

The Sandstone News

The free
community
magazine serving
the villages of
Peckforton and
Bickerton Hills

Issue 9
May 2007

Also in this issue
Harthill School
Czech Memorial
Local Businesses
Keep your Post Office
Cheshire Wildlife Trust

THE THOMAS BRASSEY TRIBUTE STONES PROJECT

by Idina Hastings & Mike Dixon



The oak tree with the stones

A family tribute to Thomas Brassey, one of the world's greatest railway engineers, has been moved from the obscurity of an inaccessible field to a place of prominence in Bulkeley where visitors and local residents can learn and appreciate something of his achievements .

Thomas Brassey was born in Buerton on 7 November 1805. The farmhouse where he was born, and which no longer exists, stood near Bruera Church in the parish of Aldford. He went to school in Chester and was then apprenticed to a land agent.

The famous road builder Thomas Telford employed him as a surveyor on the London to Holyhead road (or the A5 as we now know it) and later in life Brassey collaborated on projects with Isambard Kingdom Brunel. During the 1830s, Brassey tendered successfully for work on contracts for George Stephenson and earned enough money to become a railway contractor in his own right. In those days, before the advent of the heavy machinery that we now associate with large civil engineering projects, manpower was the force behind all construction and Thomas Brassey amassed a vast army of "navvies"

which eventually amounted to some 80,000 men. These men, with their picks, shovels and horse-drawn carts, built railway lines all over the British Isles. The line between Crewe and Chester, which runs over the bridge near Beeston market, is a Brassey line, and he also built Chester railway station.

If his work in Britain was all that he had accomplished, Thomas Brassey would still deserve to be remembered as a great man. But he built railways, bridges, viaducts and cuttings all over the world as railway travel became the new and exciting method of transport. When he began work on railways in Canada, he was faced with the problem of making the steel tracks. So he constructed a foundry and workshops in Birkenhead. He named them the Canada Works and shipped all his materials across the Atlantic from docks that he also built.



Cefn Mayr viaduct on the Chester-Shrewsbury line

Thomas Brassey died at St Leonards on Sea in Sussex on 8 December 1870. His connections with this area of Cheshire lie with another branch of the Brassey family, who had owned an estate at Bulkeley for several hundred years. Thomas inherited this estate in 1843, pulled down the almost derelict family house and built what is now Bulkeley Grange. Two years later, on the occasion of his 40th birthday, the family planted an oak tree on estate land and placed four stone pillars around it. The pillars were inscribed with Thomas Brassey's name, the date, and other names which are now barely decipherable. The pillars were joined together by metal straps approximately 5 feet long. It must have seemed a good idea at the time to keep animals from eating the young tree but the tree expanded as it grew over the years and eventually it tore some of the straps from the stones and the stones themselves tumbled into a sea of nettles. It seemed a shame to leave the stones at the mercy of time and the weather and so, a few years ago, some of the residents of Bulkeley hatched a scheme to seek permission from the Barlow family, who now own the estate, to move the stones to a more prominent position in the village where they can be seen by all. An

injection of money was essential for the project because the stones needed restoration and a display board was required at the new location to explain the significance of the stones and why they were moved. Some 500 copies of the booklet have been produced. Councillor Doug Haynes, who is related to the Brassey family and has made a study of Thomas Brassey, agreed to find funding and in 2006

was able to announce that a full grant had been obtained from the Local Heritage Initiative in conjunction with The Countryside Agency

It seemed a shame to leave the stones at the mercy of time and the weather

An architect was engaged to measure, map and record the stones in their original location. Later, a stonemason was appointed to carry out necessary remedial work to re-erect the stones, without trying to repair them where frost damage had caused some of the sandstone to break off. The stones are now relocated in an area paved with York stone setts at the Marl Pit site, alongside the A534 eastbound and close to the lay-bye in Bulkeley.

Councillor Haynes performed the opening ceremony to mark the relocation of the stones on 22 April 2007. Also in attendance were the Sheriff of Chester, the Deputy Mayor of Crewe and Nantwich and other local dignitaries, members of the Brassey family, representatives of the Bulkeley and Ridley Village Events Group, and other members of the local population. An exhibition of Thomas Brassey's work, laid out in



Councillor Doug Haynes opens the new site of the Thomas Brassey tribute stones

I am delighted to be able to inform you that the Sandstone News has been awarded a grant from the Rural Social and Community Programme for Cheshire and Warrington, administered by Cheshire Community Council. This grant for £4000 will enable some training to take place and will guarantee that we continue to produce at least another 4 editions of the Sandstone News.

We began in October 2004 and we now produce 3 editions per year and distribute some 2000 copies to our community. The 'News' grew out of several meetings by members of 5 Village halls (Bickerton, Burwardsley, Edge, Beeston and Peckforton, and Tiverton) who looked to ways of sustaining and developing our local communities both by promoting local events and by local enterprise. We are a small group of volunteers and our only real cost is the printing of the magazine which is about £1100. We do take up to £300 in advertising per issue but we are not a commercial venture and want to produce a quality product which is not dominated by adverts.

We have over the years been supported by Leader+ and by the Cheshire Strategy Innovations Fund. Grants have, in addition, come from our Parish Councils and Village Halls. We continue to need help with distribution, writing articles, setting up the 'News' using the Quark Express software (training is available for this). Please get in touch with any one of the production team listed below. I do hope that all readers will carefully read the excellent article written in support of Harthill School.

In May 2006, the editorial of the Sandstone News highlighted the growing problems facing the smaller villages in the community. The loss of shops, schools, churches and transport, are all features of our life. The proposed closure of Harthill School is another important step in the decline of the village as a community. There are doubtless economic arguments against small schools; however, the educational case does not seem to have been made to close a school which has recently received so many accolades, including the excellent Ofsted report. The relatively large sums of money spent in our towns supporting a variety of

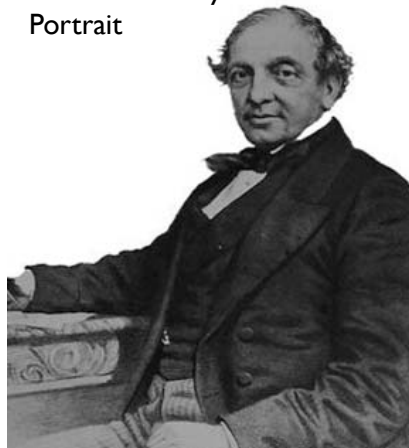
projects which largely benefit those that live in the towns needs to be set against the economics of keeping small schools open. Many of our rural children are de facto excluded from many of the town initiatives owing to time and distance of travel. We need to factor in to the costings of our local smaller schools a formula to balance the disadvantage of the rural children in terms of access to expensive town facilities.
Nigel Briers

The Sandstone News team consists of a collection of people who live in a range of villages: Nigel Briers from Bulkeley (01829 720440), Mike Dixon from Ridley (01829 260310), Janet Falcon from Brown Knowl (01829 782031) Carol Shadbolt from Brown Knowl (01829 782392), Helen Bate from Peckforton (01829 260934), Steve Armitage from Tiverton (01829 732167), Suzette McDaniel from Broxton (01829 782827) David Sorsky from Burwardsley (01829 770937).

