

**CALOR VILLAGE OF THE YEAR
ENGLAND**

Village	Hampton Lucy
Website address	www.hamptonlucy.org
Central village postcode	CV 35 8BE
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Population of village (total pop.)	c. 450
County competition entered	Warwickshire

PART A

Category 1: People

Hampton Lucy parish lies on the west side of the Warwickshire Avon, and is located about six miles from Warwick and five from Stratford-upon-Avon. Of the total population of about 450, the majority live in the village itself, with the remainder residing in the hamlet of Hatton Rock and a scattering of outlying properties, some of which are working farms. The community shares many of the characteristics of wider British society. According to the 2001 census, it is socially diverse with occupations ranging from senior management and professional to the unskilled; the house ownership rate of 76% is just a little over the national average; the age-structure shows a healthy balance between age-groups, with 21% under 17 years, nearly half aged between 30 and 49 years old, and 16% pensioners, including three brave souls in their 90's. **Only three of the houses are second homes**, few are unoccupied, only three lack central heating, and only three are officially classed as overcrowded. Hampton Lucy is a viable, stable community, with a very low unemployment rate, largely free from tensions and schisms.

Within the village the local facilities are focussed on the church, the school, the village hall and the public house. **The church**, sometimes called “the cathedral in the country”, is the obvious focus for worship, weddings baptisms and funerals, but, in addition, is the locale for concerts, both professional and performances by children from the village school. Recently the church was the venue for a concert by the Warwickshire Baroque Ensemble. A good example of linkage between the various activities in the village occurs when the **Harvest Festival** service in the church is followed by **Harvest Supper** in the village hall, cooked by local volunteers. Musical entertainment is sometimes provided by a group of children from the school, or by a village folk group.

The head teacher of the **Church of England Primary School** places considerable emphasis on relationships between the school and the community. These links range from the recent provision of eight places for nursery children, aged three and over in the Foundation Unit with the reception class, to the use by villagers of the school photocopier! The school has also assisted local organisations to mount exhibitions and talks, including allowing them the use of a school room with a digital projector when required. Additionally, on each Friday afternoon parents and other local people are welcome to visit the school for tea and a chat with staff. The school is pleased to host the annual Village Fete and school children are involved in activities such as Maypole dancing.

The chief voluntary service for young people is the church youth group, the Jigsaw Group, run by two village residents. This activity, as well as the church and school, are supported financially by the John Lucy Trust, a charitable trust which derives its income from the rents of three properties in the village, and the Hampton Lucy

Grammar School Trust. The funds are distributed to the church, to the school for expenditures not normally provided by the Education Authority, and to sundry individual applicants resident in the parish. Recent beneficiaries include a student who received a grant for books and equipment, a grant to subsidise a Duke of Edinburgh Gold Award Project, and a donation towards the cost of a mobility vehicle for a handicapped child.

It is not always easy to involve young people in decision-making within the village, but the following example demonstrates how, when an issue arises, their involvement can be galvanised. Recently the well-used **skateboard ramp** in the playing field was vandalized by a group of outsiders. The problem was mentioned in the parish newsletter, "The Grapevine" and within a few days, a group of families, with the active participation of their children, petitioned the support of the village which was followed by a door-to-door collection that raised over £800 towards the cost of refurbishment. This sum was supplemented, from within the village, by the Parish Council and the John Lucy Trust. In addition, contributions were received from Stratford District Council and the Wellesbourne Lions. The **playing field** also provides a range of well-maintained swings, climbing frames, and a roundabout etc for the younger children.

The **village hall**, run by a volunteer committee, provides an important focal point and venue for groups, classes, social events and public meetings. For example, very young children are able to attend a Trotters Toddlers Group held each week in the hall. The committee organises several social events during the year, to appeal to as wide an age range as possible. These include a "Live and Local" theatre show, an annual jazz picnic evening, a family skittles evening and a pre-Christmas drinks evening, providing an opportunity to meet and greet new neighbours and old friends alike.

A **fortnightly afternoon tea** is served in the hall and this is much appreciated by older residents, who value the support they receive when coping with illness, hospital treatment or even bereavement. The success of the venture is measured in the friendly social banter which makes for a very happy and cohesive community.

