
HATHERN HERALD

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PAGE 6

HATHERN IN LOCKDOWN

How villagers responded to the pandemic and looked after each other.

PAGE 10

IT'S ALL RELATIVE

The true WW2 story of the remarkable "Bob the Dog" and Bob his owner.

PAGE 16

HATHERN'S WILD FLOWERS

Read about the changing landscape of Hathern and its surrounds through its wild flowers.

COMMUNITY AT ITS BEST



 CONTENTS

INSIDE YOUR AUTUMN ISSUE...

- 03 Know Your Councillors :
County Cllr Betty Newton
 - 04 Parish Council News
 - 06 **SPECIAL FEATURE :**
Hathern in Lockdown
 - 08 Short Story :
Day One
 - 10 It's All Relative :
Bob the Dog –
Heroism and Heartbreak
 - 13 Meet The Neighbours :
Georgina Pilling
 - 16 **SPECIAL FEATURE :**
Hathern's Wild Flowers
 - 18 Hathern Community Library :
A Library in Lockdown
 - 20 Hathern Together
-

BEST WISHES FROM THE HATHERN HERALD EDITORIAL TEAM – ROY DANN, DAVE NEVILLE, MARTIN CLAYTON, DAVE CLEGGETT AND ELLA-MAE HUBBARD, AND A SPECIAL THANKS JO SYMON AND THE ARTISTS OF HATHERN FOR THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS.

WELCOME TO THE AUTUMN EDITION OF THE HATHERN HERALD.

It's great to be back!

We hope this edition finds you safe and well. Over the past six months, with Coronavirus changing the way we live, it's been an uncertain and difficult time for everyone. The pandemic though has brought out the best in our community and that is the subject of our first Special Feature - Hathern in Lockdown.

In the rest of this edition we have some of our usual articles but also some different things. It's All Relative is a new series of true stories, all told by village residents, that feature a past relative. This edition's tale of heroism and heartache, from Dave Cleggett, is about Bob and "Bob the Dog".

No idea what a Ragged Robin is? Or even a Pignut? Well read on. Members of Hathern Wildlife Group have been looking at how our wild flower landscape has changed over the past 30 years using Andrew Swift's comprehensive records of wild flower species in Hathern from the 1980's. This fascinating picture of a changing environment is the subject of our second Special Feature – Hathern's Wild flowers. You guessed it they're wild flowers!

You may recall the previous Spring Edition of the Herald that featured David Pilling as its Meet The Neighbours subject. Well this time around we have coerced David's wife Georgina into telling us about her life, and what a life – working and travelling extensively across the globe!

In our Know Your Councillors page we have Betty Newton our long-standing County Councillor who many of you may already know from her work in the village over the years. There is also another wonderful short story from Jo Symon that speaks to us of a momentous day from a child's perspective.

Hathern Community Library is open again! Read about what they have been up to during lockdown, including the virtual Art Exhibition. Bill Leivers' amazing painting of swans, that fronts this edition, is one of the pictures included from local artists of all abilities. That's about it for now!

COUNTY COUNCILLOR

BETTY NEWTON

A native of Belfast, I moved to England some 44 years ago, living first in London for a few years working for the Civil Service. I moved to Shepshed for a better environment in which to bring up my family.

I studied at Loughborough University where I obtained a degree in Social Policy. I then worked as a researcher at the University for the Young Carers Research Group and led on a piece of research on Young Carers in the Southwark area of London. I also did some teaching at the university and taught a broad range of Social Policy issues to first year students and Equal Opportunities to second year students.

Following my university teaching, I worked part-time as Branch Administrator for the Loughborough University College Union. When I retired from university work, I devoted my energies to full-time Council work.

I am the Deputy Leader of the Labour Group at County Council, a position I have held for many years and where I have a 100% attendance record at Full Council Meetings. I also attend Parish Council meetings when available.

I am also on the Council's Employment Committee and a member of the Conduct Panel. For many years I have served on the Combined Fire Authority Committee which serves the County and Leicester City. I'm the Equalities Champion on the Fire Authority and very proud of the award we received recently for our positive work on equalities.



When the County Council decided to close the small libraries, I worked hard to try to overturn their decision but, sadly, without success. I continue to work closely with some of the community groups in my area and try to visit as many of them as possible throughout the year. However, due to the current pandemic, my street surgeries and visits to community centres and organisations have been suspended.

I have a great fondness for the village of Hathern and its inhabitants who I find easy to work with and who are very appreciative of my efforts on their behalf.



NEW PUBLIC SEAT

The new seat opposite the Cross has proved to be very popular over the summer and we even managed to catch Tony and Anne Croft taking a quiet five-minute rest during a village walk. The Parish Council has included a small plaque on the seat to mark the very kind donation made by Tony and Anne that made this possible.

Several residents have asked about the pebbled surface that was revealed when the foundations for the seat plinth were dug. Well with the help of the Hathern History Society we have identified this as part of the curtilage of the original house build on this site, bounded by the front wall of the property and the public footpath. The Council reported this find to the County Archaeologist and a due record will be kept. Subsequently the concrete plinth was laid such that it will not damage the underlying surface and can be easily removed in the future.



