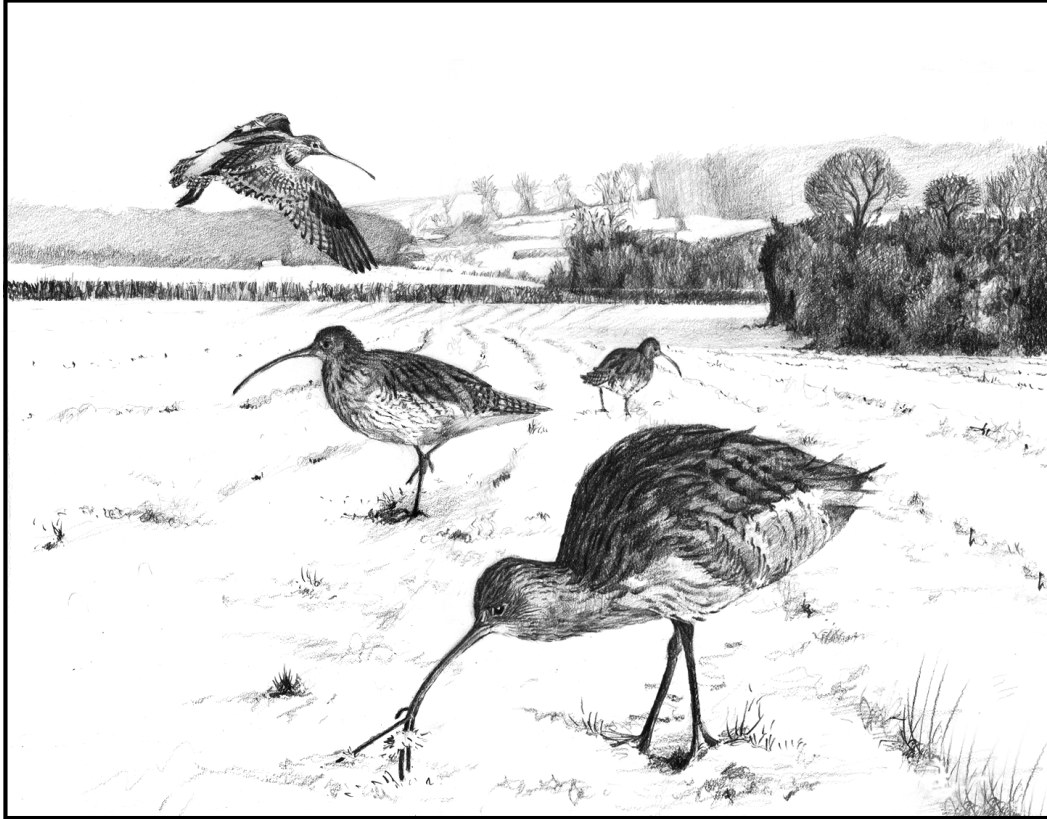


THE STOURTON CAUNDLER

ISSUE NO. 89

APRIL 2011



Curlews near Brunsell Farm - December 20 11

Drawing by Alan Peters

The Stourton Caundler team

Eric Dummett	Chairman	Margaret McKay	Production
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Gerry Holdstock	Webmaster	Marjo Walker	Advertising

Please present all contributions for the next issue to the Editor by 12 noon on 18 April 2011 by e-mail if possible. E mail address : thecaundler@hotmail.co.uk. Please use only "Word" document format (.doc) when sending contributions.

What follows?

As is perhaps appropriate with Spring in the air, this issue of The Stourton Caundler has a strong bias to nature. Alan Peters's delightful drawing of curlews on the front cover, Margaret Waddingham's ever popular notes on things natural, Austringer's unusual 'Day in the life of.. a goshawk', and the articles on gardening all illustrate the wonders of nature. We also have information on the opening of two lovely gardens in the village and on an opportunity to visit a private local wood in 'bluebell time'. As usual, we also look back at what has gone on over the past few weeks. Read on and enjoy.

Tim Villiers

A MOTHERING SUNDAY POSY AND CARD WORKSHOP FOR CHILDREN

will be held in the village church
on Saturday 2nd April from
10.30-12pm.
Refreshments will be provided.

