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Harrietsham's Village
Magazine



November 2020

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Network Magazine December 2020 deadlines

Sun 1 November 12 noon advertising deadline for December Network

Sun 1 November 12 noon copy deadline for December Network

We will be back in print with advertising, subject to lockdown rules, from September.

Please send advertising contributions to advertising manager's address above.

Please send copy to: editor@harrietshamfishscheme.org

Thank you.

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From the Editor

Hi everyone,

We are very proud and honoured to be able to include an exceptionally interesting article by Brian Drury entitled 'Harrietsham Zero Station', which we are publishing in honour of those who served and those who died in service of their country during World War 2 and which includes some charming original illustrations. Our thanks go to Brian for this superb article and to Peter Brown for arranging for Network to publish it in this remembrance month.

Please make sure to read page 8 which gives this year's special arrangements for Remembrance Sunday on 8 November. As with everything we need to be Covid-secure, so it's best to know before you go!

We still haven't got a full diary although there are some activities taking place in the Village Hall, for which see page 27. Perhaps the organisers could give us some short reports for inclusion in Network.

A big thankyou to everyone who has contributed to this month's magazine. We are back to our full pre-Covid size! Please keep the copy coming so that we can maintain this.

Stay safe everyone.

Jan - Network Editor

Please remember to email any photographs, articles of interest about Harrietsham, or recipes etc. that could be considered for inclusion to:

E-mail: editor@harrietshamfishscheme.org

Visit our website: www.harrietshamfishscheme.org

Whilst every effort is made to include as wide a variety of information as possible each month, the editor reserves the right not to publish, or to edit, any item. The editor's decision is final. Responsibility for the information and views set out in articles and notices in this publication lies entirely with the authors.

Letters sent anonymously will not be considered. Any opinions expressed are those of the contributors and not necessarily those of the officers or committee of the Fish Scheme.

Front cover: Poppyfield photo courtesy of James Hales



St John the Baptist Church Remembrance Sunday 8 November 2020

The Royal British Legion has instructed its members not to attend remembrance services this year due to the Covid-19 risk. The church building in Harrietsham is not large enough to accommodate our usual attendance numbers whilst applying social distancing requirements.

There will, therefore, be NO service in church. However, a short act of remembrance will take place in the churchyard at the memorial outside starting at 10.50am. If you attend, please make absolutely sure that you distance according to Government rules and keep at least 2 metres between bubbles. Thank you.

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Harrietsham Short Mat Bowls Club

It has been a couple of months since I have written a report for our club, but we are still here and working as hard as we can, within the changing allowances of the COVID-19 epidemic, to enable us to obtain a return to safe play status from the ESMBA.

August and September have passed us by without any encouraging news regarding re-opening the club, so it has been impossible to report any information to that end.

All the necessary forms were completed and posted to Kent County Short Mat Bowls Safeguarding Officer on 18 September so that he could check that we are following the ESMBA Coronavirus guidelines. The Safeguarding Officer is a new role created to ensure all clubs affiliated to the ESMBA are able to return to play safely under their Coronavirus regulations. David, De, and I have a meeting with him in the first week of October, the outcome of which will hopefully be that by the time you read this article we will be safely playing bowls again.

Stay safe and fit for our eventual return bowling.

Phil Gooda - Chairman

Harrietsham in Bloom Volunteers



We now have our Autumn bulbs ready for planting so the beds & planters will be cleared and readied for the Spring display.

We would be delighted to have some more volunteers to help – the work mainly involves looking after the planters – dead-heading flowers in the Summer and weeding when necessary throughout the year. We also do an annual bulb plant along the grass verges along the A20. Volunteers can fit in their time to suit when they have a convenient time slot spare to help. For more details please do get in touch.

Thank you for your continued support - any enquiries please contact the Chairman on 859352.

Andrew Rogers

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Harrietsham Church of England Primary School



Reception Class September 2021 Open Days

Monday 9 November 2020 — Friday 13 November 2020

Tuesday 1 December 2020 — Friday 4 December 2020

Due to the current Covid guidelines, we are offering parents pre-booked timed appointments during the school day. Please contact the School Office to book your tour appointments times. Come and visit and see what we can offer your child as they start school.

www.harrietsham.kent.sch.uk

01622 859261

office@harrietsham.kent.sch.uk

Harrietsham Lawn Tennis Club



The grass court season has now finished for 2020 but not before we held our Annual Tournament in mid-September in glorious sunshine. Unfortunately there were insufficient numbers for the Ladies tournament but the Men battled it out playing singles and in a very close finishing set our new Champion for 2020 was Garon Heslop. The competitors and some of the supporters are shown in the photo on page 15.

Tennis continues during the winter months at Charing Tennis Club – if anyone would like details please get in touch. Charing have two floodlit hard courts. Please contact me on 859352 or visit our website: harrietshamtennis.co.uk

Andrew Rogers

Harrietsham Gardening Society

After our virtual Annual Show there is very little to report. We are still unable to meet as a society due to the situation with Covid-19 and we have to await developments in restrictions before we do so. A while ago there was some hope that restrictions would be lifted to enable us to meet but unfortunately things have become worse rather than better.

We were unable to put forward an entry into the Inter Village Competition as we could not get enough items to make up a complete entry, The competition was to be held at Charing Gardening Society's Annual Show but this again was cancelled due to the dreaded virus.