The chief forum for decision-making over village issues is **the elected Parish Council** which meets every two months. The agendas and minutes are circulated online by the parish clerk. There is little anti-social behaviour to cope with in the village. Graffiti are virtually absent, the small amount of litter, which is usually dropped from passing vehicles, is collected by volunteers; criminal damage, whilst not entirely absent, is minimal, partly because of the unobtrusive vigilance of many residents.

Retired people play a significant part in a range of village activities, usually in conjunction with younger people, surely a healthy state of affairs. Younger adults are encouraged to "find their feet" and gradually take over the organisation of groups and events, with experienced members available to give advice if requested. Older people, for example, are well represented in the **Women's Institute** which meets in the village hall. In addition to hosting regular speakers, the WI includes a sewing group which recently has made two large quilts. These were subsequently raffled and the proceeds given to the church funds. Over the past few years, the WI has organised

excursions, sometimes with partners, to Highgrove House, Milldene Gardens and a variety of National Trust properties. Members and partners have joined other WIs on County visits to The Palace of Westminster, Kew Gardens and Bletchley Park. It is a characteristic of the village community that older people are not corralled into their own activities, but play a full part in activities such as Tai-Chi, the Keep-Fit class, and the Parishes' Prayer Group. They are also well represented on the Parochial Church Council, the Parish Council, the Village Hall committee, and the John Lucy Trust. It is also recorded in the 2001 census that about 50 residents in the village provide unpaid care for other people, usually the sick and elderly. Nine of the carers provide unpaid assistance for fifty or more hours per week, a major and heart-warming dedication to the welfare of others.

Finally, **the public house**, the Boar's Head, provides a convivial focus for socializing in the village. The meals are appreciated, as is the beer-garden in the summer. An occasional folk music night takes place there. Also an excursion from the pub is organized annually to Ascot Races and the landlady organises theme nights from time to time.

Category 2: Business

Beyond the village, the rest of the parish is virtually all farmland save for two **business parks**, one situated on the extreme western boundary which runs along the Stratford-upon-Avon to Warwick road – the A439 and a smaller one at Hatton Rock, a hamlet nearby.

Possibly the largest business operating here is a wholesale fruit and vegetable producer. Two-thirds of the firm's output goes to one of the major supermarkets, supplying half of the country's spring onions and a quarter of its green beans and peas. One local farmer owns land farmed under a **Countryside Stewardship Scheme Agreement** and he controls the Riverside Walk which is possibly the most popular footpath walk in the area, offering tranquillity and stupendous views across the Avon valley and beyond with Warwick Castle in the north. This is a permissive path and is well advertised at the southern, village end, by Natural England. Quite recently this farmer installed 2 kissing gates, one at each end of the walk at his own expense.

The Parish Council embarked upon a scheme to create a spinney on the western edge of the village, along the Stratford road, to provide a tranquil wildlife area. Faced with the prospect of clearing a substantial area of land, largely covered in bramble and thistle, before the planting of some 60 indigenous trees, another farmer came forward with heavy earth-moving equipment to clear the site. The spinney is a great improvement providing an opportunity to get off a busy road with no footpath, to exercise oneself and the dog!

This busy road became so because of the development of a business park (Ryon Hill Park) in the ownership of the NFU Mutual which employs approximately 1600 people in the Stratford area. The Park will be completed early next year and will have over 800 parking spaces available. Hampton Lucy has witnessed a tremendous increase in traffic through the village and, accepting that the creation of the Park was responsible, NFU Mutual offered to meet the Parish Council's share of the cost of traffic-calming. The company is very mindful of its impact on such a small community and keeps the Parish Council and its immediate neighbouring residents informed of its plans. Members of the Council were invited to hear the proposals for the last phase of the development and received the assurance that building schedules etc were arranged to have minimal impact on the local area. Lighting at the Park was a worry to neighbours but the company now holds regular meetings with residents to ensure that the overall strategy for reducing light spill is working and is meeting the cost of planting trees on neighbouring land for screening and light shading.

Within the village there are a number of thriving businesses including a family run business acting as an introductory agency in the Care Sector providing support to enable clients who choose to maintain their home life-style. It is a local and national service tailored to meet the needs of the individual.