The front cover

My wife's sister lives in the Orkney Islands, and curlews are not an uncommon sight there. Frequently one can pass fields which are full of these extraordinary, exotic birds, but it was quite a shock to look out of the kitchen window on Christmas Eve morning 2010 in the village and see a group of four curlews feeding their way steadily across the snow-covered fields below Brunsell Farm, bordering Cat Lane. They appeared quite at home. Through the binoculars I watched as they preened, fed and slept on one leg (the bill is neatly 'sheathed' invisibly over the shoulder and down the back feathers).

The ridiculously long bill was forced down through the snow, the grass, and on down through the soil, probing, and quite frequently extracting large worms and other invertebrates. On one occasion, the worm was so large, the curlew ran out of space to pull it out and had to lean right over backwards. When the great worm finally came out of the ground rather explosively, the bird nearly fell over backwards.

They stayed two or three days, feeding right up to the kitchen window. We became used to seeing them, however out of place they might actually be. But I never quite got over the incongruity of their eerie, mournful cry as it echoed across the fields, so evocative of rocky sea shores and Orcadian sunsets.

Alan Peters

Village Hall '100' Club monthly draw

The draw for March 2011 took place in The Trooper on 16 March. The winners were:

<i>First Prize:</i>	<i>£25.00</i>	<i>No.222</i>	<i>Ro Perkins</i>
<i>Second Prize:</i>	<i>£20.00</i>	<i>No.58</i>	<i>Jane Onslow</i>
<i>Third Prize:</i>	<i>£15.00</i>	<i>No.206</i>	<i>Andrew Oliver</i>
<i>Fourth Prize:</i>	<i>£10.00</i>	<i>No.73</i>	<i>Stella Kelly</i>

We are now approaching the end of another 6 month period, so Delia, Fleur and I will be collecting subscriptions from those members who pay twice-yearly. If you have paid for a year, we will not be knocking on your door until the autumn.

The next monthly draw will take place on Wednesday 13 April at The Trooper at about 9 pm, after the Garden Club meeting.

Anna Oliver

OPEN GARDENS

Come and enjoy springtime – visit the gardens at:

MANOR FARM and GRANGE COTTAGE

Saturday 2 April and Sunday 3 April, 2-5pm

Both gardens £7, children free. On behalf of the National Gardens Scheme.

Teas. Give your Mum a treat on Mothering Sunday !

Naturally Thinking

Much of my file of nature clippings, which dates back to the late '80s, paints a rather gloomy picture of what has been happening to our wildlife. The last few years seem to be slightly more up-beat with reports of several new arrivals, as well as a lot of our native flora and fauna flourishing. Perhaps we're getting the hang of balancing nature with humanity at last.

The RSPB website says the Little Egret first decided to try out this country in 1989 and began to breed in Dorset in 1996. This is a small, white Heron with white plumes on its crest, back and chest. They're fairly easy to identify: if you see some hunched-up creatures in the distance, with their bills stuck in the ground, looking a bit like large, white, air-filled plastic bags, that's probably them. A pair were seen in a garden in the village last year and for the past few years two or three have been hanging around the fields at Milborne Port and at nearby spots along the Stour. This year the group at Milborne Port has swelled to seven so I rather think they're here to stay. Incidentally, their staple diet is fish. I'd be interested to know what those in Milborne Port are eating, unless of course, someone's tossing fish skins to them out of their car windows as they speed by.

I shouldn't think dandelions are ever likely to be under threat and I'm glad. There's nothing like the sight of a whole field of them shining in the sun to take your breath away. Bees and hover-flies like them as each flower has up to 200 florets. It must make the dandelion one of the most richly productive, well stocked little larders. One day, when I've nothing better to do, I'll count them and confirm this number. They're coming out now on the verges, glowing amongst the primroses, violets and celandines.

The catkins have been swinging their tails for a long time now, the pussy willow is bursting with little silver buds and weeping willows are shrouded in bright green curtains.

A pair of jackdaws have taken to sitting closely together on the willow at the bottom of our garden in the mornings, looking as though they're kissing. There's a female blackbird that tugs in vain at tiny roots of a little shrub with a beak that's already crammed full of nesting material, and there's a sparrow that keeps swinging on a small clematis until it breaks off little shoots and flies off with them to a new nest site.

