

The Hamlets' Voice

*Staploe, Duloe, Honeydon, Upper Staploe,
Bushmead and Begwary*

Issue 12



Hoar Frost , Upper Staploe

DECEMBER by Eileen Saunders

Last month of all
You come to us
With days so short and cold
Yet 'ere you leave
Brightness appears
'Tis precious Christmas eve,
Which brings us hope
And faith to look
Beyond this earthly scene
To Jesus Christ
Born a sweet child
With peace and love serene.

Prepare for Bad Winter Weather and Win a Free Home Emergency Kit

What would you do if faced with natural disasters like a severe snowstorm or heavy rain? Or unnatural emergencies like a power cut or industrial accident? Helping you deal with major disasters locally is BLLRF (the Bedfordshire and Luton Local Resilience Forum) made up of the emergency services, local councils, hospitals and health agencies and a whole host of local voluntary groups working together. BLLRF co-ordinates everyone who tackle emergencies, planning for the unthinkable to ensure they are ready to react swiftly and effectively to protect you, your family and home.

Local community organisations like the Royal Voluntary Service, Midshires Search and Rescue, the 4X4 owners club and Raynet, amateur radio enthusiasts, also get involved through the Bedfordshire and Luton Emergency Volunteers Executive Committee (BLEVEC). You could also volunteer. The Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce and the local branch of the Federation of Small Businesses also help plan for emergencies and encourage local businesses to prepare for their own crisis like fire, theft or supply chain problems. See our prepare your business page for further information.

BLLRF's website – www.bllrf.org.uk – is packed with help and advice so you can prepare for being cut off in your home by bad weather, separated from your family by a major incident or left without power for an extended period. Visit now to find out what you can do to protect yourself before winter sets in.

BLLRF is now giving you the chance to win a free Home Emergency Kit that contains some essential things you'll need if there's an emergency like a power cut or severe snowfall. To enter our FREE prize draw just follow @what_would on Twitter, like us on facebook.com/whatwouldyoudoif or enter using the website's [contact page](#) on the website. Entry closes at midnight, 2 February 2014 .

The Grass Snake in the Parish

By Richard Squire, Chairman of the Staploe Parish Council

I have had the pleasure over the years of stumbling across these wonderful creatures sunning themselves in all sorts of places. More recently on felled tree stump, on an old piece of steel plate warmed by the sun near my workshop and also on the bank by the brook . I was very lucky to get a picture of one for they are a timid creature and very quickly slide away once they are aware of human company.

The black bars along the flank (as can be seen in the photo on the gallery page) are a very distinctive feature .The belly is patterned with black grey and white and a female can grow to 1.2 metres (4 foot) They can live to about nine years old provided they are not eaten by badgers, hedgehogs or birds.

After emerging from hibernation in April the Grass snake like most British snakes will spend a lot of time basking in the spring sun then courting and mating will begin. The best places to see them are in damp grass, ditches, ponds and slow moving streams; indeed the best example of this was when my father was quietly sitting on a bridge one summer eating his lunch. A pair of snakes swam up the brook towards him and under the bridge, a wonderful sight, I'm sure you will agree.

Grass snakes are harmless to humans and live off amphibians such as frogs and a large meal will satisfy the snake for a week to ten days. It is the only British snake to lay its eggs where heat is generated such as in a haystack, manure heap or rotting vegetation and will often lay up to 40 matt white eggs which will hatch out about two months later. So keep your eyes open in the spring and maybe you will see one too.

Local Recipe

Christmas Bedfordshire Clanger by Celia Woolley, Editor

The Bedfordshire Clanger is traditionally an elongated steamed suet crust dumpling with a savoury filling at one end and a sweet filling at the other comprising a main course and dessert in one package. Historically, the Bedfordshire Clanger was made by women for their husbands to take to their agricultural work as a midday meal.

There are numerous recipe variations for the clanger but I have taken a baked version and adapted it to include cranberries in the sweet filling to give a seasonal Christmas taste. This recipe makes one large clanger and would be great with gravy and seasonal vegetables with the savoury end and custard with the sweet end. Minced turkey or finely chopped leftover cooked turkey could also be used instead of the minced pork. Serves 2 to 3 but not for dieters!

