

# Iford Estate News

J & H Robinson Iford Farms Ltd – est. 1895

www.ifordestate.com

Issue 3

Summer 2015



## Iford & Swanborough Village Day

2.00pm Saturday  
17th October

In the Hall during the afternoon I will be giving an illustrated talk about the origins of the farm which I am calling “Who were J & H?”.

We have an extensive collection of photos going back to 1895 which most people won't have seen before. I last displayed them as a static exhibition in the hall in 1995 when we celebrated our centenary.

We are now in the process of digitising them and I will be displaying some of them as a slide show during the talk.

If you would like to attend please book a place at [ifordvillageday171015@ifordhall.co.uk](mailto:ifordvillageday171015@ifordhall.co.uk)

See inside for more details of the day.

John Robinson

## Time for a break?

Ben Taylor, Estate Manager



With harvest just around the corner one's thoughts begin to turn to the next season – what to plant and where. Historically it was relatively simple: wheat followed rape and rape followed wheat, scatter a bit of barley and maize in appropriate places, and *voila*, a cropping plan was made. These days of

course things are a bit trickier. One must strive to create a rotation, mindful of weed and disease pressures, and with an eye on what the price of the crop is.

And therein lies the problem.

Wheat is generally the most profitable crop, but ideally needs what is known as a break crop in the preceding year to clear out soil-borne disease. This might be rape, peas, maize or any non-cereal crop. Without the break crop you either take a hit on the wheat yield or opt for something like barley. A simple solution you might say, but with the value of the break crop almost universally at or near the cost of production you begin to question if continuing in this vein is the right course of action. Maybe more barley, but then a spring drought can halve yields; or a bit more grass, but do we really want more cows? Added to this you are only delaying the inevitable – a break crop must be grown at some point otherwise the weeds build up and everything begins to decline.

In the end of course the sensible option is to have a bit of everything and hedge your bets – after all the price might double by next year! This whole issue of course

has been around for centuries with ‘Turnip’ Townshend and the Norfolk Four Course Rotation being one of the first to tackle the problem.

Elsewhere on the farm, as I alluded to above, harvest is nearly upon us, and by the time you read this it will probably be started. Winter barley should come first, followed by rape, wheat and barley. As I write, everything looks promising, but you should never count your chickens so I will withhold judgement until the next issue.

Please remember that farm traffic increases at this time of the year, particularly around the grain drier at the Sutton end of Iford. Be aware of tractors reversing across the road and please be patient if the road is temporarily blocked as we tip corn or load a lorry.



### 40 YEARS SERVICE AWARD

Brian Cable at the South of England Show on June 11th receiving from the President of the Society, Mrs Clare Schecter, his Long Service Award for 40 years continuous service at Iford.



A call to action for our **Village Day!**

# Iford Estate Village Day

★ **Sat Oct 17th 2015 2pm - 9pm** ★

★ **COME AND TAKE PART!** ★

Are you a Residential Business, Artist,  
Seamstress, Sculptor, Baker, or Pimms Maker??

If you have ANYTHING that you would like to  
display or sell please email us for a space or table.

**Are you Musical?**

Why not take part in our church concert? All Welcome!  
Email by 30th of Aug - [annecommin@gmail.com](mailto:annecommin@gmail.com)

★ **History of the Farm Talk**

★ **Live music from Iford's**

To book a Display Table, FREE tickets to the talk and  
the evening gig - please contact us by the 30th of Aug.

[ifordvillageday171015@ifordhall.co.uk](mailto:ifordvillageday171015@ifordhall.co.uk)



Iford Estate Village Day will be a free event for Residents.  
Invitations will be sent out closer to the time. Any Queries:  
[ifordvillageday171015@ifordhall.co.uk](mailto:ifordvillageday171015@ifordhall.co.uk)

**Kids Tent - Live Music - Morris Dancing - Games  
Tea and Cake - Buddhist Tent - Iford Village Choir**

This is a private party for Residents of  
Iford and Swanborough Only.

# 120 Years

It was a pleasure to  
welcome so many of you  
to Open Farm Sunday last  
month. We had about 100  
people turn up and will be  
back next year bigger and  
better, watch this space!







## Then and now

The village circa 1900, and how it looks today.