If you want to make any comments or contributions, please contact one of us.

the Methodist Chapel at Bulkeley, provided a vivid pictorial reminder of the scale and variety of his constructions not only in Britain but also from Canada to the Crimea as well as throughout Europe, the Middle East, the Indian sub continent, the Far East and South America. A booklet commemorating the life and local connections of Thomas Brassey and the relocation of the tribute stones has been published. Some 500 copies of the booklet have been produced, comprising 6,000 words of text and illustrated by pictures of some of Thomas Brassey's magnificent constructions. Copies have been sent to local schools, colleges and libraries and they will, we hope, remind all who read them of the self-effacing and unsung genius that was Thomas Brassey.

Thomas Brassey
Portrait



Copies of the booklet are available from Idina (01829 720241) or Mike (01829 260310)

Photographs for this article are courtesy of Cllr Haynes

Advertising Rates

If you would like to advertise in the next issue call Carol Shadbolt on 01829 782392.

Full page	£200
Half page	£100
Quarter page	£50
Eighth page	£25
Sixteenth page	£15

Disclaimer

Every effort is taken to ensure accuracy in this magazine. However we cannot accept any liability for any error, inaccuracy, or omission that may have occurred.

Harthill School Faces Closure!

If you had to describe to a stranger a typical English village scene then there's a fair chance you would end up mentioning one of the four great bastions of rural living: the country pub, church, post office store and school. All four institutions have come to represent the picture postcard image of village life now so familiar around the world as a bygone symbol of what English country living used to be like. Sadly, many of these fine establishments are under threat of closure so it is rare to find all four cohabitating within existing village communities.



Cheshire is no exception and yet despite the best attempts of our city councils and hired accountants, these four cornerstones remain at the very heart of our local rural communities.

Perhaps of the four, the local school is best associated with the heartbeat of the village since **it not only sustains the existing residents but also acts as a positive incentive for new families considering a move of house.**

Without the injection of new life blood there is a real danger that

our village communities will stagnate and wither. Fortunately we still have many thriving village schools along the Sandstone Trail of which Harthill School is typical although it too, is now threatened with closure. Situated 10 miles to the south of Chester, between Tattenhall and Bickerton, the school serves the villages of Harthill, Broxton and Burwardsley but pupils attend from as far away as Malpas and Tattenhall.

Constructed of chocolate-coloured local sandstone, Harthill School sits amongst the breathtakingly beautiful Peckforton Hills just beneath the impressive 'Raw Head'.

It is difficult to imagine a more idyllic location in which to educate children.

Harthill School was built in 1868 by Robert Barbour of Bolesworth Castle. Described in Kelly's Directory of 1914 as a "Public Elementary School with turret and clock" it provided school places for up to 114 children and infants, with an average attendance of 72. Rural communities at that time were much larger on account of the need to work within a few miles of home and the high dependency upon manual labour on estate farms. Commuting to the office was certainly not an

option. It was also not uncommon for eight or more children to be sent to school from one family.

In 1922 the school was completely demolished following a devastating fire but it was rebuilt once more in 1923 by the Barbour family. In the interim the pupils of Harthill School had to take lessons in the Royal Oak public house at Broxton. The school Inspector's Report of June 1923 observed "The children are well mannered and very orderly in their behavior. Perhaps as was evident at the Inspection, if more spontaneity and independence can be encouraged among senior children, an even sharpened edge will be set on their intelligence, their speech will be less subdued". One assumes that the school inspector of the time would be pleasantly surprised by Harthill's confident speakers of today.

In 1912 Mr Pickford, a somewhat formidable character, was appointed as headmaster. He and his wife came to live at the schoolhouse until his retirement in 1945. One of the pupils remembers the strict regime and a playground rhyme which went;

"Mr Pickford was a very good man,

He tried to teach us all he can,
Reading, Writing and Arithmetic,
And he never forgot
to give us the stick".

Mr Pickford was a teacher to more than fifty children. In order that he could see what all of the children were doing he had carefully positioned his desk in the middle of the hall. Nothing went unobserved. However, the Headmaster relented somewhat on Christmas day allowing the pupils to leave at lunchtime. They then returned at 4pm for the School Christmas party which was considered the highlight of the year. The desks were moved

together to create tables upon which food was laid whilst the gas lamps were allowed to burn brightly. Traditional games like 'A hunting we will go' and 'Jump the mat' were played long into the evening.

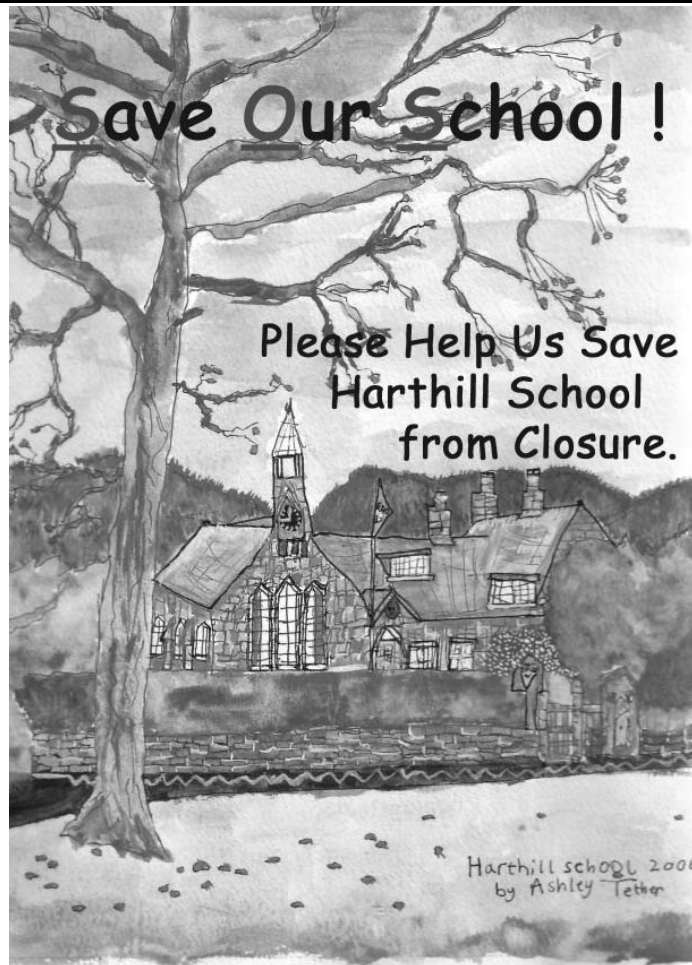
Although rich in history, today Harthill School is a progressive and forward-thinking school.

