

# PARISH NEWS

AUGUST 2022

## From the Vicarage

This is such a lovely time of year, with fields of crops golden, wildflowers in abundance, and such a blue, blue sky!

We lived on the fens for some years, and I became more aware of the farming around me; to the crops growing: from the first green shoots to tall wheat stalks, or, more commonly, large fields of bright green sugar beet leaves or the growing mounds of soil around the potato plants. The fens are potato country; that is where McCains have their factory. In August, the combine harvesters arrived, and tractors pulling trailers filled to capacity with grain or potatoes. The last crop harvested was sugar beet, deposited in massive piles, up to 18 feet high, and left out in the open for many weeks.

As an observer, I was not particularly aware of the problem of weeds among the crops, but I was very aware of the rats. It was not uncommon for grain to be spilt at some intersections as the vehicles turned; very often as I drove past the rats would scurry away from their feast. This was just spillage and, once it was gone, I saw the rats no more. But the sugar beet stood there, inviting all comers to have a bite. And they did. The sugar beet at the base of the piles always bore the scars of a lavish rodent feast, even though the rats there were never in plain sight. As long as the harvest waited there, it was vulnerable to attack. I remember the rats because of their destruction.

Of course, the farmers are aware of the rats chewing at the sugar beet, and leaving their harvest out is not an act of neglect. Rather, the farmer had to be patient, to wait until the produce was ready to be uploaded to the storage and processing plants. You see, the more weeds and earth clinging to the sugar beet, the less valuable it is, so taking it away immediately after harvesting is not sound practice.

The stories of God – the master of the field – who only and always sows good seed, and intends good harvests, knows his adversary, whose aim is to damage or destroy. The devil's intention is to hinder the work of salvation, to stonewall the Kingdom of God. And those of us who love God can get very frustrated: sometimes what we do seems to make no progress, or progress is slow, and we become impatient.

One thing we have learned from the Covid pandemic is that we cannot control everything, and what we do may not be in the same timetable as what God intends. Nor do we need to worry about the harvest: our eyes must ever be on Jesus, looking for his guidance and reassurance and concentrate on living the life he intends for us. He is the Lord of the harvest, and we can safely entrust it to him. *'For he is the living God, and he endures forever; his kingdom will not be destroyed, his dominion will never end. He rescues and he saves.'* Daniel 6:26b.

Reverend Shirley

## Church Services and Morning Prayer

Sunday 7 <sup>th</sup> August	09:30	Arlington Holy Communion	Morning Prayer at 9.30 am each Wednesday at Berwick church.  Evening Prayer takes place at 5.00 pm each Wednesday at Wilmington church.
	09:30	Selmeston Holy Communion	
	11:00	Berwick Holy Communion	
	11:00	Wilmington Holy Communion	
Sunday 14 <sup>th</sup> August	09:30	Alciston BCP	If you would like to receive weekly notification about services (the Sunday Link) please contact the Benefice Administrator <a href="mailto:benefice.administrator@berwickchurch.org.uk">benefice.administrator@berwickchurch.org.uk</a> who will add your email address to the mailing list.
	09:30	Arlington Holy Communion	
	11:00	Berwick Holy Communion	
	11:00	Wilmington Holy Communion	
Sunday 21 <sup>st</sup> August	09:30	Arlington Holy Communion	
	09:30	Selmeston Holy Communion	
	11:00	Berwick Holy Communion	
	11:00	Wilmington Family Service	

Sunday 28 <sup>th</sup> August	09:30	Alciston BCP
	09:30	Arlington Holy Communion
	11:00	Berwick Holy Communion
	11:00	Wilmington Holy Communion

## Letter from the Treasurer

*'Annual income 20 pounds, annual expenditure 19 [pounds] 19 [shillings] and six [pence], result happiness. Annual income 20 pounds, annual expenditure 20 pounds ought and six, result misery'.* (Mr Micawber in David Copperfield by Charles Dickens).

The Alciston, Berwick and Selmeaton Parish Magazine has been going for many years and the feedback, from both old and new parishioners, has been generally positive. However, with the rise of social media and other forms of cross-parish contact, the Parish Magazine is facing an existential crisis.

