



Winter 2014

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CRAFT FAIR 14: THUMBS UP FROM PUNTERS. CAKES AND BACON BAPS POPULAR AS EVER!

Many thanks to Heidi Idle for such a detailed report on one of the most important events of the Harburn Year. As a local Harburndonian (dictionary meaning – one who resides in Harburn), I have been attending the Harburn Craft Fair for over 14 years now (it’s been on the go for over 20 years – perhaps 30 years now) – so I suppose it was almost apt for me to be the chosen one (by ‘you can’t get out of this one’ Norry Boulting) this year to report back on my findings!

My son and I were greeted at the door by long standing (literally) Dave McDonald and his fine assistant Alistair who sold us our raffle tickets for the ‘donated by stall holders’ gifts on display. The great excitement and gasp was from my son Roan who was keen to win the largest item on this table – the all singing and dancing ‘with real smoke’ Santa Christmas train. “Well I hope you win it Roan” as we entered into the warmth and welcome from the Harburn Craft Fair stall holders and the glamorous Harburn Rural ladies at the ever popular cake stall and tea room.

I decided to start anti-clockwise on my round of the stalls – no idea why but perhaps it was the welcoming waft of bacon rolls which was tempting me to head to the kitchen area and cake stall – I am sure it was. I resisted temptation though. Apparently, at lunch time the hall was heaving with all tables full.

There were so many cakes to choose from but what caught my eye were the chocolate pop cakes – delicious they were too. I don’t think there was much baking left at the end of the day – a tribute to our local ladies who work hard in the background and donate their

delicious baking and jams for sale.

The first craft stall was hosted by Irene Mulholland whose kind donations from sales of her handmade and second hand Christmas ware were all going to the Harburn Hall and Children in Need. Proving popular were the delightful Christmas decorations which were selling fast. The Crafty Cauldron drew me in with the gorgeous aroma of handmade aromatherapy bath and body gifts which are made with the finest natural ingredients and essential oils. I just couldn’t resist the fairy dust bath sprinkle on offer. Susan Howie’s Calder Crafts stall was very appealing with some beautiful colourful animal themed patchwork, quilting, and handmade festive cards. Worth a special mention though, was the Ferrero Roche knitted hat covers. The must have item for Christmas 2014! I loved the spiced aroma hens. Of course I had to have the pink one. (contd P8)

STOP PRESS: Just announced ROADS REPAIRS to start 7th/8th Dec. See website for more details. www.harburnvillagehall.org.uk.

Rather Jolly!

The ‘divisive and bitter’ Scottish referendum which saw ‘carnage at polling stations’ (copyright all printed media), passed off surprisingly quietly in Harburn once the dastardly plans to raise a ‘Yes’ banner over the Hall had been exposed by crusading journalists from ‘The Harburn Times’ (in an edition you may not have seen, since at least one member of our distribution network is a known renegade...).

The campaign was notable for a guest appearance on the BBC News by none other than our own Joanna Pearce, who was filmed, clipboard in hand, looking rather lost in the middle of Knightsridge. It is rumoured that Alan Tuffs also played a cameo role before being edited out of the final package on clothing grounds. Joanna had previously narrowly escaped a road rage by being in Polbeth when a Yes car cavalcade - containing - by unfortunate coincidence - another prominent Harburnite - was passing. Having survived the worst that the Yes campaign could throw at her, she proceeded to trip over a Nepalese boulder and break her arm. There is of course, no connection.

In a sneakily unconstitutional and subversive fashion - typical of the Yes campaign - the local heritage monument, our very own Five Sisters - sprouted a ‘Yes’ slogan overnight. The rumour that certain Harburn people were debarred from taking part in this late-night piece of skulduggery on grounds of age are not to be believed. A fine sense of civic responsibility, typical of our community, was the true reason, - (though I would have advised white paint, rather than yellow).

It says little for our youth, though, that they were unwilling to climb higher than a couple of dozen feet before perpetrating their outrageous act. If the revolution is to be cancelled from fear of heights, we have little to worry about.