Skylarks, which are said to be a threatened species, have been heard by a friend singing over the fields around Holt Woods almost before February was half way through and I heard one at the end of that month in the fields opposite us. The chaffinch, the second most common of our birds, is safe enough. The males have changed their dull winter plumage now for a rather resplendent technicolour dream coat and their song, a repetitive, down the scale call, is everywhere. The wren seems safe too, so long as the cold winter hasn't reduced its numbers too much. There is one that has its home somewhere in our hedge. It lives its tiny life at a furious pace, pausing only now and then to sing a shrill but perfect little song quite out of proportion to its size. The friend who heard the early lark has a wren in her hedge too, and she watches it darting in and out of her dung heap. The male of these tiny birds will build up to half a dozen nests for his mate to choose from. Wonder what happens to all the others?

A pair of greenfinches, which escaped the disease which struck down so many this winter, are back in the ash and willow tree. They have a funny little song, rather twittery and wheezy but it's nice to hear them.

And Mr Bocelli keeps popping up, perching on the door handle to see where we've got to or standing on tip toe to peep in over the sill. Why did I doubt him? He always comes back. We're into the fifth year of our acquaintance with him. Is this a record? And there is a thrush, singing everything twice, just in case we miss it the first time.

If you're lucky you might see hares having their boxing bouts. This was once thought to be bucks fighting over the does, but those who know about such things say that the aggressor is a female, rebuffing the attentions of an over-enthusiastic male. In this hare-rich territory, I can't help thinking it's about time they performed when I'm around.

Margaret Waddingham

Recipe - for Mothering Sunday

LEMON CRISPS

These biscuits are simple enough for children to make for their mothers, have a lovely flavour and keep well in an airtight tin.

Making time about 25 minutes: Baking time about 15 to 20 minutes.

Heat the oven to 350°F, 180° C, gas mark 4. Grease two or three baking sheets.

4oz (100g) butter

4oz (100g) caster sugar

1 egg, beaten

8oz (225g) self-raising flour

Grated rind of 1 lemon

Cream the butter and sugar together and then add the remaining ingredients and work together until they form a smooth dough. Put this in the refrigerator and chill for 15 minutes.

Roll out the dough thinly on a lightly floured or sugared table and cut into rounds with a 3-inch (7.5-cm) cutter. (Use a fluted one if possible)

Place the rounds, evenly spaced, on the baking sheets and bake in the oven for 15-20 minutes until they are a very pale golden brown and are crisp; the flavour is spoilt if the biscuits are allowed to get too brown.

Lift off and leave to cool on a wire rack. Store in an airtight tin.

Makes 24 to 30 lemon crisps.

Variation

Orange crisps : Use the grated rind of 1 medium-sized orange instead of the lemon rind and make as above.

Dee Dummett

Garden club

March's meeting was an interesting talk by Dinah Lindon-Critchley on 'Building a Border'. Dinah projected a series of pictures on to the screen with which she showed how to plant a border for all-year-round colour and interest. More than 40 members attended and Dinah explained her subject very well, except that she used the plants' Latin names which baffled a few of us.

April's meeting is on the 13th and will be a talk by Charles Dowding who writes in the Blackmore Vale Magazine on growing vegetables. He is a very well known organic vegetable grower from Shepton Montague who promotes a 'No Dig' technique.

If anyone is interested in growing sunflowers you can still log on to the village website www.stourtoncaundle.org.uk for details, or contact Win Gillard, who has the seeds, on 363816.

On 17 July there will be a trip to Hilliers Nursery near Romsey, Hampshire, with Sturminster Garden Club. The cost is £17.50 to include coach and entrance. If you are interested please contact Paula Harris on 01258 471147 by 1 May for more details.

Nikki Hale

Garden tip

Now is a good time to scarify your lawns with a wire 'springbok' rake or motorised appliance, to remove unwanted moss and dead grass. Follow this with a dressing of a well balanced feed. Water in if no rain is anticipated.

Bluebells - a date for your diary

Sunday 8 May at 3.00-5.00 pm

Bluebells in ancient Bilcombe Copse at Woodrow Farm

Take a leisurely stroll around the bluebells followed by a cup of tea and a slice of cake/biscuit in the barn afterwards. A donation of £4.00 per adult and £2.00 per accompanied child is suggested with proceeds going to St Peter's Church. Parking will be in the farmyard and stout walking shoes are recommended as the woods are located across a couple of fields from the parking area. If anyone feels they can't manage the longish walk then do still call by for a cuppa and a chat.