To quote from the latest audit (2021):

Total Income - £704.75 (inc. adverts, sales and donations).

Total Expenditure - £2040.80 (printing and composition costs).

In the past, we have relied on donations and adverts and so we have always relied on support from the three villages. The issues we currently face are not new. For instance, to quote from the magazine from February 1987: *"Thanks to all who faithfully contribute towards the magazine and would encourage any who have not made a contribution towards the cost of the magazine of late, to make a contribution soon"*. With this in mind, I would appreciate some responses to the following questions:

- ◆ Would you like to continue to support the magazine for the three villages?
- ◆ Do you want the magazine to remain free, and therefore, would you be willing to contribute towards it?
- ◆ Are there any organisations representing the parish who would be willing to offer financial support?

We have plans to develop the magazine in order to improve the content. However, this requires a positive response from residents living in the three villages.

I am therefore asking for some feedback from villagers to ascertain the level of interest and support we might count on to continue the production of the magazine. Please send your feedback either by email to [brian.calcott@gmail.com](mailto:brian.calcott@gmail.com) or by post to Brian Calcott, 2, Railway Cottages, Station Road, Berwick, BN26 6TA.

## Alciston and Selmeaton Flower Show

*Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> August at Alciston and Selmeaton Village Hall*

Well the big day is nearly upon us, and we are all looking forward to the best show ever. Please remember we need your entries to make it so - please do encourage your friends and family to enter and, of course, enter yourself. As mentioned last month, the show is open to anyone living in Alciston and Selmeaton and to their friends and relatives. Don't worry if you're a complete beginner or if you think your entries don't stand a chance. We have a special class for beginners, and we all think our entries aren't good enough.

Entries need to be in by the evening of Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> August to ensure we can collate them and organise the hall for the big day. Entries can be given to:

- ◆ Margaret Weller, Anyos, The Street, Selmeaton, BN26 6UD. Tel. 01323 811396
- ◆ Janet Matthews-Moulding: Glebe Cottage, The Street Selmeaton. BN26 6UA. Tel. 07802 841440
- ◆ Alison Campbell, Southdown Barn, The Village, Alciston, BN26 6UN. Tel. 07958 768251

Please don't hesitate to contact any of us if you need more information or advice, another copy of the schedule or an information sheet with guidance for showing fruit and vegetables. These can also be accessed on the Selmeaton Village website. Finally just a couple of gentle reminders:

- ◆ If you haven't returned the cups you won last year that we need these back, please also by Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> August.
- ◆ If you haven't given a raffle prize or donation to the tombola stall, there is still time to do so. You can even drop them in to us at the village hall on the morning of the show.
- ◆ We are still looking for offers of help on the day; the more people there are the easier it is for all concerned.
- ◆ On Sunday 14<sup>th</sup>, bring your entries to the A&S Village Hall from 8:30-11.00 am. We'll then close the hall for the judges to do their work.

We look forward to receiving lots of wonderful entries and, following the judging, everyone is welcome back in the afternoon for fun and games, tug 'o' war, tombola, raffles, tea, cakes, a cash bar, and of course, the prize giving!

*Jan Matthews-Moulding / Raina Brody*

## Berwick Produce Show 2022

2.00 – 5.00 pm Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> August at Berwick Village Hall

The produce show needs you.

- ◆ Have children? Please encourage them to enter the show. Remember, we have guidance on what classes mean on [www.berwickproduce.co.uk/rules](http://www.berwickproduce.co.uk/rules)
- ◆ Don't forget to enter yourself too. To enter, just go to [www.berwickproduce.co.uk/enter-here](http://www.berwickproduce.co.uk/enter-here) or hand in the form in the centre of the programme.
- ◆ Please give us a hand around show time. We need volunteers to help set up, clean up and run stands. If you can give even just an hour, please sign up for a slot at [www.berwickproduce.co.uk/volunteer](http://www.berwickproduce.co.uk/volunteer).

We can't wait to see you on show day for the return of our show. If you have any tombola donations, they would be very welcome. Please email [info@berwickproduce.co.uk](mailto:info@berwickproduce.co.uk) and we'll arrange to collect them. Thank you!

