

Rural renewal



Two of Hamstead’s barns are currently undergoing substantial refurbishment. Above, Barr’s farmyard is being re-roofed and, below, the grade-II listed barn of

Elm Farm is being converted into office accommodation in phase two of the Organic Research Centre’s redevelopment programme.



Three well-known senior residents of Hamstead Marshall have died in the last three months: Elsie Hart of Ash Tree Corner, Alison Oldland of Craven Hill and Neil Hadow of Red Hill.

Could you represent the views of your local community?

The parish council needs a replacement for Kate Gunn, who recently resigned. Parish councillors usually serve for four years, attending two-monthly meetings at which they seek to improve local facilities, address local issues and complaints, examine planning applications, initiate projects and set the parish precept element of council tax. Local residents are invited to put their names forward. There will be no election, but if there is a surplus of candidates a selection process will be conducted by the present councillors. To learn more see <www.hamsteadmarshall.net/parishcouncil> and contact the parish clerk, Jo Wheeler, on <jowheeler43@aol.com> or 07766 692235.

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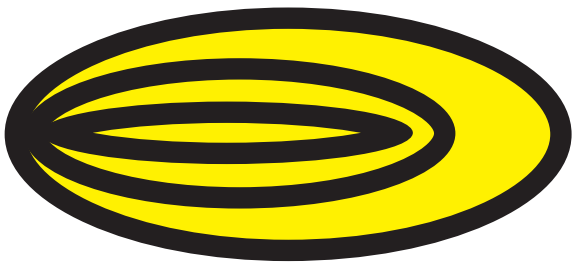
Hamstead is soon to lose its public telephone box at Ash Tree Corner. BT has announced its intention to remove all such kiosks unless local residents plead exceptional circumstances. The parish council does not consider that usage of the village kiosk justifies campaigning for its retention.

Installation of a single streetlight for security in Ash Tree Grove has proved to be beyond the capability of WBC, so Gordon Fisher is pursuing a DIY solution on behalf of the village.

Sue Watts has organised a trip for 22 local people to see the Ballet Russe company of Wales perform *Swan Lake* on 18 December.

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Broadband up and running

More than 15 Hamstead houses formerly excluded from broadband because of BT landline difficulties are now receiving a good broadband signal via Vodafone 3G. Another five who have tested positive for the signal, and are in the process of implementing the broadband committee’s instructions, will bring the total of successful installations to around 20.

The programme of individual testing carried out by the broadband committee found viable signals in most of the households which had expressed interest. By using a rooftop or attic aerial (as pictured) the 3G broadband signal from the mast at Shepherd’s Bridge is enhanced and transmitted either directly to a computer close by, or via a router which can feed up to four computers distributed around the house.

This has transformed the lives of several Hamstead residents in urgent need of broadband. Schoolchildren are now on a par with their classmates, and home-based businesses are no longer labouring at a disadvantage. After the initial outlay on equipment running costs are comparable with other broadband providers, and many households have achieved additional cost savings by cancelling telephone lines dedicated to a dial-up connection.

The signal can be affected by obstructions such as topography, buildings and trees. Completion of the test programme before leaf-fall was essential to obtain realistic, year-round results. House height and position can be crucial, and even next door neighbours can get widely different readings. Two houses which could not pick up the Vodafone signal have however been able to obtain a signal from the 3UK mast at Wash Common, obtaining connection speeds of around 120kb/s – not broadband, but still a significant improvement on dial-up (locally around 20kb/s).

Frank Ellis, chairman of the broadband committee, says: “We’re pleased to have found a solution for most of the village, thanks to a great deal of hard work by committee members. Generally speaking, the test phase is now complete, and documentary guidance will continue to be available on request for any new interest in broadband. We shall of course be keeping a watchful eye on future technical developments in this field.”



Parish plan
More money, more village amenities

Robin Tandy, chairman of the parish plan steering group, recently announced the success of Hamstead’s application to WBC for a further £5,000 to spend on projects specified in the parish plan. He summed up progress to date:

Many of our action plan projects have made a significant contribution to quality of life in the village, not least the village market, improved road signage and 3G broadband. You are probably aware that the first £5,000 was spent on a new village hall kitchen, the information point at the Ash Tree Corner bus stop and play equipment for the village hall. We also obtained funding for new village hall furniture via a National Lottery Action For All grant.

