

Awliscombe
&
Weston Tímes.

Winter 2020



Contact Numbers.

Ambulance, Fire, Police	999
Police non-emergency	101
NHS non-emergency	111
Flood line	0345 9881188
Fire Non – emergency	0800 0502999

St Michaels & All Angels Revd. Sue Roberts 01404 42925

Email: awliscombe@honitoncofe.org All church services listed here

Church Wardens	Nick Thwaite	01404 548467 / 07900 041174
	Roger Caudwell	01404 548113 – Deanery Synod Representative
PCC Secretary	Sharon Thwaite	01404 548467
Bell Captain	Roger Spriggs	01404 43814

Awliscombe School Penny Hammett 01404 42031 - Headteacher

Awliscombe Parish Council Sally Maynard 07810 442355 - Clerk

Awliscombe Village Hall Liz Gillingham 07811 675800 - Booking Secretary
01404 43551
Simon Rickets 07971 958691 - Chairman

Defibrillator Unit

As most people know, we have a defibrillator in Awliscombe. It is situated on the wall of the village hall, to the right of entrance.

This comes as a gentle reminder of what to do in an emergency situation.

If someone collapses with a cardiac arrest near you, then **speed of response is paramount.**

So ring 999 without delay.

If someone was able to fetch the defib unit, instructions will be very clearly heard once the unit is opened. There will be a repeat of training in the new year.

Email: awliscombeandwestontimes@gmail.com

Editorial team: Allison - 07507949412 Caroline - 07775931735

Editorial

Hello! So ... here we are, a new magazine, in what we could call new and uncertain times. We are hoping you'll bear with us while we get to grips with this unfamiliar task of editing and publishing. For our first attempt, we are kindly being supported by Gel and Timandra who expertly ran the magazine for the previous 3 years, Sally will be continuing to sort the financial side and Kevin will be guiding us through any technical minefields we encounter! There are going to be a few changes, the paper used will be recycled and there will be quarterly issues, instead of monthly.

It is for sure, a strange and scary time and the lead up to our festive celebrations as we've never experienced before. Not only are there global fears but personal ones too. We have been afraid of losing our health and those we love. Some of us may be sadly grieving. We may be afraid of not surviving financially through these difficult times.

Having Christmas to focus on can help. Whether it is with family, juggling the ever changing Covid rules! or on our own quietly contemplating. With our books, radio and TV, talking to those we love on the phone or Zoom!, walking in our beautiful countryside or just sitting watching the birds and wondering at nature, reflecting on our faith and creation around us.

We hope somehow that you find your happy place and comfort in the small things and of course wish you a very safe and a very MERRY CHRISTMAS!

Allison



Sarah Dent

WHAT'S ON

This section will come alive again for our next issue!

If it looks as if your event is a possibility for the **Spring** issue (April, May, June), then please drop us an email.

The deadline for the **Spring** issue will be ...15 March 2021.

Summer ... 14 June

Autumn ... 13 September

Winter ... 15 November

DISTRIBUTION

This is a big **thank you** for all past distributors of the A&W Times! As this will now be a quarterly event, the task will be easier.

We have a few folk who are continuing their 'round' and a few that have come forward. All areas now covered except for the 13 drop offs in the Honiton high street. Any kind offers please?

ADVERTISEMENTS

Parish, church, charity events - free

'for sale' - free

Business adverts please email: awliscombeandwestontimes@gmail.com

Or call Allison/Caroline

Village Hall.

I am writing this on a day that the plight of village halls throughout the pandemic has been aired on BBC national news. We all fully appreciate the value of these important community hubs and our hall is no exception.

A grant of £10,000 back in the Spring from the Government's Covid-19 Retail, Hospitality & Leisure Scheme was very welcome. The Hall Management Committee have since held regular virtual review meetings, making the difficult decision to remain closed due to the many Covid-19 restrictions.

This Autumn a grant of £5,000 was awarded from the East Devon District Council Community Building Fund for a programme of improvements and renovations. This is a match fund grant, to which the hall will contribute from hall funds.

Sadly there was no Village Quiz this year. In normal years this is our only actual fund-raising event which is always well supported and a lot of fun. However, thanks to committee members, - Sarah Dent and Heather Penwarden - a just for fun Virtual Quiz was held at the end of November.

After many years as Treasurer, Roy Hyde, has stood down and been replaced by Jack Layzell. Huge thanks to Roy for all he has done and to Jack for taking over in a year like no other!

The next meeting of the Hall Management Committee will be in early December. Keep warm and safe everyone.

Liz Gillingham.

Quiz.

The annual Awliscombe Village Hall quiz, one of the social events of the year, was not able to happen for obvious reasons this autumn.

Heather Penwarden put the idea of a virtual quiz to the village hall committee and the first and hopefully last Awliscombe lockdown quiz was born.

There were about 16 teams, ranging from 2 to 4 people. With no prizes and no overall winner to compete for, it wasn't so raucous as the usual quiz. It was a little strange, when asking the questions, to see people talking to each other but not able hear what was being said. It went well though and everyone had fun.

There were two breaks – one to refill glasses and one to wait for a delivery man from a well known supermarket to make his delivery to one of the teams.

Thanks to all the village hall committee groups who provided some really interesting and different sorts questions – including local knowledge. But most of all thank you to all the teams that took part.

Sarah



The Great Wall of Awliscombe

Not built to keep out Covid and not paid for by Mexico!

We would like to start by thanking our neighbours in Awliscombe and Weston for their patience during the nearly three months that we had traffic lights outside George Park. We are also very grateful for all the positive comments about the wall and the project. It turned out to be a much bigger job than expected but the result is also better than we could have imagined.

