

MERRY CHRISTMAS ALL

BAZAAR GOINGS ON

Despite the weather, a large number of children, parents and residents turned out to support the annual school Christmas Fair. The occasion was a reward for their efforts as there were prizes galore to win and seasonal fare to buy, a great deal of it all made by the children themselves. Secret Santa made it easy for the children to buy Mum and Dad a secret present, and their choice was wrapped up ready for them to give on Christmas Day. Of course Santa was there to complete the fun with two beautiful fairies to help him give out the presents.

Our editor did well, he and his wife managed to secure raffle wins to ensure they had a good Christmas!



It was a very busy day for children and adults alike



Mince pies anyone?



Nancy Saunders receives her prize

A very merry Christmas and happy New Year to all our readers from everyone at the magazine!

PARISH COUNCIL NEWS *Elizabeth Godwin*

Housing options decisions

Uttlesford has to face the fact that refusing to take the share of new housing decreed by Whitehall is not an option, and there are some very unpalatable decisions that have to be made. Somewhere there has to be room for 4200 additional homes in this new development framework and there may well be more in years to come.

Every household by now should have received a list of the options in Housing Options leaflet which was issued to every household last month. Please let me know if you have not yet received one on 812793. There are four options to choose from and please make additional comments where necessary. All submissions on this round of the consultation process must be in by January 11th. You are also free to propose further options yourself.

Whatever is decided Birchanger will see some in filling with affordable housing, but there are no plans to release any of the Green Belt land which surrounds the village so far!

Grants for loft insulation

There are still grants around for loft insulation this winter, and several DIY Stores have special promotional offers available. There is also a new website to assist householders in getting the best deals, and the best grants available. Simply log on to <http://www.uttlesford.gov.uk/climate+change/help+for+housholders.htm>

Birchanger poppy appeal

Once again many thanks to Geoff Driscoll who led the Poppy Appeal in Birchanger. The work put into running a successful appeal is probably never truly appreciated as boxes constantly need replenishing as well as distributing and collecting.

Unfortunately this year's take was affected by the Children in Need Appeal, particularly at the Service Station. For many years now the Children

in Need Appeal, which is another well supported national charity has brought the main appeal date closer to the Armistice Sunday. This has meant that for security reasons both the Poppy and the Children in Need Appeal boxes were sited side by side at the Service Station. Many donors were observed placing their donation in the Children in Need tin, while picking up a poppy and missing the British Legion tin altogether. Frustrating, as both causes really do deserve our support.

Armistice day was the best organised occasion for years, and even the timing for the silence was just about right. A very big thank you to the Scouts and Cubs who braved the cold and who made the day so special for everyone. They really did contribute to the occasion, despite the fact that the uniforms are not exactly designed for a cold November day. Thank you for being there.

New care attendants for Uttlesford crossroads

Uttlesford Crossroads is proud to welcome four new Care Attendants to the scheme. The only difference that these new attendants have been recruited because they have four legs instead of the usual two, although they do visit their clients with their own special two legged carers.

Ellis is a 8 year old Collie, Ted is a Labrador who is 2, while Bob is an eight month old Bedlington/Whippet Cross who has made really impressive progress helping a four year old blind autistic child. The latest member of the team is Clay who is only 5 months old and is a terrier.

So far no official timesheets have been submitted, but they will be seen to be high in "Bonio Hours."

Fete money distribution

The fete at the Three Willows was one of this summer's success stories. After inviting requests for a share in the money which was some £1898 has been distributed as follows:
£200 to the Over Sixties, £250 to Birchanger Nursery, £200 in smaller amounts to various

applicants, and the remaining £1448 to the formation of the village youth council. A big thank you to Paul and Paula and everyone who helped to raise the money for village causes at the fete.

Sunday roast at Birchanger Social Club

Sunday Lunch at the club was started last month and offers a full roast lunch with Yorkshire puddings for under a fiver. It is delicious and has to be the best value for miles. It certainly is not worth getting out the pans when this treat awaits you just up the road.