*Lisa Collington*

## Berwick Village Hall Volunteers — Relaunch of the Berwick 100 Club

The Berwick Hall Management Committee has taken the decision that the 'Berwick 100 Club' should be relaunched. The club was originally started in 1994 by the late David Lumsden to support the (then) new Berwick Village Hall, by providing funding to the Berwick Village Hall Management Committee.

Each member of the 100 Club was allotted a number, or numbers, in return for an annual subscription. A draw took place each month at the local Whist Drive. Three monthly prizes were awarded first, second, and third. However, in the June draw the first prize was £100, and in the December draw the first prize was £150.

The Berwick Village Hall Management are seeking interested residents to form a small committee, with a Treasurer, Secretary, and signatories for online banking, to promote and run a new fundraising Berwick 100 Club, in line with the associated Wealden District Council regulations, in order to provide financial support to the Berwick Village Hall.

Interested residents will be expected to have computer facilities and maintain records, which will be subject to an annual audit. Interested residents should contact either Lyn Hayward Tel: 07703 561315 / email: [linda\\_hayward@live.co.uk](mailto:linda_hayward@live.co.uk) or Sue Woodgate Tel: 07703 281516 / email [sue.woodgate1@btinternet.com](mailto:sue.woodgate1@btinternet.com).

*Lyn Hayward*

## Firle and Beddingham Women's Institute

We were pleased to welcome four guests to our July meeting. The speaker was Trevor Weeks MBE, who told us of his setting up, development and activities of East Sussex Wildlife Rescue. All wild animals - from tiny dormice to large red deer, seals to seagulls and snakes to hedgehogs are, when necessary, rescued and taken for treatment at their centre before release back into the wild.

Arlington Tea Garden is the venue for our August outing. Seaford Blind Group will be welcomed to Selmeston village hall in September where we will entertain them to afternoon tea.

Our September meeting is on Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> at Firle Memorial Hall. We meet at 7.30 pm and visitors are always welcome.

*Margaret Hughes*

## Alciston & Selmeston Village Hall Committee

Following the success of the Jubilee celebrations, we've been busy planning our Autumn events. With more information to follow in the Parish News, here's a little taster of what we've got in store for you:

*Saturday 8th October* - ticketed event - Fun, Fish & Finking is with us again. Our resident Quiz Meister Dr Andrew Thomas, is busy planning the evening. Same amazing format, fish & chip supper (veggie option available) followed by the quiz. Paying bar.

*Saturday 6th November* - ticketed event suitable for ages 8+ - The Gonzo Moose comedy theatre present "Is That a Bolt in Your Neck?" 'A fast-paced, rollicking ride mixing spooky paranoia, surreal nightmare and frantic farce.' [www.gonzomoose.co.uk](http://www.gonzomoose.co.uk) Paying bar.

*Sunday 13th November* - Open event, all welcome - Following the Remembrance Day Service, the Village Hall will be serving cake and hot beverages to warm you up.

*Saturday 10th December* - ticketed event - It's Christmas! Let the celebrations begin with the Alciston & Selmeston Village Hall Christmas Party. It's going to be a year to remember with fun, food, drink, song and 'home grown entertainment'. Paying bar.

If you would like more information on any of these events or wish to reserve tickets early just ring (for Selmeston) Helen 07969732109; Thea 07772155772; Mairi 07582938185 or (for Alciston) Phil 07538187552.

We look forward to welcoming you.

*Helen Shaw (Chair)*

## August Gardener's Diary

There is lots to do in the garden this month, with the main thing being to keep certain plants well-watered in the hot and dry weather.

Water sweetcorn plants regularly with tomato food to get the best cobs. Continue to feed tomato plants and remove leaves lower down on the plant to help with circulation and prevent disease. Pick out the tops to leave 5 or 6 trusses per plant.

Pinch out the tops of runner beans once they have reached the top of their supports. Lift onions, shallots and garlic once the foliage has flopped over and yellowed. Keep harvesting French and runner beans little and often to prevent them going to seed. Keep an eye out for potato and tomato blight and remove and destroy any affected plants.

*Lisa Collington*

## Recipe of the Month – Mary Berry's Iced Lemon Flummery

Serves 8 to 12 depending on the size of the ramekins.