We were always a little concerned about the state of the road wall but when the new road surface was laid last year, the workers removed the ivy from the wall revealing it in all its crumbling glory. In any other location, this could have been a picturesque ruin but not on an A road. So after too many nights worrying that chunks would fall onto the road and cause an

accident, we contacted Highways to ask about closing the road. The response was a demand to repair the wall urgently.

When we started the work, we knew that our options were the three Rs - repoint, repair or rebuild. The first was what we hoped for but knew that, realistically, there would be a lot of the second. In the end it was mostly the third. The original wall, which had stood for over 100 years, was so full of ivy, roots and soil that when the work got underway it was hard to see where the wall ended and the bank started. In most places, there was very little wall left to repair and the only option was to start again.

We're happy to say that practically all the work was done by firms within the village: after the laurel hedge and a threatening poplar were dispatched by Alex and Liam of Wildwood Trees & Timber, Arron Spence and his team (AS Builders) got to work and as for the stone ("where did you get it?" we're often asked), it came of course from the old wall - pulled down, cleaned up (thank goodness for lime mortar) and then put back.

Fortunately using modern block work meant that we (i.e. the amazing Simon and Mark with support from Isaac and Brad) could rebuild quickly, with most of the time being spent on the stone facing. To ensure that the wall is going to last at least another 100 years, the blocks are laid on deep concrete foundations with steel reinforcing rods. And behind the wall is a comprehensive drainage system.

The second part of the project was to repair the section of wall in front of the house, and the steps to the front door. We do not use the front entrance, for obvious reasons, but decided to take the opportunity of the closed road to sort out the steps, which were crumbling, and to remove the render from the wall before it fell onto the road. The photo shows old Mr Bishop sitting in his trap outside George Park in around 1905. Apart from the disappearance of the railings - presumably melted down for armaments in World War 1 - and the tarmac on the road (which raised the road level to the top of the bottom step) practically nothing had changed.

We had already removed some of the render on the section to the left of the steps, which revealed stone work in fairly good condition (hurrah! repoint only) but when the render was removed from the right hand side we discovered a motley assortment of stone and brick. What the ...? Further investigation revealed that the wall had bowed at some time in the past and the brick slips were added to straighten the face of the wall before it was encased in cement render. So another rebuild.

This part of the project has not been finished (at the time of writing) because, for various reasons, not all of the stone coping for the wall and the steps was ready in time, but we hope to have it all done before Christmas!

The third part of the project is what we call the garden wall. As the laurel hedge had to be ripped out to allow the rebuilding of the road wall, and to provide privacy for the garden, we decided to replace the hedge with a brick wall. We intend that the brick/stone/render combination will look like a friendly historical accumulation and not a fortification (we'll

soften it with some planting). The wall runs about one meter inside the road wall, with foundations that go almost down to road level, and curves inward and up the bank to create a sense of enclosure for that part of the garden. In due course it will have a door in it, made by Nick, who has a thing about doors in garden walls. Whereas the work on the road wall had to be done, the brick wall was not strictly necessary but next summer when we sit in the garden we are hoping that the noise of the traffic on the A373 will be reduced to a gentle rumble.

This type of project is not undertaken lightly and we have been fortunate to have the experience and skills of Arron and his team, who worked on the walls in good weather and bad. We have been told by many people how much they have enjoyed watching skilled craftsmen at work and we can only agree that the George Park road wall is now a thing of beauty. Our job will be to keep it free of ivy and brambles!



(Here at the editorial office, we love the wall!)



_ The Awliscombe Garden Club

It was not easy to know where to start with an article about our Garden Club after all that has come to pass over the last few months. What I do know is that we are all looking forward to when we can restart our meetings, hopefully in the not too distant future.

All the Speakers we had booked for last year, except for one, have all said they would be happy to rebook for next year. Our Club is known to many in the world of Speakers as a very welcoming and friendly Club.

Our membership has grown steadily over the past few years and we are always pleased to welcome new members. It is said that an estimated 3 million people in the UK became new gardeners this year, if you are one of these and would like to make new friends or catch up with old ones, then please come along to one of our meetings when we are able to restart.

None of us would say we were expert gardeners and some say they are novices, some have large gardens, some have small and some a window box and house plants. We don't have any competitions or shows but we all have an appreciation of gardening and wildlife; well some wildlife is appreciated more than others.

After the Speaker has finished, we all enjoy a cuppa & biscuit and a catch-up natter. We often have plants for sale that are bought along by members and we always have a raffle.

It won't take long for word to get round the Village when we have a date for re-opening our meetings so if you would like to join us just come along on the night.

In the meantime, with Christmas tree buying not far off please keep in mind that new, tighter plant-imported restrictions came into force last December, requiring plant passports for larger cut trees. This is to try and halt the import of non-native pests and diseases into the UK - but there are no controls for smaller trees less than 3m (10ft) tall. So maybe locally grown trees should be considered.

Before decorating your tree, cut a slither off the bottom of the trunk and stand the tree in a bucket of water over night, then dry off before taking it into the house.

Wishing you all a very Happy Christmas, which ever way you can spend it and hopefully we can all meet up again when we resume all our Village activities in 2021

Pat Hughes.

Football news



This season has certainly been a different one so far for Awliscombe FC than what we are used to. We have been fortunate in that we have been able to train and play outdoors since the start of July – apart from the most recent four-week lockdown period – but the current situation has placed a number of additional requirements on the players with regards to both training and match days. All players must ensure they use hand sanitiser when arriving and leaving venues and bring their own water bottles. Our changing and shower facilities have been closed, meaning players must get changed and shower at home before and after matches. And players have had to abide by social distancing guidelines before and after games – a trait we all seem to excel at given the amount of goals we have already conceded from corners this season.