Lizzie Fenwick

**ROYAL WEDDING DAY
FRIDAY 29 APRIL 3.00– 5.00 PM**

There will be a ***Street Party*** to celebrate the Royal Wedding
outside The Trooper

Come and join us! Free and open to everyone—any age

Watch the wedding in The Trooper on the big screen

For further information contact Jane Colville Tel: 362287

**STOURTON CAUNDLE VILLAGERS' DAY
SUNDAY 12 JUNE**

**Dog Show 4.15 PM to 5.15 PM
(For all shapes, sizes andmakes!)**

Prizes and doggy treats for four classes:

1. Best Dressed Dog – Summer attire - calls for imagination!
2. Waggiest Tail
3. Obedience – basic requirements!
4. The Villagers' choice – large or small that fits village image?

Entry is £2 per dog per class or £5 for all FOUR classes

Rules and details will follow closer to the time

Queries to David Keenan on Tel: 363409 or 07854 685671

*Have fun with your dog at the Villagers' Day – it's a
definite must!!*

Weather report for February

Rainfall	2011	2010	18-year average		
	47mm / 1.85 in	85mm / 3.35in	78.1mm / 3.74 in		
Temperature (°C)	Maximum		Minimum		Average
	High	Low	High	Low	
2011	13.6 (24th)	6.4 (28th)	9.7 (5th)	-2.3 (8th)	7.3
2010	8.6 (27th)	2.6 (11th)	4.5 (4th)	-3.8 (20th)	3.0

Survey of Stourton Caundle women - Blog

The research site is now online (www.deannetremlett.wordpress.com) and its contents should hopefully give a clearer idea of the survey's purpose and intentions. Thanks to all participants who have so far been interviewed. I will be getting round to everyone else in the next month. A social will be held in the Skittle Alley at The Trooper late April / early May. Please visit the blog and leave a comment if you wish, anyone else wishing to become involved now needs to contact me a.s.a.p. Thank you.

Deanne Tremlett

New arrivals

We welcome to the village:

Barry and Linda Mitchell who have moved into Anvil Cottage.

All Saint's Primary School, Bishops Caundle

The Spring term is drawing to a close – a lovely time of year for all of us. This week the children were able to use the field for their playtime – the first time this year – and how they enjoyed the extra space.

Our Book Week was a tremendous success with many activities including books for sale and swap, a whole school book quiz and on the Friday, every teacher and child dressed as their favourite book character.

The Year 3 children from the five cluster schools spent a fantastic day at the Ancient Technology Centre Cranborne, where they tried a hand-plough, made woven hazel fencing to 'keep the pigs in' and learned how to make fire! Their indoor time was spent in the Viking Longhouse. The Year 5 children are getting ready for their three-day residential visit to Hooke Court and in the meantime the Year 5 & 6 children are just beginning rehearsals for their cluster music, dance and drama event to be held at the Gateway, Yeovil in July.

Here at the school, the staff and the children are busy as always, with the children producing some excellent work in so many aspects of their learning. We are all very proud of their efforts and achievements.

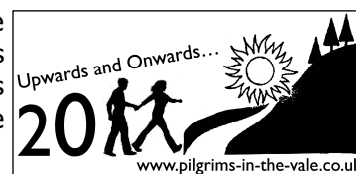
Rev Ron Hart and Rev William Ridding continue to be regular visitors taking our assemblies. At Easter the children will be producing a 'stained glass' window for the church at Stourton Caundle, following on from the beautiful Christmas window.

The governors have successfully appointed a new headteacher to take over when I retire. Mrs Anne Crumpler, who currently works at Sherborne Primary School, will take over the reins in September. I wish her every success in her new role at our lovely school.

Chris Fox - Headmaster

Pilgrimage 2011

The annual Pilgrimage will be held on 2, 3, and 5 June 2011. The three elements of worship, walking and hospitality will be integral to this year's pilgrimage. You will be welcome to join in as little or as much as you wish. There will be a booking form available in May so that the catering can be properly organised.



On 2 June, Ascension Day, the pilgrimage starts at the 6.30am Holy Communion at the Church of St Eustace at Ibberton, followed by an English breakfast at the village hall (*booking essential*). There will be a morning walk across to Belchalwell and onto Fifehead Neville for midday prayer and lunch. After a free afternoon, we are planning an evening barbecue and walk up Hambleton Hill for late night worship overlooking the Blackmore Vale.

On 3 June, the walk from Stourton Caundle to Lydlinch via Stock Church will hear readings and prayers from the Authorised Version of the Bible, marking the 400th anniversary of its publication.