### Ingredients

300 ml double cream

Finely grated rind and juice of 2 lemons

350 g caster sugar

600 ml milk

For topping

150 ml whipping cream, whipped

Sprigs of fresh mint or lemon balm

### Method

Pour the double cream into a bowl and whisk until it forms soft peaks. Stir in the lemon rind, juice, sugar and milk and mix until thoroughly blended. Pour into a 1.5 litre plastic container and cover with a lid.

Freeze until very firm.

Cut the frozen cream into chunks and process in a processor or blender until smooth and creamy. Pour into individual ramekins, cover with cling film and return to the freezer overnight.

To serve, spoon a small blob of cream on top and decorate with a sprig of fresh mint or lemon balm. They are best taken out of the freezer at least 10 minutes before serving.

*Valerie Shaw*

## Family Support Work (FSW)

With the summer holidays upon us there is a huge amount happening at FSW. Although we are hugely pleased to be able to hold our large group activities again and provide some amazing experiences for our families, the underlying issues that are concerning them are growing. Financial difficulties are prevalent, with parents concerned about how to afford to feed their children whilst schools are shut and to purchase new school uniform ready for the new school year. Our practitioners are doing a marvellous job helping families to access all sorts of local support and help to ease their concerns as much as they can, but we are sure that this is only the tip of the iceberg.

Our foodbank stocks are still low, but the response to our recent appeals has been wonderful, so thank you to everybody who has contributed. We are still in need of most items, particularly ketchup, tinned tomatoes, multipack snacks and tinned meat. If you could focus on these over the next period, we would be very grateful.

Our next central fundraising event will be the Amberley to Arundel sponsored walk on Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> August. Registration is now open either via our website or by completing and returning our registration form. We would love to see as many people as possible – there are 2 routes available, one of 2.6 miles and the other of 8.7 miles, so something for everyone. Please get in touch with Jo in the fundraising team for more information – [jo@familysupportwork.org.uk](mailto:jo@familysupportwork.org.uk).

Finally, a reminder to put Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> October in your diaries for our AGM at Chichester Cathedral. We would love to see as many people there as possible and will be sending out more detailed information nearer the time.

Thank you for your continued support of FSW's work.

June's work in numbers

- ◆ 226 individual visits and 734 calls with families supporting 359 adults and 337 children
- ◆ 42 supported meetings with other agencies
- ◆ 39 group sessions held supporting 515 parents and 174 children

- ◆ 165 food deliveries made

#### Prayer points

- ◆ Pray for a family we support who have recently, and suddenly, lost their husband/father at a very young age, that we will be able to provide comfort and support in such a distressing situation
- ◆ Pray for all the children we support who are awaiting GCSE and A-level results in August
- ◆ Pray for all of our staff who are taking well-earned annual leave over the coming weeks, that they will be able to relax and recharge their batteries.

*Nikki Kerr, FSW Director of Fundraising and Marketing*

## Housebuilding

The scale of housebuilding in our area is a huge issue for every village locally, as developers continue to try and build on greenfield sites because they are quicker and cheaper for housebuilding. Putting aside the erosion of our wonderful countryside, these sites are not ideal as they often are not near essential services such as GPs, public transport or schools and as such put pressure on existing services for all residents.

That is why the Government introduced the Local Plan system over 10 years ago, where each area could decide for themselves, by residents voting for their own neighboured plan, where housing went, and the type and style of housing needed in a local area. However, it is clear this system is no longer working well and not protecting the green field sites or delivering the housing we need for local residents.

Having met with all local parishes on this issue we have managed to get some changes to planning law, which are coming later this year, and will make a considerable difference. Firstly, the issue of five-year land supply, which was a requirement to keep Local Plans in date, is likely to be scrapped. Second, the calculation of housing need for each local area is to be changed, scrapping the 2014 data and moving to a model which take the heat of out the South East housing numbers. This will move volumes of housing to other parts of the country where they have the space and capacity to take significant numbers. In addition, the 'brownfield first' approach will mean that housing must be built on land that has had a previous use and will therefore go a long way to protecting our green spaces. Finally, a significant strengthening of Local Plans is set to take place so that if a site is not in a plan, then it will struggle to get planning permission.