I am fortunate enough to have a squad of 27 excellent players to pick from this year. We have a real mix of both 'experience' (the polite footballing term for anyone over the age of 30) and 'youth' (anyone between 16-29). Given the amount of 'experience' in the current squad, I certainly am grateful I have 27 players to choose from – with the exception of a select few, there seems to be a direct correlation within the squad between the amount of footballing experience a player has and the functionality of their muscles – when the former goes up the latter comes down pretty quickly. This is especially true for our most 'experienced' right back.

We currently play in Division 3 East of the Devon and Exeter football league system. Due to covid, the leagues this year have been regionalised, so we face teams in the east of the county. Due to the weather and the covid restrictions, we have only managed to play 5 competitive league games this season along with the 6 friendly matches throughout July and August. So far, we have won once, drawn twice and lost twice – including a 4-4 draw in our last game before lockdown – and this represents an OK start to season with something to build upon. We have been very much helped this year by the signing of our new striker Joe Mulhall, who has scored 6 goals in only 3 games. I should claim here that I have taught him everything he knows, but even I think that is a slight stretch given he's 32 and only signed for us in July of this year, having played for a team about 5 divisions higher than us before.

Whilst the season is still fairly new, all the team has behaved brilliantly and done everything that has been asked of them, both at training and on a Saturday. I know that every player represents the club and the village with pride, as we will continue working hard to do the best we can this season.

Tom Whitlock



This comes with a huge **Thank You to DENLEYS** who have sponsored us, allowing a much needed new kit to be bought. As you can see it's a smart one!

In this difficult financial time, we especially appreciate that they kindly dug deep ...
what stars!

Over the year we have seen many acts of kindness and generosity, as communities have come together to offer support. This reminds me of a story originally written by Joseph Jaworsky and rewritten many times in different ways...



It was deep winter and the snow was falling steadily upon the hillside.

A tiny mouse crept out of its hole for a little break in its long winter sleep. Drowsily, the little mouse looked around and twitched its whiskers, and would have gone back to sleep inside its hole, had not a tiny voice echoed from somewhere out there in the white winter world: "Hello, little mouse. Can't you sleep?"

The mouse looked around and caught sight of a tiny bird sitting, shivering, on a bare branch just overhead. "Hello, Jenny Wren," said the mouse, pleased to find some company on this bleak day. "I just came up for a bit of air before I go back to sleep for the rest of the winter."

But it was so good to find company that for a while, the mouse and the wren sat there together, huddled beneath the lowest branches of a pine tree, watching the snow falling and enjoying a little congenial conversation.

"How much do you think a snowflake weighs?" the mouse asked the wren suddenly.

"A snowflake weighs almost nothing," the wren replied. "A snowflake is so insignificant, it carries almost no weight at all. How could you possibly weigh a snowflake?"

"Oh, I disagree," said the mouse. "In fact, I can tell you that last winter, around this time, I woke up from my winter dreaming and came out here for a breath of fresh air, and because I had no companions and nothing better to do,

I sat here counting the snowflakes as they fell. I watched them settling on these branches, and covering the pine needles with a blanket of white. I got as far as two million, four hundred and ninety-two thousand, three hundred and fifty-nine. And then—when the very next snowflake fell and settled on the branch—the branch dropped right down to the ground and all the snow slid off it. So you see, just that one last snowflake weighed enough to make the branch sink down and all the snow slide off. So a snowflake does weigh something. It does make a difference!"

The wren, who was only a tiny little bird herself and didn't think she had much influence on the great, big world around her, pondered for a long time over the mouse's story. "Perhaps," she thought to herself, "it really is true that just one little voice can make a difference."

Caroline.

Young Wives.

Awliscombe Young Wives met at the Honiton Inn in January for their AGM and came up with lots of ideas for events for the year. In February we had a very informative talk by Robert Hesketh all about the Ghosts of Devon, this was very well attended and attracted some new members. In March we played skittles against Upottery WI at the Sidmouth Arms. From then onwards our events were cancelled due to CV19 restrictions.

We did however manage to salvage Novembers event - which has become an annual event - every year we do a recipe swop at Pat Hughes. We cook our items, print off lots of recipes and then have an evening of eating and swopping recipes. We did this by e mail this year - not quite the same but what is? I was hoping that perhaps we could have our usual AGM but it is looking more likely we will possibly have to do it on Zoom or something. Members will get an email if that is the route we are going down. 2021 will be our 30th year and we are (still) hoping to mark this in some way.

Best wishes

Sally Lawrence

Godford Farm, Awliscombe, Honiton, Devon

EX14 3PW

Tel 01404 42825

www.devon-farm-holidays.co.uk

Creative Beings CIC

Creative Beings CIC (Community Interest Company) is a social enterprise concerned with cultivating creative practices for wellbeing. It was started at the end of 2018 by Martin Staniforth and Sue Holland www.creativebeings.uk. Many of you will have joined one of our courses, workshops or have been to a music event here.

Some of you have been asking what we are planning for next year, so we thought we'd bring you up to speed with what we have done this year and give you a glimpse of things for 2021, hopefully!

Like most organisations, Covid-19 has meant a huge change to what we had planned. In March, we postponed most courses into 2021. However, we did manage to run some wonderful events before lockdown:

- In February, Lisa Parkyn – a painter from Ottery, led an introduction to acrylics painting course and Martin tutored a sculpture course – it was amazing to have people join us from near and far. In addition, we ran a series of 'give back' creative workshops for the charity Headway in Exeter. This was both fun and poignant, working creatively with people whose lives have been drastically changed through brain injury. The workshops were facilitated by some amazing volunteers from our growing network of help (thank you all!)
- In March, it was a delight to host the staff of the charity Home-Start again for another of their 'away days'.