## Businesses on the Iford Estate

We have a wide range of offices and workshops in our midst (with no vacancies at present). For website links go to [www.ifordestate.com](http://www.ifordestate.com)

### ANNABELS KITCHEN

Catering for all occasions

### ASHDOWN SITE INVESTIGATION

Ground investigation and geotechnical consultants

### AUTOPAINTS

Distributors of paint and refinishing products

### BIMBLE SOLAR

Suppliers of solar panels and equipment

### FITM FURNITURE

Bespoke upholstery and antique restoration

### GOODMAN WOOD

Carpentry work, specialising in furniture

### GRAIN FURNITURE

Manufacturers of bespoke fitted furniture

### IMAGO PHOTOGRAPHIC

Fashion photography

### LEWES TAXIS

### ORANGE BADGE MOBILITY

Wheelchairs, mobility scooters and stairlifts

### READING ROOM DAY SPA

Boutique day spa

### REFLEX

Instrumentation for the global minerals industry

### RISE JOINERY

Quality bespoke joinery

### RUGGED MANAGEMENT

Artist management and touring agency

### SOUTH EAST METAL SERVICES

Designs in metal and glass

### THE COSTUME STORE

Costume accessories

### THE IRON WORKS

Ironing and laundry

## Tug-o'-War!



The victorious Iford Tug-o'-War team pulling at the Kingston Village Fete.

From right: Pete Martin, Irek Kosec, Sam Rae, Rob Westgate, Ben Taylor, Pawel Szala, Paul Clarke and Gavin Carlisle.





## Flowers on Iford Hill

John Robinson

Late July and August are probably the best months for flora on Iford Hill.



Round-headed Rampion

Iford Hill is carpeted with cowslips in the spring which are followed by sheets of fragrant, pyramidal and early purple orchids during the summer; but it is in late summer when the main downland flowers come to life. Dominated by the pale blue haze of Scabious and the darker blue of Round-headed Rampion, (this latter plant is prolific at Iford but nationally is very rare and is only found in certain areas of the South Downs) plants such as Thyme, Milkwort, Restharrow, Squinancywort, Selfheal and Lady's Bedstraw all thrive. At the last count there were 144 different species of plant found on the front hill! No wonder it has been declared an SSSI.

The reason that it exists today when so much downland turf has disappeared is that in the 1970s progressive farmers were flying nitrogen fertiliser onto the steep

banks that they couldn't get a tractor on. My father, who was a very keen and knowledgeable naturalist, realised that if you did this, whilst you stimulated the grass to grow, you smothered and destroyed the natural flora beneath. So he refused to do it. Sometimes we should be grateful for non-progressive farming!

It is not all good news however: we have a continual battle trying to control ragwort which proliferates at this time of year and is in danger of getting out of control. As well as looking very unpleasant, ragwort is highly poisonous to ruminants. Paradoxically sheep can eat it safely and in fact grazing by sheep is the only method of control, hence we always have a small flock on the Downs with the sole purpose of trying to eat the ragwort faster than it spreads.

## Leylandii hedge – deceased

John Robinson

Has it died? Was it killed? Or even, has it committed suicide?

In truth, probably a bit of all three.

I planted the hedge in 1974/5. We were living in Chaylemore at the time and the noise off the A275 road seemed deafening to us. Those of you who, like me, suffer from tinnitus will know with age and experience that the only way to deal with unwelcome noise is to 'switch it off' and ignore it, as anybody living near to the Lewes bypass, at Rise Farm for example, must do.

We were young and inexperienced however and, having moved from the relative quiet of 2 New Cottages, we found the road noise very disturbing. In those days the road was a lot busier than it is today. It was the main Lewes to Newhaven road, before the days of the A26, and most of the Lewes bypass construction traffic was using it. We didn't know then that we would be moving to Sutton House in 1978; we thought that we were going to be living at Chaylemore for a long time so we wanted the fastest growing hedge possible which was clearly *Cuprocyparis Leylandii*, a new hybrid conifer.

My father was very much against planting it. He said that it was not a native species, that it would always look out of place and it would grow too fast. As it turned out he was right on all counts. He also queried why we needed to plant it in the first place since he and my mother had lived at Chaylemore for 10 years after the war and the road noise had never bothered them. What he was forgetting, of course, was that there was hardly any traffic on the road in those days. Apparently I used to be pushed along the road in my pram to Lewes, not something that anyone would contemplate these days. I remember my father telling me that he once opened the curtains in the morning and saw elephants walking along the road, and he hadn't been drinking – it was a



circus moving into town. Even in 1969 the traffic was lighter than it is now. I was working for my Uncle Harris at Northease at the time and we used to run cattle along the road from Northease to Southease, again not something that anyone would contemplate these days.

What I didn't know when we planted the hedge was that the main problem with *Leylandii* hedging, apart from looking out of place, is that it can't be pruned back into old wood, unlike yew which positively relishes hard pruning. Yew is actually quite fast growing and in some ways would have been a better choice but being poisonous to livestock could not be considered. If you can't trim the hedge back into old wood it means that the hedge is always going to get bigger year on year and after 40 years it had got so big that we couldn't get the hedge cutting tractor between the *Leylandii* hedge and the thorn hedge on the main road side. This meant that we couldn't keep the top cut and the hedge was in danger of getting out of control. (Apparently the tallest *Leylandii* tree in the country is 130 feet high and still growing!). So the decision was made to cut it down to a manageable size and see what would happen; and sure enough it has died, and will be removed in the autumn.