

VILLAGE BUZZ



A MONTHLY MAGAZINE FOR VILLAGES NESTLING IN THE NADDER VALLEY

JANUARY 2022

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SUTTON ROW, TEFFONT EVIAS, TEFFONT MAGNA, UGFORD

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Species of the month

THE WINTER MOTH

Peter Thompson, Barford St. Martin

You might well think that there are no moths to be found during the winter months, but there are some species flying around during these long, cold nights, and the aptly named Winter Moth is one good example.

A common species in most of Britain, this moth occurs, as its English name suggests, from late autumn through to February. The male is a medium-sized moth with a wingspan of up to 28mm and has light to dark brown wings with a darker central forewing band and a brownish hind wing. So all in all, not the most spectacular insect that you will ever see!

But to dismiss this species because it does not look that exciting would leave you not knowing about its amazing life cycle. Surprisingly, the adult female Winter Moth is flightless, with only tiny useless wings. These females emerge from pupae hidden in the soil during November to January and they crawl up the trunks of trees to find a suitable vantage point. Once there, they give off pheromones that float off into the night air, hopefully attracting a passing male.

The male moth can be seen, sometimes flying in large numbers, illuminated by car headlights near woodland and hedgerows between October and January. However, the

Winter Moth doesn't seem, on the surface, to be especially well adapted for winter. While most moths need to warm their bodies to over 30 degrees Celsius to enable them to fly, the Winter Moth seems to have thrown out the rule-book!

Their body temperature is close to the temperature outside – sometimes almost at freezing point – even when flying. Research suggests that they may achieve this by having an unusually low body weight compared to the size of their wings, so their wings don't need to beat so fast to keep them in the air and their muscles don't need to be warmed up to work efficiently.

With all the hardship involved in flying in winter, you might wonder why they bother. A straightforward answer may be that they do this to avoid night-time predators such as bats, which tend not to feed in the coldest months.

Once mated the female lays her eggs up in the tree, choosing to hide them in cracks and crevices in the bark or even in developing buds, after which she dies. The caterpillars hatch in spring and feed voraciously on the buds, blossom and leaves of a wide range of trees, including fruit trees. This means that the Winter Moth is considered a pest, which if not controlled, can lead to serious losses for the growers of fruit.

Fruit farmers and gardeners have traditionally put a sticky grease band around the trunk of the fruit tree to act as a barrier, stopping the female from climbing up into the canopy to lay her eggs. Many garden centres stock ready-prepared strips for tying round the trunk or grease for direct application to the bark.

It is interesting that the female Winter Moth has evolved to become wingless and to appear during the winter months. Obviously, there are few flowering plants around at this time of the year, and so there is little need to fly around looking for nectar, which in turn may mean that it is better to conserve energy for egg laying, rather than flight. But, to become flightless obviously severely restricts the ability to disperse, which could be a disaster in the longer term if conditions change.

The Winter Moth's caterpillar has however, developed the art of "ballooning" – hanging from a thin silk thread until the wind catches both the silk and tiny caterpillar, lifting them into the air and transporting the larvae to another nearby tree. Occasionally, people with moth traps set in the winter months, have also recorded adult males arriving to the light with a female "attached" during copulation, which may also act as another way to disperse – by piggyback!

The light green "looper" (meaning that they arch their back when moving) caterpillars grow quickly and reach about an inch long in early June, providing a wonderful meal for any bird with a hungry family to feed. →



← Many birds, including the tit family, have been shown to time their broods to coincide with this abundance of protein-rich food. It can take 40,000 food items to raise one nest of blue tits with ten chicks inside, so getting the timing right is crucial!

However, if global warming continues to start our spring season earlier and earlier, it may well be that the tit/caterpillar relationship goes out of kilter, potentially proving a disaster for the birds and maybe resulting in Winter Moths becoming much more of a serious pest in the future.

Those caterpillars which survive the bird predation climb back down the tree to pupate in the soil and start the cycle once again. So always remember not to ignore a species just because its appearance is rather dull, quite often there is much more to it than meets the eye! — PT

Peter Thompson lives in Barford St. Martin and has worked in conservation and farming all his life. You might also be interested in reading his blog: 'Fresh Air Scribbles'
<https://freshairscribbles.blogspot.com>



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Wings over Wiltshire (Part 2)

Paul Cordle, Chicksgrove

Southern Wiltshire can rightly claim to have been the birthplace of British military aviation. From their beginnings at Upavon in 1914, with a handful of men and flimsy flying machines, The Royal Naval Air Service (RNAS) and The Royal Flying Corps (RFC) developed an arsenal of sturdy 'scouts', fighters, bombers, torpedo-carrying aeroplanes and airships; in 1918 they merged to become the Royal Air Force (RAF), the largest air force in the world.