On polling day, Joanna received a text from her sister, primed by the outpourings of the Daily Mail, hoping that she was somewhere safe, with no ‘carnage’. She replied she was manning Parkhead polling place with her cousin Andrew as opposite number. “That is the final straw,” came the response. Meanwhile, the discovery that Alan Tuffs was teamed against Councillor Greg McCarra up the road, led to a useful conversation on the subject of...you guessed it...the state of Harburn Roads.

And so passed the referendum. It was rather fun. Can we do it again please? - *Andrew L*

Wilkie's Take



In search of Quiet Lanes

Have you noticed . . . that the bad state of our local roads has resulted in slower traffic: the hard surface is narrower (see pic?), the verges are softer and more chancy, the potholes are more alarming so drivers seem to be taking more care and a strange courtesy has emerged. Cars, trucks and tractors seek out informal passing places at gateways and junctions and make space for each other to pass.

At the same time, this last summer has brought more people walking, cycling and running along the roads - although for some reason or other, horse riders seem to be fewer. The idea of Harburn as a green lung for southwest Livingston and the villages has taken shape.

Around the year 2000, West Lothian Council commissioned and adopted its new Countryside Access Strategy. Embedded

in it was the notion of "Quiet Roads" for parts of the council - the Linlithgow fringes / Bathgate Hills and our own southwest corner being areas where this was proposed to be implemented - possibly just as a trial but none the

less, some form of change to the way in which the C class roads would be thought of - and used.

A few years later, the CPRE - Campaign for the Protection of Rural England - brought out a series guidelines and good practice notes to show what such "Quiet Lanes" might mean in practice and to provide a rationale for it. Between 2001 and 2006, around 350 "Quiet Lanes" were being tri-



alled in over 30 local authority areas in England so there is a body of evidence to show how this might be done and how effective it has been. Two national demonstration projects have been initiated - one in north Norfolk and the other along the Greensand Ridge in Kent.

Quiet Lanes are a positive way of:

- providing a chance for people to walk, cycle and horse ride in a safer environment;
- widening transport choice; and
- protecting the character and tranquillity of country lanes.

Cars are not banned; Quiet Lanes are more likely to include signs than speed bumps, with entry points to the network being marked clearly and speed limits of around 20mph designated.

Clearly, the support of our local authority would be an essential element for this and dialogue with them following our own local discussions and debate will be necessary.

How would it be if we aimed for parts of our own area to be established in this way? Where might

this be? Which roads are prime candidates and which are those where it might be not be practical? I have my own ideas of course and would suggest the road from Balgreen (maybe Skivo?) to the Golf Course and Sawmill Brae and along to Parkhall as my starters for ten. Where else might be considered? Letters to the editor please . . .

Alan Tuffs

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The Chairman's er.....Chair

I think that most Harburnites are aware that the proposals for wind farms at Harburnhead (23 turbines) and Pearie Law (6 turbines) have been approved. The developer is planning to start construction at Harburnhead in September 2015; it is less clear when construction of the Pearie Law wind farm is likely to begin. My opposition to these proposals is no secret and I am delighted that the most damaging proposal at Fauch Hill has been rejected. While I still believe wind farms fail to deliver any of the key requirement of large scale electricity generation in terms of reduced CO2 emissions, cost and energy security, and will blight the landscape for years to come, developers do always feel duty bound to offer significant funds to local communities. The developers at Harburnhead and Pearie Law are no exception and are planning to contribute significant funds to the local community during the course of the 25 year anticipated life of the wind farms. The way these funds are distributed and fed down to projects within local communities is not through any established framework, but comes about through local agreements between developers and whoever puts themselves forward as representing local communities or groups within those communities. Thus while we in Harburn can certainly reasonably expect to receive significant benefits from the 36 turbines (Harburnhead, Pearie Law and Pates Hill) already operating or approved within our small corner of West Lothian, we do need to be proactive in identifying projects and applying for funding. It appears at the moment that developers are likely to place most these funds into either the West Lothian Development Trust (a fund set up by and run at "arms length" through West Lothian Council) or the the West Calder and Harburn Community Development Trust to which applications can be made for funding of suitable projects. Direct applications to developers might also be possible.