It was the first primary school in Cheshire to receive an Eco Flag from the respected Foundation for Environmental Education achieving its third successive award in 2006. It is also twinned with Dong Meng Primary School in China a fact reported to the Minister for Environment by the British Council following a visit by teachers and pupils in 2005. The school has been referred to by the Under Secretary of State for Children and features heavily in the Cheshire publication "Education for Sustainable Development". All in all, a remarkable achievement for such a small school.

Academically the school is one of the best performing primary schools in the county and in the top ten percent nationally for "value added" performance, a measure of the progress students make between different stages of education.

The 2006 Ofsted inspection concluded that it was "a vibrant and successful school" gaining no less than four outstanding grades in what was an altogether exceptional report.

Harthill also prides itself on its inclusive teaching approach offering an above national average number of places to children with disabilities and learning difficulties. Sports are not neglected with regular participation in local school events including the annual Deanery Competition. The arts, drama and music are also well



catered for with pupils from Harthill School performing with the Cheshire Youth Orchestra before an audience of over 700 just last year.

But the real success of Harthill School lies in its approach to the personal development and well being of its children for which it received a Grade I marking in the Ofsted Report.

To quote the Inspector directly, "Pupils' spiritual, moral social and cultural development is outstanding". That social awareness is all too evident in its continuing commitment to village life with regular performances at the school and before community groups, and in association with church activities. The monthly appearance at the Bickerton Monday Club is particularly well received. The local villagers, as well as the parents and teaching staff, can be rightly proud of their school and the achievements of its pupils. Most of all,

the pupils themselves should be congratulated upon their unwavering determination to maintain high standards in all aspects of their work.

Sadly, the successes of the school, its outstanding academic record and its pivotal role within the community are no longer considered sufficient grounds to allow it to remain open.

The local authority proposes that Harthill School should close in September 2008 despite the fact that both

Bickerton and Tattenhall Primary schools are already at or near full capacity. Nor does such a decision allow for proposed new housing in the immediate vicinity, or statistics which predict rising demand for school places. More to the point, the Ofsted Report of 2006 concluded that the school offered "good value for money". But the true value of Harthill School, and countless others like it along the Sandstone Trail, cannot be measured simply in pounds, shillings and pence. The village school provides local opportunity and quality of care for confident and socially-aware individuals that wish to contribute to their immediate environment. But most of all Harthill School provides continuity, identity and a sense of belonging within the village community, values which local authority planners have plainly failed to understand.

More new businesses in your area

Launch of a Distribution Centre at Cholmondeley

The Cholmondeley Estate has been growing quality produce in South Cheshire for over 800 years and has recently launched a new food venture, the Cholmondeley Food hub, a one stop solution for all local businesses looking for a range of high quality, fresh local produce.



Maurice-the-delivery-man

Increasingly customers want to know where the food they buy has come from and all the produce distributed by this Food Hub can be traced back to a specific farmer or producer. The Cholmondeley Food Hub is creating new routes to local markets for local producers. This in turn will help sustain and regenerate the rural economy for local communities.

Everyone should have access to quality local food whether through village shops, in schools or the best restaurants which is why we have started the food hub. Too much food travels thousands of unnecessary miles damaging the local economy and environment James Hall, Cholmondeley Estate Manager.

Wilkesley Vegetable Hampers has increased the number of veg bag customers by supplying in to the hub, so now there are many more households eating fresh and local vegetables grown by the Clarke's.

We grow a wide range of seasonal vegetables. Our customers can't wait to find out what is in their vegetable bag each week. Jane Clarke, Wilkesley Vegetable Hampers.

'Food For Thought, Cheshire' a schools catering company managed by Carol Griffiths, purchases fresh and seasonal produce from the Cholmondeley hub. *Our policy is to source locally so that the school children can benefit from the higher nutritional value of fresh and seasonal produce. We believe it is crucial that children get a taste for real food as early as possible, and give the children a high quality diet. Food choices are part of their education for life and if we get it right early on, they will reap the benefits throughout adulthood*

Increasingly customers want to know where the food they buy has come from

The children and staff at Calveley and Pear Tree Primary School, near Nantwich not only benefit from the Food For Thought local sourcing, but are able to visit the farms and meet the farmers who produce the food they eat at lunch time.

One of these farmers, Andrew Jackson from the Great Tasting Meat Company, Gate farm Shop, Poole, is proud to supply his meat.

I want the children to know what real meat tastes like, because it tastes great! We only supply outdoor reared, grass fed traditional breeds which take longer to mature but this gives the meat such a fantastic flavour. The children are now eating freshly roasted joints, 100% beef mince, the finest sausages and gammon and they love it.

The Pheasant Inn, Burwardsley and the Cock O' Barton have placed orders with the Hub, they believe their customers



Andrew Jackson of the Great Tasting Meat Company

want to choose from menus that have traceable, fresh and seasonal ingredients.

If you are a producer interested in supplying in to the hub or would like to purchase fresh locally produce for your shop, public house or restaurant, give the 'Cholmondeley Food Hub' a ring on 01829 773068.

MRS ALMA TURNER BICKERTON SCHOOL

Mrs Alma Turner will be retiring from her post as Deputy Head at Bickerton Holy Trinity Primary School at the end of the Summer term.

Any past pupils wishing to be involved in the celebrations of Mrs Turner's 20 years at Bickerton School please contact Mrs Latham or Mrs Tedham at the school: tel 01829 720240.

We look forward to hearing from you.