We read in Part I (see June edition) how, from 1910, a handful of courageous men from the Navy and Army, excited by the personal challenge and possibilities of flying, risked their lives to help develop viable military aeroplanes and flying skills to match aeronautical development on the Continent. It was a dangerous business as described in 1910 by the 10 year old Lady Elizabeth Bowes Lyon, later Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother, in an essay: *'A recent invention, Aeroplanes' - 'An aeroplane is usually shaped like a cigar, and has a propellor at one end, and on each side the great white wings, which makes it look like a bird. They are not quite safe yet, and many, many axidents have happened.'*⁽¹⁾



As the end of the war approached, in spite of their achievements, the RNAS's and RFC's future were far from assured; it was not until the publication of the 1917 Smuts Report that a formally established and independent air force was recommended⁽²⁾. The RAF came into being as separate arm on 1st April 1918 and, with a blank sheet of paper on which to write its future, it immediately adopted a blue uniform along with insignia of rank and styles which reflected a naval character, for example arm rings denoting officers' rank such as squadron leader, wing commander, air commodore.



The new arm was even then unsure of its future as the arrangement was considered temporary and it was not until August 1919 that the RAF was confirmed as a permanent force.

The industrialisation of war, so evident in the First World War, demanded that technical advances continued to be made and we see research and development being undertaken at the former Royal Aircraft Factory soon renamed the Royal Aircraft Establishment at Farnborough. More significantly the private sector flourished with emerging British aircraft manufacturers competing to maximise their opportunities in civil air travel and in 1924 Imperial Airways was set up⁽³⁾.

It was not until the threat posed by Nazi Germany was recognised in the mid-1930s that co-ordinated and urgent military development took place. In 1936, a reorganisation of RAF command saw the creation of Fighter Command, Bomber Command and Coastal Command and the development of the iconic Supermarine Spitfire and Hawker Hurricane fighters. It was left almost too late.

Space does not allow for more than a cursory mention of what World War II meant for aviation in Wiltshire. Suffice it to say that by 1945 there were over 20 operational airfields in the



Supermarine Spitfire fighters



county from which almost every type of aeroplane was flown on a wide variety of operations and some of these airfields were handed over to the United States Air Force. Some older readers may remember watching fleets of bombers leaving for the Continent or even aerial dog-fights. Very recently an elderly person recalled to the author how he was told to go inside when watching a dog-fight. It was considered too dangerous for him as bullets, empty bullet cases and debris rained down on the countryside below.

Of particular note is the county's contribution to the war effort in the building of thousands of Spitfires. In 1940, after the Luftwaffe had destroyed Southampton's Spitfire factories, we continued to build them unknown to the Germans. Salisbury, Trowbridge and Reading become secret manufacturing centres with work being carried out in private houses, sheds, garages, bus depots and hotels. A workforce,

mainly made up of initially unskilled young people, women and elderly men with a handful of engineers to instruct them, built almost half of the 22,000 Spitfires manufactured in the war, an achievement that was instrumental in our survival during the Battle of Britain and ultimate victory. The other half was built at a factory in Castle Bromwich near Birmingham. The completed Salisbury Spitfires were flown to their operational squadrons from RAF High Post, now a golf course.

Following the end of World War II in 1945, the start of the Cold War in 1949 and the gradual loss of Empire, there were radical changes in the Armed Forces. The RAF continued for a while to operate out of several airfields in the southern part of the county with most notably RAF (now MOD) Boscombe Down becoming a NATO site for the testing and evaluation of new aircraft. Now the last of our airfields, it continues in that role to this day. ➡