Lunches are served on a first come first served basis between noon and 4pm each Sunday. Other meals are served at lunchtime between 11.30 and 2.30 on Monday, Wednesday and Friday with a snack menu at Saturday lunchtime. Full evening meals are available between 7 and 9pm on Tuesday and Saturday. There is a new and varied menu with fresh fish and steaks as well as jacket potatoes with a range of fillings and much more. All are at very

low prices.

Visitors to the club are amazed at what is on offer. Drinks are incredibly cheap as they are in fact owned by members collectively and not sold to make a profit. Everyone who visits the club wishes that such facilities exist where they live. Clubs like this are rare in the south of England these days. Enjoy!

Choice based lettings

The first list of available council and housing association properties appeared on November 23rd. Potential tenants can register their interest either on line, by text or by completing a coupon. The list is also available from the council offices or at the Total garage in Stansted. The points assessment scheme will still be used to decide to whom the properties will be offered from amongst those who have expressed an interest. To find out more call 01799 510507 or visit www.homeoption.org

BOOK NOW FOR THE SSE BURNS NIGHT SUPPER

Proceeds to Stop Stansted Expansion's Second Runway Fighting Fund

Saturday 26 January 2008, 7.30pm – Village Hall, Birchanger

We're delighted to invite you to our Burns Night Supper on Saturday 26 January in support of Stop Stansted Expansion's Second Runway Fighting Fund which will be needed to challenge BAA's impending planning application, due in the New Year.

The traditional menu of Cockaleekie Soup, followed by freshly-snared Haggis, Neeps and Tatties will be served, rounded off by Scottish cheese and oatcakes. (Vegetarian option available.)

We're delighted that the haggis will be presented as ceremony dictates by Pipe Sergeant Scott Davidson from the Essex Pipe Band, accompanied by two drummers, with the traditional Address to the Haggis, Toasts and Poems throughout the evening.

We hope that guests will join in with the spirit of the occasion and help make it a real party night with each table contributing a recital and/or toast in honour of the great Poet and fellow diners.

(Suggestions available on request.) Tables for eight can be reserved, as can individual tickets, at only £15 per head. Bring your own liquid refreshments and/or pre-order a bottle of Scotch for your table for an additional £12.

Dress code is anything from smart casual to formal just so long as, in keeping with tradition, there's a bit of tartan somewhere.

What better way to chase away the post-Christmas blues than a proper Burns Supper with all the ingredients to warm the cockles of your heart?

When Santa left his sleigh at home

I had been hoping to fill these pages with some festive copy from the children of the village. (However as they did not respond to my appeal last month, all too busy I guess.) I will remind you of the day Father Christmas came to the village in an unusual way.

On Christmas Day 1913 excitement in the village must have been at unprecedent levels as Father Christmas was going to visit Birchanger by plane. Bear in mind that it was only ten years since the Wright Brother's first flight. So the sight of an aeroplane was just as thrilling to young minds as the arrival of Santa Claus. The Daily Mirror from Boxing day that year describes what happened.



The benevolent old gentleman greets the little ones

Father Christmas has had to give up his reindeer drawn sleigh, for so numerous are his engagements that nothing but a swift aeroplane can meet his requirements.

Amongst the places which he visited yesterday at the request of The Daily Mirror was the village of Birchanger near Bishop's Stortford. He was piloted from his far away home by Mr Brock.

Apprised of his arrival by a huge letter, which had anyone else sent it would have required a heap of stamps. School children to the number of about 100 awaited him in a field. After landing in his whirring flying machine, they quickly relieved him of the contents of the sacks full of splendid toys, which he had brought with him for distribution.



Who would like this drum? Says Father Christmas
"I would piped the boy's shrill voices"

STUNTMAN COMES TO BIRCHANGER

Stuntman Jamie Millington came to Birchanger Cubs to talk to us about his amazing career. He passed round some of his protective gear such as his flexible back pad and his really cool fire proof trousers with a heavy padded pair of shorts to go with it. Pictures were also sent around to show us what films and programmes he has appeared in. For instance Hot Fuzz, the highly watched Eastenders and Emmerdale farm where he jumped out a window whilst it was burning.

He did a couple of programmes in Bishops Stortford. One of them was to jump over a high speed motorbike it took lots of hours of practising but finally he did it.