Another aspect of Creative Beings is our passion for nature and how the creative aspects of the natural world can teach us things. Lockdown provided us with an excuse to crack on with other outdoor projects on the land:

- We continued to shape, plant and fence the agroforest - some of you will be familiar with the idea of growing an open woodland that provides food in the form of perennial edibles that are grown amongst the trees (in a previous incarnation, Sue was a research botanist, that's the link there!). This is not a short-term project and it will be 8 or more years until we start to see the fruits of our labour!
- The polytunnel was erected in April and has been moderately productive this season, a highlight was growing our own melons. We hope to use this space for hosting 'how to grow food courses' with local experts – if you are interested, please get in touch!

And then we had that brief spell of relaxed Covid-19 rules.....

- During August we opened our garden and many of you came to visit us. Together we raised over £650 for Hospiscare. Thanks to all who came, volunteered, baked cakes and donated plants.



For 2021, we have all sorts of things planned; from foraging & preserving to Haiku writing, felting, botanical dyes, painting & sculpture. In addition, we will be running projects with numerous charities again. If you would like to be involved in some way, please drop us a note.

In the meantime, we wish you a safe and peaceful festive season – with the winter solstice just around the corner, the days will soon be getting longer!

Sue Holland & Martin Staniforth (01404 47322)



Remembrance Sunday

Remembrance Sunday this year fell shortly after the imposition of the new national lockdown regime, and at first we weren't sure whether any sort of commemoration event would be permitted. As this shows, after careful reading of the rules, we did manage a shortened gathering, with Paddy Gillingham representing the Parish Council, and our veteran contingent, Roger Sprigg, Richard Beale and David Chippington, who laid the wreath. Grace Gillard had enhanced the war memorial with a display of poppies; grass and hedge were trimmed with a crispness that would have satisfied any sergeant-major, and as the Last Post rang out, we had a chance to remember that, hard as these times may be, our forebears have endured many worse.

Christmas at St Michael & All Angels

Come and visit - Sunday 20th December 3 - 7pm

We would, of course, normally have our village carol service on the Sunday before Christmas. This year it (like everything else) will be a bit different, but the church will still be open and welcoming visitors: our Christmas tree will be looking fabulous, the nativity scene will be set up in the Lady Chapel, and our flower team are getting ready to deck out the interior. And we'll have Christmas music playing to complete the atmosphere - some recorded and, for the last hour we're planning to have a small singing group.

We'll have a one way system through the church and we'll ask everyone to wear masks inside the building.

There will be an opportunity to donate to the church's costs, but the key thing is to give people the chance to come and see St Michael's: it's been sadly under-used this year.

Christmas Day service 10am

We'll have a service on Christmas Day at 10.00. This will be lay-led, by Gary & Timandra Burford, so there will be no communion or sermon, and we're not allowed to have congregational singing, but there will be readings and recorded music.

We have standard protocols in place to keep everyone safe, which includes keeping family groups separate and everyone wearing masks. We very much hope to 'fill' (in spaced out fashion) the church, but just to make sure that we have enough room for everyone, please could you contact Gary and Timandra (timandrab@hotmail.com, 07946 869251) to tell them you're coming if you're not a regular visitor to Sunday services at St Michael's?



School Matters.

As a parent and a governor it has been amazing to see all the children back at school after the summer, and the teachers have expressed their delight at having full classrooms again and a return to some level of normality.

There have been a number of changes - new routines for parents, teachers and pupils to get used to, and as is often the case the children have adapted most easily! This has meant a bit of a change for parents, for example we now have staggered drop off and pick up times, but these quickly embed and come with some upsides - traffic congestion has lessened and parking is noticeably easier during those busy periods.

With the national curriculum currently suspended the focus is to support children as they catch up on the disrupted summer term. The focus this term has been on reading, but also understanding where children are after a summer term of home schooling, and aiming to provide support for everyone to "catch up". Of course in our community we have many key workers and so the school had a reasonable number of children in during the summer term, to allow those key workers to continue their important work.

As governors we are working hard to support Penny Hammett, Vicky Morris and the rest of the staff. The governors have met seven times since September as we get to grips with constantly changing rules and updated guidance from the government, and to ensure that we are doing all we can to continue to provide a safe environment for pupils and one that enables them to get the most they can from their time at school.

Whilst naturally it is a challenging environment, the school has adapted very well and the current situation has brought about a number of initiatives and new ideas that would have seemed alien even a year ago. A remote parents evening took place in November, over three days. We know we will sadly be unable to have a traditional Christmas nativity, but the school is hoping that there will be some way to celebrate and share some festive cheer.

On the technology front there has been a significant investment and we will shortly be taking receipt of a number of new computers, which will be a fantastic addition to the school. We are also hoping to shortly have access to Google classrooms, which will aid remote learning, particularly in the event that there is a school closure due to covid or because of a further strict national lockdown. Finally, a remote reading programme has also been rolled out, designed to assist learning at key stages and introduce a fun element to reading. Sadly due to strict rules on visitors onto the school site, some of the community help that is very welcome has had to be suspended, so alternative help in these areas has been found as the school strives to keep supporting and assisting pupils in their learning.