Whatever money is available (we are talking in terms of six figure sums per year), we as a community will not see projects magi-

cally springing up. Unless we are proactive in developing ideas and seeking our fair share of the funds available to realise them, then the only things guaranteed to spring up in Harburn will be turbines and other communities further afield will benefit from "our" (I say that with no pride) wind farms. The Village Hall Association is working on a package of improvements for the Hall, but we should all be actively thinking about how we take maximum advantage of this opportunity to improve the amenities within our community. *Cheers, Guy*

SWRI Jottings

The heady days of the Festival have disappeared into the murk of Autumn but as with the academic year, September is a season of new beginnings for the Rural after the long Summer break. A very enjoyable meal at the Thistle Cafe brought us all together again and at the agm it was time to thank our retiring Committee members, Linda and Lilian and to welcome Betty and Morag in their place. It was also time for me to hand over to Kay. During the last three years I have come to realise just how much we depend upon each other for help and support and I cannot thank my friends in the Rural enough for guiding me through. I am sure Kay will find the same and enjoy her time as President.

We have already had two meetings, as ever on wildly different themes. Alan Graham talked on Modern Farming in October and November brought us a most thought provoking and yet entertaining talk on the work of a Forensic Pathologist by Professor Bussutil. Some of us enjoyed a visit to The Scottish Tapestry at New Lanark in October. This was Joan's last event as Social Secretary and I would like to thank her for all she has arranged for us and Helen B for stepping into her shoes.

So, with the Calder Handbell Ringers and the Christmas and Birthday parties to look forward to, we approach a new year and I wish Kay and the new Committee all the best. We go towards 2015 in safe hands.- *Juliet*

Man the Barricades?

The article below was contributed before the MOMENTOUS news broken by Allan McLaughlan on Nov 25. ADL's threepence worth is printed nevertheless....

For those whose trust in the efficient workings of administration remains undimmed, attending the series of meetings your unfortunate 'roads' representatives have endured over the past months would rapidly have changed their outlook.

Even under the energetic guidance of our ever-patient chairman, Allan McLaughlan, past whose lips no bad word has been known to slip, we have achieved.....not a lot, frankly. It would be tedious to go into detail, so let me just note some of the more enlightening moments:

- 1) The discovery that (unlike English parish councils) we have no power to erect barriers to prevent people driving onto non-existent verges and getting bogged down in bottomless mud.
- 2) The discovery that we cannot guide anyone from officialdom around our battered roads without everyone donning hard hats and high-viz jackets.
- 3) The astonishing mangling of the language, by which in construction industry terms, 'open' apparently means closed and 'closed' means open.
- 4) The fact that yellow or white markings appear on our roads doesn't mean that any work has been agreed, but that a 'survey' is taking place.
- 5) The knowledge that it takes at least six months of haggling to agree cost allocations between West Lothian Council and Scottish Power
- 6) The discovery that even when costs have been allocated, there is further haggling about who will actually do the work
- 7) The discovery that when the top roads official in West Lothian council goes on sick

leave, there is no replacement. Or, if there is, we are not told who it is.

8) The surprising fact that the 'schedules' and 'maps' that we are promised seldom materialise - and if they do, they are incomprehensible

9) The ability of all concerned to disguise the lack of progress with endless politically correct platitudes about being determined to do the very best for the community...

10) The failure of anyone to guarantee that it is not all going to happen again.

Last year, in jocular terms, we spoke of lying down in front of the diggers next time round. It may yet come to that....

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Saturday 28th Feb 2015.

Hall Fund Raiser...Music, food, drinking and dancing.

Eastwood, Harburn's favourite Band, like us so much they have offered their services to help the Hall.

Ticket details to follow...reserve your table now...call David on 872 501.

Seems ridiculous, but Saturday and Sunday 13/14 of June 2015. Get those dates in you diary and spread the word. Forget the other Galas, The GRAND HARBURN FESTIVAL is THE event of the year. More, many more, details to follow. A form to be completed and all ideas, suggestions very welcome. especially from new members of the Community. Phone David on 872 501 please.

Wind, Roads et (quite a bit of) al.....

