



Under the Downs

3 Country Churches Nestling Under the Downs

View From the Rectory

February 2019

Are you good at planning ahead? Do you like to know well in advance when your holidays might be, who you will be visiting, or who might be planning to visit you? Some people favour the 'last minute' approach, and enjoy the surprise element, others find that uncertainty quite unsettling.

Of course, there are some events where we have little choice. The busyness of life generally often means that weddings, for example, have to be planned well in advance, as do holidays, if there is a specific date and/or venue important to us. Other life events, such as funerals, often come upon us unawares, and we suddenly need to make new plans and change existing ones.

The Church has to plan ahead too: so already we are thinking about Lent and Easter - our weekly themes concertina the whole life and ministry of Jesus into four or five short months.

Our communities are involved in long term planning too - what will happen to Dunford House or St Mary Magdalene Church in West Lavington, how are the plans for transformation of the Bluebell in Cocking progressing?

Of course at the very beginning of time, God had a plan too - for the creation and working out of his world, in which we all have a place. He gave us freewill, so that what happens in our world in the shorter term is in part to do with choices that people down the ages have made. It's good to know that God's long term plan is unchanging, and perfect, and continues to hold a place for each of us.

Linda

Short-eared owl by Michael Blencowe of the Sussex Wildlife Trust

They come from the land of ice and snow

On soft, silent wings they came. Gliding over forests and skimming across the lowlands until the seemingly impassable dark sea stretched out ahead of them. But still they flew on.

The first signs of this Nordic invasion came in on October. Observers stationed on the Norfolk coastline watched the first of them glide overhead. Another followed. Then another. Elsewhere along our eastern seaboard, more silent invaders were arriving.

Short-eared owls are scarce winter visitors to Sussex. Swiss ornithologist Paul Geroudet described them as 'nomads who camp where the table is laid'. This winter dozens of these wandering diners were reported in Sussex and small parliaments (the collective term for owls, pub quizzers) lingered around the meadows along the county's river valleys where they have tucked in to a bountiful rodent buffet.

In Sussex we have four breeding owl species. The most familiar will be the tawny owl – whose hoots and twit-to-woos can be heard in our woodlands. The barn owl is that pale spectral spirit that may be glimpsed in the headlights along country lanes at night. The long-eared owl is our rarest, most elusive species. The little owl was introduced here in the 19th century. It eats worms.

So when short-eared owls arrive it's an extra owl to get excited about. The meadows around the Ouse, Arun and Adur become popular destinations for owl watchers to observe these graceful daytime hunters.

And a hunting short-eared owl is a sight to behold. It's a large bird - with a one metre wingspan - but agile. It twists, weaves and glides low over the ground before dropping hard on its prey. Its 'short ears' are just feather tufts. Its bright yellow eyes are set in a face which seems fixed in a permanent impatient, angry expression.

I recently led a walk to see these owls and our group waited patiently on the Ouse banks. Our first sighting was high, distant and disappointing. But another hunting owl, seemingly oblivious to us, flew closer. And closer...and closer still. There is something eerie about the sound of seventeen people not breathing, but as the owl passed by we were stunned and as silent as its wingbeats. After hunting the owls will gather and roost, no doubt dreaming of Northern Lights, lemmings and the long journey home.



Looking forward to Lent

Easter is quite late this year, so Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, 6th March. There will be a joint service of Holy Communion at St James Heyshott at 10a.m.

We will as usual be running a Lent Study course in the five weeks following. This will be held in turn at our various churches. We are still at the planning stage, but sessions will probably be on Monday afternoons, including tea and cake.

The theme will probably be to do with music in worship - more details next month!

Calling All Yachties!

Exciting talk in The Cobden Hall on 6 February 7 for 7:30pm

Mervyn Wheatley, a former Royal Marine, is a very experienced sailor. In July 2017, during a ferocious storm, he was the subject of a dramatic rescue in mid-Atlantic from his yacht, 'Tamarind', while competing in OSTAR - the single-handed trans-Atlantic race. This was his 5th OSTAR, his 8th single-handed Atlantic crossing, and his 19th Atlantic crossing overall. He had owned 'Tamarind' for 20 years and had sailed her 135,000 miles. He has also sailed around the world, in all clocking up about 245,000 miles at sea. Mervyn tells an amazing tale with great honesty and considerable humility.

Attendance is free – no tickets required – there will be a cash bar. Collection for the Royal Marines Charity. For further information contact Andrew Keeling 01730 812474

Community Hub for Cocking and Surrounding Villages

A Community Benefit Society has been formed by a group of residents of Cocking to try to turn the now-closed Blue Bell pub into a community hub. The hub will provide a focal point for Cocking and surrounding villages incorporating the Post Office, a shop, and a pub with a café and B&B accommodation serving hot and cold drinks, and wholesome affordable pub-grub. Parking for cars and bicycles (and repair facilities) and a garden area will be available. The family-, walkers- and cyclists-friendly hub will be community-owned through issue of shares by the Benefit Society which will give participants membership and voting rights; this form of co-operative is becoming more popular and since started in 1982 has a 100% survival rate.

The group is now seeking grants, donations and will issue shares to anybody interested in participating in February. Much more information about these exciting plans can be found on www.bluebellhub.org.uk.

Midhurst WI Meeting January 2019

The speaker at the January meeting was a local historian, Dr Janet Pennington. Her talk was entitled 'Sussex Inn Signs and Their History'. Janet has made an extensive study of West Sussex inns and taverns in the period 1550-1700. She explained that inns and taverns were often built on land owned by aristocratic families, with pubs called the White Horse connected to the Dukes of Norfolk. Religion also provided another connection. The Lamb, and the Dolphin and the Anchor have a religious meaning. Many old inn signs have gone. These signs were not merely random decorations but formed part of the wider social and religious life of their community. This was a very informative talk. Members will not pass pub signs in the future without looking at them in a lot more detail than before. See:- <https://sussexhistorytalks.co.uk/sussex-inn-signs-history/>

Thank you very much for everyone's generous donations towards my trip to the 24th World Scout Jamboree at the Summit Bechtel Family National Scout Reserve in West Virginia, USA in July 2019. I just wanted to thank all from the local Cocking community who donated. I hope you found my talk and photographs informative. I am now one step closer to reaching my fundraising goal and am very much looking forward to the experience. William West



Church Service Times

This is the usual pattern, but occasionally there are changes - please check the church noticeboards. This is especially important at festival times such as Christmas and Easter

St Mary Bepton

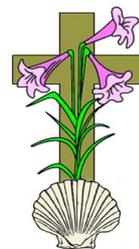
11.15am 1st Sunday of the month Matins BCP
2nd, 3rd and 4th Sundays Matins with Holy Communion BCP

St Catherine of Siena Cocking

9.30am Every Sunday
1st Sunday of the month Family Communion CW
2nd, 3rd and 4th Sundays Holy Communion CW

St James Heyshott

11.15am 1st Sunday of the month Family Communion CW
9.30am 2nd Sunday of the month Holy Communion BCP
9.30am 3rd Sunday of the month Matins BCP
11.15am 4th Sunday of the month Holy Communion CW
6.00pm 1st 2nd and 4th Sundays Evensong BCP
3rd Sunday Compline



On a 5th Sunday of the month, there is a joint service at 10.00 am at one of our churches - please check the notice boards or our magazine.
CW - Common Worship is the modern language service
BCP - Book of Common Prayer is the traditional service