OPPOSITE PAGE

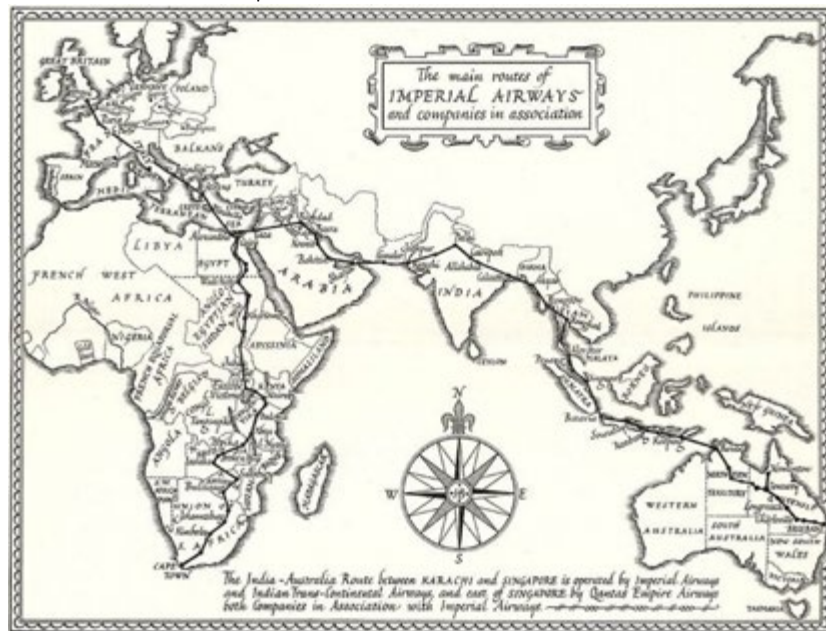
FAR LEFT: Vickers F.B.5 (Fighting Biplane 5), a 1914 two seater 'pusher' with its propeller behind the wing. Known as the 'Gunbus' it was armed with a single .303 machine gun mounted in front of the wings in what was called the 'pulpit' from where 'the good news' was dealt out to enemy aircraft. It was the first aeroplane purpose-built for air-to-air combat thus becoming the world's first operational fighter.

TOP LEFT: Another kind of good news from a Vickers F.B.5. RFC Chaplain, the Revd James Walkey (the author's grandfather) preaching from the 'pulpit' of a 'Gunbus', St Omer Northern France, September 1918.

BOTTOM LEFT: A British Handley Page Type 00/100 bomber, the most successful First World War bomber, photographed after capture with German soldiers standing to show its size.



← Beyond several private light aeroplanes and helicopters, we continue to experience the occasional rush of low flying RAF fast jets and helicopters which give us unexpected moments of excitement coupled with the comforting reassurance that the United Kingdom still has the military capacity, however much reduced, to support our Foreign Policy in troubled parts of the World. Perhaps one day, after the covid pandemic, we may once more see the vapour trails of high flying civil aeroplanes hurrying their passengers to distant places whilst we in the Nadder Valley contentedly let the world rush past us. — PC



- Notes:**
1. Excerpt from 'Counting One's Blessings', The selected letters of Queen Elizabeth, The Queen Mother, edited by William Shawcross published by Macmillan 2012.
 2. General Jan Smuts (a former enemy Boer commander in the South African War) was in the Imperial War Cabinet. His report (August 1917) recommended the establishment of an independent air force under the control of an Air Ministry and not under the Admiralty or the War Office. The Air Ministry came into being on 1st January 1918.
 3. **Imperial Airways was the first British commercial long-range airline principally serving the British Empire across the globe, see map.** It also flew to Hong Kong and New Zealand. Passengers were typically businessmen or colonial administrators, most flights carried about 20 passengers or less. Accidents were frequent. In the first six years, 32 people died in seven incidents. Imperial Airways became the British Overseas Airways Corporation (BOAC) in 1939 and merged with British European Airways (BEA) in 1974 to become today's British Airways (BA).

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One of my favourite recipes

Barbara Duncanson – Compton ChamberLayne.

Langoustine and spicy pumpkin soup

Just what is needed on a cold, windy January day!

Serves 4

Prep time: 20 minutes

Cook time: 1 hour

Ingredients

- ¼ of a medium sized pumpkin
- Olive oil
- Salt to season
- Water
- 1kg langoustines, shelled
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 1 red pepper, finely chopped
- 1 red chilli, finely chopped
- 4 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 1 tablespoon red Thai curry paste
- 1kg red tomatoes, cooked and peeled
- 1 bunch coriander, chopped
- Handful of toasted pumpkin seeds
- 1 x garlic and coriander naan bread



Method

1. Chop and de-seed the pumpkin. Put in a roasting tin and drizzle with olive oil and some salt. Roast at 200°C for about 30 minutes. Leave to cool down then peel and chop into cubes.
2. Fill a deep saucepan with water, add a pinch of salt and boil the langoustines for about 3-5 minutes depending on their size.
3. Drain, reserving the water, and peel the langoustines, reserving the shells.
4. In another saucepan, drizzle some olive oil and add the finely chopped onion, pepper, chilli and garlic. Fry for 5 minutes on a medium heat and add the red Thai curry paste and the pumpkin.
5. Add the water from the langoustines together with the shells and the tomatoes. You might need to cover this mixture with some water.
6. Leave to simmer for 20 minutes.
7. Blend thoroughly and pass through a sieve to remove any shell pieces.
8. Serve, adding the langoustines, chopped coriander and then sprinkle with the pumpkin seeds.
Serve with garlic and coriander naan bread.