For the Pastry : 350g self raising flour, 1tsp salt, 60g butter, 85g shredded suet, 1egg, 150ml water

For the Savoury Filling: 1 small finely chopped onion, 1 tbsp olive oil, 225g minced pork, 1 tsp dried sage, 1 small finely chopped or grated cooking apple, 50g cooked peas

For the Sweet Filling: 1 large chopped cooking apple, grated rind of 1 orange, 50g dried cranberries, 55g sultanas, 2 tbsp caster sugar

Method

1. To make the savoury filling place the onion and oil in a frying pan over a medium heat for 2-3 minutes until the onion is soft and golden.
2. Stir the pork and sage into the onion and cook gently for 5 minutes stirring frequently.
3. Add the apple to the pork mixture and cook for a further 5 minutes and then stir in the peas. Season to taste and leave to cool.
4. To make the sweet filling mix together in a bowl the apple, orange rind, cranberries, sultanas and sugar.
5. Preheat oven to 220oC/200oC fan/Gas 7.
6. To make the pastry mix the flour, salt, suet & butter with your finger tips into a fine bread like consistency. Mix in about 150-160ml of water and the beaten egg to form a smooth dough and knead for 1 minute. Roll out a large rectangle or 6 small to 1cm thick keeping aside a small amount to form a wall to separate the savoury from the sweet.
7. Spoon the savoury filling onto one half and the sweet onto the other using the set aside pastry to form a dividing wall. Roll up the pastry into a sausage roll shape tucking over the ends to stop the filling from escaping during cooking. Score with a knife 2 lines in the pastry on the sweet end so once the clanger is cooked you can tell which end is which!
8. Place the clanger join side down on a lightly greased or non-stick baking tray and bake for approximately 40 minutes or until golden brown.

Local History

Honeydon Widow Leads Wagon Train Across Hostile Wilderness

By Frank Squire

In 1846 this might have been the headline in the local paper, had there been one. So who was this widow and where had she come from? She was Mary Fielding, a farmer's daughter from Honeydon.

Manor Farm Lane in Honeydon is a narrow rutted farm track running alongside Honeydon Brook. At the end of this track are some abandoned farm buildings and nearby mostly overgrown with brambles and ivy is a brick building which was once the wash-house of a six roomed farmhouse that once stood in this place. An old photograph shows a handsome double fronted house with a steep tiled roof, tall chimneys, and the little window frames characteristic of 18th century farm houses and alongside the house you can see in the photograph the gable end of the wash-house.

In the early part of the 19th century this farm house was occupied by John Fielding, his wife Rachel and their 5 children, Mary, Mercy, John, James and Joseph. John Fielding Sr was the tenant of the farm and assisted by his wife and children he farmed the farm which consisted of 90 acres of arable land. Tucked away in this remote corner of Bedfordshire the Fieldings would have had to work hard to earn a living and to pay the rent. While there were horses, most of the other work of planting, hoeing, harvesting and threshing was done by hand. Then there were cows to be milked, pigs to be fed, eggs to be collected, produce to be marketed. In the evenings there would be games or music and singing or reading poetry aloud and Bible reading. This was a devout, hard working and cultivated family and they led a rich, industrious life.

In 1832 Mary Fielding's brother and sister Joseph and Mercy emigrated to Canada and two years later Mary joined them obtaining employment as a teacher. At this time Toronto was undergoing a religious revival and in 1836 Mary Fielding, Joseph and Mercy were baptised into the Mormon faith, a flourishing religious cult introduced in the early 1820s by Joseph Smith a farmer.

In 1837 the three Fielding siblings moved to Kirtland, Ohio which since 1831 had become the Mormon headquarters. Mary Fielding was introduced to the Mormon leaders including Joseph Smith, the founder, and his brother, Hyrum Smith, recently widowed with six children. To Hyrum, Mary Fielding must have seemed like a godsend: beautiful, cultivated, hardworking, skilled in rural and domestic arts, devout and most important of all, unmarried. They were married on 24th December 1837. Mary was 36 and Hyrum was 37.

Mary slipped easily into the role of stepmother, having taken on the six children ranging in age from 12 weeks to 10 years. In addition to the children Hyrum's household also contained two older people whom Hyrum had taken in as they had nowhere else to go. The settlement at Kirtland prospered, the population grew and a grand temple was constructed. However

wherever the Mormons settled they attracted hostility from the non-Mormon community and this hostility escalated into the 1838 Mormon war in which the governor of Missouri ordered that the Mormons “must be treated as enemies” The governor determined to exterminate the Mormons and raised an army of several thousand. Between November 1838 and April 1839, a thousand Mormons including the Fielding Smith family migrated 870 miles to Illinois where they constructed a new settlement known as Nauvoo on swamp land on the banks of the Mississippi River. .