I recognise the concerns about house building in our area is not because people are anti-development, but that housing needs to be planned and appropriate and have the services to support it. I will keep you updated as the legislation makes its way through Parliament and, as always, I welcome views on this from residents.

*Maria Caulfield, MP*

## A Kind of Pilgrimage

We followed part of the ancient Pilgrims' route from Canterbury to Winchester. It is now incorporated into the North Downs Way and Saint Swithun's Way. We started at the old village of Merstham and passed through four historic towns - Dorking, Guildford, Farnham, Alton - before reaching Winchester cathedral on the fifth day. At one level we were walking towards King Alfred's capital city. At another level, we were walking towards ending indefinite detention at Immigration Removal Centres (IRCs), walking with a purpose, walking in solidarity with past and present detainees.

There were 60 to 100 people walking each day, the majority of whom went the whole way, and are committed to persevering until their objective is reached. Amongst us were many native-born UK citizens, also with us were individual people of many different nationalities, some who had come to this country to work or study and others who had come to seek refuge. We were practising and demonstrating a welcoming community, which might counteract some of the adverse effects of the politically-inspired 'hostile environment' encountered by so many migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. Although we had been put into colour coded groups, which each had a leader who knew the way, if anyone joined or strayed into another group no-one minded: "no discrimination here" they would say. As we walked, we talked — about our lives and others' lives, and our common concerns.

At evening meetings open to the public in each place where we stopped, stories were told or read aloud, stories of people who had endured detention at IRCs, people who had first-hand experience of the prison-like conditions, of not knowing when or if they would be discharged back into the community. In some cases these people, after being unfairly imprisoned and mistreated in their own country, had come to Britain with considerable expectations of finding here a just and humane society. Some of those who have been detained bravely tell their stories to Refugee Tales, in the hope that sharing of their experiences will help the public to understand what is happening. One ex-detainee ended his account with these words: "...but I thought you would help me".

More information available at [www.refugeetales.org](http://www.refugeetales.org)

*Ruth Butlin*

## George Byrne Stanislaus Coleman DFC

If you enter Selmeston churchyard via the lychgate and take the western footpath to Slubby Lane, halfway along, close to the boundary, you pass by what appears to be a blank headstone. Further investigation of the reverse side reveals all. This is the grave marker of the late Lieutenant Colonel Maurice Coleman and his wife Josephine, which is in fact, facing towards the family home of Little Bells. There is an additional name carved below - George Byrne Coleman with the sad and poignant words 'Lost at Sea 1948'.



More intriguing for me as a RAF historian are the post nominal letters DFC after his name, indicating that he received the Distinguished Flying Cross 'for an act of gallantry in the air'. Further research shows he was also one of the RAF 'fighter boys' of WW2, and not only that, but he was a flying 'Ace' (responsible for the destruction of at least five enemy aircraft in aerial combat). The term originated in the first world war by French pilots and was quickly followed by both German and British pilots. I say fighter boy (a RAF term), but George was hardly a boy, being 35 years old when awarded the DFC, thereby gaining him the nickname 'Pops Coleman' among his fellow flyers.

George was born on the 4<sup>th</sup> September 1908, the younger brother of Maurice, and attended Beaumont College Windsor, after which he worked as a salesman before joining the RAF. He was commissioned on the 13<sup>th</sup> September 1929 and, after training at RAF Sealand in Wales, he joined No 16 Army Co-operation Squadron a year later.

In January 1932, George was attached to 463 (Torpedo Bomber) Flight aboard the aircraft carrier, HMS Courageous. On the outbreak of WW2 he was promoted to Flight Lieutenant and sent to the Elstree Flying Club as an instructor, later moving to the Central Flying School at RAF Cranwell, where he stayed until January 1941, when he was attached to No 6 Anti-Aircraft Co-operation Unit based at Ringway, Manchester. After further training he was posted to 256 Squadron in September 1941, and claimed a German Junkers 88 (Bomber) as destroyed on the 23<sup>rd</sup> October, before joining No 456 Squadron (Royal Australian Air Force) in December, both squadrons flew Beaufighter aircraft (known as Whispering Death) in a night fighter role. In March 1942 George was sent to the Middle East, joining 89 Squadron stationed at Malta, then moving to 46 Squadron on the 21<sup>st</sup> May. Both squadrons were designated the Malta Night Fighting Unit (MNFU).