Got a good recipe?

If you have a favourite recipe that you would like to share with our readers, please email:

gill@village-buzz.co.uk

AND SEE YOUR RECIPE IN PRINT!



Focus Point

AS WE TIDY AWAY THE CHRISTMAS DECORATIONS and look to the New Year we must be wondering what 2022 will bring. What will we be doing this time next year..?

Will things have changed for us on a personal basis? On a local level? Nationally? Globally?

When the wise men came to see Jesus in the stable on that very first Christmas they knew that something was happening. Something big! Something that was to change the whole world forever. That tiny baby in the manger was about to become a leader but not in the way that was expected. The people of the day could only think in terms of fighting for power and influence. But something miraculous was going on, right from the start when Mary said "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word". It took about thirty years to become clear. And to coin a phrase, the rest is history.

So who are the wise men today? Who do we trust? Who can we trust? When the media is so strong and influential in our world, when social media spreads lies and conspiracy theories, who should we listen to? Who is right and who is wrong? What is the best thing to do? So many questions and life can feel quite bewildering.

Well, I believe that on that first Christmas morning Jesus was given to us all as a very

special gift. He is the one that we can trust through all of our uncertainties. He tells us, through the words of the Bible, that He 'is the Way, the Truth and the Life'

To have a faith in God today can be a stabilising tool for us all through times that are challenging and uncertain.

It's by no means straightforward though. The Church itself faces uncertain times. There are not enough clergy, not enough money and can it be trusted after so many cases of abuse have emerged?

For me it's about relationships. By knowing people, we can learn to trust, and by trusting, we learn to believe. If, as Christians, we can build relationships with those surrounding us, slowly, slowly, things will grow. Communities need relationships in order to thrive.

So as we move into a New Year, as the challenges and uncertainties continue, let's believe that through trusting in a loving God all will, in the end, be well.

Wishing you all a very Happy New Year

Tina – Associate Priest



DATE	2 January			9 January			16 January			23 January			30 January		
SUNDAY	Christmas 2			Baptism of Christ			Epiphany 2			Epiphany 3			Epiphany 4		
SOUTHERN AREA															
Ansty	11.15	MBCP	LAY	11.15	PC	GS	11.15	HCBCP	GS	11.15	FC	GS	-	-	-
Compton Chamberlayne	09.30	PC _T	GS	-	-	-	11.15	SoW	JA	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fovant	08.00	HC _{O2T}	GS	-	-	-	-	-	-	09.30	PC	EB	-	-	-
Sutton Mandeville	18.00	EBCP	GS	09.30	PC _{O2T}	GS	-	-	-	-	-	-	09.30	Area PC _{O2T}	GS
Swallowcliffe	11.15	PC _T	GS	15.00	Plough Sunday Service	GS	08.00	HCBCP	GS	11.15	MBCP	LAY	-	-	-
NORTHERN AREA															
Barford St Martin	11.15	AAC for Epiphany	EB	09.30	MCW	LAY	09.30	HCBCP	JN	09.30	AAC	MH	-	-	-
Baverstock	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Chilmark	11.15	AAC for Epiphany	TF	09.30	AAS	EB	11.15	AAC	EB	11.15	MPr	LAY	-	-	-
Dinton	09.30	AAC for Epiphany	EB	11.15	AAC	CF	09.30	AAC	EB	09.30	MCW	GS	10.00	Area AAC	EB
Teffont Evias	-	-	-	-	-	-	11.15	AAC	TF	-	-	-	-	-	-
Teffont Magna	-	-	-	11.15	AAS	EB	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
WESTERN AREA															
Chicklade	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Hindon	09.30	PC	SE	09.30	AAC	JN	18.00	EBCP	JN	09.30	PC	JN	-	-	-
Fonthill Bishop	17.00	EBCP	MH	08.00	HCBCP	JMH	09.30	MBCP	JA	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fonthill Gifford	08.00	HCBCP	MH	11.15	MBCP	JN	08.00	HCBCP	JMH	11.15	MBCP	JMH	-	-	-
Tisbury	09.30	AAC for Epiphany	JA	09.30	PC	JMH	09.30	PC	JMH	08.00	HCBCP	JN	10.00	Area PC	JMH
				18.00	RS	EB	18.00	Epiphany Carols	JMH	09.30	PC	JMH			