This magazine is edited and set out by Janet Falcon and Frances Connor
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Then there was Light

Lighting Up Special Events

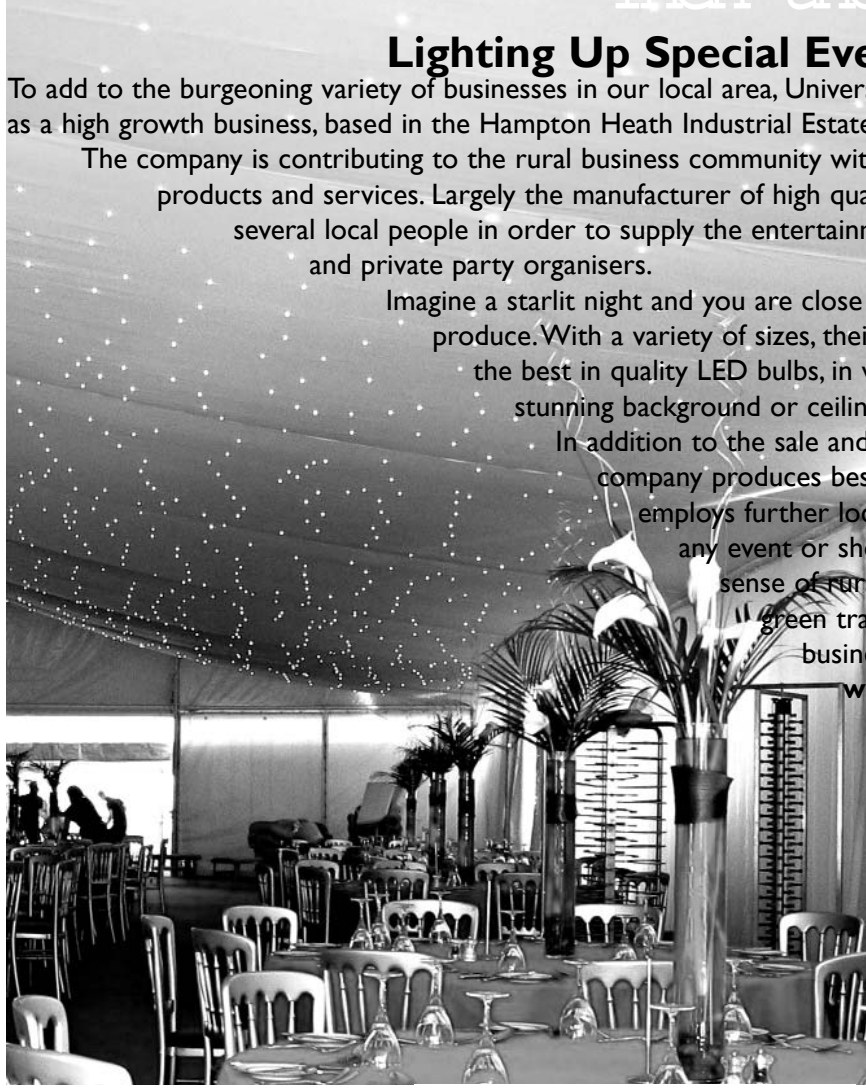
To add to the burgeoning variety of businesses in our local area, Universal Stars Incorporated have emerged as a high growth business, based in the Hampton Heath Industrial Estate.

The company is contributing to the rural business community with their unique and cutting edge products and services. Largely the manufacturer of high quality Starcloths, the company employs several local people in order to supply the entertainment industry as well as corporate and private party organisers.

Imagine a starlit night and you are close to imagining what Universal Stars can produce. With a variety of sizes, their black serge wool starcloths boast the best in quality LED bulbs, in white or colour, which provide a stunning background or ceiling to any event both indoors and out.

In addition to the sale and hire of the starcloth drapes, the company produces bespoke signage and draping and employs further local people to carry out installations at any event or show. The company boasts a strong sense of rural industry and has formulated a green travel plan. More information about the business can be found on its website:

www.universalstars.co.uk



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Cholmondeley's Unsung War Heroes

by Suzette McDaniel.

When Barbara and Eric Illingworth advertised their Chester home in a holiday exchange magazine, little did they suspect that their advert would lead them to a fascinating encounter with one of World War II's little known heroes...

Robert Matula, a Czech now living in Canada, told the Chester couple about his wartime links with the area and asked for their help to track down the Czech War memorial situated on the Cholmondeley Estate.

After the German invasion of Czechoslovakia, Matula and 5,000 of his compatriots, who had been fighting with the Czechoslovak Brigade in France, were rescued by the British in 1940. They were then sent to different parts of the UK, to assist with "Home Defence". Matula, together with 3,000 exhausted and bedraggled Czechs, arrived at the Cholmondeley Estate in July that year.

Although the Czechs were at their lowest point, Corporal Franta Belsky, carved a lion (the Czechoslovak emblem) and the words "Czechoslovakian army. Cholmondeley - 7.7.1940."
The stone which was originally part of



more than six weeks. Matula, already a lieutenant colonel in the Czech army, ignored the warning and became one of those picked for training as a Special Operations Executive (SOE.)

The volunteers were divided into groups. The first group were parachuted into Czechoslovakia in 1942. Their mission was to assassinate Reinhard Heydrich, who was second in importance to Heinrich Himmler of the SS. Heydrich travelled every day in an open top Mercedes. He refused an armed escort, arrogantly believing that that no-one would dare try to kill him. As Heydrich's car slowed down around a sharp bend in the road, one of the special agents fired. Although the gun jammed, another of the Czechs quickly threw a bomb at the car, severely wounding Heydrich, who died several days later. The SOE's managed to run away and hide in the crypt of a church. But one

of them defied instructions to stay hidden and contacted his grandmother. Their cover was blown. The Germans descended on the church, killing all members of the first group, two of whom had been Matula's friends. The Germans then set about the systematic destruction of the village of Lidice, killing all the men and boys over 16 and deporting

the women and children to concentration camps.

The 1944 Wolfram mission is a story of exceptional courage in the face of an almost suicidal task

Matula was part of a second group of agents (known as the Wolfram mission) which parachuted into Moravia. According to Dr David Stafford (Centre for Second World War Studies, University of Edinburgh), "The 1944 Wolfram mission is a story of exceptional courage in the face of an almost suicidal task."

The team succeeded in sabotaging railway lines and disrupting the advance of the German troops, despite being under constant attack, losing two of their group and being poorly equipped.

After the war, the Communist regime in Czechoslovakia meant that the war heroes were not honoured but persecuted with many forced to flee abroad.

It was not until 1988, that the Czech war veterans finally received some of the recognition and honour that they deserved.

