

Village views from England - March 2024

Welcome to this new venture! Hopefully I will be able to make an occasional contribution through the “off season” of villaging to this wonderful website hosted by our good friend Bill.

I'll be reminiscing, sharing my stories and include random bits and pieces of interest (at least to me!)

As recorded in my last column of 2023 we have now sold all our village pieces. A mixture of relief, sadness and pleasure too as we passed our much loved collection onto new owners who are just starting out on the journey of villaging. It heartens us to think our houses and village folk will continue to give enjoyment to many other people in the future. Indeed within days of collection, the new owners were sending us pictures of “our” pieces in their own Christmas villages.



We did have a few hiccups within the sale process. As many of you will have experienced, each year when the houses and village folk are brought out of storage for a new display there are some casualties, bits become detached from houses and need a spot of superglue to re-attach them. This was always Sue's job, as my clumsy ham fists were considered too risky for such delicate operations.

I never really got involved and left her to it. One year when placing the village folk in their positions for that years display I was populating the fairground area. Lots of suitable options and the families with balloons and prizes etc really bringing the fairground atmosphere to life.

One young lad just looked a bit odd to me... he seemed to have an abnormal head, and on closer inspection it became apparent what had happened.

The poor fellow in question had lost his head, literally. Sue wasn't phased by

this new complication and quickly performed a village first, a “head re-attachment “

At least that was what he went into the operation for! We have all heard horrible tales of medical negligence but this really sets a new level. It transpires that at the same time as he “lost his head” he also became separated from the ice cream he was holding.

At the time of re-attachment (without anaesthetic I might add) Head surgeon Sue expertly attached the ice cream to his body instead of the head without realising the error. He was sent home without much examination and never voiced a complaint. (well, how could he!) Just an icy stare!

We are not sure how many years he carried out his duties as a fairground attendee before we noticed but when we did finally notice we accepted him and never thought any more about it.

Fast forward to our village sale... and he was in a group of villagers about to be sold. I realised just before the purchaser was about to pack him into her bag with the others she had purchased. What should I do? Would she realise when unpacking him at home?

I had to say something, “ There’s something I need to tell you” I stuttered, “ the man’s head is actually an ice cream”. Just hearing the words as I spoke them sounded so ridiculous!

“Oh that’s all right, I hadn’t even noticed “ she replied so all was well!



I have stated that we sold everything, but that isn’t strictly true. Two pieces were left unsold, one, St Patrick’s cathedral which we even reduced down to £20 and still no takers. The other was Jenny’s Cookies facade. This didn’t have the original box, and I thought it was one that might sell better on e-bay as it seemed to have a rarity value. In the end we decided to keep both these pieces and they fitted neatly into two display alcoves in our living room.



One piece that we did sell on e-bay, the Snack Shack, was returned at our cost , because the chimney broke off in transit. This was possibly down to poor packaging by myself but once again proved Sue's point that she didn't think the trouble of selling on e-bay is worth the hassle. I'm slowly beginning to agree with her!

Once returned, a spot of glue on the chimney and it was as good as new. We sold it to one of the house visitors.



A familiar sight in villages across England used to be the village post box and the village telephone box. Both are quite well represented in Lemax accessories. I thought I would share a couple of real life examples from a local village not far from where we live.

This lovely idea that I've seen on numerous places on my travels, the post box has a knitted topper! This looked especially charming with a light dusting of snow just before Christmas.



The village phone box is now almost a thing of the past in villages these days, that is one that still is a working example. Many remain but have other uses: second hand book exchanges, information leaflets and commendably, locations for a defibrillator machine for quick access in medical emergencies. I was quite surprised to see one still in use as originally designed!



I'm not sure what telecommunication equipment is inside the Lemax phone box, perhaps John can tell us!



In writing this column I had a thought, what constitutes the description “village”? I assumed it’s just a small collection of dwellings, but how big does a village get before it becomes a town? How big does a couple of houses need to get to be called a village, does it have to have certain amenities? I’ll do some research and report back in my next column.

To finish I’ll feature a couple of my photos from what is often called one of England's prettiest villages. We were fortunate to visit last September although it didn’t look quite at its best in the rain! We were staying at Whitby in Yorkshire and the pretty village of Staithes was only a short distance up the coast. Historically it was a busy port and also the boyhood home of Captain James Cook the famous seafarer.



More Village Views from England to come in a while!

Phil and Sue
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