We do intend to have a members Spring Show in 2021 and we are not sure yet how this will pan out. It will probably have to be a virtual show as we had for the Annual Show. Most of our members will be aware that there will be three classes at least, and these are:

A bowl of bulbs

A photo of a winter scene

A house plant

We hope to keep members as up to date as we can.

We hope that everyone is keeping safe and well, and not getting 'stir-crazy' because of the lockdown restrictions.

David Oversby



Gavon Heslop Men's Lawn Tennis Champion 2020

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For more information, visit the Kent Police website **www.kent.police.uk/speedwatch** or Chris Roots 851 885 chris-roots@outlook.com



**Kent
Police**

Harrietsham Craft & Chat, Crafternoon and Knit, Crochet and Natter

Keep Calm and Carry On Crafting!

Harrietsham Craft and Chat/Crafternoon have continued doing our group projects remotely during the pandemic and, recently, we have been having socially distanced garden meetings under a gazebo with chairs spaced two metres apart. All chairs and tables are disinfected both before and after use. For the coming colder weather, we have two super-duper patio heaters to cast a warm glow over us whilst we create and we have even managed to borrow six small tables at just the right height for crafting so we will have one each. The only real limitation is that, currently, we can only meet six at a time and that is the case for both indoor and outdoor venues. As our priorities are staying safe as well as happily creating, we have chosen to meet outdoors for the moment and being limited to six at a time simply means more meetings! Our October crafting project was bejewelled beetles and our November crafting project will be metal embossed boxes led by Kim. Meetings will be rearranged if the weather is wet or too windy. Then, hopefully, we will have a Christmas themed crafting meeting together with alfresco Christmas party for six at a time in December. Members are also welcome to come along and work on their own projects rather than the planned project at any of our meetings if they prefer. All of this, of course, is subject to what we are allowed to do when the time comes and whether tighter restrictions come into force.

We are continuing to meet outdoors for Knit, Crochet and Natter, too, and we recently donated a bag full of twiddlemuffs that we had created to Chippendayle Lodge which was very well received. If you are interested in any of our meetings whether you have lived locally for years or are a newcomer to our lovely village, please contact me on 01622 851885! We are just a bunch of friends who like to share our crafty endeavours.

Hazel Roots

Harrietsham Fish Scheme Lift Organisation

We regret we are still unable to organise lifts in the normal way due to the Covid virus, but we are hopeful we can provide support via a local community transport support scheme. Please contact Andrew or Felicity Rogers on 859352 if you need help. Please note that there will be a charge made for this service and they will require as much advance notice as possible which will help keep the costs as low as possible.

Andrew Rogers

Be a Hero... Wear a Mask

Let us protect each other by wearing masks... needed for all below.

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- premises providing personal care and beauty treatments
- premises providing veterinary services
- visitor attractions and entertainment venues (museums, galleries, cinemas, theatres, concert halls, cultural and heritage sites, aquariums, indoor zoos and visitor farms, bingo halls, amusement arcades, adventure activity centres, indoor sports stadiums, funfairs, theme parks, casinos, skating rinks, bowling alleys, indoor play areas including soft-play areas)
- libraries
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The government's guidance is that you are expected to wear a face covering before entering any of these settings and must keep it on until you leave unless there is a reasonable excuse for removing it.

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Face coverings are needed in NHS settings, including hospitals and primary or community care settings, such as GP surgeries. They are also advised to be worn in care homes.

Tom and Janetta Sams

Local Churches

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For details of services see p.19

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Holydays Mass 7pm

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Saturday Evening Mass 6pm

Sunday Mass 10.30am

Weekday Mass generally

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Holydays Mass 10am and 8pm

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McCabe www.pathwayschurch.org.uk

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Tel 752895

Sunday Service 10.30am

***For all church services
please see informtion
on page 21.***

Len Valley Benefice Service Times

Everyone is always welcome to any of our services or events

How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news
Isaiah 52: 7a

Sunday 1 November

- 9.30 am Boughton Malherbe: Holy Communion (Book of Common Prayer)
- 11.00 am Lenham: Leading ourselves through the garden with Communion
- 11.00 am Ulcombe: Morning Worship

Sunday 8 November

- 9.30 am Harrietsham: Holy Communion
- 9.30 am Lenham: Breakfast Service
- 10.15 am Boughton Malherbe: Remembrance Service
- 10.30 am Ulcombe: Outdoor Remembrance Service
- 10.50 am Lenham: OUTSIDE short act of remembrance at the War Memorial
- 10.50 am Harrietsham: OUTSIDE short act of remembrance at the War Memorial and see page 8.

Sunday 15 November

- 9.30 am Boughton Malherbe: Holy Communion
- 11.00 am Harrietsham: Morning Worship
- 11.00 am Lenham: Holy Communion

Sunday 22 November

- 9.30 am Harrietsham: Holy Communion
- 9.30 am Lenham: Breakfast Service
- 11.00 am Ulcombe: Holy Communion

Sunday 29 November

- 11.00 am Boughton Malherbe: Informal service

Online Service at all other churches. Please call church office for links.

Our weekly online services will also continue throughout November.

Please contact the church office on churchoffice@lvb.org.uk or 01622 850604 if you would like to receive the weekly email with the links to our Sunday worship.

For service times at other churches, please confirm days and times with your church. The information given on page 20 is pre-coronavirus.

Harrietsham and Lenham villages community support

We wanted to update residents on our current situation from the volunteers' perspective on the pandemic.