He claimed another German Ju 88 destroyed on 6<sup>th</sup> April 1943, an Italian BR 20 (Bomber) probably destroyed on the 9<sup>th</sup> May, another BR 20 destroyed on the 15<sup>th</sup> May, and another Ju 88 destroyed on the 4<sup>th</sup> September, with 46 Squadron. He was injured in a flying accident on the 11<sup>th</sup> January 1943, when the Beaufighter he was flying collided with a Harvard training aircraft taking off from Heliopolis.

George then joined 272 (Beaufighter) Squadron as a Flight Commander, and was promoted to Acting Squadron Leader, just before the Operation Torch landings in NW Africa. On the 17<sup>th</sup> March 1943 he flew with nine other aircraft on a shipping strike, when they were attacked by Axis aircraft, but he experienced trouble with his canons, thereby only able to claim two enemy aircraft as damaged, a German Ju 52 (Transport Aircraft), and a He 115 (Torpedo Bomber Seaplane). On the 16<sup>th</sup> April, he flew the Air Officer Commanding Malta to Algeria, and on his return the next day, he destroyed a German Ju 88, flying a Beaufighter VI F (T5170), just off Cap Bon.

On the 6<sup>th</sup> April 1943 the London Gazette published that Squadron Leader George Byrne Stanislaus had been awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC): *This officer has completed a very large number of operational missions, including a number of daylight attacks on shipping. In night attacks on the enemy's communications, he has bombed railway junctions and machine gunned locomotives with success; he has also destroyed 4 enemy aircraft. On one occasion, after attacking two ships, he was forced to bring his aircraft down on to the sea when one of his engines caught fire. He spent several hours in the water before being picked up. The next day S/L Coleman led a successful attack on a merchant vessel escorted by 3 armed ships. Despite heavy anti-aircraft fire from the ships and coastal batteries he succeeded in obtaining hits on the supply ship. This officer has invariably displayed courage, skill and determination.*

George was posted back to the UK in May 1943, and relinquished his Squadron Leader rank, reverting back to Instructor duties, this time with No 2 Torpedo Training Unit at Castle Kennedy, Scotland in July.

In March 1944, George was posted back to the Mediterranean, joining 600 Squadron flying Beaufighters, as a Flight Commander, promoted again to Acting Squadron Leader. He claimed two German Ju 87's (Stuka's) destroyed on 20<sup>th</sup> January 1945, and these were his final claims during WW2. On the 10<sup>th</sup> March, George was flying a Mosquito night-fighter aircraft with Flight Sgt Richards as his navigator, when one of their engines was damaged by AA fire over Ravenna, Italy. George skilfully managed to land the aircraft with no injuries to either party.

Returning to the UK in time for the celebrations marking the end of the war in 1945, he resigned his commission on the 30<sup>th</sup> September, in order to return to flying as an airline pilot. On the 6<sup>th</sup> January 1948, he was flying a Proctor V civil aircraft from Zurich to Stanstead Airport with a Mr G Dawson on board. The weather was poor, with visibility at 200 yards, when George radioed at 19.55 that he had only fuel for another 25 minutes flying, after being instructed to land at RAF Manston.

The Coastguard at Margate later reported sighting flares out at sea at 20.30hrs. George had landed in the sea on three previous occasions during the war and had survived, but was not so lucky in peacetime. Rather ironically, also situated in Selmeston

Churchyard, only a few yards away from George's headstone, is the resting place of Frederick Mockett, the inventor of the international distress call 'Mayday', probably one of the last words uttered by George Coleman on that fateful day.

© Simon Muggleton

## Grass Snake

"Go wild in the country, where snakes in the grass are absolutely free." I can still remember Annabella Lwin, of new-wave pop group Bow Wow Wow, singing those words on Top of the Pops back in 1982: a clarion call for early eighties urbanites to get out into the wild. Annabella was ecologically correct. There are indeed free snakes out there, a fact that still thrills me each time I encounter one slithering through Sussex.