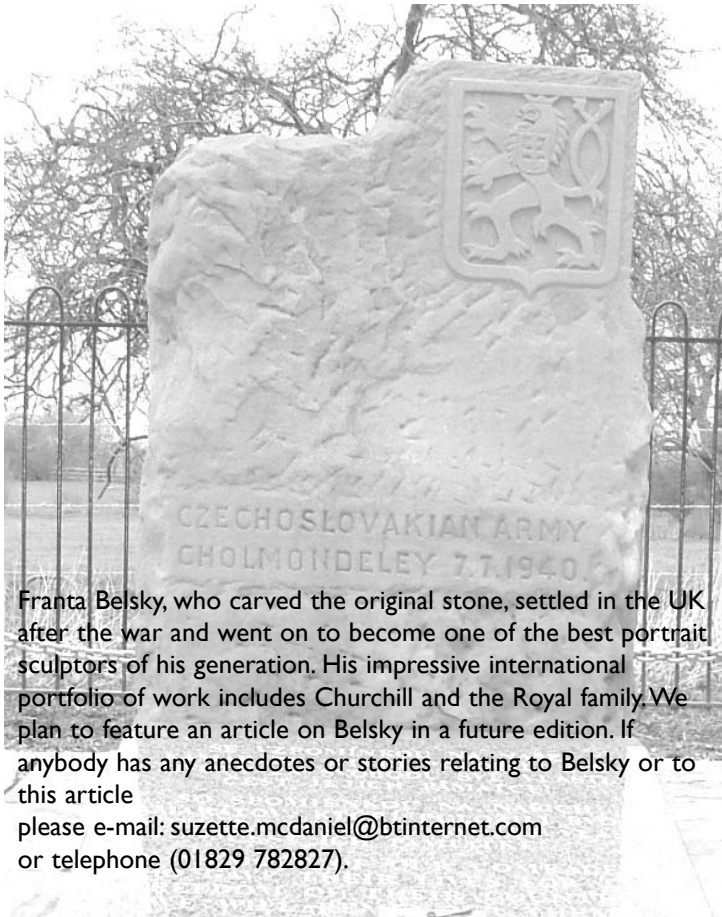
The Czech war memorial, located on Beeston Drive on the northern side of the park, draws back many of the surviving Cholmondely veterans for the memorial service in July. The park itself holds a special place in their hearts because according to one veteran "Although we were at our lowest point when rescued by Churchill, this is where we planned the future of our country." On the 7th July 1999, as part of the 60th anniversary VE celebrations, the original 1940's stone carving was enhanced with the addition of a black iron enclosure, two benches and a new marble stone.

The inscription reads: *"In memory of our comrades who gave their lives for the freedom of their country. We will always remember them."*



Nantwich church was ceremoniously unveiled in their campsite and helped give the Czechs a renewed sense of solidarity and determination.

In 1942 the British asked for Czech volunteers to return to their Nazi-occupied homeland, as part of a secret mission. It was so risky that no-one was expected to survive for



Franta Belsky, who carved the original stone, settled in the UK after the war and went on to become one of the best portrait sculptors of his generation. His impressive international portfolio of work includes Churchill and the Royal family. We plan to feature an article on Belsky in a future edition. If anybody has any anecdotes or stories relating to Belsky or to this article please e-mail: suzette.mcdaniel@btinternet.com or telephone (01829 782827).

Our thanks to the Cheshire Community Strategy Innovations Fund who have sponsored this magazine. Thanks also to all the local parish councils and village halls who have provided additional sponsorship

Come to the Malpas & District Toddler group.

Monday mornings from 9:30-11:30am at Bickerton Village Hall.



We are very friendly and welcome new little people.

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Please contact Helen (01948) 860634 or just turn up!

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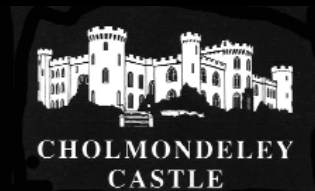
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Activities at Bickerton

The film show audience at Bickerton Village hall has seen a wide variety of films from 'March of the Penguins' to 'Pride & Prejudice' and 'A Cock & Bull Story' with a new year family screening of 'Wallace & Gromit'. Entertaining and absorbing films which were well worth the short trip to the hall.

The Big Lottery Awards for All has given a grant of £3,786 for a DVD projector, amplifier and speakers, radio microphone, 32 more chairs and an induction hearing loop. All equipment will greatly enhance the film show experience and will also benefit all hall user groups.

All the funds raised from the film screenings, including the funds from the 'Ice Cream Interval' which will be nearly £1000 will go to the

Bickerton Village Hall Fund and help to pay off the loan of £18,000 for the building of the new Community Room and central heating system.

The last show of the season on Friday May 11th 2007, was a chance to give feedback on the films and for film night enthusiasts to enthuse about films they think may be worth screening in the future. If you have any recommendations or would like to help with the film society please give me, Carol a call 01829 782392.

So put Friday September 14th 2007 in your diary for the start of the new season of film shows at the Village Hall, don't stay at home, come and meet your friends and neighbours and enjoy a film with an ice cream interval, together:



'Cock and Bull Story'.....
The last film in the series

Don't forget you can see all editions of The Sandstone News at www.sandstonenews.org.uk

LET'S GET FIT FOR THE SUMMER

Are you looking to 'Shape Up' for the Summer time?

I'm hoping to start a weekly Aerobics class at the Village Hall in Bickerton, on a THURSDAY EVENING from 5.45pm until 6.30pm. This Aerobics class will be for all levels, and we'll be concentrating on all round body conditioning and toning I'm aiming to start running the class from the middle of May onwards

So if you are interested in joining please do give me a call or drop me an e.mail and leave a message with your name and contact details to let me know if this is a class you would like to have a bash at and if you have any questions at all I'll answer any queries that you have.



Look forward to hearing from you all!

Mobile: 0777 407 3402

E.Mail: shonie_8@hotmail.com

(Mrs) Shona Tomkinson

Level 11 RSA Fitness/

Aerobics Instructor



Robert Dodd's Sponsored Walk in Aid of the Brown Knowl Chapel

Robert has been a member of this chapel all his life and now there are substantial repairs needed to the roof, Robert is going on a fund-raising walk. His challenge is to walk the Sandstone Trail in one day, all 34 miles from Frodsham to Grindley Brook on Saturday June 30th 2007.

If you want to sponsor Robert or give a donation towards the maintenance of the Chapel please contact Robert Dodd 01829 77037

Bickerton Sandstone Rock School

The music workshops for the Bickerton Youth Music Group now have three new youth bands and some very fine lead singers. The Showcase on the 24th March lead by our music tutor Colin Tolley with technical support from David Tanswell, attracted a large audience, displayed the talents of the students and raised funds for the hall. The new stage lighting system, paid for with a grant from the Chester Community fund was used for the first time to professionally and colourfully light the stage.

The Summer term started on Wednesday 18th April 7:30- 9pm for ten weeks in Bickerton Village Hall. We have also been invited to play at Byley Village Hall for the Cheshire Community Council member's evening.

The students are also going on a couple of trips to recording studios in Malbank and Rudheath to make records of their music.