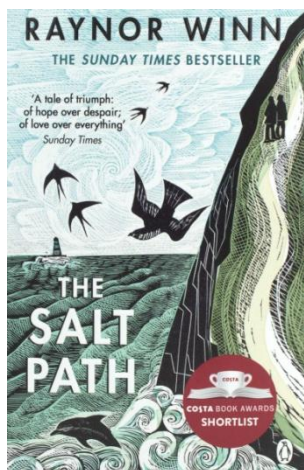
In September the school welcomed fourteen children into the reception year, swelling school numbers to almost a hundred, a sign of what a vibrant positive school we have in the village.

In short it's been a strange year to say the least, but the reopening of the school in September and welcoming back all pupils has at least meant a positive end to the year.

As governors we remain grateful for the tremendous efforts of Penny and her team, and the resilience, understanding and support of parents. Most importantly we are very proud of our little superstars as they run into school every day, throw themselves into their learning and continue to represent Awliscombe in a very positive light.

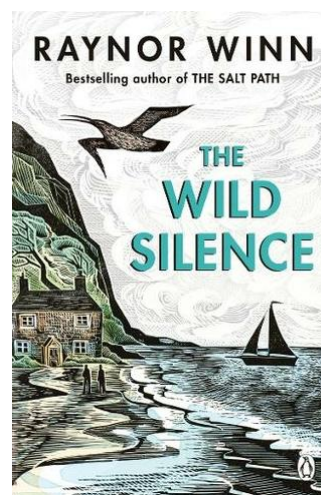
Stuart Coombe.

We would like to say a huge THANK YOU to Gel and Timandra who have produced this magazine for the last few years. We still have a lot to learn and they and Anvee before them have set the bar high. We would love to print any thoughts, ideas, photos, poems, articles or jokes you have come across or written yourself. Do you know about birdwatching, nature, cooking, bee keeping, farming, music, the arts, or anything else? If so get in touch at awliscombeandwestontimes@gmail.com .



Book Review

The Salt Path.



This is a truly inspirational book which many of you will have already enjoyed.

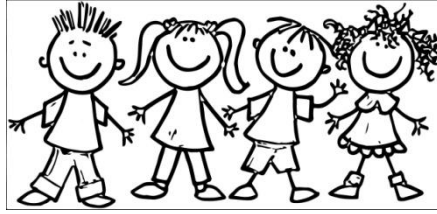
It is a true story - a memoir. Following a devastating diagnosis, at the same time as losing their home and livelihood, Raynor Winn and her husband Moth decide to walk the South West Coast Path from Minehead to Poole via Land's End.

This brave journey takes them through wonderful scenery and places familiar to many of us. With very little money they carry everything they need on their backs and their world becomes the sea, the cliffs and the sky. Through every trial and joy along their way their journey becomes a path to courage and hope and reveals all too clearly the healing power of nature.

There is now a sequel to this wonderful book; The Wild Silence. It is top of my Christmas list and I can't wait to read it. For anyone, but especially we who live in the south west, these books are special, up lifting and thought provoking.

Caroline

I'm sure many of you have read some wonderful books this year. If you are happy to tell us about them, then please send a review to Allison or Caroline and we will be happy to print them.



We thought it would be fun to have a little input from the children of Awliscombe school. Listening to their responses when asked questions can often make us smile.

So here is a new regular slot to hopefully do just that.

So we asked the rather big question ... WHAT ARE YOUR HOPES?

*** I hope that all the homeless people will feel safe and warmer -**

Matilda

*** I hope the farmers will have a good rest at Christmas - Blake**

*** I hope I can see my grandparents and my cousin at Christmas,
because I haven't seen them at all - Noah**

*** I wish I could help everyone in the world wherever they are
even in space. - Archie**

***I hope people will not put their rubbish in the ocean. - Harvey**

Followed by asking a few children from the 'Robins' class ... WILL SANTA FIT
DOWN YOUR CHIMNEY?