Working alongside Martin Sherwood the Community Warden, we continue to collect paper prescriptions from residents and deliver these to the Surgery. We also deliver the medications that come out via the Saxon warrior pharmacy. We publicly thank Bipin Patel and his team for their continued assistance. He is currently offering flu vaccinations.

The volunteers wish to continue to offer support in whatever way is felt needed and however we can. All the while we are able, this will continue. Some have returned to work, some work from home, others are furloughed. Shopping for some vulnerable residents is still being done in a formal and informal way by many volunteers

We would like to say thank you to:

- Our many volunteer helpers, who in the background have continued to help, listening to residents, and offering practical assistance when able.
- Lenham Storage, as a company have enabled our early practical financial support which has proven vital for us to have continued.
- Martin Sherwood KCC Community Warden. Ever present. Assisting medication distribution during a time of extreme difficulty. Socially connecting people together. Offering advice. Assisting residents in practical and physical ways. Professional and diligent throughout.
- John Britt, new chairman of Lenham Parish Council, and Emergency Planning Officer. He has offered practical advice and support, enabling us to volunteer and have working protocols so that we may act as safely as possible.

Be Responsible, Stay Safe.

Contact Tom & Jan 01622 859412 or sams.uplands@gmail.com

A community fund to financially support our activities is being used. This is long established. It supports Lenham Festival amongst other events. We would be grateful if residents wishing to make contributions would send them by bank transfer to Harrietsham and Lenham Parish Residents Association (HELPERS), sort code 08 92 99 Account 65271434, or alternatively a cheque made out to that organisation and arrange for collection.

Tom and Jan



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Bell Ringers

Captain Ken Leach 851173

Captain Graham Cuthbert 01795 886365

Bible Reading Fellowship

Co-ordinator Mrs J Bevan 859310

Booth and Baldwin Charity

Secretary email boothandbaldwin@hotmail.co.uk

Brownie Guides

Brown Owl Louise Ayres 07590 037693

Community Support

PCSO John Boyd 101

Conservative Association

Faversham Office 01622 758053

Countryways Quilters

And Stitchers Pamela Gillard 01233 879507

Craft and Chat/Crafternoon/

Knit Crochet and Natter Hazel Roots 01622 851885

Cricket Club

Chairman Mr A Hubble 859692

Cub Scouts

Leader Mrs A Seales 859829

Explorer Scouts

Leader Mark Horlock 07789 226516

Family History

Enquiries Mr F Long 850863

Flower Guild

Parish Church Mrs R Long 850863

Friends of St. John the Baptist Church

Chairperson Audrey Joy 850806

Gardening Society

Chairman Mr David Oversby 859674

Girl Guides

Leader Kate Davies 07971 254029/beaukate@btinternet.com

Golf – Bill's Round for Charity

Secretary Mr T Grimes 850632

Harrietsham Academy of Ballet

Organiser Deborah Nankivell 07775 716714

Harrietsham in Bloom

Chairman Mr A Rogers 859352

Harrietsham Social Club

Secretary Jed Stone 07759 8771198/whipacres2@g.mail.com

Harrietsham History Society

Chairman Mr P Brown 851075

Health Walks

Organiser Ms M Darby 850657

Helpers

Chairman Mr T Sams 859412

Karate Club

Organiser Mr Lewin Tuckwell 07812 089304

Kent Community Warden Mr M Sherwood 07977 981993

Kent Messenger "Your Local Pages"

Village correspondent Charlotte Lingard miss_lingard@hotmail.com

Lenham and Harrietsham Youth Hub

Contact Katie at KCC 01622 755044

Liberal Democrat Association Mr David Naghi 07970 626829

PTFA (Harrietsham School)

Chairman James Reed harrietshampfta@gmail.com

Pre-school Susan Taylor 07897821399

harrietshampreschoolmanager@gmail.com

Rainbows

Leader Kate Davies 07971 254029/beaukate@btinternet.com

Royal British Legion

Branch Chairman Mr Barry Wood 850702/barry.wood1112@outlook.com

Safari Supper

Organiser Mr R Bevan 859310

Scouts

Group leader Mr E Seales 859829

Leader Mr N Still 880139

Short Mat Bowls

Chairman Phil Gooda 01622851217/p.gooda@btinternet.com

Tai Chi Class Angela Akast 07754454030/akast.a@btopenworld.com

Tennis Club

Chairman Mr A Rogers 859352

Secretary Mrs K Daking 850652

The Lenham School

Head of School Mr Chris Foreman 858267

The Poppy Appeal

Organiser Richard Cast 07787476879/richardcast@btinternet.com

Ulcombe Pre-school

Chairperson Helen Leat 07511657828/ulcombepreschool@live.co.uk

Village Hall

Chairman Steve Brown chair@harrietshamvillagehall.org.uk

Whist Club Miss Denise Williams 859410

Wives Group

Leader Katherin Daking 850652

Women's Institute

Secretary Mrs J Tabrett 859224

Public Services and Emergencies

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Councils:

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Maidstone Borough Council – all departments 01622 602000

Harrietsham Parish Council – Parish Clerk 01622 850089

Police: Emergencies only 999 Non- emergencies 101

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Deadlines for December Network

Sun 1 November 12 noon advertising deadline for December Network

Sun 1 November 12 noon copy deadline for December Network

Harrietsham Village Hall

Everything has got very difficult for everyone with the new Covid guidelines changing all the time. Your village hall is open and clubs have started to come back following their own Covid guidelines and also the Village Hall guidelines. The clubs that have started back are Yoga, Duets Dance, Make and Shake, Tai Chi and Zumba. A very popular new club Beginners2Runners has also started up. If you have been a member of any of these clubs in the past, why don't you give it a go and come back. The Village Hall has the NHS Track and Trace poster so it's easy to register when you enter.

