

THE OVINGTON ORACLE

JULY 2005

No. 5

SUMMER FETE DECLARED A SUCCESS; WET WEATHER FAILS TO DAMPEN THE OVINGTON SPIRIT. OVINGTON VILLAGE FETE, 2005.

In spite of jokes about "How many men does it take to put up a gazebo?" the Ovington Village fete took place once again on the 11th June. Tempting fate by commenting on the sun's appearance at the beginning of the afternoon, we were then treated to a very wet second hour! However our trusty band of volunteers had got off to a flying start and with the advent of the Ju-Jitsu demonstration the public just kept coming. Bob and Nic did sterling work in the car park and were literally kept busy moving cars in and out all afternoon.

Our thanks to Kevin Pell and his fantastic team for yet another superb demonstration of their skills. It is great to see so many of our own youngsters in this team and to have the support of parents and adults from other villages as well.

Christine had very kindly stepped into the breach, as our children's entertainer was unavailable, and the children thoroughly enjoyed a treasure hunt and colouring competition. All of the stalls did a roaring trade and our thanks go to them for soldiering on through a wet and cold second hour.

The kitchen was also extremely busy and thanks are due to those ladies who kept pouring and washing up until almost 6 o'clock.

The new awning (Thank you Ed) helped to keep us dry throughout the afternoon and also provided the warmest spot for the BBQ in the early evening.

It was great to see not only the evening regulars at the BBQ but also some of our newer neighbours, who between them raised over £100 for the evening and who kept munching until well past 9 o'clock.

I had expected our takings for this event, which is a major fundraiser for both the Village Hall and the Church, to be less because the weather did cut down activity on the stalls in the last part of the afternoon. I was therefore delighted to learn from Grace that we had raised £830.74p.

I think this is a testament to all our wonderful helpers, to everybody who gave so generously when we were collecting for the fete in goods and donations and to everyone who supported us on the day. Thank you to all those people. It makes me really proud to be part of this little Village.
Laura:

JULY DIARY

4th July 1.45pm	Bowls Club
6th July 7.45pm	Gardening Club
11th July 1.45pm	Bowls Club
18th July 1.45pm	Bowls Club
19th July 6.00pm	Ladies Group +
21st July 8.00pm	Photo scrap-booking
25th July 1.45pm	Bowls Club

All events, other than those marked +, are held in the Village Hall. Locations of the marked events are detailed elsewhere.

LADIES GROUP.

Unfortunately we are not able to report on June's big event, our BBQ at Wendy and Peter Alexander's home on 25th June, as "The Oracle" has to go to press just as the event takes place. We thank them both for providing the venue for what we know will be a great event.

In July (Tuesday 19th) there will be what has now become an annual pub walk in place of the usual meeting.

We have arranged a pleasant country walk with an added point of interest, which will finish at The Blue Lion public house at North Pickenham for a meal. The walk is open to husbands and partners as well and, if you are not able to make the walk, you can always join us at The Blue Lion afterwards.

We shall be meeting at Crown crescent at 6.00pm for those on the walk, or at 8.00pm at The Blue Lion for anyone coming along just for the meal. If you haven't already booked your place on the trip, please ring Angela on 882944.

BOWLS CLUB.

Peggy tells us she still has room for a few more bowlers at the Village Hall every Monday at 1.45pm. Judging from the gales of laughter heard coming from the Hall on Monday afternoons it would seem that a great time is had by one and all.

GARDENING CLUB.

At our last meeting we visited "Desert World" at Santon Downham. Although the weather was not very kind we had a good turn out of members and Barry Gayton gave a most interesting and informative talk.

This month's talk held on 6th July at 8.00pm in the Village Hall will be by horticulturist Richard Hobbs, who will describe the techniques involved in producing top results when growing from seeds, taking cuttings and quite importantly, the use of the correct compost to achieve the best blooms. If you are not a regular visitor to our gardening evenings you are most welcome to attend any event at a most reasonable cost of £1.00.