SERVICES

BCP Book of Common Prayer
CW Common Worship
HC Holy Communion (said)
PC Order 1 Communion (with hymns)
HC (or PC) O2T/C Order 2 Communion, traditional/contemporary (PC includes hymns)
PC_T Order 1 Communion, traditional language (with hymns)
PC_{O2T} Order 2 Communion, traditional language

FC All Age Family Communion
AAS All Age Service
M Mattins or Morning Prayer
MPr Morning Praise
E Evensong or Evening Prayer
RS Reflective Service
SoW Service of the Word
AAC All Age Communion

CLERGY

CF Colin Fox
EB Elaine Brightwell
GS Graham Southgate
JA Judy Anderson
JMH Juliette Hulme
JN Jo Naish
MH Mark Hayter
SE Simon Evans
TF Tina Fox

A MADAGASCAN ADVENTURE

Michael Groom – Teffont

One man's unexpurgated safari diary, as it was written.



AN OLD KENYA FRIEND, Alan Douglas Dufresyne, had often told me what a marvellous place Madagascar was so in the autumn of 2007. Grandman (as my grandchildren Charlie and Kitty call me) decided that it was the time for another adventure. Following five years of restoring old French farmhouses, La Roque was sold; St Jean was finished and awaiting a buyer and there is very little to do in France in November. The Quercy is a quiet and somewhat drab place in the winter months with little social life, restaurants closed and temperature often dropping to as low as 10 – 15 degrees centigrade.

Having been introduced to a friend of my daughter Annabel's who was married to a Malagasy, I was given an introduction to a supposedly professional safari guide and therefore decided to organise my own trip through the wilds of south western Madagascar with Bernis as my guide.



small mansion block somewhere in West London beckoned me to a front door with a part-polished brass plaque which was simply engraved "MADAGASCAR".

I pushed the bell – no answer. I made my way up a tiny staircase to a small dingy sitting

room where I found a Malagasy girl sitting behind a large desk with a huge pair of scissors in hand. My Visa and receipt – both multi-coloured – were cut out slowly in exchange for my £40 and a huge, welcoming smile was my reward.

Throughout, sitting in the darkest corner of the room, was a distinguished-looking but wordless man who it transpired was the Vice Consul. An exchange of pleasantries, followed by descent of the

rickety staircase, saw me on my way. I was ready for the off. But why? A whim, Alan's romantic views of Madagascar, the need for escape from Blairite Britain, the cross roads of approaching later life or was "Grandpa's Gap Year" to be "The Last Hurrah"?

Saturday 28th October: After months of "banging on", to those who would listen, our intrepid adventurer departs with mixed emotions, together with a portable fridge, satellite telephone, inflatable mattress and countless other items.

The waving of hands after a fond embrace and with monstrosly overweight luggage I enter the mêlée of Terminal 3 and to my amazement all is accepted by a compliant Air Mauritius, without charge.

Sunday 29th October: I'm in Mauritius, on time, with four hours to kill before my ongoing flight to Antananarivo. So far, so good.

Reality envelops a tired adventurer! Will Bernis, my guide, be waiting for me on arrival in Tana? Yes! There he is – my name on a vast piece of cardboard amongst the welcoming throng – what relief – all bags sail through Customs with a nod – amazing, even the fridge – no backhander needed!

A grinning Bernis welcomes me (without our driver, who is burying his uncle). Bernis is a small, fit, bright-eyed, intelligent looking chap. I recall the Malagasy are indigenous from Indonesia/Malaysia rather than Africa. I hope for the best – off we go – the ancient taxi bounding through throngs of traffic and a heavily polluted atmosphere to the Hotel Colbert. The pollution is inevitable with a population of some four million driving very ancient vehicles.

The Colbert is really quite good, quite chic inside and a very comfortable spacious bedroom. I worry as I have a deep suspicion about getting off to a good start – rather like winning the first horse race of the day.