Due to the latest guidelines all committee meetings have been cancelled but the committee is keeping an eye on the hall making sure everyone follows the guidelines and keeping the hall clean. If anyone has any concerns do not hesitate to contact me at chair@harrietshamvillagehall.org.uk or if you need to make a booking please contact Jeanine our booking Secretary on bookings@harrietshamvillagehall.org.uk.

Steve Brown

Countryways Quilters and Stitchers

Our meetings for October started us on our choice of Christmas projects. Yes, it's that time of year, so in November our plan is to get them finished and if there is time maybe even tackle another project. We will be meeting on Wednesday 4 and Tuesday 17 November unless new Covid-19 restrictions prevent us from doing so. Due to Covid-19 restriction we will not be taking in any new members this year as we must allow for social distancing. Hopefully, things will be different next year.

We meet in the Osbourne room in Lenham Community Centre. If you would like more information on our group or would like a copy of our 2021 Program when it comes out, please contact me, Pamela Gillard on 01233 877453 or e-mail moonbeamspinner@gmail.com

Pamela Gillard

Christian Message

Testing Times

One of the hardest verses in the Bible for me has often been 1 Corinthians 10:13. In the New English Bible version it reads '*No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.*' He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand.

I realise that it has seemed hard because it is so often miss-quoted as God not letting us suffer more than we can bear. It's a lovely thought but with colleagues, students, friends and relatives who have suffered depression, been suicidal or actually taken their lives, it certainly doesn't always seem that way.

Context is everything... the verse is about avoiding sin and that being a Christian does not exempt us from temptation. There is evil out there to avoid and there are consequences to the way in which we behave. The desire to give in and do wrong can be very great indeed but in response the Bible offers reassurance that overcoming temptation is entirely possible. This is quite different from finding ourselves in bad situations. This doesn't mean we will never suffer or that people who are facing huge difficulties are necessarily doing wrong.

When too many things need doing at once, I know that I can feel panic just when I need to remain calm. My coping mechanism is to write a list, make a timetable and organise things into small manageable chunks, just as I encourage my students to do: "Don't try to conquer the world, just do the one thing you are doing at that moment."

Why didn't God save my university friend or my husband's cousin from suicide? Well, he did save my university friend many, many times in the help and support he received from friends and professionals over the years, but we all have free will and ultimately this meant that he did the one thing that he had been feeling for many years, was the only real route left open to him.

Many are the times I have thought 'If only he had rung and talked that night as he had done so many times before' but his suffering was such that he didn't want anyone to stop him. When another friend recently rang me to say he had tried to take his own life and failed, I literally ached at the thought of how much he too, must have been suffering lately, but then leapt for joy that the Lord sent an elderly couple to his rescue just at the right moment. They noticed him in his car, pulled him out and stayed with him until he promised to go home rather than try again.

The phrase 'No man is an island', made famous by John Donne, may be a cliché but it's a jolly good one. Our humanity is about relationships and we all need each other. Jesus taught us, simply, to love each other.

God does intervene if we let him. We can turn to him at any time and in any place and, generally people do want to be there for us. Whatever you are feeling or thinking during this very unusual and difficult year, please, don't suffer in silence or alone. Please pick up a phone and contact a family member, a friend, someone from Church, a local helpline of professional services.

Pamela Cuerden

No man is an island

No man is an island entire of itself; every man
Is a piece of the continent, a part of the main;
If a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe
Is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as
Well as any manner of thy friends or of thine
Own were; any man's death diminishes me,
Because I am involved in mankind.
And therefore, never send to know for whom
The bell tolls; it tolls for thee.

John Donne



Maidstone Food Bank

This operates from Knightrider Street and is a lifeline to so many through the Covid 19 outbreak. Our volunteers continue to deliver local surplus to this much needed facility.

The Food Bank has been very important to local residents and volunteers and We urgently need people to make food available for collection on Tuesdays that can be collected by volunteers. Contact 01622 859412.

Alternatively, if you shop at Harrietsham & Lenham Coops there are food bank containers near to the check outs.

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100 Club Lottery Draw

Result of the Forty-sixth draw of the Friends of St John 100 Club

As all the social events in the village have ceased because of Covid-19, the 100 Club draw was made on 12 September 2020 at Little Hatch by Terry Whent under the supervision of Michael Gear (Independent Adjudicator).

124 numbers were included in the draw giving a prize fund of £124

First prize £62.00 – number 76 – Valerie & Stephen Brown

Second prize £37.20 – number 10 – Pat King

Third prize £24.80 – number 98 – Margaret Bottle

For further information and details of how to become a member of the ever-growing 100 Club to help with the upkeep of our church - contact the Administrator, Chris Roots on 01622 851885

Christmas Cards

Christmas cards will again be on sale this year. All profits go to the upkeep of our beautiful village church. A pack of five cards will cost you £3.00. They are 10.5cm x 15cm (4" x 6"). To order please contact Denise Williams 01622 859410/ 07516776241, Audrey Joy 01622 850806/07754639798 or email secretary@friendsofstjohn.org.