On 5 June, we are invited to worship together at 10am at the Church of St Mary at Sturminster Newton to renew our covenant and commitment to mission in the Pilgrim Vale and to celebrate Holy Communion together.

William Ridding (on behalf of the 2011 planning group)

Home watch

While you may be engaged in following Richard's advice and watching the Sky at Night, there are villains about!

Scrap metal prices have risen recently and there have been reported local thefts of a copper tank, as well as fixings and hinges from gates. The police warn that any type of metal implement may be a target for thieves. However there have been some 'good' arrests recently for thieving, thanks to information from the public – so keep your eyes skinned, lock up your sheds etc and tell the police if you see anyone, particularly in a pick-up type vehicle, acting suspiciously.

STOP PRESS

There was an attempt to break in to The Trooper in the early hours of 25 March. The intruder left after hearing the dog barking. Attempts were also made to break into cars nearby.

Ensure that all ground floor windows and doors are properly secured at night and when you are in the garden, as open doors and windows may be out of sight.

Keith Murphy

Hunky Punks

It all seems an age away now since St Peter's Church tower was shrouded in scaffolding and plastic sheeting undergoing repair. During the tower's final inspection I was fortunate to have the opportunity to climb up and have a close inspection of Stourton Caundle's four 'Hunky Punks.' This was the name used by our team of architects to describe a grotesque architectural feature which served no apparent purpose, unlike grotesques with water spouts which are termed gargoyles. Further research revealed that the name derives from the Somerset dialect. It is believed that a Hunky Punk or grotesque feature was designed to remind churchgoers of the balance in life between good and evil.

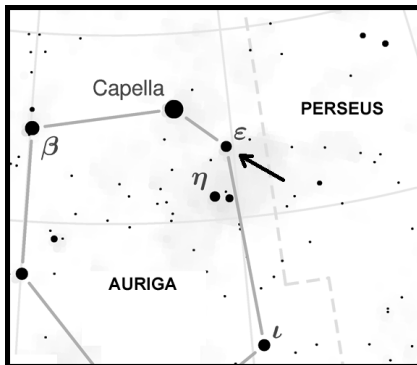
Our four Hunky Punks are located on each corner of the church tower. The photographs need careful examination because seven hundred years of wear and tear have obviously weathered the features, but they are intriguing. So next time you go past the church look up at our four figures and remember that lovely name 'Hunky Punk', good for a pub quiz if nothing else!!

Gill Sanders



Sky at night

Towards the end of March, specifically during the weekend of the 19th /20th, we were privy to a couple of spectacular moonrises. I hope you noticed them especially the one on the Saturday night when the moon rose at the very time it became 100% full. It turns out that not only was it full but it was nearer to the earth than it will have been for some years. Quite a sight!



What else has been happening in the sky? For some time now many amateur astronomers have been keeping tabs on a unique star called Epsilon Aurigae. The star in question is located a few degrees away from the bright star Capella, which can be seen almost overhead at dusk. I have included a star map showing Capella in the constellation of Auriga alongside Epsilon (arrowed). Every 27 years Epsilon Aurigae fades in brightness as something passes in front of it as seen from earth and blots out part of its light.

All manner of ground-based telescopes and orbiting observatories are being used to monitor this fade or eclipse and many amateurs (including myself) are also taking part in what is an international observing campaign. During April the eclipse will finish as the star brightens after which time it will shine with its normal brilliance for the next 25 years or so before the eclipse repeats once again. The eclipsing object is rather mysterious but is most likely an enormous dust cloud a billion miles across which surrounds a second fainter star largely hidden by the dust. Try googling 'Epsilon Aurigae' if you want to find out more – with all the instruments being aimed at it, we are bound to resolve some of its mysteries this time around.

A day in the life of Tosca... the goshawk

Tosca looks fine sitting on her bow perch on the lawn. The late winter sunshine lights up her barred adult plumage – porcelain white breast feathers barred with delicate horizontal black lines, like Chinese calligraphy. Her eyes now fully yellow (they were blue when she was a baby), imply a hawk in her third season. They blaze with an intensity that is completely compatible with her operatic namesake - passionate, female, and inclined to murder! Goshawks are not legally taken from the wild any more. Tosca was born in an aviary somewhere in the New Forest, and since taking her up for falconry in August 2008, she has been trained and flown at game throughout the country. This year has been especially exciting as my friend and I have hunted with her from Dorset to Surrey, in Lincolnshire, Fife and in the Orkney Isles beyond John O' Groats...