This settlement prospered and rapidly expanded but again the Mormons were subjected to hostility culminating in raids and massacres. In 1838 Mary's husband together with other church leaders were imprisoned and the order given for their execution. However due to an administrative error they escaped! In June 1844 Hyrum and his brother Joseph Smith were again imprisoned. One night when there were only two guards on duty, a mob broke into the prison and murdered the two men. By this time Mary Fielding Smith as well as being stepmother to Hyrum's 6 children had two children of her own together with a number of older people they had been taken into the household. .

Persecution continued and eventually it was decided by the Mormon leadership to trek to the Rocky Mountains in the far west to a place where there were no white settlers.. Mary Fielding managed to sell much of her livestock, her house and farmstead and with the proceeds she acquired nine wagons and oxen to pull them. These were needed to convey her household of 18 people, supplies, guns and gun powder, seeds, fodder for the accompanying livestock, iron and timber, baggage and bedding, a spinning wheel. In September 1846 she finally set off, in spite of being the subject of scorn from male Mormons who thought that a mere woman was incapable of leading a wagon train across a thousand miles of hostile wilderness.

On 23rd September 1847, one year and fifteen days after leaving Illinois, Mary Fielding Smith and her wagon train, having overcome countless vicissitudes including shortages of food and water, bitter cold, torrential rain, burning sun, rocky roads, mountain passes, wild animals and hostile Native Americans, arrived in the Salt Lake valley where she was welcomed by earlier arrivals.

The day after she arrived, she reconnoitered the surrounding countryside in which she located a plot of 40 acres of fertile land with a stream. Here she decided to start her farm. In due course bricks were made, mortar mixed and timber cut and a farmhouse erected: land was cleared, fences erected, fields cultivated.

On 21 September 1852 aged 51 Mary Fielding Smith died, probably from pneumonia. Her children and step-children prospered and one of her sons, Joseph Fielding Smith, became a head of the Mormon church.

Quite a life for a Honeydon girl!

Did you know the parish can boast an international GB Athlete?

By Dave Stead

Well we do, what's more he was actually born here in Staploe, and we have been nurturing him right here ever since.

Tom Stead, now 17, represents Great Britain at Age group level in Triathlon, Aquathlon and Duathlon. Still at the lower end of his age group (2 more years to go) Tom was at the World Championships held in September in Hyde Park, London - the same venue that was used for the Olympic Games in 2012. In the Aquathlon he finished 10th overall and 2nd Brit and in the Sprint Distance Triathlon he finished 3rd Brit (12th in AG and 23rd overall out of 1,845) meaning that he has gained automatic qualification to next year's World Championships in Canada. Now, as Tom, who is a full time student, say's *"I've put the training in, done the hard work, now just need to fund it!"*

On 22nd September, a local venue to us (Grafham Water) hosted a Standard Distance European Qualifying race. This is twice the distance that Tom normally trains for. Tom took part in this event and although competing with a 'tired body' - he still managed a creditable 21st overall and qualified 1st in his age group for the European Championships in Kitzbuhel next summer. Only the day before he was in Yorkshire 'racing' against the Olympic Gold and Bronze Medallists Alistair and Jonny Brownlee. He came an amazing third overall, with the second fastest cycle leg of the day, only Alistair Brownlee beat him .. what an achievement!

Tom trains nine times a week often races twice a week. If you as a private individual or your company would like to be associated with a young dedicated man, then please do get in touch, as you can imagine Tom is always looking out for sponsors to help him to continue achieve in the sport he loves.

Tom keeps a blog, please do visit it to find out more: <http://tomstead.blogspot.co.uk/>



Gallery



Top: The old wash house at Honeydon

Middle: Hoar frost at Staploe

Bottom: Grass snake seen at Bassmead Farm, Staploe

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Parish Website

Keep up to date with parish news, events, parish council minutes and more on the parish website – just type Staploe Parish in your search engine and it will come up.

Residents News

SPONSORED TANDEM SKYDIVE IN AID OF THE PSP ASSOCIATION Laura Woolley of Staploe did her sponsored tandem sky dive on 1st September and loved every minute of it! In fact she actually jumped twice that day as the first time they forgot to send up the photographer to film her! Laura's grandad was diagnosed a couple of years ago with PSP (Progressive Supranuclear Palsy) a very rare terminal degenerative brain disease. Laura raised £1,100 for the PSP Association who offer advice, support and information to people living with PSP while at the same time support research into treatments and ultimately a cure. Many thanks to those from the parish who kindly sponsored her.

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