Apologies

The committee would like to apologise for the late cancellation of the Friends AGM due to have been held in the church on 24 September.

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Top Tips by Harrietsham Gardening Society

November already! How the year has flown. Hopefully, most of the Autumn tidying up and putting away has been undertaken and you can reflect on the pleasure you gained from your garden this year. What a privilege to have your own garden. This has been particularly beneficial during the lock-down period and beyond. Gardens are not just about plants of course, start to top up the bird feeders now as winter approaches, when blue and great tits will soon flock around fat balls and peanuts. Don't think the tweets on social distancing have reached them yet!

Time now too to plan ahead with seed ordering and an opportunity to imagine what the garden can look like next year. That reminds me, imagine your garden is a wilderness full of nettles, thistles and brambles – what's the best way of resolving the situation? Answer on page 35.

By now hopefully all the veg are safely gathered in for the winter. Potatoes and onions will keep round until next April if kept dry and frost free, squash and carrots generally up until the end of the year. People can sometimes be a little bit like potatoes, or 'taters' as they're often known. As has been said elsewhere:

*Some people never seem motivated to participate, but are content to watch others
... Spec-taters*

*Some are always looking to cause problems and really get under your skin
... Agi-taters*

*Magicians try to pull the wool over our eyes by purporting to be
... Levi-taters*

*There are those who are always saying they will, but somehow, they never get
around to doing
... Hesi-taters*

*Some folks spend a lot of time sitting and contemplating their navels and
philosophising
... Medi-taters or Cogi-taters.*

*Ah yes, a couple of thoughts, if Vegetarians eat vegetables, what do Humanitarians
eat? And however bare the lawn gets why does grass still grow in cracks in paving
slabs? No answers to those!*

*Then there are those that try to maximize their crop yields while reducing expenses
...Compu-taters*

Don't ask for those varieties in the Garden centre!

November is also a month for planting new shrubs and trees. The most important thing here is, especially if they are bare-rooted and not pre-grown in a container, to ensure the roots do not dry out. On delivery immerse them in a bucket of water for a few hours and ensure the planting hole is twice as wide as the roots. Although they should be planted at the same depth they were originally growing in the Nursery, leaving the soil slightly dished will help immensely with watering next summer. Trees in particular should also be staked to prevent the wind rocking them around. The stake does not need to be more than a couple of feet high as research shows allowing the tree to flex a bit helps to build up its 'muscles' and form a strong healthy stem.

If you haven't done so already it is a good idea to lift gladioli corms and dahlia tubers, which should have as much soil removed as possible, then dried and stored frost-free in a cardboard or wooden box with old carpet, sacking or other breathable material over the top. Bubble wrap, although a good insulator, can cause fungal growth as it will trap condensed moisture. Apples stored in trays don't really need covering but with these also check regularly that Mickey and his mates are not getting fat at your expense.

Pruning of roses and shrubs such as buddleias by removing the top third of growth to prevent windrock is another useful bit of exercise. Plunge the cut material into a trench and leave three or four inches sticking out the top and you may well have free new plants next year. Time too to start winter digging on the veg plot. Don't break the soil down at all but leave it as cloddy and lumpy as possible so that the frost does that work for you. More surface area of soil is also exposed along with pests such as cutworms, wireworms and slugs which will not appreciate the fact as birds can access them and the aforementioned frost. If you like them, broad beans (a good variety is Exhibition Longpod) can be planted now, in a double row with 6 inches between the rows and each bean. They are a bit of an acquired taste but are good in salads when no bigger than a fingernail or with prawns and rice as a hot dish when larger.

Happy gardening

Answer - Stop imagining it!

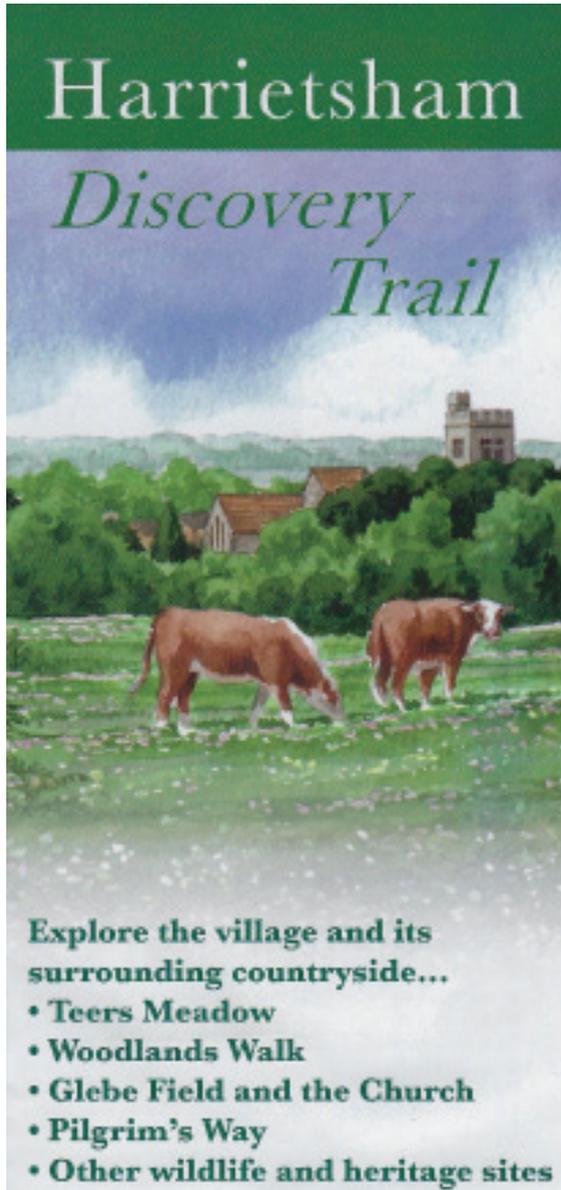
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Discovering Harrietsham