But today we are hawking on the Cowdrey estate in West Sussex, and we will be flying pheasants which is rather special. Tosca's normal quarry is the humble rabbit, and she has become very quick and clever at taking them. Not for nothing was the Goshawk called the 'Pot Hawk' in medieval times, and when rabbits are plentiful, she can in one afternoon provide food not only to keep herself throughout the month but also supply plenty for the kitchen. I know a very fine recipe for 'Hungarian rabbit with mustard, cream, beer and prunes'. Yummy!

Tosca is eager as we go to pick her up, and she jumps to the gloved fist. Her weight is carefully measured and reads 2lbs 2,1/2 ounces. That's perfect. An ounce higher and she will start to become difficult to fly, but at this weight she is like the trained athlete, fit, obedient and keen to hunt, or 'sharp set' as the old falconers described it. Now we have taken her to the back of the car, and she jumps straight into her dark travelling box. Once settled and the door firmly shut, Mocha the cocker spaniel who has been in a terrible state of excitement all morning, jumps in beside her. A mass of equipment both ancient and modern in design is checked through, and we depart. We are meeting four other friends at a nice little pub just outside Midhurst who will make up the 'field' and will assemble for a brief drink before we start hawking. We try to keep the number small; hawks do not like large groups, and five is a maximum. They know Tosca well, and she knows them, and though Goshawks never become friendly or affectionate toward their human companions, there is no doubt they recognise individual people and understand the significance of the gathering. The hawk comes out of her box after her two-and-a-half-hour journey, and is being prepared. Her mews jesses are changed for flying jesses (mews is an old word for the building where the hawks were kept, and probably refers to the mewing sound hawks make; Jesses are the leather straps around her ankles). She carries a bell on each leg, and one on her centre train, or tail feathers. On to this we connect the vital telemetry transmitter, which in the event of a total loss of the hawk (and therefore a failure of fieldcraft), will allow us to recover her.

Hunting with a Goshawk in these circumstances is akin to rough shooting. The little cocker ranges ahead, working obediently to the whistle. The field is spread out behind the falconer, or more correctly the Austringer (*definition*: one, usually of lowly birth, who flies the short winged hawk - the Gos, the Spar, or Sparrowhawk, as opposed to the supposedly more noble falcons, or long winged hawks - the Peregrine and Merlin, fit only for a king or duke). There is a slight check; Mocha momentarily 'points' the brambles, and with merely a second to raise the gloved left fist high, a gloriously bright cock pheasant bursts from cover.

The hawk's reactions are unbelievably fast, and Tosca has already left the fist and is making ground on the pheasant as it rockets skywards. She has one chance before the pheasant reaches full speed, and we watch in a kind of slow motion as she makes an agile turn in the air, rotating her body through ninety degrees and extending those fearsome talons. But the pheasant releases a cloud of feathers as the hawk engages, and escapes to burst out into the sunshine, over the beech trees and away. Tosca flies on a hundred yards and 'puts up', 60 feet into a tall oak.

January pheasants are very strong, and there is no doubt flights off the fist are not going to be very productive today, so we decide not to call the hawk down, but to change tactics and fly her loose from tree to tree. From 60 feet up, more people get to see the flight, which is the whole point of the exercise, and it is nearly always spectacular. It is however unpredictable, as you are very much flying the hawk with her dictating direction and events.

The afternoon heats up and so do the people. Pat has left his best thumbstick somewhere and has gone back to find it. While a hurried conversation takes place with the departing member of the field, Peter shouts "Mark!" indicating that Tosca has moved off in the opposite direction. I turn to see the hawk rowing those powerful wings (The French call her the 'Rameur') with amazing agility through the woods in hot pursuit of something small and brown, probably a woodcock. She likes to fly them, but they are too clever for her usually! Everyone moves forward, some steadily and at a distance, others too rapidly, falling over hidden stumps and crawling through ditches and waist-high bramble thickets, that seem unrelentingly to leap out on the unfortunate Austringer. Chloe 'phones to say could someone please come back to help her as she has both wellies completely stuck in mud up to her knees, about a quarter of a mile behind. We look to each other quizzically. Chloe will have to wait. The hawk's away and we don't know where she is. We follow on, all emerging from the end of the wood together, but spread out at different points. Now which way? Stand still and listen. The heart is thumping, and Mocha insists on drinking noisily from a stream. Listen..Can we hear the bells? Three ear-straining minutes pass and we decide to move off to the right, and over to the next spinney. She was travelling in that direction after all. But, she might have reached the edge of the wood and have spotted quarry down the valley to our left. It's nearly time to ask Nick to unfold the Yagi antennae on the receiver. Just then however, crows start to spiral up over a little clump of willows down by the stream, and they are calling loudly. That is where she is!