Over a cold beer with Bernis I meet Fama, our driver/mechanic, fresh from the funeral and well turned out – looks good, we shall see. We arrange

to meet next morning at 0930, then I call my friend from France, Patrick Claese, who is currently the M.D. of the Madagascar Railways, to arrange lunch tomorrow. Dog tired, with the second temazepan of the last twenty four hours, I crash for the night.

Monday 30 October: Splendid breakfast; jacaranda trees are in full flower everywhere. Bernis arrives and

we set forth weaving through a multitude of happy-go-lucky, good-looking, apparently quite healthy Anatanarivans – masses of cars, jams and frenetically gyrating policemen. Even the beggars look in good shape.

Certified copies of my passport are obtained so that I may leave my passport behind at the hotel for safekeeping. After



The Crew

much waiting – "mora mora" is the first and most important Malagasy phrase I learn for "slowly slowly" – I change euros into arias (1,000 roughly equal 30 euro cents). Huge bundles need to be securely stuffed into different bags as pickpockets abound.

The currency is a nightmare as it goes down to 100 aria notes and I'm lumbered with predominantly 10,000 aria notes and even those are only worth about three euros.

Yes, things are cheap here, but rough, I quickly learn. A large advance is given

to Bernis.

Gerard, our cook, joins up this morning, ready for the off tomorrow – I wonder what his cooking will be like – he seems a nice chap.

Patrick and Maryvonne I found to be well and we enjoyed a good lunch together. They have to return to France every three months to find reality. Evidently there are some 80,000 French living out here, many of whom are "poor whites". It's best to be rich in a poor man's country, perhaps.

An introduction to a safe pair of hands for my investment in sapphires is provided, together with a warning not to visit the mining town of Itakaha – very dangerous like the old wild west with pistols and gangsters everywhere.

Beware the "ladies of the night". There are absolutely vast numbers everywhere. I think of



having a drink outside of the environs of the Colbert before dinner this evening but the multitudes of big eyes, big lips, big smiles and lots of white teeth are overwhelming, so it's back to the sanctuary of "La Fougère", the hotel coffee shop, for me. Hold on to your arias my friend!



Tuesday 31

October: At 0900, with passport and airline ticket left behind in safekeeping in the hotel safe, we set off into the sun-filled, polluted morning with well charged batteries. Fama's not-too-young Nissan Patrol, with massive black plastic bin bags containing I know not what, haphazardly lashed to the roof rack, chugs off for Antsirabe leaving an unhealthy contribution to the pollution of Tana. We head for Antsirabe, the agricultural capital of Madagascar.

Fama proudly tells me "It's done 250,000 km for me since my uncle from France bought it for me" (fifth hand I wonder?). I am introduced to Bernis's wife and suckling new born, hidden in the back – she's along for the ride with a new mobile phone, doubtless bought with part of my money yesterday. She and babe are being returned to where they live.

It's about 35°C in the shade and we are at about 1,500m. The road is reasonable – we pass the massive riverbank "central laundry facility" followed by the President's house, lots of red soil, small rice fields, barren countryside, brick-built rice straw thatched roofed houses and overwhelming evidence of the catastrophic "slash and burn" that has decimated so much of Madagascar.

Glad I have my certified passport as there are numerous police stops en route – they are after the local rum and marujihana runners.

At 1300 we arrive in Antsirabe (1.4 million), the "pousse-pousse" (rickshaw) capital of the world. They are everywhere – in their thousands – with super-fit Malagasy running "in hand" to the benefit of the recumbent passengers.

This is a large town with wide streets in the centre and one particular bar which I thought worthy of a visit later – so booked my *pousse-pousse*. I checked into the Camellia Hotel with its beautiful garden, featuring a

mass of tropical plants and many plants we have in England – we are at 5,500 ft – so it is cooler.

Following a brief siesta, there followed shopping for a good supply of beers and "the gemstone collector" acquiring a beautifully coloured 20 carat topaz. The *pousse-pousse* collects me and delivers me to the cold beers bar,

without any of "les belles", thank heavens. After a one hour wait, a good dinner arrives and with preparation completed for our departure tomorrow to the hottest place in Madagascar, all seems well, so far.

Wednesday 1 November: I awake to a stunningly beautiful, cool morning and revel in identifying the plants that surround me. The creaks from the bed in the room above quickly fade from memory.

At 1300 we arrive in Antsirabe the "pousse-pousse" (rickshaw) capital of the world.

The safari proper starts today – the Nissan finally arrives, well-laden, one hour late. En route to Mandrivazo (220km distant) we visit the impressive Lake Andraikeba (I deal with a somewhat incongruous sat-phone negotiation for the sale of my Norfolk cottage) and view the volcanic Lake Tritriva. I pass through many villages with brick and attractive rice straw thatched houses and well-built churches.