There is no meeting in August

PHOTO SCRAP-BOOKING.

Each & everyone is always welcome to pop along and see what goes on at our monthly gatherings. 21st July is the date for this months meeting

PARISH COUNCIL.

The report on the June meeting will be held over until next months issue as it took place too late for inclusion in this months Oracle. We are reliably informed that should there be any major issues arising from that meeting the Parish Council will employ a Village crier (complete with bell and loud shout) to circulate the Village environs, and "cry out" the news ! (Should be an interesting trip along the A1075. Ed.)

VILLAGE HALL.

This ancient, but beautifully maintained, edifice is available for hire at quite reasonable rates. Ideal for Wedding receptions, private parties, concerts, film shows, band practice, martial arts, jazz sessions, quizzes, anything you fancy. For bookings and rates of hire contact: - Marie Ann Cave on 885019.

MAY RAINFALL.

Courtesy of Ted Bowman

May 2005	60mm or	2.3"
May 2004	37.8mm or	1.5"
May 1995	26mm or	1.0"

This May we would seem to have above average rainfall.

CHURCH NEWS.**Church Rota for July**

3rd July	No service at Ovington
10th July 9am	Parish Communion
Lessons	Mr. C. Springfield
Stewards	Mrs. P. Lovewell
Flowers	Mrs. R. Rednall
17th July 3pm	Open air Songs of Praise
24th July 9am	Parish Communion
Lessons	Mrs. A. Johnson. Mr. D. Pritchard
Stewards	Mr. D. Pritchard
Flowers	Mrs. P. Lovewell
31st July 6pm	Evensong

On 17th July at 3pm there will be an Open Air Songs of Praise with Watton Silver Band. If it is wet the service will be in the Church. This service will be followed by cream teas in the Village Hall. It is advised that you bring your own chairs for the outdoor service.

On 1st October at 7.30pm there will be a return visit by the Norwich Barbershop Singers. Those who attended their concert last year will be aware of their outstanding repertoire, and we can guarantee you an exceptional evenings entertainment. More details to follow.

On 4th December at 3pm Breckland Harmony will be entertaining us. Once again an event not to be missed. More details to follow.

SALAD DAYS.

We are delighted to bring you the thoughts of gardening and nutritional expert, Dr. Thomas Arthur.

"This is the time of year when salads really come into their own, I'm talking of the home grown varieties of course, not the well travelled and less succulent supermarket products.

Salads are easy to grow not requiring large gardens, an area no more than 2 metres square will be adequate for most families, and for catering establishments looking for a year round supply of one particular salad, e.g. lettuce, a similar area plus a cold frame to encourage growth during the winter months will be quite sufficient.

Global warming, whilst not to everyone's liking has proved beneficial to gardeners who are now able to cultivate salad varieties in the U.K. which previously were grown only under Mediterranean climatic conditions.

Some cooks advocate storing lettuce in the refrigerator bringing them out of the cold an hour before serving. I would suggest that for maximum freshness, superb tastes, together with a higher nutritional value forget the 'fridge and serve straight from the garden with only a thorough washing to remove any transient insect life. This practice being essential for the peace of mind of those with strict vegetarian principles.

The policy of taking food from your garden and serving with minimum time delay applies to all fresh produce. What can be more delicious than new potatoes freshly dug, cooked with a hint of mint and served with a drizzle of butter. From soil to plate in less than half an hour, when the supermarkets can offer that kind of freshness, well, I might be tempted to hang up my fork"

(Sounds good to me Ed.)

BLACK & WHITE KITTEN.

Early in June a little black & white kitten was run over at the junction of The Street and Crown Crescent and sadly killed. The driver did not stop, but a kind person took the little body from the road and laid it on the grass verge. However when the owner carried out a search for the kitten it had disappeared. If anyone can throw any light on this mystery please contact Gordon North on 883848 or any of the editorial team listed at the bottom of page four, thank you.