CORONAVIRUS

Coronavirus has affected almost every aspect of community life this year and the Parish Council has been no exception. We have followed government guidelines closely and taken much practical advice from our local association of councils. However it was important that the Council continues to operate and carry out its statutory duties in the community and having been unable to hold face to face meetings of Councillors or public meetings we have had to embrace so called "virtual meetings". These have been run via Zoom on the Internet and surprisingly enough have proved very successful, even for our regular public meetings. We will continue to use this platform into the future for some meetings as it provides flexibility for both Councillors and residents who may have difficulties in getting to and from the

meeting venue. A mix of face to face and on-line meetings is a good combination. We post details of our public meetings and how to access them on our website and Facebook page.

Closing Hathern Park for a short period during April was a most difficult decision. Following the closure of all of Charnwood Borough Council's parks and play areas and advice from our local association we reluctantly decided to close Hathern Park. We appreciated that it would cause disappointment amongst the community, especially as schools were closed. Fortunately, we were able to re-open the green space areas later in the month and subsequently all of the equipped play areas in early July. We thank residents for their understanding during this most difficult period.

NEW COUNCILLORS

Earlier this year we were very fortunate to have been able to co-opt two new Councillors onto the Parish Council. So let them introduce themselves:

Maxine Hopwood - Moving to Hathern in 1996 I am now on my third house in the village - I love living here. Local residents might recognise me from out walking my two friendly Labradors, Texas and Rio. I became a councillor as I am passionate about Hathern, keeping it a safe and interesting place to live. With many years' experience working in local government and similar roles I enjoy meeting and talking to people. Being on the Parish Council helps me stay involved in what's happening in my community.



Rachel Bennett - I have lived in Hathern since 2014. Originally from Liverpool, I moved to the area in 2007 when I commenced my degree at Loughborough University before starting work for Rolls-Royce. Outside of work I spend the time renovating our home, exploring, spending time with friends and family, and being around anything automotive! I love being in Hathern, mainly due to the great community spirit and have been encouraging even greater community cheer as part of Hathern Village Association since 2015. Being part of the Parish Council is another way for me to contribute to our lovely village, and ensure it retains the charms and community spirit I have experienced so far.



USING HATHERN PARK

As part of our review of the use of the Parish Council's assets during the coronavirus restrictions it became clear that a number of small businesses and clubs that would normally be able to use indoor facilities such as the village hall or community centre were unable to do so.

We decided that with appropriate safety measures in place, especially social distancing, it would be possible to allow some of these activities to take place on Hathern Park. This would not only benefit struggling

local businesses but also Hathern residents who enjoy the organised sessions they run.

To apply for approval to use the Park you will need to visit the Parish Council's web site where there is further information on what to do next. The intended use will need to be appropriate, such as for fitness training sessions, exercise classes etc and there should be a clear benefit to Hathern's community.

We have already opened our doors (or should it be gates!) to several organised groups and it seems to be working very well.

HATHERN IN LOCKDOWN



Who would have predicted what 2020 would bring? Disruption of our lives because of a global pandemic was not something we anticipated. Businesses have been forced to adapt to the new situation and our organisations have had to find new ways to keep going. By the time the Herald is published, things will have changed, but this is the snapshot from mid July.

John Worsfold told us how the Parish Church has faced the crisis.

"We went into total closure after lockdown was announced. There was no access to the church, except for the clergy and Rosemary Worsfold, the churchwarden.

But the church is more than just a pile of mediaeval stones, it is the people who worship their maker and who help others that constitutes the real church, so measures needed to be put in place to ensure the continuity of Hathern Church.

Members were asked to look out for other friends, to check on them at regular intervals and to pray for them. Some of us have been able to do shopping, sort out plumbers, fetch prescriptions, etc., for others. Most of us have found it initially difficult to accept help, after all we're here to help everybody else! But we have, and it has proved humbling how generous friends and family are.

We began to stream our services on Facebook with Morning Prayer each day and Communion Service on Sundays. This has proved interesting as people have joined us from other parts of the country plus one friend from Germany. We have

also used Zoom to meet for discussions and meetings.

As we look forward to a return to more normal times, we ponder what lessons we have learned and how we can take the church forward into a new future. As a first step towards getting back on our feet, the church is open for two hours each week (Fridays 10:00-12:00) for individual prayer or just for a quiet calming sit. It is a step forward and we do look forward to engaging more fully with life here in Hathern."

From Gail Wooliscroft, President, Hathern WI
"Shortly after lock-down we decided to keep in touch with members with a weekly phone call, and an information email, accompanied by a fun quiz. Conscious of the fact that some of our members are not on email we have continued with the phone calls to them and hand delivering any other relevant information so that everyone is kept in touch.

After a few weeks we began holding some meetings on Zoom, beginning with coffee mornings once a fortnight and progressing to holding virtual meetings with a speaker, which are proving very popular now that the initial techy problems have been sorted out!!

Our latest activity was to deliver a tea and biscuit gift to every member. We are looking forward to being able to meet again in person, initially with a garden party and once the Village Hall is available, with an actual meeting."

Hathern Library volunteers have continued to meet using Zoom and the library has reopened using an appointment system

Others can drop by but may have to wait if anyone else is in the building. For more about the Library during lockdown, see their article on page 18. We were contacted by a resident of Long Whatton full of praise for Gill Rockett who has been delivering books to them.