*** Of course he will fit in ... last year his reindeer came in too! I saw the
footprints!**

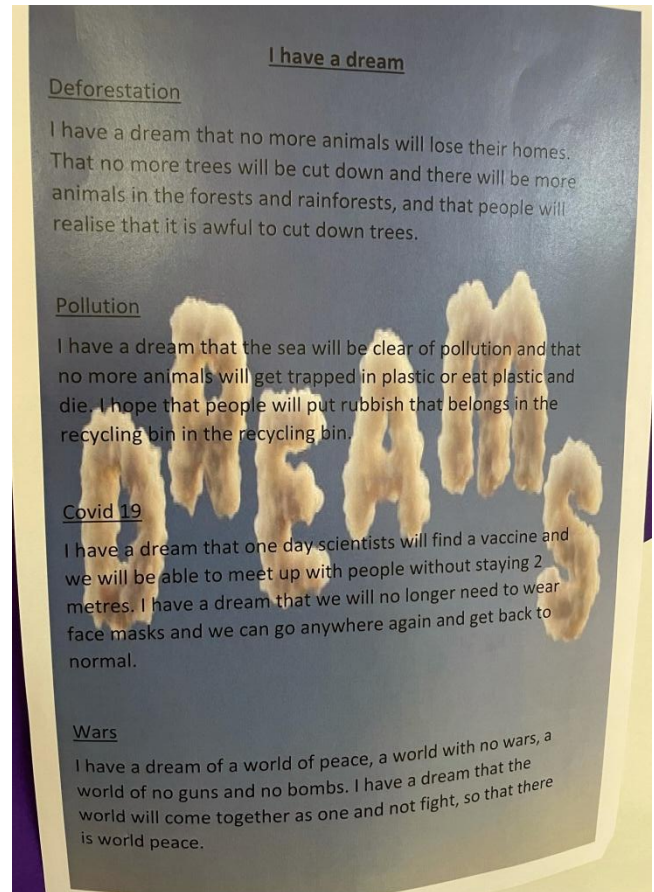
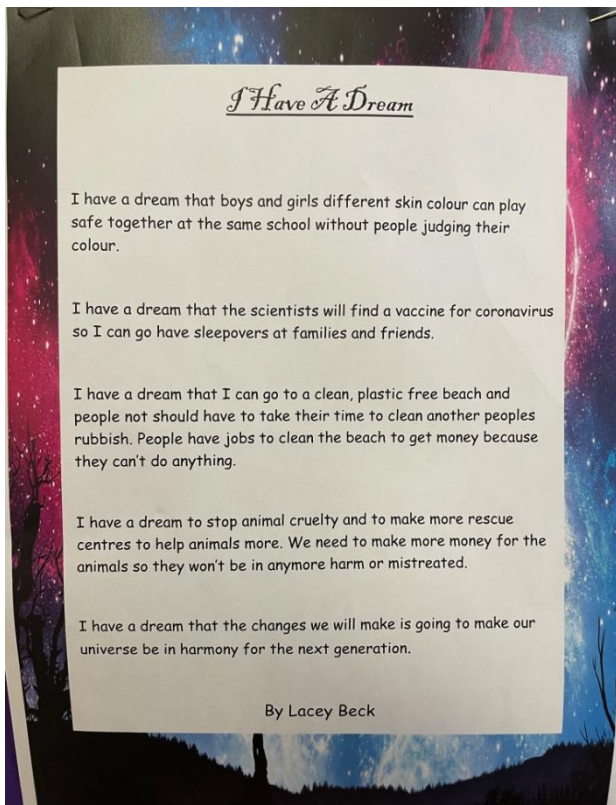
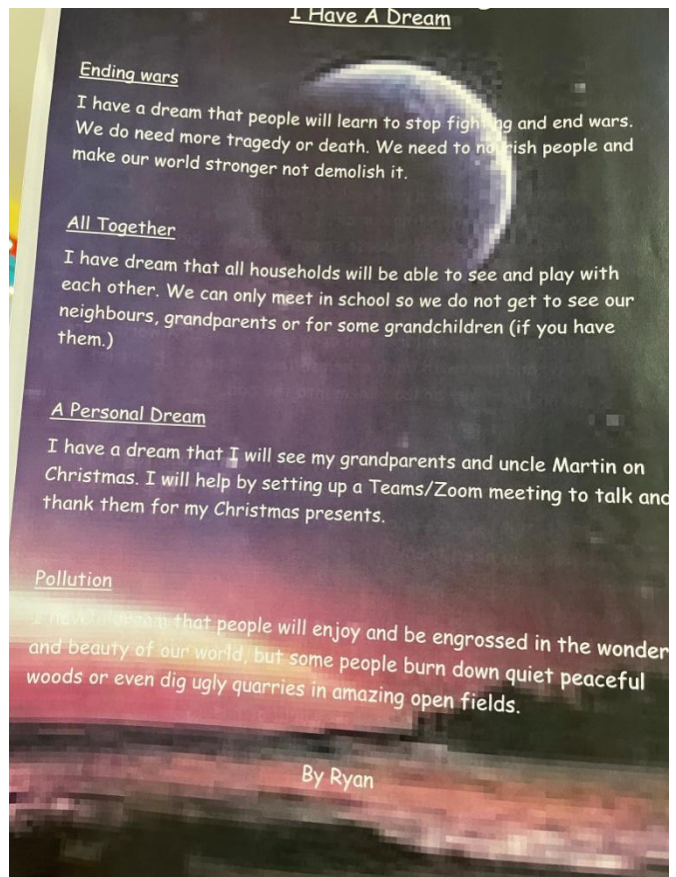
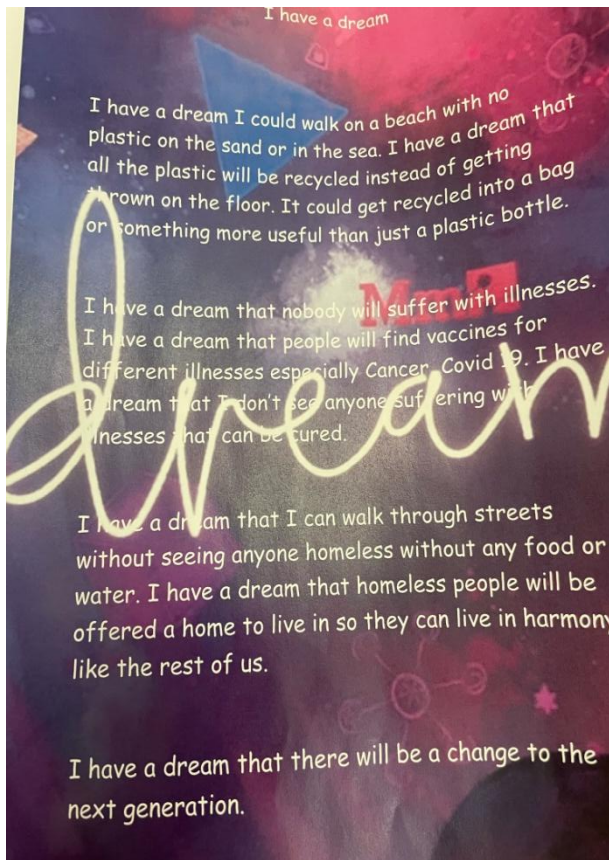
*** Well, he's very fat but he is magic too!**