Some folk are running gardening services providing paid-for work to the less able in the community and in some cases receiving payment in the form of fruit and vegetables in exchange for some of the heavier, more laborious jobs around the garden.

Our local milkman deserves a mention for his sheer grit and determination. Seventy-nine years of age, he has been delivering milk in the village for 60 years. Starting with his father's farm and delivery business he recalls the days when milk arrived at the door in a bucket and was measured out by ladle – inaccuracies led him to using bottles! Suffering arthritis in both knees he provides a valuable service many people want – milk on the doorstep come rain or shine.

The Boar's Head is the **local hostelry** and well deserves its reputation throughout South Warwickshire. The pub employs local people, provides the ideal venue for meeting up with friends for a drink and reasonably priced meals. Occasionally a local folk band arranges a get-together for a jam session on a Friday evening. In the run-up to Christmas this year there will be themed nights, a wine-tasting event and a 'Casino Royale' feel over New Year. The landlord promotes other pub events, gives raffle prizes in support of school and village hall fund-raising functions and gives a generous welcome to tourists. As she says, 'remember, a friend is a stranger we have soon to meet'.

Other businesses include pest control, sand-blasting, architectural design and development, mobile catering, acupuncture, physiotherapy, translating, charcoal-making, fostering and child-minding.

The Parish Plan prepared in 2002 identified the need to replace the shop and post office which had closed some years ago. The survey also established that many residents offered to work together as a **community business** to run it. A small committee was formed and successfully obtained a grant of £5,000 from Village Ventures towards start-up costs. Unfortunately it has not been possible to take up the grant because no suitable accommodation can be found. Frustrating for the committee and residents, the plan is on 'hold' but the search will go on. At present, residents must travel to Stratford or Warwick, six or seven miles, to find a supermarket although there is a Co-operative food store and other retail outlets in Wellesbourne, 2½ miles away. It is ironic that fresh vegetables are produced in great quantities at the end of the road but are not available to buy locally.

Category 3: Environment

Hampton Lucy parish is bounded on three sides by the **river Avon**, with an historic iron road bridge (built in 1829 by Horseley Iron Works, Shropshire) providing a fine view of it both up and downstream. The meadows and well-tended farmland surrounded by hedges and interspersed with small woods and spinneys provide a charmingly rural backdrop and a haven for wildlife of all kinds. The centre of the village is a 'Conservation Area' (created and maintained by Stratford District Council (SDC) since 1969) which contains the older houses and thatched cottages, the spectacular church of Saint Peter ad Vincula (built in 1822-25), the Parish Field, and a public house, the Boars Head. A children's playground, skateboard ramp, and football pitch are all located in the King George V Playing Field.

The Parish Council has fought long and hard (as a member of CLEAR, the Campaign for the Leam and Avon rivers) to preserve **the river** against several proposals to make it navigable to large powered craft. The villagers regard it as a peaceful place where wildlife can live undisturbed. WCC carried out a public consultation in 2004 which supported our stance and resulted in the Council voting unanimously not to support navigation. A readership survey by the Leamington Courier in 2007 showed 325 readers opposed to navigation, 59 in favour and 18 "don't cares".

The villagers have done their best to **plant trees** and hedges where possible. The village has joined the SDC **Tree Warden scheme**, and our parish tree warden has attended most of its meetings. The Parish Council was offered whips of native trees by SDC in December 2005 and 60 of these were planted by volunteers on a strip of former allotment land alongside the Stratford Road, now known as The Spinney. Most of these are still alive amid a mass of brambles and numerous other wild species, which attract various butterflies, moths and birds. Although the trees are barely visible above the brambles, they are being looked after and we are confident that they will soon begin to shade out the competition. Another offer of bigger trees for planting is shortly to be taken up in the form of five ash trees, chosen because they are said to provide the best firewood. (Parish councils are being urged to provide biofuel for the future). These will also be planted in the spinney. A path is being mowed monthly along the spine of the spinney to provide access to the public. The Parish Council has also prompted SDC to put a Tree Preservation Order on one of the big oaks at the junction of The Close and Snitterfield Street. All trees within the Conservation Area have special protection.