Hathern Open Gardens had to be cancelled, however several residents volunteered to have their gardens on video as part of Hathern Virtual Gardens 2020. Every Sunday a new garden was featured on the Open Gardens Facebook page.

Zoom again! Hathern Dance Group secretary Judith Wardell told us: *"We have been meeting by Zoom. So far, we have had several quizzes on a multitude of topics, several "guess who's" with baby/child photos, wedding photos, etc. and other similar competitions to keep us entertained. On VE Day, we hung up our bunting, dressed to fit the occasion and sang wartime songs together (badly)!"*

During the lockdown, musicians have been trying to find new ways to play. Hathern Band has only been able to play outside in groups of six. Not one to rest on their laurels, the Wicked Hathern Fest team organised a "Lockdown" festival on the first weekend of May. Broadcasting for 12 hours each day, it included performances from bands in lockdown, from Hathern and beyond, culminating with a live DJ set from Hathern's very own Jason "JFK" Kinch. According to Facebook, the live streams ended up reaching over 60,000 Facebook Timelines, and raised over £3,000 for Leicester NHS Charities in the process.

The Cross Street Stores and Post Office became a lifeline for many residents. Keith and Sue Thrush worked tirelessly keeping the shop opening seven days a week from early morning to early evening on most days. Without a village shop so many of us would have struggled to get even the most basic of supplies. However, Keith and Sue recognise that this would not have been possible without the help of a small group of

volunteers, including Sharon Williams and Liz Bristowe who helped out in store and Simon Edgley who delivered groceries and newspapers to those who were unable to get to the shop itself. Another great example of Hathern's community spirit in action – so a well deserved thank you to Keith, Sue, Sharon, Liz and Simon.

As lockdown eases and our businesses re-open, that's just a brief picture showing how some of us have kept going. There will be lots more examples of neighbourliness, and stories of unsung Hathern heroes during the lockdown.

We say a big thank you to them from the community.



Kings Arms Great to be back



A board Headroom - We are open

DAY ONE

So, this is it then. Don't really understand what all the fuss is about, though there's no denying there's a strange feeling throughout the house, with lots of forced smiles from Mum and Dad that look more like they have a nasty smell under their noses

Fred, my older brother is his normal uncommunicative self, conversing with everyone via his Neanderthal grunts which are his get-out clause to indicate he's not interested. My cat 'Whisper' is curled up on the bottom of my bed, she doesn't appear to be too interested in the supposedly dramatic events that are to unfold later this morning. Perhaps she doesn't understand that from today onwards, nothing will ever be the same again. Not that she's going to be involved in any way of course. Molly, our little white dog is bounding up and down the stairs in her ritual burst of post- breakfast madness. Perhaps those 'E' numbers are getting into dogfood now?

A loud-ish call from the kitchen, it's Dad. 'Sarah, have you finished brushing your teeth yet?' That's aimed at me, I'm Sarah. 'Yes Dad, bathroom's free!' I called back. Fred mutters something about girls and bathrooms and stomps heavily along the landing from his bedroom into the now vacant bathroom, neatly and gently side-footing Molly away from the closing door.

Think I've got everything. New pencil case full of brightly coloured crayons still in their protective wrappings; why I haven't been allowed to draw with them is anyone's guess, Mum bought them last weekend in WH Smiths in town. Why do grown-ups still call it WH Smiths? Why can't they call it 'The paper

shop' or 'The stationers'? No, it has to be WH Smiths. Quirky grown-ups. Mum and Dad even call McDonalds McDonalds! Everyone I know calls it Makky Dees! Oh well. So, crayons in pencil case along with pencils and a sharpener and a rubber. Oh, and a little plastic ruler. Wonder why it's called a ruler? Thought that was reserved for Kings and Queens. Who knows?

'Come on Sarah – let's brush your hair'. It's Mum's turn now to be overly attentive, hovering about doing small inconsequential tasks that hinder rather than help. 'Mum, I've already done my hair.' And pirouetted to demonstrate. 'That's very good Sarah, it looks lovely!' 'Now, have you packed your tissues and a spare pair of pants?' I'm supposed to have a spare pair of pants in case of 'Accidents'. Does that mean I'm going to fall down or trip over something? 'Yes Mum, got everything, Dad's just given me my packed lunch.' And he has too, it looks really good, I've got a ham sandwich, a cheese sandwich, a packet of Quavers and an apple. No sweets though. I did look enquiringly at Dad when he gave me my lunch box but he chose not to respond to my unasked question. Oh well.

'Fred it's time to go!' called Mum. Another grunt-like response from the ape-man in the bathroom. Molly thought the shout was for her, so she's off again, pounding up and down the stairs with her breathless squeaky bark adding to the bustle. 'I'll get the car out!' shouts Dad as he goes out the back door, obviously glad to be doing Man-things rather than fail in his futile attempts trying to round up the household. Fred comes out of the bathroom looking slightly more awake than when he went in, even though he had missed his mouth with some of his toothpaste,



remnants of breakfast still lurking between his front teeth. Eagle-eyed Mum spotted it. 'Fred, brush your teeth again, you've got toast and Marmite all over your mouth!' Another grunt, Fred mutters and brushes his teeth with ferocious swipes of his toothbrush. 'That's better,' Mum smiled, 'though how you can eat that stuff is beyond me, it's only you and your Father that likes it.' Marmite. Well, you do or you don't. I most certainly don't.

