

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## Conscientious builder

My neighbour is replacing the roof of his cottage. Not exactly earth-shattering news you may rightly think. When the builder removed the grey, boring, low-profile corrugated asbestos sheets to make way for the charming old double Romans he found a pied wagtail brooding a clutch of eggs.

Since then several purlins have been renewed and the whole roof has been felted and battened and now re-tiled. That is, all except the tile covering the wagtail, which has been left off and the felting cocked up with a billet of wood to allow access to nest.

What a pity this cottage is not situated on the main road where it could act as an example of sympathetic development to other would-be builders and developers. And what a pity that world leaders like George Bush and our own Mr Blair can not be made aware that the grass roots of the nations are actually interested in allowing forms of life other than the urban commuter and the bureaucrat to share our fragile environment.

One can only hope that Mrs Wagtail will successfully bring off her clutch to grow up into good little insect predators upon which we depend so much.

*D Cross, Child Okeford*

## Dorset's Shared Care Scheme

Last month I decided to go along to the Blandford Day Centre to join others in listening to a discussion on "Shared Care for Children with a Disability."

As I walked into an empty room, I thought I must be very early, as no one else was in sight. As time progressed it became apparent that I was to be the only person interested enough to come along from Blandford and the surrounding district. I felt embarrassed for the organisers, Dorset Social Services, and sorrow that such a worthy cause was going unnoticed by local people who felt it not worth the effort to attend.

So, not being one to be deterred from any good cause, I would like to tell Blackmore Vale readers a little about the scheme. Shared Care is a scheme which benefits everyone concerned. It is a type of fostering for disabled children on a very short-term basis. The idea is to give the main carer a well-deserved break while still providing a safe and loving environment for the child. The shared carer also gets the chance to use life's experiences and skills gained in their own environment to build up a relationship with a child who, although disabled, is able to offer so much - an experience surely to give the

world we live in today some sort of meaning. This scheme is not taken lightly. For those interested enough there is the usual stringent process of personal references, police and medical checks to be sorted through. The rewards however, for those who venture, will hopefully result in new friendships, unconditional love and the knowledge of having given back something to the society we find ourselves living in.

For more information contact The Shared Care Team, Dorset Social Services, Acland Road, Dorchester, DT1 1SH.

*J Osbaldstone, Blandford.*

## Outrageous increase

Your readers and council tax payers must be concerned about the report that North Dorset District councillors have voted themselves an outrageous 52% increase in their allowances. No doubt this will have to be paid for in next April's council tax demands. In April 2001 North Dorset District Council increased council tax by 15%, what will it be in April 2002?

Council tax payers on fixed incomes or on incomes increased only by the current rate of inflation are yet again going to have their standard of living eroded by this local council.

Richard Thomas, a Liberal Democrat, is reported to have urged his councillors in the debate "Be bold. Be brave. Be grown-up." He should have added a bit more - be greedy.

*M Frampton, Stalbridge.*

## Calling Jennifer Clifton from Ewhurst

WHEN you think back to your schooldays, do you remember someone who knew how to make you laugh? For the 90-strong 1959 intake at Guildford County Grammar School for Girls, that person was Jennifer Clifton from Ewhurst. It's 35 years now since we left school, and on the weekend of 21-22 July, more than 50 of us met up in Guildford to celebrate and catch up on each other's news, but Jennifer wasn't there, and no one knows where to find her. For five years, the organisers have been trying hard to track everyone down, across the world, not just the UK. We seem to have been a very mobile lot, and even the best of friends have lost track of each other down the years, due to changes of name and career and family circumstances. As late as 10 days beforehand, more classmates were still coming to light. And one rumour said that Jennifer Clifton had married, and had gone to live in Dorset.

We had a great time at the

reunion, and have a lot in common still, despite all our different lives. Now the plan is to have a contact list, and to work towards meeting again in 5 years' time. Jennifer, if you read this, please get in touch, and the same goes for anyone else of our year-group.

*Joyce Carter (née Smith),  
Damory Cottage, Salisbury  
Road, Blandford Forum,  
Dorset DT11 7LP*

## Finding the Plowmans

I am a descendant of Archelaus and Mary Plowman born in Stalbridge in 1706. A large family grew up in the North Dorset and Wiltshire areas. In the late 18th and 19th century large families were established in Tisbury, Barford St Martin, Compton Chamberlayne, Wilton and Salisbury. Many of them were stonemasons. If other descendants would like to get in touch I would be pleased to share my researches and hopefully fill in any gaps! Please contact me at 16 Minden Way, Winchester SO22 4DS or e-mail: plowmanF@aol.com.uk.

*Francis Plowman*

## The Incredible String Band

I strongly feel I need to redress the acidic review printed about The Incredible String Band.

Although I did not go to the Sidmouth Folk Festival I was lucky enough to get to their concert at the Eden Project the next day.