The Parish Council has improved **road safety** in the village by constructing a lay-by alongside the Stratford Road, so that vehicles can be parked without obstructing the thoroughfare, and with WCC, it has moved the location of speed restriction signs and added an electronic, traffic-activated 'Too Fast' sign at the entrance to the village on the Stratford Road.

Some years ago, a group of villagers formed a '**Village Enhancement Group**' (aka 'VEG') that is dedicated to improving the appearance of the village. The VEG planted a mixed native hedge alongside the allotments in Bridge Street in 1999, together with four Scots Pine trees which are now quite mature. In 2001 a beech/holly hedge was planted along the south side of the playing field, and several of the beech trees in it are being allowed to grow into full-sized trees. VEG also planted

and maintains attractive floral displays at strategic spots throughout the village including the planting of daffodils along the roadsides. As part of its remit, the group also organises regular ‘litter picks’ along the village roads.

The famous botanist, **Charles Maries** (1851-1902) was born in Hampton Lucy and his parents and grandparents are buried in the churchyard of St Peter ad Vincula. Charles attended the Hampton Lucy Grammar School where he was taught by the Reverend G. Henslow, who later became the Royal Horticultural Society’s Professor of Botany. As a young man, Charles was employed by James Veitch & Sons, the largest nursery in England in Victorian times, and was sent by them to China and Japan to collect plants that might grow well in British gardens. He visited the Far East between 1876 and 1879 and sent back many hundreds of specimens.

The VEG decided that, in view of the many associations Charles Maries and his family had with Hampton Lucy, they would collect together as many of his plant introductions as they could and create the ‘**Charles Maries Trail**’. The idea for the trail was first floated at a ‘Gardener’s Question Time’ organised by the Hampton Lucy Village Hall Committee about four years ago. At present, there are 21 plants in the collection, of which 17 are in public locations around the village; all have slate labels written by a retired minister who, at 92 years of age, probably still has the neatest handwriting of anyone in the village. The VEG has produced a free leaflet (available from the church) that provides a ‘self-guided’ tour of the Trail.

Creating the Trail involved numerous villagers in many different ways. At least 12 of them (the majority of whom are not members of VEG) have become involved either by purchasing individual plants or by ‘adopting’ the plants that were located near them and protecting and watering them as needed. The VEG has held a number of well-attended fund-raising activities to enable the purchase of further plants, and sundries and it arranged for the Trail to be launched in 2005 by the Director of Horticulture, Science and Education of the Royal Horticultural Society. This event was held in the village hall and was attended by more than 50 villagers together with 19 relatives of Charles Maries. Details of the Trail are on the internet (www.hamptonlucy.org/Charles_Maries_Trail.PDF) and that has resulted in enquiries coming from many parts of England as well as from Australia, and Saudi Arabia.

Regarding **electricity use**, the village has reduced power consumption of its street lighting by replacing seven 80W lamps in The Langlands development with seven, more efficient 23W ones. The Parish Council favours switching off all the street lamps for most of the night (e.g. midnight – 6 a.m.) but this proposal, made twice so far, has met with fierce opposition from villagers who fear that it might encourage crime. It has therefore not been implemented.

The Parish Council, in conjunction with the owner of Charlecote Mill and the adjacent weir, has commissioned a feasibility study by Warwick University Engineering students into the possibility of **generating electricity from the river**. The group produced a report in May 2007 (available on CD-ROM), in which they concluded that it would be technically viable (though currently not economic) to generate about 10kW by installing a siphon turbine (obtainable from Derwent Hydro) on the small weir next to the mill. The electricity produced would be sold into the national grid. The total project cost was estimated to be £116,170, yielding around £3038/year in

revenue at 2007 prices (a 2.6% return on investment). Some villagers would be willing to buy shares in such a scheme, but unless it was a charitable one, government grants of up to half the project cost would not be available. The Parish Council is now waiting for the mill owner to decide whether he wishes to proceed.