Beep-Beep of the car horn. 'Come on you two, let's not be late!' Mum leads the way downstairs, carefully avoiding the Molly obstacle. Fred stomped down next, dragging his shoulder bag down the stairs behind him - thud, thud, thud. Then me, being extra careful on the stairs as my new shoes have slippery soles. Perhaps this was to be my 'Accident'? All safe now, Molly into her bed, front door locked, Fred and me buckled up in the back and with Mum in the front seat and Dad driving off we jolly well go. That's Dad's saying by the way - 'and off we jolly well go!' Whatever.

It's not that far really, not even got the car warmed up according to Dad. We passed lots of other Mums and Dads and kids walking through the village, some I recognised. Getting really excited now, though Fred doesn't seem to be interested or concerned. 'Here we are,' said Dad, 'let's just park up and I'll let you two out.' He seemed to have a little smile hovering in his eyes as he turned

the engine off. He glanced in the rear-view mirror and caught me looking at him. 'You ok Sarah?' he asked. 'Yes Dad, of course I'm alright.' I'm not really though, I'm getting really scared now - what's it going to be like I wonder. Who will I know?

'Come on guys, let's go then!' Mum and Dad get out, then Fred and me. Fred shouts at one of his friends, the first intelligible sound he has made so far today, and off he goes. Or tries to. Mum stops him. 'Fred, you remember what we agreed? You are to look after Sarah until she gets to know other girls. Now hold her hand and take her into school. Sarah, do as you are told today and be a good girl.' I think Mum is being a bit bossy, she has her own feelings about today which she is trying so hard to hide. Dad is different though. He squats down in front of me and looks me straight in the eye. It's as though I can see deep into my Dad, I can really see what he is thinking. 'I'll be alright Dad,' I said, though I can feel my lip wobbling about. I'm sure I can see my Dad's eyes watering as he quietly says 'I love you Sarah!' He's never said it like that before, not with that degree of intensity. And I've never seen him cry before neither, that's making my lip wobble even more. 'Love you too Dad!' I shouted as Fred reluctantly grabs my hand and yanks me away from Mum and Dad towards my first day of school.

BOB THE DOG HEROISM AND HEARTBREAK

This is the story of my Dad and “Bob”, his remarkable dog but first of all, some background.

Maria Dickin was born in London in 1870. She was originally a vocal coach for operatic hopefuls. Giving that work up when she married, she soon became disillusioned entertaining the rich and famous at her London house and to fill the void in her life became actively involved in social work. Appalled at the awful living conditions in the city, she was incensed at the then dreadful standards of animal welfare. Maria was revolted by what she witnessed. She recalled the scene in a book published in 1940:

‘The suffering and misery of these poor, uncared-for creatures in our overcrowded areas was a revelation to me. I had no idea it existed, and it made me indescribably miserable.’

In November 1917 she set up a clinic in a London basement where those living in poverty could bring their animals for medical attention and care, without payment. Crowds flocking to the opening had to be controlled by police – The ‘People’s Dispensary for Sick Animals’ (PDSA) had been formed. Within four years there were seven clinics across London, treating some 40,000 animals each year, entirely free.

Women were not allowed to train as Vets, so Maria recruited and trained her own staff and by 1933 she had 17 clinics operating throughout the UK, with numerous horse-drawn mobile dispensary vehicles providing

animal welfare and care, now treating upwards of 150,000 animals each year. She then continued to expand the service overseas, including France, Rumania, Morocco, Egypt, Greece, and Palestine.

During the ‘Blitz’ period of the Second World War, it is estimated Maria’s PDSA mobile teams rescued 250,000 pets injured or buried from the bombing raids and it was now that the idea of recognising and honouring animals that were fighting alongside members of Civil Defence teams and the Armed Forces was conceived.

In 1943 Maria established the ‘Dickin Medal,’ to be awarded to those animals who had displayed ‘Outstanding Acts of Bravery’ whilst serving with any branch of the Armed Forces or Civil Defence. It is often referred to as the animal metaphorical equivalent of the Victoria Cross and the citation on the bronze medal reads: ‘For Gallantry’ and ‘We also Serve’.



The medal was awarded 54 times from 1943 – 1949 and still continues to be awarded – 9 times since then up to the end of 2019.

The first dog to be awarded the 'Dickin Medal' was 'Bob', a black and white Labrador/Collie Cross. His owner/handler was my father, Company Quartermaster Sergeant RE Cleggett (how apt, also 'Bob'), of the Queen's Own Royal West Kent Regiment. During the 1943 North Africa campaign at the battle for Green Hill, they were both on nightly information-gathering forays into enemy held positions. On several separate occasions 'Bob' the dog silently lay still and refused to move forward. Several minutes of intense silence was broken when enemy soldiers moved or coughed, giving themselves and their positions away just metres ahead. Silently retreating with valuable information regarding location of enemy positions, 'Bob' had saved the patrol again. The official account reads as follows:

"A patrol was sent out into enemy lines when we were facing him on that well-known place called

Green Hill in North Africa. 'Bob' went with them as messenger carrier. It was a dark and very cold night and 'Bob', who is black and white, had to be camouflaged. The patrol had some very hard places to overcome in their job and they were soon inside the enemy lines. Shortly after 'Bob' stopped and gave warning of near enemy. The patrol leader waited for a period to try and find out how near the enemy was. Not hearing anything he gave the order to move but 'Bob' refused to budge. A member of the patrol told his leader that perhaps 'Bob' knew the enemy were nearer than they thought. How true that was became very clear soon after, because a movement was seen just a few yards away. So, the patrol left for our lines with some very good information."