Laurie's, "RAILWAYS AT WAR".

In the years 1944 / 45 many of the elderly railway men who should really have retired at the start of the war were starting to show their age with shift working taking its toll. This meant that the younger employees being allocated jobs which would not be allowed today. I recall being sent to a station some ten miles away for a week, as the staff

there were all off sick and the local farmers and smallholders were bringing their produce for loading and dispatch to the larger towns and cities. The railways at that time being their only means of conveyance.

So serious was the staffing problems at that station that the signal man and I were the only men available. However I somehow got through that week of twelve hour days, returning to my "digs" every night on the footplate of a light engine to be ready to start again next morning at 6am. The only benefit to me was the extra in my pay packet and the satisfaction of a job well done.

The railway men were nearly all good gardeners and a lot of them would get an allotment alongside the tracks. It provided them with a hobby but more importantly supplemented their rations and even provided a little extra income for them by selling their surpluses to those people who had neither the time nor opportunity to grow their own fruit and veggies. It always amused me to see these men working on their gardens all go for their pocket watches whenever a train passed to check whether it was on time or no, then hold an inquest with other railway gardeners, after checking each others timings, as to why such and such express was so many minutes late. Most of the drivers and guards would blow a whistle to the chaps in their gardens, who would in turn point to their watches to let them know how late they were, such was the banter between all railway men.

As the war dragged on, trains broke down more frequently, parts wore out but were rarely replaced just patched up, sometimes with just wire and rope. The axle boxes would run dry of grease and get hot and sometimes cause a fire, which if not dealt with quickly could, in the event of a moving train, spread to the wooden floor or sides of the wagon. This was particularly hazardous in wartime as the cargo being carried could easily be explosives or petroleum products. At Soham station during the war a train loaded with explosives did catch fire and blow up causing devastation of a large area and killing railway staff, such were the risks taken by rail staff during those times.

One of my duties was to record the defective wagons in the marshalling yards and assess whether they were suitable to proceed further down the line at a slower speed. If they then reached their destination they would receive a Red Stop label which meant they had to go into the wagon repair shop before further use. It was easy to see that railway rolling stock was gradually grinding to a halt particularly during the build up to D-Day. Every road was blocked by convoys moving to the south coast ports, so it fell to the railways to continue to deliver the massive amounts of supplies still required by the hundreds of RAF and USA airfields throughout East Anglia as they stepped up their own operations against the enemy. So it was no wonder the railways were being worn out, the original shareholders only got a few pence back from their investments too. No doubt many of those investors were hoping for a continued payout to see them through their old age, but was, as many found out, blatant robbery. The future of the railways was looking bleak, and still to come was the "Beeching Plan" ————— but that's another story.

Thank you Laurie.

TALES FROM OUR CHURCHYARD.

How you're getting on together? I see the hot weather's back again, which reminds me of an instance a few years back when the sun was beating down on me as I attempted to scythe the long grass in the churchyard. My own silly fault really that I found myself in this unenviable situation, I had expounded my theory to the Church Council for many a year, that traditional methods were the most effective means of controlling nature's verdant pastures. Now my bluff had been called and I was beginning to have some reservations about old methods, why I had not suggested borrowing a goat or two from old Bert, I'll never know.

I paused from my labours, leant on my Dad's old scythe, mopped my brow and looked at the pathetically small area that I had mown, I started to dream of a long cold beer cascading down my parched throat when I nearly jumped out of my skin as a voice at my shoulder spoke in broad Norfolk "How yew'r a doing ole partner, warm ole work I'd reckon?" People really should not do that sort of thing in Churchyards. Phew!

