

BELLINGDON & ASHERIDGE

Special Edition - The Playground

This special edition is dedicated to our Playground and Fund raising. Every child deserves a safe and welcoming place to play. However, our playground is now in desperate need of replacement. An incredible amount of work has already been done to raise funds and secure planning. We now need another push as we start to approach the finish line, so please read on ...

PLAYGROUNDS A SURVIVOR'S MEMOIR

Modern playgrounds are marvels of safety engineering. They're built on soft grass, safer mulch, rubber matting, and enough wood chippings to cushion a falling elephant. The equipment is all plastic and rubber multi-activity towers, gentle swings, smooth tunnels, and sandboxes designed exclusively for *therapeutic digging*. It's less a playground and more a wellness retreat for toddlers.

Now, as I turn 64 and officially take my seat in God's waiting room, I find myself nostalgically rewinding to the playgrounds of the 1960s and '70s. Back then, playgrounds weren't places to *play*—they were combat zones. Frankly, even today the SAS would take one look and say, "Nope. Too risky."

Playgrounds were fun, yes—but fun in those days meant **danger**, **jeopardy**, and a solid chance of a faceplanting on concrete from a high-speed metal roundabout.

Take swings, for example. Today they're all about gentle swaying and mindfulness. Back then, the goal was simple: achieve escape velocity. You weren't swinging unless you were attempting to break the sound barrier or complete a full 360-degree rotation over the metal bar. And if you couldn't manage that, the backup plan was to go as high and as fast as humanly possible and then *launch yourself off*. Onto concrete. Naturally.

This was also where we perfected the parachute landing roll—on concrete. It didn't prevent injury, but it did reduce the chances of a full facial scrape from the tarmacadam.

Seesaws were another delight. Usually made of metal and wood, they doubled as splinter-delivery systems for the backside. One popular game involved your mate sitting innocently on one end

while a group of you (strength in numbers) jumped on the other end to see if you could catapult them into low orbit—or at least onto the concrete. Points were awarded for height, distance, and crying.

Sandboxes were technically for the youngest kids, they made sandcastles, fake food, and occasionally ate said fake food. What they didn't know—and *what we did*—was that these sandboxes were also the preferred lavatories of every cat and dog in the neighbourhood. Bon appétit.

Roundabouts were a personal favourite. Once again, speed was everything. Ideally, you wanted enough G-force to blur your vision and challenge your internal organs.

The grand finale was jumping off at full speed. Spectators were warned to stand clear, especially those prone to vomiting—because someone *always* redecorated the playground with their last meal. Then there was the Witch's Hat (photo). What could possibly go wrong !?

Most playgrounds followed the same general design philosophy: "Let's see who survives." One memorable playground even had a **full-size tank**. An actual tank. I climbed all over it like a feral monkey. My local playground also featured a conker tree, which I fell out of repeatedly. I even broke my arm once—but climbed it again as soon as the cast came off, because apparently, I don't learn lessons involving conker trees.

Now, I don't want to sound like a grumpy old curmudgeon muttering, "It was better in my day," or the classic, "It did me no harm." But... it kind of did something. It toughened you up. Built character. Improved spatial awareness. And taught you valuable lessons about consequences—unless, of course, those lessons involved a conker tree. Some mistakes demand lifelong commitment. 😊

Christopher Wood (age 7 and ¾'s)



FEBRUARY

Wed 4th Meeting Point Tea & Chat St John's 2.30pm

Wed 18th Knit & Natter, Craft & Chatter St John's 2.30-4pm

PUB NIGHT 27th VILLAGE HALL
From 6.30pm

MARCH

Sat 7th History & Culture Club
St John's 11.30am

Wed 4th Meeting Point Tea & Chat
St John's 2.30pm

Wed 18th Knit & Natter, Craft & Chatter St John's 2.30-4pm

APRIL

Wed 1st Meeting Point Tea & Chat
St John's 2.30pm

Wed 15th Knit & Natter, Craft & Chatter St John's 2.30-4pm

PLAYGROUNDS - A PLAY FOR TODAY

Some readers may be too young to remember *Play for Today*, a television series designed to broaden our cultural horizons. It was well-intentioned, worthy... and now firmly filed under “*whatever happened to that?*” What hasn’t faded with time, however, is the value of children playing outside.

Outdoor play has always mattered, and it still does. It’s one of the best ways to help children grow into healthy, confident adults. And let’s be honest—these are the very people we’ll be relying on one day to keep the country running and our pensions paid.

Even though health and safety rules have transformed playgrounds from something the SAS might once have said “absolutely not” to something much more sensible, playgrounds remain vital. They build strength, coordination, creativity, resilience, and social skills. Children learn how to make friends, take turns, solve problems, and occasionally dust themselves off—all while having fun and burning off energy that might otherwise be spent glued to a sofa and a screen.

As one local head teacher wisely told a parent:
“If you want your child to have good handwriting, take them to



the playground—it develops all their motor skills.”

So let’s help parents provide a proper alternative to screen time—one that doesn’t need a charging point. Please support the brilliant work already done to raise funds and secure grants by coming along to the next pub night. Every penny raised goes straight to the playground. The last one was very well attended and a proper giggle.

As the song goes, *the children are our future*—and the pub night is our chance to help them climb, swing, and slide their way there.

If you can’t make it but would still like to donate, here’s how:



Donate now!

gofund.me/80b362ca

EDITOR’S NOTE

If anyone wishes to see something covered in the newsletter or has an article at their fingers tips wishing to see it in print please contact me at newsletter@bellingdon.com. Subject to levels of decency and laws enacted, all will be considered!

This is our village newsletter funded by the Bellingdon & Asheridge Community Association , so do join the fun.

NEW CAR PARK NOW COMPLETE

The village hall's brand new car park is now complete, with very smart lines marking out the spaces.



The project was funded through funds raised at community events like the village fete, along with a generous donation from the National Lottery Community Fund. There is now significantly increased parking

capacity, which should help alleviate the shortages that can occur which has led to cars being parked along the road during the busiest times.



DOORS OPEN AT 6.30pm



PUB & QUIZ NIGHT

FRIDAY 27 FEBRUARY

BELLINGDON AND ASHERIDGE VILLAGE HALL

ALL PROCEEDS IN AID OF THE PLAYGROUND IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

HOMEMADE FOOD

LOCAL BEER, ALCOHOLIC & NON-ALCOHOLIC DRINKS



TOMBOLA!