We have been successful with our second £5,000 WBC bid, and work will start shortly on new fencing, gates, notice boards, outdoor play items and a sign at the village hall and field.

We have recently had an application provisionally approved for a grant of £3,000, with which we propose to improve the village hall car parking area. This will be submitted to the WBC Vibrant Villages committee, which meets early in 2009.

If this latest application is formally approved we will have obtained about £17,000 from various sources in just two years.

Village Design Statement

The third draft of the Village Design Statement (VDS) is currently with WBC’s Development Control department. When this final hurdle is cleared (possibly in January 2009) the VDS will be formally accepted, and thus the canvassed views of villagers (on which it was based) will be taken into account when any planning application is being considered.

What’s on Dec 08 - Mar 09		
19.30-21.30 Thu 4 Dec	Circle of Friends (ladies’ group) in village hall Christmas party	Sue Watts 01488 658932
20.00 Sun 7 Dec	White Hart quiz £2 per person – all proceeds to charity	01488 658201
10.00-13.00 Sat 13 Dec	Christmas village market in village hall gifts, decs, crafts, local produce & refreshments	Sue 01488 658932 Lanie 01488 658168
15.00-18.00 Sat 20 Dec	Christmas party with mulled wine, festive food in the village hall – please be sure to book	Sue 01488 658932 Lanie 01488 658168
19.30 Tue 23 Dec	carol singing for all around the village meet at Craven Hill	Sarah Ward 01488 658117
Wed 31 Dec	New Year’s Eve party at White Hart buffet supper & dancing	01488 658201
20.00 Sun 4 Jan	White Hart quiz £2 per person – all proceeds to charity	01488 658201
19.30-21.30 Thu 8 Jan	Circle of Friends (ladies’ group) in village hall hobbies evening	Sue Watts 01488 658932
20.00 Mon 19 Jan	parish council meeting in the village hall	Jo Wheeler 07766 692235
Sat 31 Jan	Burns Night ceilidh in village hall NB: participants must book with organiser and attend four practice classes beforehand	Liz Harris 01488 658330
20.00 Sun 1 Feb	White Hart quiz £2 per person – all proceeds to charity	01488 658201
19.30-21.30 Thu 5 Feb	Circle of Friends (ladies’ group) in village hall “my favourite photograph”	Sue Watts 01488 658932
10.00-13.00 Sat 14 Feb	village market in village hall local produce & refreshments	Sue 01488 658932 Lanie 01488 658168
20.00 Sun 1 Mar	White Hart quiz £2 per person – all proceeds to charity	01488 658201
19.30-21.30 Thu 5 Mar	Circle of Friends (ladies’ group) in village hall	Sue Watts 01488 658932
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regular term-time activities in the village hall		
10.00-11.30 Weds	yoga classes	Inga Craven 01488 658744
13.30-16.00 Mons	oil painting classes for beginners & improvers	Newbury College 01635 42824
weekdays	Little Sunflowers nursery school	Teresa 01635 253201 Trudy 01635 255363

Did you miss it?

- Village events in the last three months have included
- ☺ the **WHITE HART BEER FESTIVAL** over the week-end of 5 - 7 September – music, hog roast and real ales enjoyed by hundreds of drinkers, diners and dancers
 - ☺ the **GARDEN SOCIETY FLOWER SHOW AND FETE** at Hazel Paddock on Saturday 6 September
 - ☺ the **HARVEST SUPPER AND AUCTION** at the village hall on Friday 17 October, attended by around 60 people, raising money for the church

- ☺ a **SHOWCASE EVENING** at the village hall on Friday 24 October, featuring the work of nine local artists
- ☺ a stupendous free-for-all **FIREWORK DISPLAY AND BONFIRE** at the recreation field on Wednesday 5 November, organised by the White Hart and the village market. Donations not only covered the cost of fireworks – they also raised £150 for the Air Ambulance.
- ☺ the **CHRISTMAS VILLAGE MARKET** at the village hall on Saturday 8 November, another of which takes place on Saturday 13 December with hand-made chocolates, handbags, decorations, jewellery, cards, toys and turned wood, as well as the usual goodies.