Wind Farms -- The developers of Harburnhead and Pearie Law have begun negotiations with local community representatives re their proposals for the delivery of Community Benefit arrangements. They have had initial meetings with representatives of West Calder & Harburn Community Development Trust; West Calder and Harburn Community Council; West Lothian Development Trust and Woolfords, Auchengray and Tarbrax Improvement Foundation. A further meeting is planned in the New Year.



It is anticipated that initial site preparation-works will commence on these sites midway through 2015. Both developers are finalising their construction plans for presentation to community meetings early next year. (see roads report)

Camilty Wind Farm -- No progress noted on the Camilty application to WLC.

Roads Report -- At long last there appears to be an end in sight per the reinstatement of the roads damaged during the installation of the Pates Hill electric cabling works.

At a Roads Liaison Group Mtg recently Scottish Power reported that they had reached agreement with WLC over the repairs which are to be undertaken and have instructed contractors to undertake this remedial work. Of necessity this will entail lo-

cal road closures between 8.00 am and 4.00 pm when even local access will be denied. All Residents will receive advance notice of these closures in order to make alternative transport arrangements.

It is anticipated that, allowing for all the legal procedures to be followed to organise

these closures, these works could commence in mid December and be completed in the New Year [subject to weather constraints].

The first phase will be from the Golf Club to Harburn Hall; then from The Hall to Balgreen;

then Balgreen to Skivo. Thereafter the C24 road from the Water House Crossroads to the Wind Farm will be undertaken.

Repairs to the B7008 will also be undertaken. These will take place under temporary traffic light conditions. (Photo: verges in 2014)

The Roads Liaison Group will reconvene in the the New Year to liaise with all parties re the inevitable disruption which will be caused by the cabling to Harburnhead; Pearie Law and possibly Camilty. It is hoped that that by prior consultation much of the disruption and inconvenience experienced in recent years re the double cabling of Pates Hill can be avoided. *ALM -- Chair; WC&HCC.*

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www.harburnvillagehall.org.uk.**

Full house for Beryl

David McDonald on the latest - and as we've come to expect, very enjoyable, Ceilidh.

Once again the Harburn St Andrews Day Ceilidh was a great success. Needless to say, in the greatest Harburn tradition it was not held at any time near St Andrews Day. The Hall was full, we even had to produce another table and extra chairs to accommodate the crowds...it was set up the night before, but clearly those responsible had miscalculated.....oops I helped set up.



The music was, of course from John Morgan. who was on top form.

The food as always was plentiful and delicious, provided by the good ladies of Harburn and the good ladies of the surrounding district...even as far as West Calder.

Linda McDonald made a chocolate rice crispy tray-bake...but had forgotten what sandwiches she had to provide...so after much discussion on how no one touched sausage rolls last year and what a waste they were...she decided to bring 150 sausage rolls...controversial as it sounds...I managed to get one...the other 149 had already gone.

It was great to see a table of new Harburners as Joe, Yvonne, Alistair and Louise from "the row" came along. They even won a prize in the raffle.

We have to thank all who contributed to the raffle, the amount of prizes meant that all the tables went away with at least one prize. But the big winner of the night was the Hall...we raised over £650 for the Hall funds, the highest ever...to put it in to context it is as big a contribution as a Panto plus all the WRI meetings put together.



Thank you to all that contributed...but biggest thanks of all is to Beryl and her family who put in huge effort to make the Ceilidh such a success. Well done Beryl.



Pat Provan's stall. 2014: See Craft Fair

Craft Fair (contd from P1)

Crafty Creations were back on stage this time with Liz Steele's gorgeous Christmas



trees and Christmas decorations. So much hard work and detail goes into Liz's unusual colourful shimmer array of Christmas cheer. Joining Crafty Creations on stage were returning husband and wife duo Sue and Frank Whittle with their Funkrase Crafts. Sue was showing off her unusual knitted gifts and children's clothing in which I was drawn to the gorgeous safari animal key rings and heart shaped handbags. Frank's detailed and beaded bling earrings were gathering much attention from the men of Harburn. I suspect a Christmas gift for their loved ones...which was lovely to see.