In Bob Cleggett's opinion – *"It was Bob's warning that saved one or two members of our patrol from being taken prisoner or perhaps wounded or even being killed."*

Bob and his dog remained inseparable, going into every action together for the remainder of the North Africa campaign.

Moving on to Sicily for the Italian campaign, Bob Cleggett wrote a letter home saying that the snow and ice in the mountains of Italy were a welcome relief for the dog as the flies in Sicily were very bad. And as the mountain weather deteriorated 'Bob' had a customised coat made from an Army greatcoat, which helped keep him warm and camouflaged when out on patrols.

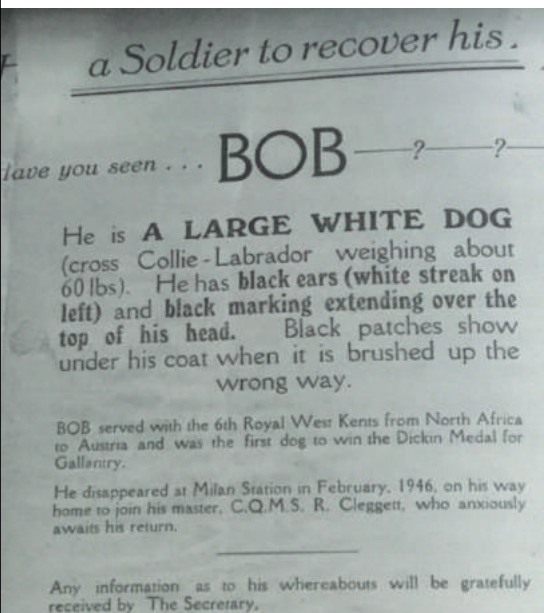
It was during the chill of an Italian winter that Bob Cleggett received notification that the PDSA's Allied Forces Mascot Club had awarded 'Bob' the Dickin Medal for: 'Magnificent work throughout the whole North African campaign; running messages and doing patrol work. Many lives were saved by his timely warnings.'

Still performing almost continual patrol work, there was no time for any presentation, although a morale-boosting certificate was sent out to the troops.



At the end of the war, VE day, Bob Cleggett and 'Bob' were in Austria. The arrangements for getting 'Bob' home was undertaken by the Royal Army Veterinary Corps, with Bob Cleggett going on ahead. However, a letter home voicing his misgivings proved sadly correct.

He wrote; *"We have not been separated for more than three years and I'm not convinced they have any idea about 'Bob' and his ways and I worry that he might get lost."*



Never taking well to strangers, 'Bob' slipped his leash on Milan Railway Station. Throughout Northern Italy every effort was made to find the dog; leaflets printed and handed out, dropped from planes, published in the Italian press and circulated through all official channels – all to no avail. 'Bob' was never seen again.

Several months later in England, the heartbroken Bob Cleggett was presented with his companion's medal and certificate.

'Bob's Dickin Gallantry Medal, original collar, his citation and official certificate are presented alongside Bob Cleggett's Medals and Awards in the Queen's Own Royal West Kent Museum in Maidstone, Kent. Additionally, during restoration work in 2010, a life-size replica of Bob the dog was made and introduced into the display.

'Bob's custom-made overcoat has sadly been lost, but I can vividly remember it tacked to the inside door of dad's workshop. Made of Army khaki greatcoat material, it was lozenge-shaped with white tapes for tying around the body. Embroidered along each side were the campaigns and countries they had both served in.

The origins of 'Bob' the dog are unclear. Obscured by time and with no War Office records to go by, our family's preferred version is one that Dad told me many years ago. Whilst on 'RNR' (Rest and Recuperation) in Cairo, he befriended a mongrel stray that then followed him everywhere. Dad smuggled the dog inside his kit bag to get it onboard the troop ship before heading back into the war zone, and the rest, as they say, is history.

As a final addendum; I came across a Reader's Digest magazine years ago, which related a story told by an Italian train driver in the early 1950's. Every time he pulled in to Milan Railway Station, the train doors would be opened and a large black and white dog would trot up and down the platform as if it was looking for someone. Not finding whatever it was looking for, it would trot away again. Apparently, this went on for nearly two years after which the dog was not seen again.

Dave Cleggett

GEORGINA PILLING

Do you recall 'The Girl from the Beach House' from the previous David Pilling article? This is her story – an extraordinary story of an extraordinary young woman; growing up in an uncertain world still reeling from the aftermath of the Second World War

A carefree childhood, ultra-strict Convent schooling, and wonderful experiences set in exotic locations and very determined to find her own place in the world. Let me introduce you to Georgina Pilling. No diminutives please, just Georgina. Born in Nairobi, Kenya, she was several months old before her father first saw her – he was a senior Army officer fighting the Japanese in war-torn Burma during the latter stages of World War II. The re-united family were then posted to Berlin, at the height of the so-called 'Berlin Blockade', and shortly thereafter a short distance from Paris, with father working with Field Marshal Montgomery at the inception of NATO. Now a Colonel in the Northern Rhodesia Regiment the family moved to Lusaka, capital of the then Northern Rhodesia, now the capital city of Zambia.