This new free leaflet is available now from local stores, Post Office, Harrietsham Station, St. John's Church, Salon 62 and BP garage. Get your copy for an excellent guide to the beauty spots and places of interest in and around Harrietsham



Harrietsham Zero Station

Few people realise that Harrietsham played its part in the UK secret underground invasion plans of the Second World War. The story began in 1940 when Sir Winston Churchill gave orders for the construction of a 'stay behind' operational force and communications network to be used after the anticipated German invasion to hinder and disrupt the Nazi troops.

Very simple underground bunkers were constructed to accommodate specially trained resistance fighters. These were located at hundreds of secret sites around the coast of the UK. In addition, a network of underground communication centres was built, these larger more complex sites were equipped with VHF communications equipment operated by specially trained female ATS (Auxiliary Territorial Service) officers. One such site is located near the Ringlestone road between Hollingbourne and Harrietsham and was generally known at the time as the Harrietsham In Station or Zero Station.



The main chamber inside the underground Harrietsham Zero station

The purpose of the station was to periodically receive information from 11 'out' stations located around the coast of Kent. The information related to observations by a specially selected group of individuals who had agreed to spy on the Germans after the invasion. However, the aborted German invasion plans allowed the 'spies' to limit their observations to UK, American and Canadian troop movement and this was relayed back to the central control station at Reigate via Zero stations such as Harrietsham.

Harrietsham Network

The Harrietsham 'In' station was provided with two or three specially built VHF communications transceivers. These battery powered units running from a 6 Volt car battery were known as TRD's.

Personnel

Various ATS officers were posted to or involved with the Harrietsham station between 1942 and 1944 these included the following: Elizabeth Rush, Airlie Abinda Campbell, Peggy ?, Hazel ?, Phyllis Marion Britten, Ely ?, Wendy Kaines, Marjorie Tarrant Edwina Burton, Sally Waterhouse-Brown, Margaret Hamilton Rigby, Florence Margaret Cole (Waddy), Senior Commander Beatrice Temple, Lieutenant Roy Russell

Sally Waterhouse-Brown was clearly a talented artist. While serving in the Harrietsham station she produced several coloured pencil drawings of her fellow officers. Fortunately, these were donated to the Imperial War Museum as document 3150 by the estate of Margaret Hamilton Rigby and this is an excellent example which shows her explaining the electrical wiring to Phyllis Britten.

Accommodation

Although the subterranean bunker was equipped with beds and other equipment this was reserved for use after the anticipated invasion. Normally, the station operated from a small hut located very close to the dugout and the subalterns were billeted locally for meals and bedding. Usually the girls would stay with a local family. Perhaps even today there are stories in some families of well-spoken army girls who came to stay but who never talked of the work they were doing.

The ATS subalterns were responsible for day-to-day station operation but equipment maintenance which included periodic battery replacement was carried out by ATS personnel attached to Royal Signals Units. Lieutenant Roy Russell of Auxiliary Unit Signals was the officer responsible for Harrietsham and also the sister station at Brasted.

Administration

This is a verbatim account written by Lieutenant Roy Russell, officer in charge of the Harrietsham station:

A Royal Engineer officer came - I think he was a captain - and took us to see our two underground units, ready for our occupation. The Royal Engineers had built the stations and devised the secret entries. The unseen hatchway design was brilliant. You had to know exactly where to look, usually on the fringe of a copse with tall trees, where the camouflaged aerials were strung high. We put the radio equipment in and we started testing.

I did not see the In stations being built, but when they were operating I went in a lot, so I remember what they were like. The sets were the ones we had been developing, and our main task was to put up the aerals and their hidden feeder cables. The aerals were working on a very high frequency, not known to the Germans or the Italians. It meant that to get good communication the aerals had to be very high, over 100 feet. The aerals were made of two pieces of copper wire, and what we called a dipole - you sometimes see an aerial with two rods sticking out and a junction box which somebody told me Jack had made. From there it was joined to something I had never seen before -a co-axial cable; it was never used domestically then. The cable had to go up the main trunk of the tree. (The aerals at the Out stations were simple-no one would query a domestic type aerial) The cables were placed under the tree bark, which had to be peeled back and then replaced.

To get into the underground station you had a crank (I had one and so did Jack) you knew more or less where the entrance was and you had to find a particular small flat stone. I don't know where they got them from but there was one in each place. You moved that, and underneath you could see the rod which the crank fitted onto. You could turn it and up came a circular piece of grass which was really like a manhole cover which you see in the street, except that it was a large saucer-like piece of turf which had been cut to fit entirely into it so that when it was tightened you could not see any join. When it came up it revealed a shaft and at a certain height you swung it away so that you could climb underneath it. You then put the crank handle on the rod at the bottom of the turf and turned it the other way to reseal it and no one knew you were there except your colleagues. The structure was like a Nissen hut with corrugated iron arched across to form a roof.