Next on my rounds I was expecting to turn round and see JennieTuffs at the usual fire exit door, and was surprised to see that Jennie had instead turned into the friendly wood craftsman Peter West who was camped out instead. Jennie from Roundhouse Publications – we wish you a speedy recovery from your broken arm injury – we hope it's not the painting arm!

Peter West's display of craftsmanship is always a sight to see each year. Everything you can imagine handmade from Scottish hardwood – from drum sticks to pestle and

mortars and even envelope openers. My son is fascinated with this stall. It's the first one he goes to each year so he can add to his collection of wooden spinning tops. However, new for this year and I can honestly say a new fashion accessory if you need one was the e-cigarette wooden neck holder. David McDonald jokingly remarked that it was actually worth taking up e-cigarettes just to own one!

Pat Provan's stall reminded me of an enchanted forest with some beautiful pieces of jewellery and decorations hanging on her tree. Pat also makes fine wedding jewellery custom made to your specification. Lots of shimmering golds and silvers, and gorgeous Christmas beaded decorations.

I left Pat's stall into another place in Narnia - Heather's Craft Studio with her display of country, contemporary and mixed media altered art. Well I couldn't resist – I had just bought some fairy dust from across the way and now I was debating on which handmade fairy door to choose. Heather said she had one in every room...I suppose that's what fairies need but on this occasion we bought two – and will be saving up for more next year. Just what we needed said my husband when I got home - ha ha! They do look cute though. Even the dog was sniffing at the door but the fairies didn't appear. At least not yet. (Contd. P9. Photo: Sarah Thomson's cakes)



Contd from P 8. Iona Allen attends the Harburn Craft Fair each year as a one-off annual appearance to display her collection of wonderful gifts. She has some very nice pieces of jewellery made with crystals and semi-precious gem stones including some fab earrings, and this year new to her collection - some unusual furry friend brooches in all colours.

Another wood craftsman— Roy Pritchard was showing off his wood turning skills too with some lovely pieces – bowls, plates and pots – all made handcrafted from birch wood. A nice gift for your kitchen or display cabinet.

Harburn Craft fair wouldn't be the same without Delightful Chocolates being there, and with mum Hazel who does a great job lovingly selling her son Alasdair Macewan's scrumptious chocolates, in particular his new chocolate Christmas trees and Santa Sleighs. After having too many of the tasters, we opted for the delicious strawberry chocolate tasters to take home which didn't last the length of our five minute journey home sadly. I must follow them on Facebook and Twitter or would that be bad for my figure?

And finally, in the same front entrance exhibit area as ever was Ray Kew from Kew Kottage Krafts with her fabulous collection of knitwear (and cards including John Wilkinson's old favourites) – all hand spun from her finest flock back home of naturally coloured fleece and honourably named after each one of them. I liked Ray's new funky flower hair bands which were very popular with the ladies of West Calder and Harburn alike.

Well I had managed to get round all the stalls and was absolutely delighted with my purchases and of course the social chat. I think I did it in 45 minutes which is unusual for me – afterall I do like to blether.

All was left to do was check out our raffle tickets to see if we had won anything. "Roan – please go and check the door to see if our number has come up", said I. Silence then....squeals of delight from one satisfied customer "Mum!! We've won the train!" (Thanks Irene Mulholland for the best ever raffle donation.)

All in all another successful craft fair for me as a serial craft shopper, and I hope for the local crafters too whose skills and work are a credit to our local community.

Thanks, as always to, in particular, Isobel McChesney, without whom the event would never leave the ground and who is always the last person to leave the ship! For full credit list and more photos, please visit the Village Hall site.

Words & Photos: Heidi Idle, Harburdonian. Further photos and contact numbers on Village Hall site.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

ROBIN HOOD

(and his band of merry persons)

This year's offering from the
HARBURN PLAYERS

Panto time again: get your tickets for
Wed 10 to Sat 13 December at 7.30
Cheap at half the price: £5 to you
Support your local Thesps.
Tickets (going fast!) 01506 873032

HOGMANAY BRUNCH. This mega-popular event will be on offer once more - first attraction of 2015! Details to follow.

BURNS' NIGHT SUPPER. Unbelievably date announced months ago! Saturday 24th January 2015. First big name signing -- Claire Duncan. Tickets:

Profile: with the Bennets in Spain

JGW: What sort of state was it in and what did you have to do to it?

