table, or - for greater interest - make a small hole in the base of an old yoghurt pot, insert a knotted string or a piece of wire to act as a hanger, place the cake mixture in the pot and then when it has solidified it can be hung upside down from a tree or bird feeder. For even greater variety of

feeding opportunities, pour the bird cake into a half coconut shell (rinse it out first) or pack the mixture between the flaps of a fir cone.

Bird cake and bird seeds are well known feeds for garden birds, but there are many other opportunities to make attractive and unusual feeding devices. Try smearing peanut butter onto the bark of a tree; spiking a fresh corn cob onto a nail fixed to a tree or a feeder; making imitation maggots out of lard and flour and spreading them on the ground; or fixing a large apple on to a spiked holder. Different birds feed in different ways and so, by varying the types of food which are available, you will be able to attract a wider variety of species to your garden.

If you prefer to use a traditional bird feeder - filled with seeds or nuts - it is worth experimenting with different seed mixtures to find out which are best for your local birds. Many companies now sell specialist mixes - e.g. for finches or for song birds, or high energy mixes for when the birds need a boost - whilst the peanut granules and other 'husk-less' mixtures overcome the problem of discarded seed shells littering the lawn. But one of the great successes of recent years - now taken up in many gardens in Croxley Green - is the use of niger seed to attract goldfinches. This tiny seed - which is best used in a special feeding tube - is very similar to the seed of thistles and teasels on which goldfinches feed naturally. It is full of oil and energy and is a real favourite with these delightful little finches. Niger seed has only been available in this country for a few years, but it has been widely used in America where it is seen as a very effective food for many species.

And finally, remember that birds also need water. Ensure that there is always a supply of fresh water available - whether in a bird bath, a flower pot saucer or an upturned dustbin lid - and that it hasn't frozen solid overnight. Putting out food and water for the birds in your garden can make a very real difference to their chances of survival throughout the winter period. Research has shown that many of our most familiar species depend greatly on the additional food which is given to them by millions of people at this time of year. But it's not only birds which benefit - sitting by the window watching the birds on the feeders or in the bird bath can be very relaxing and therapeutic for us as well. Perhaps if Marie Antoinette had practised a little more ornithotherapy she would not have lost her head.

If you would like more information about feeding garden birds, or would like to try out some of the different feeds available, contact John Britten, leader of the Watford RSPB Group at 98 Sheepcot Lane, Garston, WD25 0EB.

© John Britten

"I'd like to breed from my cat/dog"

Every now and then a client will say to me that they would like to breed from their cat or dog. There can be many reasons for this and all are admirable. However from a veterinary point of view I believe that this is a very responsible act, not to be taken lightly. Why I say this is that every year there are a lot of pups and mature dogs that suffer from diseases that could have been prevented with a bit of careful selective breeding. There are a number of diseases out there that are hereditary in nature or have a strong genetic component. What this means is that if your cat or dog has one of these diseases there is a reasonable chance that you could produce pups with similar problems. I am sure that most new owners of a puppy or kitten do not want to be buying a problem. Imagine the scenario where you have brought a lovely Labrador Retriever puppy only to find at 6-9 months he/she is starting to walk with a swaggering gait. He/she may not want to go for a walk at all. It turns out that your dog has bad hip dysplasia. On investigating the pedigree of the pup, neither parents had been screened for hip dysplasia. Not only is the pup not very happy, being in a lot of pain, but neither are you the new owner. Your young dog is probably going to have problems for the rest of his or her life.

This is but one scenario that I and many other vets have encountered at some time in their career. The most frustrating thing is that a lot of these diseases can be minimised by consulting your vet and then exercising your consumer power. Imagine a breeder not being able to sell her litter of puppies or kittens because she had not had the sire and dam's eyes tested properly. It would certainly improve the situation. Many of the hereditary diseases can now be screened for with the use of eye tests, radiographs and for some diseases by DNA tests.

Most pedigree breeds are recognised for at least one hereditary disease. By consulting your vet, he/she will be able to tell you what diseases they are predisposed to and guide you with what questions you should be asking. We hope that when you come to purchase your new pet you will know exactly how to tactfully question the breeder as to whether the parents have been screened appropriately or whether there has been any problems in the family before. Answers like that "my dogs have never had a problem" are not good enough. This is not the sign of a responsible breeder. I would recommend that you go elsewhere no matter how cute the kitten or puppy looks.

Finally if you just have to have that adorable ball of fluff, make sure they are well insured. Just in case.

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