So-called 'peace' didn't last long. The communist-driven uprising in Malaya meant that Georgina's father and his Regiment were posted en-masse to support the Commonwealth Forces in the Malayan Peninsula. Georgina can well remember the ultra-long troop train carrying all the soldiers, officers, wives and families, on the four day trip from Lusaka to Beira, the Mozambique port on the Indian ocean. Her



bunk bed on the train had the then ultimate in travel sophistication – a sliding-framed mosquito net covering the window, which, when opened, allowed all the magical delights of the African countryside to become visible to a young girl. What a start to another adventure! Boarding the troop ship 'Empire Trooper', the company set sail for Malaya where the men moved off into the jungle doing military duties whilst the wives and children remained in Penang. So followed two wonderful years packed with wide-eyed childhood memories. To a ten-year-old child this was the most fascinating sensory-driven playground ever – school hours were mornings only, then the children, who had grown up together in Africa, were free to run through the native villages or swim in the sea. Georgina can well remember sitting on the veranda of their hill-top house watching big-bellied flying boats land on the sea. Across the bay, an off-shore island hid the tuberculosis and leprosy riddled unfortunates from society.

At the end of this posting and now back home in Africa it was back to school for Georgina – a very different experience from those carefree years in Malaya - school being the Dominican Nunnery in Lusaka, where the Nuns were so very very strict, bordering on cruel.

Father was now seconded to MI6, and this led to yet another family move, this time to Middlesex! It wasn't for too long however as after being promoted to the post of Brigade Commander, Kings African Rifles, it was back to Africa, Nanyuki in Kenya this time for the family, minus the less-than-fortunate Georgina who, now 12 years of age, was sent to boarding school - The Sacred Heart Convent in Surrey. This school was the complete antithesis to the Lusakan Nunnery school; Georgina fondly remembers her friends there and recalls it being a very happy place, full of light and laughter. The annual flight home from school to Kenya was an eagerly awaited adventure - flying via Rome and Entebbe before finally landing in Nairobi. Those summer holidays were full of childhood adventures, spending time in the family beach house on the Indian Ocean coast, and trips to visit family friends throughout Southern Africa. This boarding school life continued for the next four years, until Georgina left aged 16.

Father had been posted to NATO Headquarters, so again the family was uprooted from Kenya and now settled in the totally different culture of Parisian life, living in Fontainebleau. For Georgina it was off to school again, this time at Champéry in Switzerland. It was skiing during the winter and summer term on Lake Geneva, making many life-long friends in the process. Georgina was enveloped in a seemingly endless carousel of social gatherings, entertaining and parties, mixing with other teenagers from a variety of nationalities, cultures and backgrounds.

Now aged 17 and always wanting to be a children's nurse, the next stage for Georgina was training at St. Thomas' Hospital London where she qualified as a paediatric nurse. A chance conversation with a hospital secretary led Georgina and a nursing companion Margy to apply for an interview for BOAC; apparently the secretary had said the money was hugely more than what they were earning as nurses. Success at the interview meant resigning as

nurses and whilst awaiting her BOAC training Georgina went to stay with family friends in Cyprus. Liking the climate and life-style so much and not wanting to leave, she took a job as nanny to a military family. By coincidence, the Army General in Cyprus at that time had served with Georgina's father and had known her since she was a baby. Now in her early 20's she was the ideal companion to help his wife Lois host cocktail parties and social functions. At one party to welcome a Naval Submarine Captain, Lois expressed her wish to venture on board the submarine, HMS Aeneas, which was initially refused on the grounds that it is unlucky for females to go on board. However, and probably swayed by it being Georgina's birthday, the Captain relented the next day and both Georgina and Lois were invited on board. As a young 20-something female, exiting the sub via the conning tower must have raised everyone's temperature somewhat!

Life in Cyprus was great until the family were posted to Benghazi and, not wanting to go with them, Georgina was fortunate enough to meet a newly-qualified doctor, whom she knew from St Thomas', whose father ran an eye hospital in Jordan. Invited to visit Jordan



and stay with the family, Georgina accepted. Whilst there the Middle East Six-Day War erupted and, under instructions issued by the British Embassy, 'should bombings begin personnel are instructed not to view the planes from the roof-top terraces but to seek shelter in cellars.' Sounds like a reasonable enough plan thought Georgina – until the eye surgeon refused to let anyone into his cellar! Intrigued and mystified by this stone-wall refusal she asked why, only to be told that no-one has ever been allowed in his cellar, that was where he kept his train set!

Evacuated to Beirut along with a host of other nationalities Georgina decided to go onto Cyprus, where another ex-nursing colleague introduced her to a guy who had set up a villa rental business and wanted someone to look after his villa in Northern Cyprus. Life was just full of opportunities so off she went. And that began yet another career, joining a crew of two 'chalet girls' working in Cyprus, Switzerland and the Greek island of Poros. Back in England waiting for another chalet season meant working for an advertising agency on a part-time basis. One particular contract involved Georgina and the other girls dressing up in corporate colours, selling Players No 6 Cigarettes around Brighton and Hove. Just a tad strange, being a non-smoker herself!