No Muslims here; they are mainly a wide variety of Protestants and Catholics.

After rice fields and some vegetable growing areas, we enter a lunar landscape, an ever-present reminder of the catastrophic "slash and burn" interspersed with the occasional superb vista.

Finally we arrive in Miandrivazo; a dump – damned hot – in fact it clearly is the hottest place in Madagascar. I find a cold beer from a distinctly unhealthy looking downtown bar. My fridge has already ceased to work off the Nissan's ancient batteries.

Bernis sets off shopping once more – returns to introduce our boatmen, Kama and Robert – good looking and friendly types. It is very HOT and I have wistful visions of escaping this hell hole, but no, now he has to obtain passes for the river for our departure tomorrow morning.



One hour later, very, very HOT and another beer or two later "mora mora" we have seven, yes seven copies of the wretched pass and at last we head up to the top of the hill above town to doss down in a most unattractive "so called" cottage type hotel. I am allocated a filthy, little and extremely hot shack – great!

Gerard produces supper after two hours and three warm beers. I eat in solitary state at my table on top of the hill, anticipating the night ahead and recalling the unattractive sight of two very fat Frenchmen cruising down below in their 4WD, seeking the comfort of a willing "belle". I see there is a blanket at the end of my bed – this I most certainly will not need! Tomorrow will arrive, j'espère!

Thursday 2 November: At 05.00, I fell from my hot little hut into the cooler outside air of the early morning. My thermometer tells me it is already 30°C. The sun rises at about 05.15 and sets at about 18.15. The crew to look after me – only me – now numbers six. It consists of Bernis my guide, Fama, the driver/"mechanic", Gerard, the cook, Kamba and Robert the boatmen and Francia for laundry. Francia, Bernis's twenty year old sister has arrived from Morandava. "When will you be doing the laundry?" I ask. "When we reach Morandava", I'm told. Another one for the ride – we are due in Morandava in about five days' time.



A substantial breakfast arrives amongst much good humour and with gear littered all over the place, I wonder, will we ever get underway?

Eventually we head downhill to hellish Miandrivazo – remember the hottest place in Madagascar. "Arahaba Tonga Soa" says the banner across the road. It is market day and the streets are overfilled with stalls and people and we cannot get through. It's hot as hell – we meet Francia, who climbs aboard. Bernis disappears – more

shopping – more incomprehensible Malagasy chatter. He returns with a live chicken which is tied to the roof rack. It must be kept alive to be fresh I'm told but it certainly will not be a bon vivant's dream – scraggly to an extreme. He disappears again – back he comes, we drive off – we stop again – why? Can't find a mosquito net – we find one in the last shop in town – we head off downstream to join the canoes which have been relocated due to shallow water (no rains) at the original point of embarkation.

We stop yet again – Bernis dives into another shop and returns with a shiny blue plastic armchair. "What's this for?" I ask. "This is for you, I cut a hole in the centre so you have somewhere to sit and shit!"

"Everything is going well" says Bernis. What the hell; we are only two hours behind schedule. It's now very hot – we stop again – the chicken needs further securing

Loading up!



– off we go, stop again, reverse and shoot off down a tiny track through bamboo, maize, grass and grazing zebu cattle finally arriving at a small village on the bank of the river to find unbelievably that the two canoes are there awaiting us.

Loading up takes place – the chicken has managed to disappear – another is presented to us – someone’s making money! The new chicken is incarcerated in the stern of one canoe and the immaculate blue chair proudly mounted in the front end of the other one.

It is now very severely hot – Robert and Khama shove off and we are on our way down the Mahajilo river to join the Tshiribihini river. We wave farewell to Fama, who is driving the Nissan round to Belo Tshiribihini to meet us in three days – we hope!

In the searing heat, we make our way downstream seeing an abundance of fascinating different birds and locals in the reeds searching for crayfish. My thermometer has broken. The estimate is around 42-44°C. This midday sun is too much when on the water – eventually we stop at about 13.00 and I struggle up the river bank and take shade under a huge mango tree. My table, chair and lunch arrive, as do a large gathering of mothers and children – very well behaved. “Salaama” we say to one another

then they suddenly all sit down.

Rows of large white eyes watch my every mouthful. I am down-wind so the musk is pretty strong but the zebu steak and rice is tasty!! The ownership of my empty beer can and water bottle are eagerly sought after – ah for the simple life! “Veloma” I say and stagger off down the bank back into the intense heat.