The shaft was four sided, about the size of a trap-door. It was wood-lined; there was no ladder, but wooden steps, fastened at one side, and you just climbed down, about 8 feet, on to a concrete floor. At the bottom there was a room, about 6 feet by 9, with shelving all round, and on one shelf there was an empty shell magazine, which gave the impression, if anyone found it, that the place was an empty ammunition dump. If you looked carefully, on one of the shelves lay a length of rigid wire. If you knew what to look for, there was a small hole in the woodwork into which you could push the wire. Something was activated on the other side and the whole of that side cantilevered. If you bent down you could now walk in and close it behind you. You were now in a room where you would see in front of you two tables with our radio sets on and three ATS officers operating them. They were talking to the Out stations and when they were free they would talk to us, telling us of any military incidents, or it could be just a set problem or aerial trouble or a power problem, or it could be to do with air-conditioning or sanitation or battery charging .Usually we could sort it out; if not we would radio back to our base in Sevenoaks. I had a staff of twelve - they were of different trades - Jack was the only sergeant; there were one or two NCOs who had got their stripes by passing radio tests, so if anything went wrong I had the staff to deal with it. Then I would ask the ATS whether they had any other problems and if not we would have a cup of tea, and we would go back up the shaft

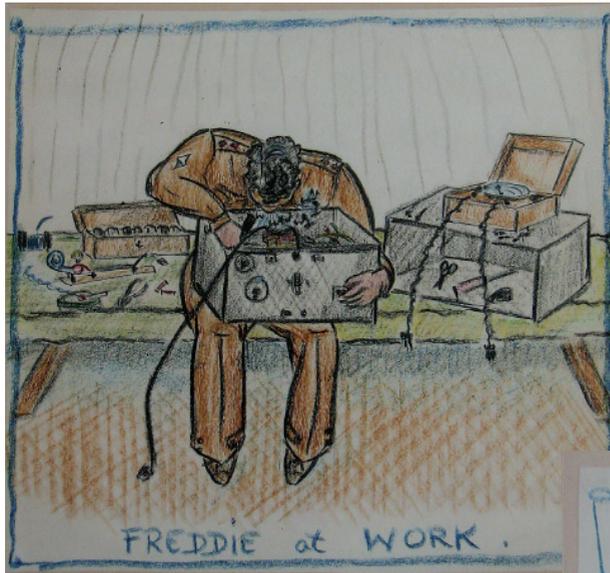
Harrietsham Network



This map showing the final network plan was produced by Major R M A Jones on 28 June 1944

Sally Waterhouse-Brown's sketches

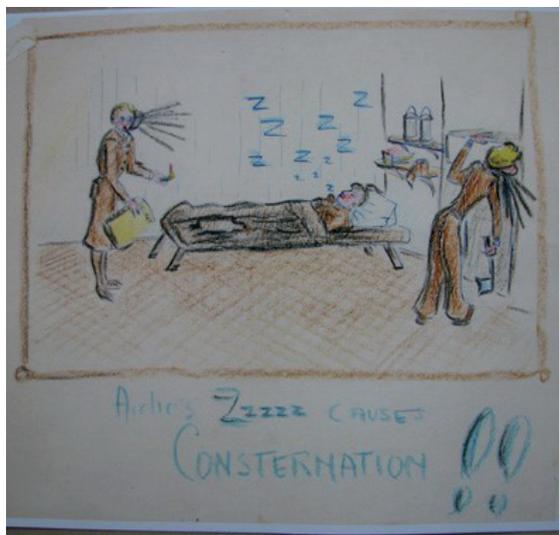
Freddie working on one of the sets in the Harrietsham bunker.



The electrical wiring lesson



Airlie Abinda Campbell is noisily snoring in one of the beds inside the bunker.



Harrietsham Network

the way we came. The main faults were usually with the aerials.

Communication at the high frequency we used required accurate direction for reliable reception. High winds or even branch growth could alter the delineation and lose radio contact. It would then be necessary for one of our several volunteers to go up the tree. He would be hauled up, standing in a noose of rope thrown over a high branch. The other end was attached to my Humber car, and by slowly backing, he would be drawn up the tree. Sometimes he had to climb the last few feet, carrying a bag of tools on his back. This was a job we shared in view of the risks involved. Even when we started winning the war, towards the end, we were still operating, as this was part of an anti-invasion operation, which Churchill personally set up because he said, and I remember his words, "The French were run over and had to start thinking about setting up a resistance." I met Churchill just once. I was at a meeting where he spoke to me and others. He was very positive that we were not waiting till we had been invaded before we set up a resistance movement.

Those who passed information to the Out stations were never seen by me or my staff. Also in reserved occupations, they were trained in the recognition of German military vehicles and their uniforms. Their received information would be passed on to the other radio people without them knowing each other, so that if either was captured neither could be made to give the other away. This was because the metal numbers on some telegraph poles had been taken out and a space bored deep enough to take written messages. The trick was that the pole number would be replaced upside down to indicate that it was "live". I believe that the info-gatherers were also trained in hand-weaponry, infighting and garrotting but I have no proof of this.

This was why the Out stations were set up. We knew at once if anything was wrong at the coastal stations because the first thing the In stations did (there were eight Out stations to one In station and nine to the other) was to call each station. The Out stations had very much less complicated sets than the In stations; theirs just said "Send" and "Receive". They were designed by Jack Millie. (The aerials for the Out stations were also very simple-no one would query a domestic type aerial.) All those who worked at Out stations were volunteers.