Property slow to move

National stagnation in the property market is reflected in Hamstead Marshall, with little change to the situation reported in the September *Hornet*. One flat at the mill has sold; the other six properties were still being advertised on the web by their agents on 1 December, two at reduced prices. The list now comprises:
 North Lodge, £2.8 million, Knight Frank
 Barn House, £750,000, Henry George
 Merrow Mead £560,000, Rural Scene
 Mansard, £475,000, Hillier and Wilson
 Waverley, £425,000, Haines Residential
 2-bedroom flat at Hamstead Mill, £249,950, Chancellors.

Planning applications

Patrick Early’s application for the erection of a replacement dwelling at **Foxlee Farm** is pending WBC consideration. The parish council has objected to the application on the grounds that it is not in keeping.
 Also pending consideration are two applications from **The Old Post Office** to change and convert outbuildings from agricultural to domestic use. The parish council has not objected to this.
 A new application has been submitted for the demolition and replacement of **Holtwood House**. This new proposal positions the replacement house slightly further back from the road. The parish council has not objected.
 Keith Webb of **Hamstead Growers** has submitted a retrospective application for change of use for a manege, livery stables within an existing stable building and horticultural fields to be used for equine purposes, together with planning permission and change of use for a seven-stable block with store and hardstanding, and planning permission for new specified activities within the existing Portakabin.

Coming soon...

A history board is planned for inside the village hall, displaying old photographs and memorabilia relating to the village. Rob Bowyer is making the board itself (he also made the altar table beneath the millennium window in St Mary’s Church, and a traditional butcher’s block for the new butcher in Kintbury). Sue Watts is researching and co-ordinating the contents of the board.

Hamstead now has a Village Literature Group of 10 volunteers who are working on the compilation of a welcome pack for newcomers to the village. It will contain information on the village hall, forthcoming events, local societies and businesses, the village market, church details, the parish plan, local police and neighbourhood watch contacts, forthcoming events, maps and a bus timetable. When this is complete the group will turn to producing leaflets on local walks.

A permanent vehicle activated speed sign on the Kintbury road is promised for December, backed up during January by a police enforcement campaign which will also focus on seatbelt and mobile phone offences.

Scottish dancing classes will again be held in the village hall during January in preparation for a Burns Night supper and ceilidh on Saturday 31 January. The ceilidh will be strictly limited to those who have attended the four prior practice sessions. Both couples and singles are welcome. If you would like to know more ring Liz Harris on 01488 658330.



CAROL SINGING around the village

This year’s carollers will meet at 7.30pm, Tuesday 23 December at Craven Hill. Singing will continue into the village to finish at the Wards for a warm drink. All ages are welcome, bring torches, and instruments if you want to. Donations raised will go to *Swings and Smiles*, a charity raising funds for a playground for disabled children in the Newbury area. For further information ring Sarah Ward on 01488 658817 or email <sarah.ward1000@hotmail.com>.

You should soon receive with the church magazine an invitation to the village Christmas party in the village hall on the afternoon of Saturday 20 December. Mulled wine, festive food and good company are guaranteed. There is no charge (it is yet another venture funded by the village market) but advance warning of numbers is definitely needed, so please ring Sue on 01488 658932 or Lanie on 01488 658168 to let them know how many of you are coming. Donations to the tombola or raffle can be delivered to either of them, or to the White Hart.

A Hamstead turkey for Christmas...

...well, quite possibly from Hamstead. Visit <www.pangvalleyorganics.co.uk> to order an organic Norfolk Black turkey (and a good deal more), or contact 01635 200021. This is the Eling Farm shop near Hermitage, whose owners are also the tenants of Elm Farm land. Their turkeys have been reared here as well as on the Eling estate’s acreage elsewhere, so whilst Hamstead provenance can’t be guaranteed, it’s about as local as you can hope to get. It may be possible for Hamstead orders to be delivered to Elm Farm for collection on 23 December.