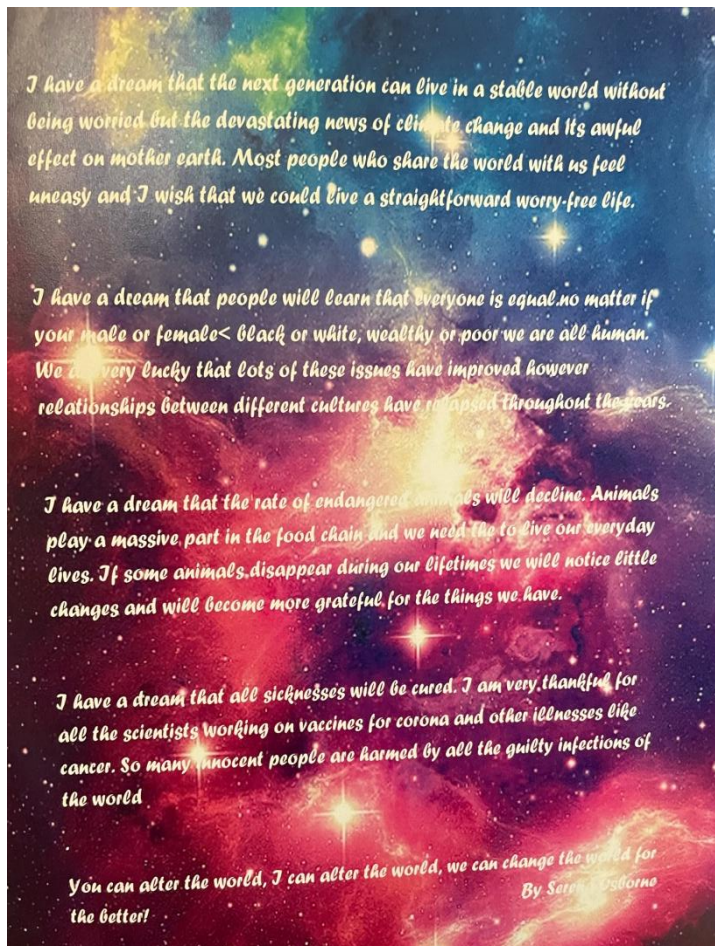
*** When I got up last year the window was open. I think I saw him!**

*** I don't know ... we don't even have a chimney! I don't know how it works.**

*** He comes in like a tooth fairy. It's all magic and magic and magic!**

Here are some of the hopes and dreams of Kingfishers, beautifully expressed.





As well as thinking about their hopes and dreams, they have been making natural sculptures.



Heron Farm.

Well, what a year it has been! Back in February we were busy completing the renovations to the building that would become our Kitchen/Shop, along with all the groundworks and landscaping to produce the Walled Garden, the Play Park etc. At the time we were scheduled to finish all works by the end of April, giving us time to get ready to open in mid-June. And then of course we all know what happened. The builders downed tools, and everybody left site other than us. With two young children at home and nobody to help us on site progress was quite slow, however we did manage to complete a number of jobs ourselves. The builders started to return mid-May, but with not everybody returning at once and supply chains being severely disrupted, we ended up not completing the majority of the works until mid-Aug. Not wanting to miss any more of the Summer than we already had we set ourselves an ambitious target of completing the final fit-out and opening on Sep 2nd, which we managed to do...gaining a few grey hairs in the process!



We had a great start, too good in fact, with over 900 people coming through the doors in the first 5 days. This was a lot more than we had anticipated and we just weren't prepared for it, sadly resulting in an undesirable drop in service levels...more grey hairs! But a few days later and with more staff on board (we now employ 26 people in total, which we still can't believe ourselves!) and processes ironed out things started to run more smoothly, and have largely done so ever since. Despite those few initial glitches we have had lots of compliments on the site, the food and the service, and lots of happy repeat customers.



That sort of feedback makes it all worthwhile so thank you for that! We also hosted our first two evening events which were sell outs and gave our Head Chef Harry a chance to show off his skills while showcasing produce grown on site.

8 weeks or so later, and we were devastated to have to close our doors for 4 weeks. Having opened our doors after the pandemic started we are ineligible for any form of financial support, and couldn't furlough all of our employees (even more grey hairs!). We considered staying open for take-aways and for shop sales but realistically we were running a serious risk of losing money simply by doing that, and so we have used the time to catch up on all those little jobs that didn't get done before we opened. And of course to make the place look extra festive for our reopening....we hope you will agree we have done a good job of this! We have also put a special festive menu in place, and overhauled the shop so it now contains lots and lots of gifts and treats alongside our wine and other produce. So do think of us for your Christmas shopping. Although we are now faced with new restrictions, we are hopeful that our extensive outdoor space and in particular our covered decking area (now with patio heaters!) will prove popular over the coming months. We are also putting on an 'Elf Trail' to keep the little ones entertained during December – if they can find all of the elves hidden around the farm, they get to choose a present to take home from underneath the Christmas tree!



We are also actively working on future plans for Heron Farm, including some catering provision for the play park area, and finishing off the Outdoor Kitchen which will enable us to expand our food and drink offering in the Kitchen and Walled Garden. We are also working on plans for Vineyard Tours so we can showcase the vineyard and the wines we make a bit more, as well as more evening events, as these have proved very popular so far. All in all, despite the challenges we have faced, we are very excited about the future and about all that Heron Farm has to offer. And we are well aware that all of this would have been much harder without the support of the local community – it has been wonderful seeing so many of you visit us since we opened, and to have had so many nice comments. Thank you for that and we look forward to seeing you soon!

If you are interested in keeping abreast of what we are up to here please do keep an eye on our website (www.heron-farm.co.uk) and follow us on FaceBook or Instagram.