Beyond the Set room there was a room with cooking facilities and Elsans, and there was a room for battery charging. There was no electricity laid on; everything was powered by batteries which had to be recharged by a little engine a "Chorehorst" - (petrol-driven) in a tubular cage; the exhaust from that was led away by a duct and came out in a ditch some way away, where you could only just hear it faintly. The last room led to an emergency exit tunnel which was a heavy duty concrete culvert pipe, 30 inches in diameter, 15 - 20 feet long, through which the occupants could try to escape should their station be discovered by the enemy.

On paper we were known as a group called "Auxiliary Units" which would convey nothing of what our military role was. It was part of the Y service, another anonymous service.

The ATS officers — Captains - had not had any military training or drill and had not come up through the ranks. Recruitment happened when one of the girls went on leave and in chatting to a friend would drop hints about the secret work and tell her how she could apply. She would be told to go to Harrods in Knightsbridge, wearing a red rose. The store was boarded up, but the doorman would tell her to go to the fifth floor. Other girls wearing a red rose were there, and each would be interviewed by Senior Commander Beatrice Temple- a niece of the then Archbishop of Canterbury, William Temple. They were tested solely on their suitability for secret work. Only when they were accepted would she tell them what they were going to do! They were then kitted out and came straight to us. I said "Why are they officers? We could have done this with ATS sergeants" I was told "Well, we first thought all they needed to be was privates, and then we thought with all you chaps going down there it could have been very difficult" "I don't think so" I said "They never interested me"

That is why they were ATS officers. We all acted correctly. They were nicknamed "Secret Sweeties" (not by us!) which apparently they hated, but they knew they had to keep their mouths shut. And of course, they never wore trousers always skirts! They were very nice girls, cut-glass spoken! They were taken from the FANYS sometimes and other sources which could be trusted. Both In stations in Kent at Brasted and Harrietsham worked with Out stations which were virtually on the Kent and Channel coasts. When we started we were the only group operating; it was only when they found that the system worked that other stations were developed. Eventually there were fourteen areas around UK, each having its own In stations and Out stations.

I regularly visited my Out stations. One was in a farmer's chicken coop; they had their own ways of deciding where to hide their sets. I said to the farmer "Where is your set?" We went out to the barn and inside one of the coops he lifted a board on a hinge. He had cut a space in the chalk ground underneath to fit in his set. In another coastal place the lady operator was a music teacher and her set was in the Music room. "Where?" I said "Can't you see it?" she said. I was looking all round and I told her she had hidden it very well. She took the front off the upright piano; she had removed the top eighteen or twenty key hammers and it was there. These sets were designed by Jack Millie; they were in aluminium cases, about a foot long; they were robust and all they had was an on/off switch according to whether you were sending or receiving. If you wished to send, you might have to wait for the In station to come back to you; it was so simple a child could use it; Jack had kept it so simple. Another set I remember was operated by a vicar; I asked him where his set was and he took me into the church and showed me where it was in the pulpit. "Nobody but me goes up there!" I remember another Out station because the man did not want me to know about it; he said "You don't need to know, do you?" but I said "Yes, I have to!" The set never went wrong so I never went back there again! It seems now that after our In stations were successful, others were built further inland as a second line of defence, and have now been discovered.

The girls at the In stations arranged the times of contact with Out stations according to the operators' occupations. There were always three on duty at the In stations; they worked eight hours on and sixteen off all through the conflict. They never complained though the work was full time underground.

The time came that there was much speculation that we must soon be mounting a joint invasion of Northern France with the American forces, now building in Southern England. There was a much larger concentration in places like Salisbury Plain and the South Coast. Our tiny contribution, although I only guessed at the time, was to step up our on-air traffic. We made up hundreds of meaningless five-letter coded group messages and transmitted them to our Out stations for their "dummy traffic" responses; round the clock. It was the first intimation I had that the enemy could pick up our very-high-frequency; although maybe they couldn't, we'll never know. If they could it would tell them that our invasion could start from the Dover coastline. In support, a concentration of tanks, landing craft and military vehicles in our area could have been seen by their recce aircraft. It caused them to leave troops in the Pas de Calais that were not facing ours when D-day came. But they were life-size blow-up dummies, even realistic when I saw them at ground level; as bogus as our surge in radio traffic.

Current Situation

The bunker is located on private land and after 79 years has deteriorated considerably and must be considered at risk of collapse. The corrugated structure has rusted away therefore should not be walked over or entered. At least one of the trees in which the VHF aerials were concealed is still standing and the cables that were once buried beneath the tree bark can be seen today.

Brian Drury 2020

Coronavirus

Keeping up to date with the progress of the virus and the rules has become an impossible mission. Rather than risk giving incorrect or out-of-date information, the diarised feature has been discontinued.

At the moment we are being told to obey the slogan

Hands - Face - Space

The government is expected to publish more information and instructions in the week commencing 12 October.

Please stay alert everyone and stay safe

Jan - Editor



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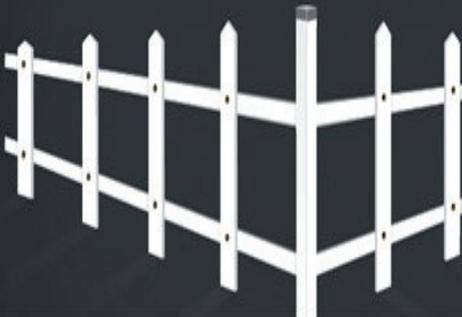
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