As regards **green transport**, the Parish Council has been trying to persuade the villagers of Alveston to agree to the building of a **cycle track/footpath to Stratford**, a project that was supported by 76% of residents in our 2002 Parish Plan. It would require a footbridge over the river at Alveston, at the site of the ferry which existed until the sixties, and would follow the straight and level former Roman road which is the public footpath past Old Pastures Farm (SD 132). This would enable villagers to cycle to Stratford in little longer than it currently takes to drive and park. It would be hugely popular with Sustrans as a missing link in their national cycle network. It also appears to fit in with WCC's objective (see CAROWIP 2006-20016, page 56) to "develop a flagship trail between Warwick and Stratford along the River Avon for walkers and cyclists". This was originally suggested at a meeting held in Charlecote in July 1997, where it met with ferocious opposition from two ladies. The Parish Council has since tried to approach the residents of Alveston about this, but has been rebuffed. The NFU Mutual is developing a Green Travel Plan for Ryon Hill Business Park and has conducted a survey to identify the travel needs of staff. The company plans to launch a private bus service early in 2008 and to develop existing bus routes. The company is also setting up a car-sharing database with the County Council.

Local footpaths were the top priority of residents surveyed at the time of the 2002 Parish Plan. The village is very fortunate to have numerous paths radiating from the village, some along high ground with wonderful views, and others beside the river or through the water meadows to Charlecote and Wasperton. Until recently the parish was a member of the WCC P3 scheme, and made several improvements under this scheme, including spreading gravel on two stretches of the Scar Bank path, and building steps up the steep bank near 'Sal's Grave' near Hatton Rock. Local residents have installed three benches on 'Scar Bank' from which one can rest and admire the view. The village has invited others to enjoy this Scar Bank walk as part of the Warwickshire Walking Festival each year since it began in 2005. The parish includes **Hampton Wood Nature Reserve**, an ancient woodland with meadow frontage, that is maintained by Warwickshire Wildlife Trust. The wood is particularly wonderful at bluebell time. Permission was granted to the local primary school to create a **nature reserve** in the far corner of the playing-field. The area is becoming quite mature.

The village is also fortunate in having a daily **bus service** to and from Stratford. Most of our several **allotments** are actively cultivated, and often sought by newcomers to the village. Those controlled by the Parish Council are rent free.

As a result of these many good features of the village and the enthusiastic inputs of many different members of the local community, the village has received a Gold Award in the 'Small Village' category of the Warwickshire, Best Kept Village competition in 2005 and 2006. This year, it won the 'Small Village' award in the Stratford District region of the Warwickshire, Best Kept Village competition and was third overall in the county. In addition, of course, Hampton Lucy was the overall winner of the Warwickshire 'Calor Village of the Year 2007' competition.

Category 4: Communications

New residents arriving in the village are given a copy of our Millennium walking map, a copy of the 2002 Parish Plan, and a ticket giving their family free entry into Charlecote Park.

The monthly **parish newsletter**, *The Grapevine*, covers the three parishes of Hampton Lucy, Charlecote, and Loxley and is now in its ninth year of production. The newsletter consists of four sides of A4 paper and through the generosity of the three parochial Church Councils and the three civil parishes, together with a healthy advertising income, it is able to be produced and distributed to parishioners, free of charge. The present Editor, both proof readers, the Treasurer, the Advertising Manager, and the main distributor are all volunteers who live in Hampton Lucy. Furthermore, within Hampton Lucy, there are five or more local distributors who deliver the copies to most households in the village. The newsletter has seven or more regular contributors and a similar number of occasional ones, plus four people who regularly provide photographs from the three parishes. It is, therefore, very much a community effort. In addition to giving advance notice of events of all kinds, the newsletter also carries reports of meetings, a diary of events for the month, a listing of all church services within the three parishes, and a record of registered baptisms, marriages, and funerals in the three churches.

The Parish Clerk provides an **e-mail news service** to anyone who wishes to provide him with an e-mail address. These addresses are not made public but remain confidential to the clerk. The news includes such things as scam warnings from Warwickshire Trading Standards, Neighbourhood Watch Alerts from the police, Parish Council meeting notices and minutes, details of forthcoming events, severe weather warnings, road closures, and of 'flu jab sessions for the over-65s. About a quarter of all households in the village choose to receive communications via this service. The recipients also include our MP, John Maples.

The clerk also uses **e-mail to inform the councillors** about what action he is taking as a result of Parish Council decisions and routine maintenance. The four councillors (out of the five) who have e-mail facilities receive copies of any correspondence of significance. Thus they become aware of how difficult it often is to get action by higher level authorities on such matters as road sweeping, drain clearing, lamp cleaning and verge mowing. Our direct contacts with County and District councillors also help to produce results, although still subject to delay.