Each issue we will be inviting a person or a couple, to be cast away on the infamous desert island!, asking them for the eight (or four) music tracks they would choose to take, a book, a luxury item and all the reasons why...



DESERT ISLAND DISCS



Our first guests: David and Doreen Chippington

This was not so much a case of 'what shall we choose?' as much as 'how could we possibly leave that out?' and 'these are all things we both like'.

We are glad we made the same life-raft and ended up on the same island! So

DISC 1: Scheherazade – Rimsky-Korsakov. David was never very keen on violin music until we heard this symphonic suite at a concert in 1955. He was converted by the violin parts representing Scheherazade's voice telling her tales to the Sultan.

DISC 2: Poisoning Pigeons in the Park – Tom Lehrer. We loved the cynicism of his songs!

DISC 3: South Rampart Street Parade – The Squadronaires We have always liked jazz, especially Trad Jazz, played live in a pub. As we spent quite a bit of time at RAF Uxbridge – home then of The RAF Central Band and The School of Music, which has made this choice appropriate.

DISC 4: Coppelia Ballet – Delibes. In 1957 we bought a rather smart 'radiogram', but we couldn't afford any LPs. An uncle who worked with Pye lent us a few, among them was this ballet music for Coppelia, which we came to really like.

DISC 5: Madness – by Madness. Rather less melodic (tuneful). With grandchildren on long car journeys singing (??) along in the back at the top of their voices!

DISC 6: Bruch's Violin Concerto, (particularly the adagio). On a somewhat sadder note is a car journey returning to Norfolk from Bruton, through Savernake Forest – no motorways then! – having delivered our two boys back to boarding school after the summer holidays – when we heard this Violin Concerto.

DISC 7: Stardust – Nat King Cole. Doreen was always an admirer of Nat King Cole, one of the 3 first really popular black singers, so we had to have this track.

Disc 8: And This Is My Beloved – based on music composed by Borodin. Finally, some real nostalgia. On the day we got engaged, in 1954, we went to a superbly staged musical Kismet at the Stoll Theatre in the Aldwych, now long gone, with Alfred Drake and Doretta Morrow – so appropriately we want to include this.

Having The Bible and the Complete Works of Shakespeare, which book would you choose to take with you?

Doreen – Dickens – The Complete Works

David – Mahabharata – Vyasa. Both enjoying our two trips to India, particularly Kerala and staying in Delhi with Indian friends from RAF Staff College who we hadn't seen for 30 years, we had a copy of this large book of myths and legends, much unread. With interesting angles on husband and wife relationships. It could take some time for David to read but we could swap if we read all and were still 'islandated'!

A luxury item?

Doreen – medical kit (insect repellent, sunscreen and anti-histamine), that's her experience of wildlife!

David – a good pair of binoculars for birds and wildlife on the island – (promising no searching for ships on horizon)!

And finally, which one track would you save from the waves?

Doreen – Madness

David – Scheherazade

THANK YOU SO MUCH, BOTH OF YOU, FOR SHARING YOUR 'DESERT ISLAND DISCS WITH US.

ORIANA

My favourite song

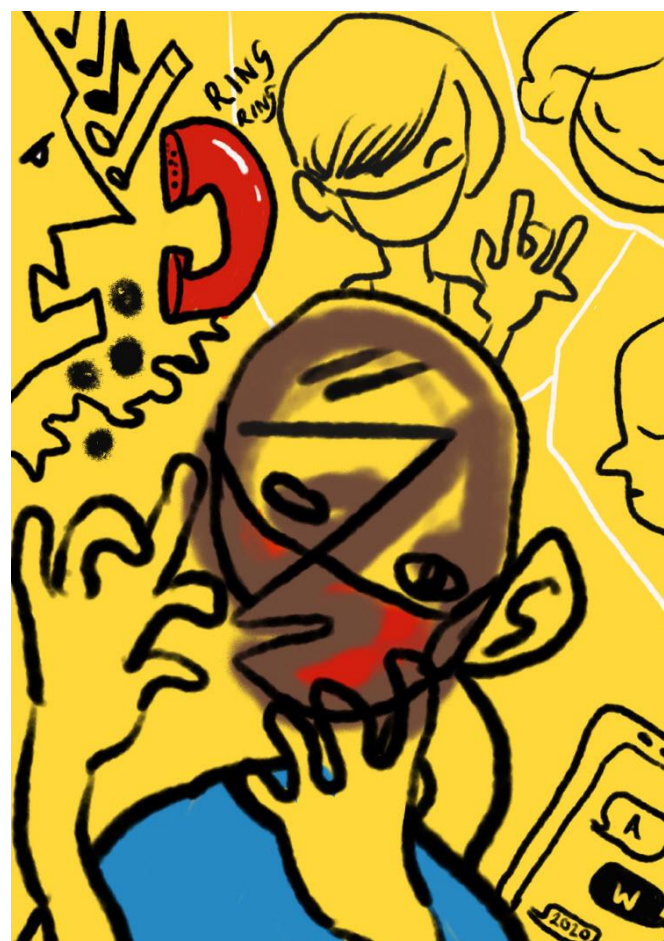
I walked across
an empty land
I knew the pathway
like the back of my hand -
Somewhere only we
know - Lily Allen

Quote

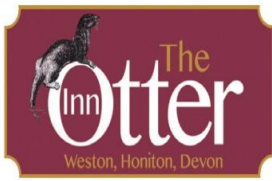
"Nothing is impossible
the word itself says
'I'm possible'!" -
Audrey Hepburn

My favourite colour

Blue!








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