As a child I thought snakes were exotic creatures, which hung off African jungle branches in Johnny Weissmuller Tarzan movies to convey a vague sense of something sinister. But there's nothing sinister about the Grass Snake; the commonest of Britain's three native snake species. Mesmerising eyes, gorgeous sleek scales of olive-green and a series of stripes along their flanks. For a cold-blooded reptile they sure look hot. A key identification feature is that yellow collar encircling the back of their head.

Grass Snakes have been rather short-changed when it comes to their name; they're much better at swimming than they are at sitting in the grass (a bit like Johnny Weissmuller, who performed better in the water than he did on dry land). You'll find Grass Snakes gliding through wet ditches and dykes or even in your garden pond as they hunt for their favourite food: frogs and toads. These amphibious feasts really pile on the pounds, so when their snakeskin suits become too tight, they slip out of them to reveal a larger, shiny set of scales underneath. They undertake several costume changes each year and can grow to an impressive size – two or three feet is typical, but there are rumours of six-foot long monsters out there. Of course they're nothing to be scared of: if threatened they either pretend to be dead, hiss a lot or, according to my reptile book, "release a pungent, foul-smelling substance from their anal gland."

In July, the female Grass Snakes excavate a chamber in a mound of decaying vegetation – a compost heap is perfect. Inside, she lays 5-20 leathery eggs and the heap's heat and humidity cooks them to perfection. Set your egg timer for ten weeks and you'll return to find pencil-sized baby snakes emerging into the world. I guess not everyone followed Bow Wow Wow's advice back in 1982 because, when leading my wildlife walks, I'm always amazed at how many adults have never seen a snake in Britain. But it's never too late to go wild in the country.

Michael Blencowe  
Sussex Wildlife Trust

## Benefice Priests

Revd Peter Blee - Rector of Berwick and Vicar of Selmeston with Alciston

The Parsonage, Berwick, Polegate, BN26 6SR  
Tel: 01323 870512 Email: [peter.blee@berwickchurch.org.uk](mailto:peter.blee@berwickchurch.org.uk)  
Peter's day off is Saturday.

Revd Shirley Pearce - Assistant Priest  
The Vicarage, Wilmington, Polegate, BN26 5SL  
Tel: 01323 318231 Email: [revshirleym@gmail.com](mailto:revshirleym@gmail.com)  
Shirley's 'on duty' days are Wednesday, Thursday and Sunday.

## Churchwardens

Alciston - Michèle Boys Tel: 01323 870623  
Berwick – Ruth Nares Tel: 01323 811186  
Selmeston - Jan Matthews Tel: 01323 811380

## Benefice Administrator

Stephanie Lewis-Grey Tel: 01323 811136 Email:  
[benefice.administrator@berwickchurch.org.uk](mailto:benefice.administrator@berwickchurch.org.uk)

## Parish News Advertising

Brian Calcott coordinates this. Tel. 07999 788618.

## Parish News Distribution

Jeremy and Valerie Shaw coordinate this. Tel: 01323 811567.

## Parish News

The production team is Jane Anderson and Martin Chilvers. Contributions (other than advertising requests) should be sent to Martin Chilvers by the 12<sup>th</sup> of the month.

Email: [empty.sea@outlook.com](mailto:empty.sea@outlook.com);  
Post: 66 Parkfield Avenue, Eastbourne, BN22 9SF.  
You should receive confirmation of receipt by the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month, but if not, please call him on 01323 507655.

Contributions can also be passed on to one of the coordinators:

Jane Anderson at Old Postman's Cottage, Alciston  
Tel: 01323 870075.

Valerie Shaw at Selmeston House, Selmeston  
Tel: 01323 811567.

Laurie Tinsley, Wynsford, Berwick  
Tel: 01323 870895.

## Donations

Financial donations to the Parish News are gratefully received. Cheques payable to "Parish News" can be passed to the Treasurer, Brian Calcott at 2 Railway Cottages, Station Road, Berwick, Polegate, BN26 6TA.

Alternatively, electronic donations can be made to Barclays Bank - Account No. 70650625; Sort code 20-49-76.