Now back in London Georgina rented an apartment in Earls Court along with two Australians Suzie and Sharlie (Charlotte, so diminutive pronounced as Sharlie). Australians eh! Now in her early 20's Georgina managed to outrageously blag her way into working back at St Thomas', in the Children's Surgical Ward, doing the hours that suited her and not the Matron, to some degree of incredulity from the other nurses. After just a year of this Sharlie announced she was going back home to Australia. And now for the great plan! Georgina suggested they took time out, go to Africa where Georgina could show Sharlie the country, stay at her parents' house, now living in

Zambia, then travel down to Capetown where more ex-St Thomas' nurses were living and working, and after which they could sail to Australia where the roles could be reversed. So, off the girls went, initially to Kenya, where they stayed with friends in a beach house in Mombassa. And here Dear Reader she met a young Navy pilot named David who had lost the whereabouts of his ship! Cupid's Arrows and Fate!

Eventually Georgina and Sharlie arrived at her parent's home in Zambia, where the family intended to spend their first Christmas together for many years. Georgina's mother was just so overjoyed! Until her excitement was dashed when a telegram arrived for Georgina from David saying 'Accommodation arranged – see you in Singapore!'

And so to Singapore, where David and Georgina met again. Sharlie, now feeling slightly 'Gooseberry' decided to fly home to Australia, leaving the two love-birds alone in Singapore for two or three weeks. And this is where the couple became engaged to be married. David's ship then sailed, with him on board, and Georgina flew back to Zambia. After meeting up with David once again in Capetown they then both set sail for England and their marriage at 'St Martin-in-the-Fields, Trafalgar Square, in 1971.

And the rest, as they say Dear Reader, is history; a memorable, remarkable history.



HATHERN'S WILD FLOWERS

The Covid 19 lockdown has had many unforeseen consequences. Only being able to exercise locally has made many people take more notice of the natural world around them. Added to that, the lockdown has meant that some councils have not been cutting road verges resulting in a profusion of wild flowers in some places.



Meadow Saxifrage

In 2015, Andrew Swift, who used to live in Hathern, published "The Hathern Wild Flower Book". The book contains details of wild flowers found within 2.5km of the village cross with information about the plants and the stories behind them. What is unusual is that Andrew's records date from the late 1980s. The book took a long time to come to print because the computer disk with the text was believed lost but turned up in 2015, and so gives us a fascinating insight into the changes there have been in and around the village in the last 30 years.

There is nothing particularly unusual about the natural habitats around Hathern. It is surrounded by fields, has the River Soar nearby and the nearest accessible woodland

is at Pear Tree Lane and Piper Wood. This means that most of the wild flowers described can be found in many other localities, but it is this that makes the book so interesting. All too often the more common flowers get overlooked with interest directed towards the unusual and rare, yet it is these flowers that can be good indicators of the changes that have occurred.

The biggest change to the landscape has been the degree of building that has swallowed up many of the fields around the village, and we will have more to come with the development of the Garendon Estate. Once upon a time road verges used to be cut and raked away - farmers would take the cuttings for hay but now grass cuttings are just left. This smothers seedlings and increases nutrients to add to the nutrient run off from fields treated with fertiliser. That means nettles, docks and brambles take over and the more delicate grassland wild flowers are lost. However, it should be noted that Oakley Grange Farm is run organically, so fields farmed by them do not receive chemicals.



Round-leaved Cranesbill

Before 1990 there were several old hay meadows to the east of the village supporting flowers such as Meadow Saxifrage, Pignut and Lady's Bedstraw. These have now been lost to arable farming. Today there are only two old meadow areas maintained by the landowner which provide a last refuge for plants such as these.

Thirty years ago, the dykes running down to the Soar were free running, and Andrew recorded plants such as Brooklime and Pink Water Speedwell in them. However, the flood barriers at the Soar have reduced the flow and these plants cannot be found in the dykes now, though they can still be found along the Soar. Generally, the land has been getting drier.

is increasing its range as a result of climate change. In 2019, it was discovered growing in Tunnel Lane, and has been found again this year. Our second uncommon plant is a subspecies of the familiar Hedge Bindweed. This one has striking large pink and white flowers and is known as *roseata*. Always found bedside water, it grows in the Osier Beds next to the Comma Dyke and thankfully has survived the new bridge construction.

Members of the Hathern Wildlife Group have been making a record of Hathern's wild flowers and comparing with Andrew's book. Many locations have been lost but it has been a delight to find some wild flowers doing well in the same place as thirty years ago. The Group has been active in establishing



Ragged Robin



Hedge Bindweed (*roseata*)

Many wetland plants were recorded along Pasture Lane, but they're not there now. Ragged Robin is a plant of marshy ground and Andrew recorded that he was assured by older villagers that Ragged Robin was not a rare plant when they were children. In 1979 it grew in a meadow east of Tunnel Lane and Andrew recorded it in the Weirs field. Alas, Ragged Robin appears now to be extinct in our area.

So Hathern doesn't have any rarities? Well not quite. Round-leaved Cranesbill was never recorded in Leicestershire until recent years. It's a plant of southern England that

new meadow areas with the Parish Council at the bottom of the Park and the Cemetery, and with the Parochial Church Council in the churchyard. All are doing well, and hopefully will return many meadow flowers to the village. I wonder what it will all be like in another thirty years?