After a further 3½ hours we complete our day’s 50km zig-zag course down river and limp ashore on to a fine white sand beach, where my tent is eventually erected in a strong morale boosting breeze. My best friend the blue chair (without hole – it will not be holed I say!) and table arrive with a warm beer and the sun goes down.

Peace descends, my mind wanders – what must it have been like for my grandfather as a D.C. in Northern Nigeria in the early 1900’s, away from home for three years at a time in the bush? It’s dark and cool, dinner is served, my tent light works! On with the anti mozzie – another beer please Gerard. Silence prevails, broken

by the occasional laugh from the river bank. Suddenly two shapes emerge from across the beach – Bernis and Gerard – “another beer, Michael?” – why not? — MG

TO BE CONTINUED IN THE NEXT ISSUE



Rockbourne Fair 2021 raises over £50,000 for the Stars Appeal

The annual boutique Christmas shopping event which was held in October at Salisbury Racecourse had a bumper year, raising £50,301 despite cutting the number of stalls by 15% to allow more space for Covid safety measures.

Amazingly this figure is a few thousand short of the total raised pre-Covid in 2019.

Bev Moulding, chair of the organising committee, said: “We

are thrilled to have raised such an amazing amount for the Stars Appeal and Salisbury District Hospital. It has been such a difficult year for so many charity events so we feel very grateful that we could put it on again this year to raise these much-needed funds. Our thanks to everyone who came along to ‘Shop the Rock’ and of course to the stallholders for their continued support of the fair.”

Lord Pembroke, President of the Stars Appeal, said: “To raise such an incredible amount in what were very

challenging circumstances was I think even a surprise to the wonderful team that organised it! It was, in my opinion, the best Rockbourne fair yet with a beautifully curated selection of stands perfectly timed for the run up



to Christmas. In what has been a challenging year for the Stars Appeal, a fundraising event such as this really has been a beacon of hope as we head to 2022 and goes to show that despite

the barriers facing all of us, it is still possible to achieve the extraordinary. Thank you!”

All of Rockbourne Fair’s profits go to the Stars Appeal, the charity which helps hundreds of patients at Salisbury District Hospital and supports the NHS staff who care for them. The Stars Appeal aim to raise over £1 million each year to fund projects which offer direct, practical support to patients, their families and the Hospital’s staff.



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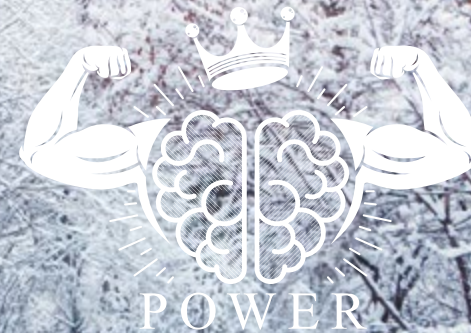
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	6	8	1	7		2		
		2					7	3
	3						6	
			9	8		7		
		5	2					
7		9	5			1		
						9	4	5
4			6		8			



January's Brain Gym

HOW TO PLAY SUDOKU

The objective of the puzzle is to complete the grid so each of the rows, columns and 3 x 3 sub-grids contains the numbers 1 to 9. The challenging part of the puzzle is that each number can only appear once per row, column, or sub-grid.

SOLUTION ON PAGE 27



Letters to the Editor

Have your say!

See yourself in print! From February we invite our readers to write in on any interesting topic that they would like to share with our Village Buzz readership.

Just email us* – including your name and full address to:

letters@village-buzz.co.uk

The Editor has the final say on what is printed and reserves the right not to publish anything which in her opinion is deemed to be inappropriate.

* Maximum word count 250 please.



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Solution to:
January's Brain Gym on
page 25

5	6	8	1	7	3	2	9	4
1	4	2	8	6	9	5	7	3
9	3	7	4	2	5	8	6	1
2	9	6	3	5	7	4	1	8
3	1	4	9	8	6	7	5	2
8	7	5	2	4	1	6	3	9
7	2	9	5	3	4	1	8	6
6	8	3	7	1	2	9	4	5
4	5	1	6	9	8	3	2	7

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Advertising & article submission deadline

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File formats we prefer to work with –

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In other words: Images must have a minimum resolution of 300ppi (pixels to the inch).

Any problems please give Jan a call on 07881 288027.



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JANUARY 2022

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