The group successfully applied for funding for this year from the Rural

and Social Communities Programme. With the £3,390 the group have bought an electric drum kit, very necessary with so many bands rehearsing together, and a PA system for the vocals. This will also pay for hall hire and contribute to the costs of paying our music tutor and going out on recording trips.

So if you enjoy music and want to learn more ring Carol 01829 782392

LITERARY SOCIETY

The success of the various Theatre evenings and Poetry nights held at Bickerton Village Hall over the past few years has prompted an interest in starting a local Literary society to serve our community. The Society would help to promote local theatre evenings/arrange theatre visits/invite speakers/arrange poetry evenings/set up discussion groups on literary topics / perhaps even perform plays in the future.

The Society will be open to all ages and interests. It is proposed to hold a meeting in the early Summer to discuss a way forward. At present there is no structure / no constitution simply a wish to promote activities which will be of interest to some members of the community.

If you are interested please contact Nigel Briers before the end of May (01829 720440) nigelbriers@btinternet.com

Watercolour Painting Classes

at Bickerton Village Hall

One Friday in every month,
9.00am - 1.00pm

Tutor - Richard Diggle, a practicing artist and teacher

Anyone is welcome to join the class

For further information contact Sue Blackburn, 01829 782491

Bickerton Community Ball

Saturday 29 September
Tickets available from

Mike Dixon, 01829 260310 or
Carol Shadbolt 01829 782392

Book now to avoid
disappointment

SALSA - ON ICE!

Thanks to all those who have picked up the phone and added their names to the waiting list we have at least 20 people keen to learn salsa dance in the new Community Room at Bickerton Village Hall. Ring Carol 01829 782392 and add your name to the list if you want to learn to dance.

The dance class is currently on hold as although West Cheshire College would be happy to run these classes, they don't have a dance teacher on the current list! So we may be able to start dance classes on a Thursday from September 2007 if the funding for a dance teacher becomes available.

In the mean time if you are a dance teacher and prepared to travel to Bickerton please give us a call because we need an inspirational, energetic and talented Latin American dance teacher.

Summer Art Exhibition Bickerton Village Hall

Sat - Sunday 4th & 5th August
11am - 8 pm

Mon 6th - Friday 10th Aug
11am - 7 pm Sat - Sun 11th &
12th August 11am - 8 pm

Private View (invitation only)
Friday 3rd Aug 7.30pm

Any artists who wish to enter work should contact Ann Boxall on 01829 782336

Medau Exercises Classes

Suitable for all ages and abilities. Using music and apparatus (balls, beanbags etc) Tuesday evenings, 7.30pm at Bickerton Village Hall

New session starts April 17
Contact Sue Blackburn
01829 782491

Spring is here ... TIME FOR TENNIS

Bickerton Tennis Club's new season starts on Saturday 14th April at 2pm with an afternoon's tennis where everybody can 'mix in' in a series of friendly games.

It doesn't matter whether you are a comparative learner or a regular player - whatever your standard, come along and enjoy the fun. It's a good way to meet other players and you don't need a partner because you will play with a different person every game. All ages are welcome from teenagers to old pros.

This "Friendly afternoon" is the first of a series of evening get togethers that the Club holds throughout the year. All are on Tuesdays at 7pm: 15th May, 12th June, 17th July, 14th August, 11th September, 9th October

To play you have to be a member.

The current subscriptions are:

Seniors	£48.00 each
Intermediates & Students	£19.00 each
Juniors	£12.00 each
Families	£96.00 each

To join, ring Jane Bell, the Membership Secretary, on 01829 270446

COACHING

Coaching for both juniors and seniors has always proved popular and the Club is intending to run coaching sessions this year, starting in May. Early booking through Jane is essential.

**CITIZEN'S
ADVICE BUREAU**
at Bickerton Village Hall
every Thursday from
10.00am to Midday.

Benefits Debt
Employment Housing

No appointment necessary

CHOLMONDELEY
Cholmondeley Castle
Saturday 21st July 2007



www.cholmondeleyfireworks.com

Cholmondeley Fireworks Concert

Viva Italia for a summer's evening of food, friends and music, inspired by this year's Italian theme. Popular Arias from Verdi and Puccini pay homage to Italy's heritage, followed by other much loved works and ending with Tchaikovsky's 1812 Overture. The concert begins with the Mossley Brass Band, followed tenor soloist Marcello Bedoni and the Manchester Camerata conducted by Timothy Redmond. Bring your own picnic or pre-order a hamper from the Castle Farm Shop.

To book tickets phone
Ticketmaster on 0870 4000 877

Alpha Course

Join us on September 25th 2007, at Bickerton Village Hall, for food, friendship and fascinating discussion on the meaning of life.

For further information, contact
Charles Hobson: 01829 782576 or
Veronica Green: 01829 782488

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Contact Deryl Gosmore: 01829 782776
or email: deryl2912@hotmail.com



The Pheasant Inn

Get a better view of eating out at The Pheasant Inn

Good wholesome freshly cooked food sourced from local produce, traditional ales, a selection of wines from around the world, and a warm welcome await you at this 300 year old inn. Tucked in a peaceful corner of rural Cheshire, the Pheasant Inn at Higher Burwardsley enjoys some of the most magnificent panoramic views of the Cheshire plains. Whether you come to drink, dine or unwind for a few days in one of our 12 en-suite bedrooms, this atmospheric location will quickly have you under its spell. Delightful old sandstone buildings, relaxing and attractive beer gardens, and the friendly, pleasant atmosphere all add up to the magic.

A few miles away - a world apart!

The Pheasant Inn
Higher Burwardsley, Tattenhall, Cheshire, CH3 9PF
Tel: 01829 770434 Fax: 01829 771097
Web: www.thepheasantinn.co.uk
Email: info@thepheasantinn.co.uk

Sample Menu:

Sizzling King Seawater Prawns in Garlic and Chilli (pil pil style) served with Kalamata olives and Garlic Bread
Cholmondeley Estate's Welsh Black 8oz Rib Eye (aged for 5 weeks) served with garlic & herb butter, Field Mushrooms, Grilled Tomato and hand cut chunky chips.
Locally sourced Cheeseboard - Blacksticks Blue, Mollington Cheshire, Burland Green Brie and Whitehaven

Rural Post Office Stores Receive Local Support

Many villages throughout rural Cheshire are served by a thriving Post Office and store. This was the finding that came out of the feasibility study commissioned by the Rural Retail Partnership.

The Health Check Study of all rural Post offices and Stores in Rural Cheshire gave a detailed picture of the current trading conditions. The good news for these rural businesses is that over 70% are eligible for a match funded grant to ensure the sustainability of the business, as the sole retail outlet in the village.