Firstly, I think, that for a sixties band, three original members out of five is pretty good going these days. (Likky seems lost somewhere and I know that Rose had other commitments).

Most of the concert came from 5000 Layers Of The Onion album (always much more popular than Hangman's Beautiful Daughter) and was a joy to hear. Robin Williamson was as pitch perfect as on the album and Mike Heron's enthusiasm was as strong as ever. Bina's eastern vocals seemed a perfect compliment to their music and she looked beautiful too.

Watching these guys perform is to witness something special, not the youthful 1960's beings they once were (who is?) but something resembling vintage wine or beautiful antique brocade.

Although this was an open air concert and later rather chilly, most people stayed until the very end and eagerly waited the encores. If you're unfamiliar with their music then try and catch them in Somerset at the Cheese & Grain Show on 8th November. The freedom of their own particular sound is very refreshing and liberating especially in these times. I was not sorry I went, as I so

often have been, when watching 60's reformed groups. The long journey down, time off work, inclement weather, all worth it. I'd do it all again tomorrow and probably will. They still are The Incredible String Band.

*Anita Dear, Gillingham*

## Symbols of loyalty

Referring to the BVM dated 4th August: Yes, I think the author is alone in his sadness and no, I am sure that those people of Fovant who believe the badges represent symbols of loyalty to country and fellowmen, want them to remain forever.

The users of the A30 already view acres of sheep speckled green hillsides with pleasure and why - because many of the badge carvers gave their lives to ensure that nature's beauty remained for all to behold.

Are we to lose the Cenotaph in order to improve traffic conditions in Whitehall?

*M A Stockton, Fovant*

## Fovant Badges

Some sixty years ago I was teaching in London's East End - the Isle of Dogs in a multi-racial school. This establishment had a wonderfully happy and harmonious atmosphere, engendered by the humane and caring personality of its Cockney headmaster.

Knowing I came from the Salisbury area, he once said to me, "Do you know a damned awful place called Fovant Down? I was stationed there in 1916. I was a young volunteer with the London Rifle Brigade. I had never experienced anything like the conditions under which we lived. It seemed to rain continuously - we were always cold, wet and hungry. Quite a number of the lads died, chiefly from pneumonia. Not surprising as we lived in a sea of mud. Our only escape was when we were sent up the hillside to carve our regimental badge in the chalk. Although it was bitterly cold and wet, at least we were free of the mud."

I have always remembered these words, especially when travelling along the A30 and often wondered why the badges were not cared for by the War Department. Having visited the war graves in France and Belgium (my father was killed in 1917) and seen how beautifully the graves and many monuments are preserved, I would have thought that the Fovant badges came into a similar category. Those lads who carved the badges and who died on Fovant Down are equally deserving of remembrance as those who died in foreign fields. I hope something can be done to preserve their handiwork and memory.

*Rosina Corp, Tisbury*

## Polo in Dorset

You have been misinformed that polo has recently been

played in Dorset for the first time since 1913 (BVM 27th July). I recall that as a child, less than 45 years ago, my parents would take us to Canford to watch this fast and exciting sport. There I obtained the autograph of keen player Jimmy Edwards, who was a popular actor/comedian of the time and first experienced the pleasure of "treading in" the divots at half time (considered to be the spectators' duty!).

I wish the Orchard Polo Club great success. Their opening tournament was very enjoyable and, having been a non-playing member of the former Ansty Polo Club for four years, I am delighted that the sport is being played locally again. It is not half as elitist as people imagine, has a commentary during matches to help spectators understand what is happening and excellent teas!

*Carolyn Staunton, Manston*

## Zebra Crossing in Stalbridge

I would ask Mr Diaz, was he in his present job on 4th July 1992 when my father was killed in the High Street at the spot where the new zebra crossing is proposed? At the time a petition of 1,237 signatures was collected in support of a crossing, not 500 as suggested by Roger Else. The people against this new proposal have not been in Stalbridge five minutes and as usual are the most verbal. I'm sure if their family had been torn apart as we were at the time they would shut up and support the town council to make our High Street a safer place. Next time it may be their father, son or grandchild that is the victim.

*Des Short, Stalbridge*

## Midnight Thieves

Who are you? Does it give you satisfaction when you rob the elderly of a simple pleasure such as watching the fish in the pond come up for their daily food. Not possible now that my friend has been robbed of at least 25 to 30 fish during the past few months.

Now the police have been informed and their advice taken. So you could be in for a shock if you sneak into the garden again. It is a pity that you did not fall into the pond, but then the fish might have been harmed, instead of the low down scum you seem to be.

*Name and address supplied*

## It only takes a little

I would like to offer my support and encouragement to Ian Harris of Sutton Waldron "Why not adopt an African village" (BVM 17th August). Whilst in rural Zimbabwe recently I was impressed by how little it took to make a vast difference and how my gifts of charity shop clothes were appreciated and shown off.

*Jill Marsden, Gillingham*