Andrew's "The Hathern Wild Flower Book" can be bought for £5.99. Details from the parish council clerk.

Interested in the wildlife around Hathern? Why not join the Hathern Wildlife Facebook Group.

A LIBRARY IN LOCKDOWN

Try as we might, we can't escape from the fact that lockdown affected us all, and Hathern Community Library was no exception. But, whilst we may not have been able to open our doors, we've certainly still been keeping busy. From volunteer remote quizzes to art exhibitions, our activities have kept going. And we have been working hard to get things ready for reopening.

Back in March 2020, in much the same way as the wider country (and indeed, to one extent or another, the rest of the world), Hathern Community Library had to close its doors. It was tough, because we knew that many people were likely to find more time to read, and one of the reasons that HCL became a community managed library was because we are dedicated to continuing to provide what we see as a very important service to the community. However, even though we didn't know how long it was going to last, we knew that it was the right step to take. If you've followed our story so far, you'll know that we are very much of the opinion that HCL is about more than books and closing the building didn't stop us.

Volunteers

HCL volunteers are a community in themselves and it was important to keep in touch during the closure. Just like many others during 2020, our volunteers had a crash course in remote meeting software, like Zoom. They had regular Zoom coffee mornings – a chance to keep in touch and socialise with some fun activities including quizzes and even a Karaoke session. Not a bad way to start the week. Without going into too many details, we hear that they gave Kylie Minogue a run for her money!

Art at HCL

Art has been popular with our groups of all ages at HCL. From early in the lockdown, the library window was opened as a temporary art gallery. A huge thank you to everyone who posted a picture through the letterbox for display – we know it helped to brighten up the daily walk for many passers-by.

HCL also launched an online Art Exhibition on the library website – you can see some of the work displayed here as well. The original plan was for the exhibition to be in the marquee during Hathern's Big Week, but for obvious reasons, that didn't happen. So, it became a virtual exhibition, showcasing works of art by members of HCL Art Group and people associated with the library. The works displayed were of an excellent standard – who knew that there was so much talent around us?

Summer Reading Challenge

The Reading Agency's Summer Reading Challenge also went digital this year. The annual challenge delivered in partnership with public libraries and funded by the Arts Council England, encourages children aged 4-11 to enjoy the benefits of reading for pleasure. The 2020 challenge celebrated funny books, happiness and laughter. The challenge ends in mid September. We have missed seeing our younger readers coming in to the library to update us with how they are doing on their challenge and telling us what books they have read. Given the theme this year, we were looking forward to hearing some good jokes! You can find out more about the challenge ahead of the 2021 launch at summerreadingchallenge.org.uk

We'd love to hear what the best book your read over summer was.

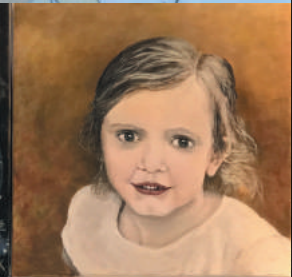
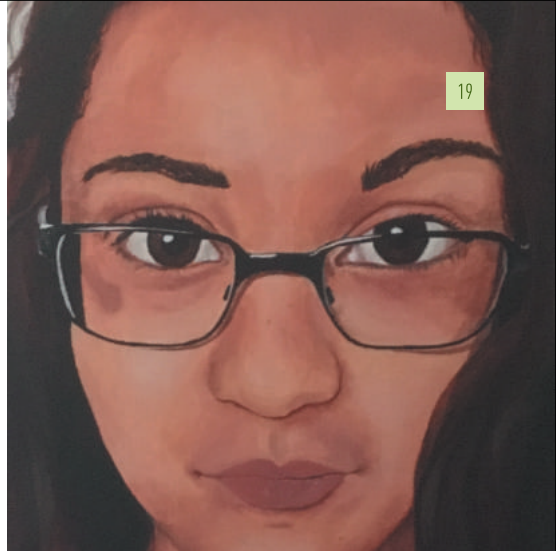
Reopening

During the lockdown, it gave us time to pause and reflect. Our AGM (again held virtually) reviewed the past year and saw some Trustees step down, and new ones step up. Our outgoing Chair, Resh Kandola said 'I would like to thank everyone involved in HCL, the hard work and help from Trustees and dedicated volunteers, as well as engagement and support from our visitors and the wider community. I look forward to seeing everyone soon, as I remain part of the volunteering team.' We'll be introducing you to the new trustees and management team in the next Hathern Herald – but you'll be able to get a sneak peek on the website.

Throughout lockdown, trustees new and old were monitoring the advice from the Government and Leicestershire County Council in relation to reopening HCL. Although we are a community managed library, the decision was not only ours to make in this case. This saw both physical and process changes to help keep both volunteers and visitors as safe as we can, and something that we continue to review as the situation develops and guidance is updated. We'd love to hear from you if you've visited the library since we reopened – what did you think?

As always, for the latest news (including how we're changing our opening hours and process to make things safer for the community), or to get involved in any of the groups at the library, check out our social media channels or the website hatherncommunitylibrary.org

If there is something that you think we should be doing that we don't, get in touch and let's work together to increase what we offer for our community.





WE'LL BE BACK

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