Tosca is spotted sitting half-way up the trunk of an ancient crack willow, and looking downwards intently to the reeds below. Again we work the dog underneath, flushing two hen pheasants and a cock simultaneously. In the confusion the hawk makes the mistake of following the pheasant that took off first, and the furthest, completely ignoring one that rose almost immediately below her. I am afraid some rather bad language is directed at the 'stupid bird' under the breath. But now we have another field to cross to get to where hawk and quarry disappeared, and there is a chance that, in true Goshawk style, she might just catch this pheasant as it brakes, and 'puts-in' to cover. By now, members of the field are becoming a little strung out. Has Pat returned, and has anyone seen Chloe?..

Austringer

to be continued

Welcome Club

Bingo was enjoyed by the members at the last meeting, with Larry Skeats calling the numbers.



The annual jumble sale will take place on Saturday 9 April starting at 10am. Setting-up will take place on the Friday evening providing the hall is available. Donation of items on the Friday evening or before 10am on the Saturday morning. Items can be collected prior to the day by arrangement with Helen.

The first outing of the year, 20 May, is to Bowood House and Gardens near Calne. The gardens were designed by Capability Brown in 1762 and include an extensive arboretum with over 700 trees identified and labelled within the grounds. Central to the design of the park is Brown's great lake, almost a mile long, winding sinuously like an enormous river. The outflow is channeled through a series of aqueducts which feed a cascade, a stunning torrent of white water which falls 30ft over an outcrop of rocks. The Rhododendron walk is two miles long with plenty of seating along the route. Non members are welcome please contact Helen for further

Raffle **Jumble Sale** *Cakes*

Sat 9 April 10.00 am
Village Hall

If you have any items of jumble
Please call Helen on 362929 or Margaret 364621 or
any committee member.
Cake donations would be great!

Calling all Maypolers
We are hoping to give a Maypole demonstration at
The Villagers' Day on 12 June 2011
Any children interested
please contact Marie Martin 01963 364755

Sports Club news

The advert last month regarding Short-Mat Bowls raised a lot of interest and investigations continue as to whether it will be feasible. If you haven't yet shown your interest please contact Colin McKay on 364621 or colin-mckay@live.co.uk.

We would also like to draw your attention to the fact that table tennis as well as badminton is now available on Tuesday evenings from 7.30 pm.

The church clock ...and other repairs

The clock movement was last overhauled for the Queen's Silver Jubilee in 1977, and it has developed wear in the bearings while a tooth has broken off one of the cogwheels. The movement has recently been removed for overhaul and repairs by a firm of expert clock repairers, and will hopefully soon be back and running.

A lightning strike is something you hope will never happen, but tall buildings such as church towers are particularly vulnerable. Our lightning protection system has now been upgraded by the addition of more conductors at the top of the tower, and the fitting of an additional down conductor which carries the current down to earth.

The stone walls around the churchyard and the cemetery have needed repairs, and we are lucky to have our own skilled stone-wallers in the village. Fortunately NDDC are responsible for maintaining the closed churchyard (around the church), and they funded the repairs to the wall on both sides of the church gate which were damaged by tree roots. The long and very attractive cemetery wall is however the church's responsibility; when a section next to the Village Hall collapsed in the Autumn I am pleased to say that the Parish Council kindly agreed to meet the cost of those repairs, as well as further repairs which may soon be required to the south wall, much of which is beginning to lean outwards.

We continue to keep an eye on the ancient yew tree in the churchyard. Last summer tree surgeons had to remove a large branch which had become dangerous from the crown of the tree .

All this work has been funded from the proceeds of the 2009 appeal. Churches are inspected on a five yearly cycle and St Peter's next inspection is due to be carried out by the Church Surveyor in April. I will let you know the outcome when we receive the report.

Andrew Oliver