Village shops are offering many additional niche services,



Tilston Post Office

selling fresh bread, News and magazines, Mobile top-ups, Lottery Tickets and a Dry cleaning service. Bill Smith the Rural retail Partnership's specialist retail advisor will be able to provide a dedicated retail consultancy report to all qualifying retailers at no cost to the individual business and help increase the longer term viability of each rural shop.

What do you as a customer want from your village shop? One of the findings was that only 22% of the retailers who took part in the Health check had

undertaken any research in to the needs of the customers to find out what would encourage them to increase the spend in the shop. More than 60% of shops stocked 'Local produce' lines sourced from near by producers and encouragingly were interested in stocking more produce from local businesses.

Cheshire Community Council are offering a 50% match funded grant to eligible stores, the focus will be on new refrigeration units to display local produce. Now that the Cholmondeley Food Hub can supply small local stores there is to be a trial of village shops promoting seasonal local products from local producers. From April, Waverton, Wrenbury and Burwardsley village shops will become the focus of a 'Local Produce trial'.

So if you want to shop locally, save 'Food miles' and support your local economy by buying the products from local farms and producers go to your Post Office Store and try the local meat, cheese, vegetables, preserves and many more products on display. The quality is great and you can taste the difference yourself without having to travel miles to a supermarket.



THE NATIONAL TRUST

Disabled Access at Bickerton Hill

If you have struggled or found it impossible to reach the woodland and heathland of Bickerton Hill, we may be able to help.

Following discussions with a local wheelchair user, an alternative route, which makes reaching the summit potentially achievable for more people is now available. Parking at the start of the route is very limited so please call David Morris, the warden, on 07831 561588 for more information.

The route is not fully surfaced and can be rough in places. Assistance may also be required. Funding for improvements to the path will be sought in due course.

Fresh & Healthy Bags of Vegetables

Bags of fresh and local vegetables are now being delivered to the doors of thirty new customers who responded so readily to the last article in the January 07 issue of the Sandstone News.

Wilkesley Vegetable Hampers are now supplying the Cholmondeley Food Hub with fresh, seasonal vegetables grown near the Combermere Arms by Iain and Jane Clarke. The delivery takes a break until July while Iain weeds, ploughs and plants the hundreds of thousands of seed plugs he has grown in to the field he

cultivates. All the vegetables are grown without the use of liquid fertilisers, pesticides and herbicides. Iain does the weeding by hand. The Clarke's are hoping to hold an open day in July so that vegetable enthusiasts can visit his small holding and see the plants growing in the fields.

Please ring Localproduce.org office 01829 720897 or e-mail info@localproduce.org.uk if you are interested in becoming a vegetable bag customer.



Jane Clarke from Wilkesley Vegetable Hampers

Regular events at our village halls

Mondays 7.30 - 12noon **Mother & Toddler Group** at Bickerton Village Hall

2 - 4pm **Monday Club** at Bickerton Village Hall (alternate Mondays)
Mrs Audrey Ryder, on 01829 770572

6.30 pm **Bridge** at Tiverton Village Hall
01829 733502 for details

7.30 pm **Line Dancing** at Burwardsley Village Hall
01829 770572 for details

7.30 pm **Whist club** at Bickerton Village Hall
01948 860457 for details

7.00 til 8.00pm **Medau Exercise Classes** at Hargrave Church Hall
- contact Connie on 01829.

Wednesdays **The Embroiders Guild** hold regular Wednesday workshops between 10am - 4pm Tel: 01829 771349

(last Wednesday in month)
Broxton & Bickerton W.I. at Bickerton Village Hall.
01829 270610 for details

Bickerton Youth Music Group
- Sandstone Rock Workshop from 7pm

(Details: 01829 782392)

Whist 7 pm (first Wednesday in month) at Burwardsley Village Hall. 01829 770572

Tuesdays 10 am - 1pm (second Tuesday in month) **Cheshire Borders Embroiders' Guild** at Bickerton Village Hall. 01829 771349

10 am **Line Dancing** at Tiverton Village Hall

9.30am - 11.30 **Dru Yoga** at Peckforton and Beeston Village Hall 01829 260989

3.30pm (term time only) **Hanlon School of Dance** at Bickerton Village Hall.
01948 820791

7 pm **Iyenga Yoga** at Peckforton & Beeston Village Hall
01606 888324 for details

7.30 - 9.15pm **Spanish Conversation** at Bickerton
Mike Dixon 01829 260310

8 pm (first Tuesday in month) **Gardening Club** at Tiverton Village Hall
01829 781577

Thursdays 7.45pm **Yoga** at Peckforton & Beeston Village Hall. 01829 261258 for details

8 pm **Bingo** at Tiverton Village Hall

7.30 pm (first Thursday in month) **Edge & District Motorcycle Club** at Bickerton Village Hall details from 01829 271142

Fridays 7.00pm for 7.30pm **Countryside Classics Film nights** at Bickerton (monthly) through Autumn & Spring
Tel: 01829 782392

Saturdays 10.00am to 1.00pm **Young Embroiders Guild** at Bickerton, 1st Saturday of the month
Tel: 01948 820791

Monday to Friday **The Beeches** Pre-school Unit at Edge Village Hall providing **pre-school education** for local children from 2-5 years of age. For details contact Sue Anderson on 01948 820775.

Wednesdays 10.00 - 12.00 **Hatha Yoga** at Bickerton
01829 271299

1.30 pm **Bridge** at Tiverton Village Hall
01829 733502 for details

7 pm (first Wednesday in month) **Peckforton & Beeston W.I.** at Peckforton & Beeston Village Hall

Village Hall Contacts

If you need to book one of the village halls or find out more information, please contact the following:

BICKERTON
NIGEL BRIERS
01829 720440,
answerphone
01829 782348
nigelbriers@btinternet.com
BURWARDSLEY
AUDREY RYDER 01829
770572

PECKFORTON AND BEESTON
GILL THEXTON 01829
260974
TIVERTON
STEVE ARMITAGE
01829 732167
info@tiverton-
cheshire.org.uk
EDGE
MANDY EDWARDS
01948 820551

HUXLEY & HARGRAVE HAPPY DAYS

Weekend- 22ND, 23RD, 24TH JUNE on Hargrave Church Field

FRIDAY 22ND - 7.30 for 8.00 pm - "GEORGE FORMBY" NIGHT

SATURDAY 23RD - 2.15 pm onwards - Floats, Fete, Fun - 8.00pm - Family Barn Dance & Bar-

SUNDAY 24TH - 12.00pm onwards - Lunch in the Marquee

- 6.30 pm - Songs of Praise in the Marquee

For details and ticket prices for the above contact Chris Hunt on 01829 781112.