John Wilkinson, resident Cartoonist for the HT, writes on a mid-ge-fee visit to ex Harburn residents. Photos by JW.

In June Heather and I went a walking holiday in the Picos de Europa in Northern Spain. Afterwards we relaxed for a few glorious days with ex-Harburnites Tom and Helen Bennett in the little piece of paradise that is their Iberian home.

JGW: Nice to catch up, it's been a wee while. Can you tell our readers where you live now?

HB: We live in Salas, in the province of Asturias in North West Spain. Salas is a little town on the Camino de Santiago (the ancient pilgrim route) and we live just about 4 kilometres away. Salas is also the name of the 'concejo', which roughly translates as 'the county'.

JGW: How long have you been here now?

TB: Can you believe we bought a ruin ten years

ago! We spent time each year in Asturias and in Scotland until 2009 when we came to live here more or less permanently.

JGW: Why did you move away from Harburn?

HB: We were looking for a different quality of life. We both like the Spanish way of life, the friendliness of the people, the slow pace of life, the good food and of course the cheap wine! We get much more sunshine annually here, although it's not as hot in the north-west of Spain as it is further south, so the countryside is green, mountainous and with fast flowing rivers.

JGW: Sounds great! How did you find this place?

HB: We stopped the car in Salas on one of our visits to Spain in the early 2000s and went into the local estate agency. The owners took us on a tour of various houses on their books and we liked the look of this one. It was meant to be!

HB: Like Tom said, it was a ruin, although it did have sturdy stone walls which are about 60 - 70 cms thick. It was also full of rubbish, as an old tramp had lived in it for years before we bought it. We needed to have a bonfire for three days to get rid of the stuff that he had left behind.

TB: Tell me about it! We had to point all the walls (a job that took months), put on a new roof, lay floors, build new windows and doors, build up the outside terrace, raise part of the roof space to accommodate an upstairs room and put in all the things you need indoors from plumbing, wiring and insulation to walls, ceilings, bathrooms, the kitchen, fires and stairs. We also rebuilt the 'galeria' which is a kind of enclosed terrace/sun room, very common in Asturias and a feature of all the old-style houses.

HB: That's right, Tom. It was NOT a des. res. when we bought it, but we like to think it is now.

JGW: It's a highly des. res., and I've got the pix to

prove it! Tell us what your circumstances are.

HB: The house is one of four on the edge of a village and we're surrounded by our land. Because of the good, gentle climate here we spend a lot of our time outdoors, and as it rains quite frequently things grow at an alarming rate. So we're constantly fighting with the plant life to keep it under control! We grow fruit and vegetables and, depending on the season, are lucky enough to have strawberries, raspberries, red & black currants, gooseberries, apples, pears, plums and figs. We're trying to encourage the peaches/nectarines/apricots but are having a little bit less success with them. We make jam, chutney and pickles with the produce and already have lots more than two people can eat!

JGW: We'll help you later. Do you have a typical day?

TB: A typical day? Hello! Like most people, we



probably don't have a typical day but we don't tend to rise too early. We try to have breakfast on the terrace as often as possible, then if it's a working day for Helen, she gets her books etc ready and drives into Oviedo to teach an English class three days a week. I usually do the chores like maintaining the house and garden and doing whatever jobs need doing.

HB: You're telling me! For example, this week he cut, split and stacked wood for the winter, pickled some figs,

searched the internet for a part for his camera, cut all the grass around the house and pruned some plants, dried some mushrooms we picked on a walk in the hills near our house and brined and smoked some pork to make Canadian bacon!

JGW: *I thought he'd given up smoking...?*

TB (examining the sky): Now you know why we left Harburn...

JGW: *Sorry! Sorry, no, that's great! Never a dull moment. D'you have any anecdotes to tell us?*

HB: Anecdotes? Let me think. We do have trouble with cows! A local farmer puts his cows in our fields and those of our neighbours for grazing. We woke one morning to find that one of the cows had eaten her way through the hazel hedge and made a hole big enough to push herself through into the garden and was just about to start on the veg.