The Parish Council meets every two months in the village hall. Parishioners are invited to attend all **Parish Council meetings** and are encouraged to speak in any debate, even though the recommended format is to set aside a short period for the public to express their views on agenda items and for them then to remain silent for the rest of the meeting – NOT in Hampton Lucy! It helps that, as Hampton Lucy is a small village, most people know at least one of their five councillors and so can raise points for discussion wherever and whenever they may meet. The Parish Council also holds an Annual Village Meeting at which villagers may raise and discuss any item that they wish to bring to the attention of the Council.

The **parish notice-board** was recently rebuilt and is well used. A second notice-board has been installed in the hamlet of Hatton Rock. Official notices take priority if there

is a shortage of space. Parish Council meetings are advertised on it and on various telegraph poles, as are forthcoming events.

Elderly people seem to be well looked after by their relatives and, when necessary, many also receive help from neighbours. **Computer training** is not given in the village but there is IT training available for ‘Silver Surfers’ at the local Library in Wellesbourne, the nearest big village, just 2½ miles away.

The local primary school maintains close **communications** with the Parish Council and the villagers. The Headteacher meets the Chairman of the Council each term following meetings of the governing body to pass on proposals and in turn to receive the minutes of the Council. At the end of the school year villagers are invited to the school fête and again for the Christmas Fayre.

The village has a **website** www.hamptonlucy.org that contains many details about the village including the full story of the Charles Maries Trail. The site displays past issues of *The Grapevine* and it also receives news from the Parish Council. The webmaster, who lives in Hampton Lucy, is considering how a small number of people might be allowed direct access to the website. This would enable them to add or update items such as the current issue of *The Grapevine* and the minutes of the most recent Parish Council meeting, and would help him to make the website topical and up-to-date.

PART B

Our village is like a big family. We nearly all know one another, and this is probably why we have so little crime or vandalism. We no doubt have our pleasant surroundings to thank for people wanting to live here, but once they are here they are reluctant to leave. Recently, an elderly widower left to join his relations. A local couple bought his thatched cottage followed by another local couple who bought their house!

When considering a house-move most people are concerned with market value, location and usually, education. Hampton Lucy boasts a great “**community value**”, a wonderful location and an outstanding primary school.

A recent report by Statutory Inspections of Anglican Schools described our **primary school** as “excellent”. OFSTED has given a good report affirming the additions to the standard curriculum of ‘creative Mondays’ and ‘physical Fridays’ when pupils are encouraged into art, music, sport, design and technology. There are 96 children in school and there is provision for 8 nursery places.

The Parish Council has a **King George V playing-field** maintained in perpetuity for the recreation of parishioners. The council obtained a by-law banning dogs, levelled the ground for a football pitch and with the help of grants installed play equipment, a skateboard ramp and new railings to give everyone the opportunity to have fun and exercise themselves in a safe environment.

Early this year the skateboard ramp was vandalised (not by our village children!) and the Council responded to the **pleas of local children** for repairs and renovation which have now been completed.

The County Council initiated an **annual walking festival**. This was adopted by the Parish Clerk who leads a walk along our Scar bank footpath. Walkers come from all over Warwickshire,

Spurred by the activities of the Village Enhancement Group the village entered the **Best Kept Village competition**. The Group’s success, measured in 4 awards in 3 years, clearly demonstrates how attractive the village appears.

The botanist, **Charles Maries**, was born here and members of the VEG have collected 21 of the shrubs that he sent back to England from China and Japan. These are planted throughout the village and provide great interest, particularly to plant-lovers.

The Village Hall Committee provides all manner of opportunities for us to get together. The high point of the year is the **Jazz Picnic** in the Parish Field. For three years running we have been lucky to have a beautiful summer evening when we can sit around with a picnic, listening to the music while the children play and their parents chat over a drink.

Wonderful **choral concerts** take place in our church, St Peter ad Vincula. These are always memorable occasions.

The village is the community is the people. Whichever aspect of village life you examine you will find people who are willing to offer their talents for the well-being of their community, their fellow men. That is the spirit of Hampton Lucy.