'Sandstone Churches Celebration In Flowers'

Come along with the family and enjoy a unique day out. The three Churches of Bickerton, Bickley and Burwardsley have got together to host a CELEBRATION IN FLOWERS on Friday 13th, Saturday 14th and Sunday 15th of July 2007.

As well as beautiful flower displays in each of the Churches there will be a garden party, sales of plants, teas and lunches, crafts, music and lots more. We want to encourage people to discover the unspoilt countryside around the villages of the Sandstone Trail and promote the beauty and history of the Sandstone Trail Churches.

The money raised by this event will go towards the ever increasing need to repair and maintain our beautiful, ancient 17th and 18th century Churches. We want to keep them viable to meet local need and at the same time provide a focal point for visitors to the area as a quiet resting place and information point.

For more information or if you want to help in any way with this event please contact Pam Thomas on 01829 771 225.

Marjory Checkley

BICKERTON AND DISTRICT GARDEN AND PRODUCE SHOW

BANK HOLIDAY MONDAY 27 AUGUST 2007
IN BICKERTON VILLAGE HALL
BARBECUE, BAR, BOUNCY CASTLE

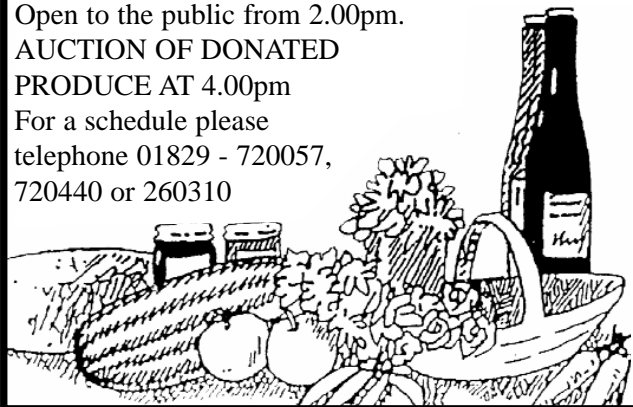
Classes for Flowers, Fruit, Vegetables, Flower Arranging, Produce, Handcrafts, Photography and Children's section.

Exhibits to be staged between 9.00am and 12 noon.

Open to the public from 2.00pm.

AUCTION OF DONATED
PRODUCE AT 4.00pm

For a schedule please
telephone 01829 - 720057,
720440 or 260310



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THE CHURCHES ON THE SANDSTONE TRAIL

"A Celebration in Flowers"

13 - 15 July 10am - 8.00pm

A wonderful day out for all the family at Bickerton, Bickley and Burwardsley Churches. A fun filled programme of events including ; garden party, music, crafts, games, food, plant sales and beautiful flowers.

TICKETS - £3.00 each with children under 10 years FREE

Tel: Pam Thomas on 01829 771225 for info and tickets

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BSI PART P DOMESTIC ELECTRICAL INSTALLER APPROVED

Wildlife Champions Move To Bickley Base

by Carole Bentley

Cheshire Wildlife Trust achieved one of its dreams when it moved its headquarters to Bickley just before the turn of the year. The 200-acre Bickley Hall Farm has been mostly free of pesticide and herbicide use for the past forty years and made an ideal site for the Trust to champion the cause of wildlife friendly farming.

For the previous 14 years Cheshire's wildlife charity had worked out of offices on Reaseheath Agricultural College's campus in Nantwich where there was limited visitor access and no opportunity for expansion. In 2006 the Trust began leasing the land at Bickley Hall Farm to produce winter feed for the cattle and sheep it uses for conservation grazing on some of its nature reserves. When the farm buildings themselves were put up for

appeal exceeded the "wildest" of dreams – a cheque for £20,000 came from the Duke of Westminster alone, and with generous contributions from the Cholmondeley Estate as well as 600 of its own members, the Trust was able to take a major step forward in its development.

The main farm building was adapted for office use and now boasts a smart meeting room, which is available for hire, and a large kitchen where the full and part-time staff and volunteers gather over their packed lunches. Outside are about 100 head of cattle - mostly English Longhorns and some Dexters - and 200 rare-breed Hebridean sheep. The Longhorns will be used to graze Gowey Meadows Nature Reserve along with the sheep, and the smaller Dexters are destined for Swettenham Meadows Nature Reserve. Some cattle are also being hired out to Warrington Borough Council to graze Paddington Meadows. **The grazing habits of the cattle and the sheep mean that species-rich traditional meadows regenerate naturally and their fragile beauty is conserved.**

The land at Bickley Hall Farm is itself species-rich. It's home to several vulnerable bird species including curlew, lapwing and grey partridge and the flora includes cornflower – a rarity in Cheshire – field pansy, poppy and sun spurge. Water violet has recently been discovered in one of the ditches. The brown hare and water vole are present as are several species of bat, butterfly and bumblebee. There's a large stand of yellow water lily at the southern end of Bar Mere, which is also particularly rich in molluscs.

So, one of the first things the Trust wants to do is to provide access for the public via self-guided nature trails. It's also set up a gardening club for volunteers who want to help establish a wildlife-friendly garden under the watchful eye of gardening officer, Sue Tatman.

There are bigger plans afoot, as the Chief Executive, Chris Mahon,



explained. "We're discussing plans for developing some of the farm outbuildings into visitor facilities or classrooms where we could provide enjoyable environmental learning for both children and adults. We feel privileged to be in such wonderful surroundings and we have a duty to share it as much as we can, especially with our members and our

neighbours. **Bickley Hall Farm is a base from which we can reach out to so many more people and offer them a wildlife experience.**

It's a whole new chapter in the history of Cheshire Wildlife Trust and we're determined it will help us be even more influential in caring for our environment."

Cheshire Wildlife Trust owns or manages 45 nature reserves. It runs Wildlife Watch groups for children.

It provides training and practical conservation experiences. It runs volunteer working groups. It monitors planning applications to protect the interests of wildlife. It is the Cheshire region's leading environmental charity.

You can become a member of Cheshire Wildlife Trust for as little as £2.50 a month. Members receive three copies a year of the Trust's widely respected magazine, *The Grebe*, along with *The Natural World*, the magazine of the UK Wildlife Trusts. With family membership comes free membership of the Watch Club for children. For more information visit the website www.wildlifetrust.org.uk/cheshire or telephone 01948 820728.



lease by the Cholmondeley Estate the Trust knew it had to act fast. The charity's Trustees stipulated that it could only move if it raised £20,000 towards the costs of fulfilling this dream. **The Trust appealed to its members, pointing out the wildlife-rich nature of the farmland, which includes Bar Mere, a Site of Special Scientific Interest and one of the important Meres and Mosses of South Cheshire.** The result of the