

## FIFIELD VILLAGE HALL

We thought the Pied Piper had come to Fifield on the night of our Carol Singing, just before Christmas! As we gathered at the crossroads, children came from every corner – and we seemed to gather more and more as we went round the village singing carols at various points. Our final destination was the Village Hall where lighted candles and Christmas decorations provided an appropriate atmosphere – and the smell of mulled wine and warm mince pies gave promise of a convivial evening. Could there have been a better occasion to welcome the newcomers to Fifield who joined the party?

The Hall was full to overflowing and it was a delight to see so many children there. Led by the Vicar, they sang carols and Christmas songs which they had learned at school. Then it was the turn of the grown-ups who, with Jean Rose at the keyboard, enthusiastically sang all the old favourites until they could sing no more!

The proceeds of the evening went to Tall Trees in Shipton and the Committee would like to thank everyone for their generous support.

Pat Yaxley

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## The Ascott Toad Patrol

Could you help a toad to cross a road? The first time I helped, I wore the thickest duty gloves and was tense with anxiety and ready to run. The toad just sat there on the road with jewel-green eyes reflecting in the dusk and offered no resistance. In the bottom of my bucket it chirruped – not the gruff bullfrog's croak that I was fearing.

These harmless creatures migrate in great khaki droves to spawn in the Manor Farm pond where they hatched. The level crossing at Ascott channels three roads across the railway and is a dangerous place for single-minded toads. They move only from dusk until the temperature drops at about 9.00 p.m. Motorists don't see them easily. Before John Gripper started the evening Toad Patrols, every dawn revealed a ghastly slimy sea of corpses and wasted eggs.

Last year we bucketed 1,200 toads across the roads, many more would have made it alone, and the body count was 40. We need the site manned every likely evening from about 10th March to mid April by at least two people. We urgently need extra volunteers when the weather conditions cause a sudden peak of toad activity and hundreds cross at once.

All you require is a good torch beam to see those bright green eyes along the roads, a bucket and yellow reflector bands so that motorists can see you. Please telephone John Gripper during February on 830278 for an information sheet and return slip. A rota will be compiled and circulated to volunteers.

Perhaps you, like me, will overcome a prejudice against toads as you witness their amazing migration, and will develop a soft spot and fascination worthy of David Attenborough himself.

Joan Lilley.