When there are calves with the cows, we have to be especially vigilant as they are more adept at getting out of the fields; they are a bit like cheeky children who know they're doing wrong but will face up to you anyway.

TB: You bet! We've also had wild boar in the garden during the night, rootling for bulbs (usually our tulips) and you have to watch where you're putting

your feet at night when it's wet: that's when the salamanders come out in force.

JGW: *Salamanders? I've seen lizards in your garden... d'you mean lizards?*



HB: No. Salamanders are quite like lizards, but... different.

TB: Duh! Google them.

JGW: *I will, I will. To finish, though, what advantages do you find living here?*

HB: It's a great place to live and one of the advantages is how much time you can spend outdoors.

This month's been one of the warmest of the year so far (brill for October): Tom's still in shorts and T-shirts!!! And living so close to the coast means that the seafood and fish are excellent and we try to take advantage of that whenever we can.

TB: Yep: we're planning on visiting the coast for seafood tapas this weekend. So it'll be little squid

or razor clams or small sardines or prawns for lunch (or maybe all of them).

HB: Mmm! Tom's built a barbecue / smoke house so we try to use that as much as we can. He's enjoying making his own pancetta and bacon and since he's started to smoke foods, we've had smoked trout, salmon and mackerel, smoked chicken, and now he's preparing to cold smoke cheese and fish! The eats are good!



TB: It's all good, Helen! And you know what's best of all? Nae midges!

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Got your tickets for Robin Hood yet? £5 from Isobel on 873032. Going fast!!!

And another thing.....

FOR THE MOST PART the HT chunters on in its own uncontentious way. The Editor rarely has to put in anything approaching a disclaimer and the Powers who check the columns, the guys (with and without a capital) who ensure that no offence can possibly be taken, almost never have to reach for the blue pencil.

Christmas 2014 sees something of a departure from HT's normal somnolence. There are one or two articles that may get Harburnites to mutter (mild) obscenities and prise themselves out of their bowl of muesli. A few lines in the edition to disturb the normal tranquillity.

ANDREW LESLIE returning to the community after his strenuous activities on behalf of Mr Salmond, has a chivvy or two on the subject of roads (a popular topic in this edition) and on the referendum.

ALAN TUFFS also has a word or three about roads. Whilst few would disagree with the Roundhouse Sage - Peaceful Lanes are greatly to be desired by all - his contention that the crap state of the verges and tarmac prevailing since last Christmas be considered an improvement, is difficult to support. Throughout 2014, passing in our lanes has been a trial. Take to the verges and you risk having to call on the breakdown services to come with block and tackle.

Nor have these quagmire borders stopped the rat-runs through Harburn. It's only a month or two since I found a souped-up Ford upside down in the ditch, having failed to make it round Duncan chicane. The youthful driver was performing eye-watering contortions levering himself through the space where the window had once been. I

fear that the lovely idea of a 20 mph limit on this road would be greeted with the cliché use of finger/s by the majority of our visitors. And yet, of course, we all know what Alan is talking about. Only a fool would disagree. If only.....

ONE LAST PLEA, probably in a lost cause. Most of the Community will have received a form asking for a bit of information regarding their availability round the time of next year's Festival. The reaction to receiving this attachment has been one of extremeapathy. The returns have been negligible and the exercise has been a waste of time.

There's still time to ferret around amongst your old emails and fill the form in. Following that you simply push the save button, close it and attach it in the normal way. The whole process takes about two minutes and would greatly help planning for the Festival and, particularly, the days leading up to the event. PLEASE.

TWO BRIEF POINTS about visits to the movies. Went to the Imitation Game (very interesting with an outstanding performance from Benedict Thingummy). Booked on line. Belatedly noticed an extra £1.30 had been added to the total. A *'booking fee'* because I had purchased on line, I was told when I took it up with the 12-year-old manager. *Why am I being charged when I am saving you money by doing all the clerical work for you?* I asked. *Company Policy* I was told. Any comments?

Next point? Saw the trailer for Paddington Bear. WOW! A MUST VIEW Might find attendance a bit embarrassing though. Not quite in the correct demographic..... is there a branch of Rent a (very small) Kid in Harburn?