I turned and looked into the twinkling eyes of an old fellow that I didn't recognize. He looked a true son of the soil, dressed, incongruously for the weather, in a dark, well worn suit and the ubiquitous flat cap, thick striped collarless shirt with a pair of heavy but well dubbed boots completing his attire. "Er, - yes" I replied "It is a bit on the hot side"

He nodded towards the scythe "Mind if I give yew a spell along a her?" he queried. "Not at all" I said "Be my guest" passing him the instrument responsible for my blisters. He held the scythe up and ran his thumb along the blade and gave a grunt which I took to imply dissatisfaction with my scythe sharpening abilities. He nodded at the rub stone sticking out from my pocket so I duly passed it to him. With practiced strokes that made the old blade sing he soon had an edge on it that passed his thumb test. Laying the scythe heel on the ground he quickly adjusted the handles to suit his height and grip. His first seemingly effortless swing laid down a swathe of grass that would have taken me at least four chopping motions to achieve. I watched in awe as his rhythmic swings put down long, even cuts, I could have sworn the blade passed right through the rows of headstones as he never faltered in his steady forward progress. A bit different to my clanging blade efforts, striking sparks from every stone I met.

Still admiring his expertise and steady progress, I followed behind using my hand hook to decapitate those few strands of grass left between the gravestones. In what seemed no time at all he had cut all but a small triangular area in one corner of the Churchyard. I looked up as I realized I could no longer hear the blade whispering through the grasses, and saw him standing, leaning on the scythe looking towards the area yet to be cut. Fearing that the old chap had overdone it I strode over to him, and was relieved to see that his exertions had had no noticeable effect. Nary a bead of sweat clung to his brow, unlike my own which had assumed river like rates of flow. "Reckon that's brook the back on it ole partner" he said leaning the handle towards me to take hold of. "Thanks a lot" I said "I'm sorry, I don't know your name" "Most call me Billy Davis" he replied and held out his hand as if to shake mine. Rapidly changing the handle to my left hand I was about to grasp his hand, when I saw that he was pointing to the area as yet uncut.

"Look yew over there ole partner, do yew take care, there's some good people in that there bit" I turned and looked in the direction his outstretched finger was indicating, trying to recall seeing any gravestones in that part of the Churchyard. Turning back to where he had been standing I put out my hand again saying "OK Billy, and thanks a-----" My voice died away as I realized there was no-one there. I looked around me, even peering behind a particularly large memorial nearby. Nothing. Where in Gods name had he gone?

I started to call out "Mr. Dav-----" but stopped, feeling a bit foolish as I was obviously alone again. Thinking that there are some funny people about, but feeling too that I had a better idea from the now absent Billy how a scythe should be used, I reset the handles and set to, to cut the small area left. True enough, the old blade under my guidance swiftly swished through the remaining grasses, and there were no head stones to impede my splendid progress. Funny that it felt so much cooler in that corner despite the high sun still beating down, I didn't even raise a sweat.

When I swept the last few stalks to the ground, I turned and surveyed 'our' efforts, pretty damn good work I thought. As I hefted the scythe over my shoulder and walked away I felt a hard surface under my feet. I always feel a bit self conscious about treading on peoples graves so stepped aside and looked down at a headstone laying face up under the mown grass. Curiosity, and remembering Billy's final words to me, I raked away the grass thinking at the same time that it was a good job I'd missed hitting that one. Suddenly the temperature dropped even more as I read the inscription engraved upon the stone.

**IN LOVING MEMORY
OF
WILLIAM 'BILLY' DAVIS
DIED 1938. AGED 78
'FORGET ME NOT'**

Thanks again Billy. No ole partner, I won't forget you, ----
----- ever.

Sid.

ROAD CLOSURES

We have just been informed by the Highways Department that the A1075 Watton to Dereham Road will be closed between Watton & Ovington crossroads from 18th July for 5 days. Road resurfacing is planned. Diversions (not through Ovington ????) will be implemented, but prepare for rat run traffic. Please let the Parish Council know of any serious infringements.

DEADLINES.

Please may we have your submissions for next months publication by **21st July**. Thank you in anticipation of reams of printable literature.

To contact the editors of The Oracle:

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