Birchanger Cubs really enjoyed having the chance to listen to a real Stuntman. So we all asked him questions. Here are some questions we asked:

What is the best movie you have played in? "A new film coming out called Ink."

What was your best stunt? "Jumping over the motorbike."

Who did you play in Hot Fuzz? "The man holding a machine gun."

Maybe you've seen some of these stunts before. Birchanger Cubs really enjoyed having Jamie Millington in.

By Mickey ,Hayley and Rachael

Open Gardens.

We may not be opening our gardens this year in the usual format, but there are ideas about to consider initiating a fund raising event with a difference in 2008. It will involve visiting some homes, and there is the invitation to the Open Gardens Group and anyone who would like to join them to find out more about this on Saturday January 19th for an evening at Moorswood.

If you would like to come please call Sheila Devereaux on 813843

A Sadly Seasonal Warning

The Christmas lights are on, presents are being wrapped, but there are still those to consider who prefer to do their Christmas shopping by helping themselves to other people's property and damaging premises in the process. They even steal Christmas lights in the garden- Pathetic!!

There are reports in Birchanger of garage break ins and the strange men who knock on the doors of those who are elderly or who may possibly live alone, asking to use the phone or for a glass of water. Their accomplice is probably nipping in through the back door stealing what ever comes to hand while they keep the victim talking. Sadly it has happened.

Please be particularly careful. Secure your garage as best you can, and do not open the door to someone you are not sure about.

Above all never let them in.

School News

Changes in the School governing body

Susan Haggerwood Bullen became Chairman of the Governors last month. She has worked tirelessly for the school since she became a school governor a decade ago. It is probably quite unusual to have a Chairman of the Governors who was actually a pupil at the school herself. There are few people who will know and care the school as well or as much as she does. The role will be very familiar to her as she has acted as Vice Chair for the past four years, and has served on all the Committees of the Governing Body. She is very deservedly continuing the family tradition at Birchanger School.

Two new parent governors are also due to take up their new roles as school governors following their successful election earlier in the year. Birchanger School has four places on the governing body open to parents although in practise the number of parents past or present is greater than this. Although they were elected several weeks ago, like every governor at the school they have to go through routine police checking, which always seems to take a great deal of time. There is also initial training but we do welcome Mrs Jo-Ann Chaplin and Mrs Lianne Sowter to the Governing body of Birchanger School.

There had been a vacancy for a Parent Governor for some time, but this time there were four candidates and a high poll. The other vacancy occurred when Mrs Molly Bishop moved earlier in the year. Although Mrs Bishop was a Foundation Governor, one of the existing Parent Governors whose children are no longer at Birchanger School is to be appointed to this category, thus leaving the second parent vacancy.

Settling in for Winter

The school football season came to an end temporarily when the clocks went back, but will resume again with the longer evenings in March. School finances do not run to floodlighting, and the school might not be too popular in some areas if they were to be installed.

There are other things on offer for the second half

of the term as work on the Infant's School Play gets under way and the children learned to design their own shopping bag following a visit by Chairman of the District Council, Catherine Dean. She spent time with every class and at the end of the day every child had a heavy cotton bag which they had decorated themselves using stencils, leaves, apple stamps and a great deal of their own ingenuity. Some of the bags were displayed at one of the regular Friday Assemblies, which over thirty parents regularly attend. Then there were all the items to make for the Christmas Fair.

Invitation to Learn to Knit.

Both girls and boys have enjoyed the Knitting Club run by Mrs Lee and Mrs Kadwill. They have now extended the invitation to parents to join them on Fridays to knit, or find out how to knit with the children over a cup of tea. It is open to anyone else who would like to join in, and every age is very welcome. To find out more call the school on 812362.

Parents involved with reading programmes

The emphasis is very much on teaching every child to read at present, and there are a great many government ideas and initiatives floating around. At a recent Parents' Forum they came up with their own ideas about greater involvement in reading at the school. They are now working on a Rota for the Parent's Golden Hour where they will share with the youngest children books they have particularly enjoyed, and invite the children to share their own favourites and explain why they like them so much. For the older children there will be book clubs, where everyone will have a book to read, chosen by one of the children and will then discuss the book and say whether or not they enjoyed it and why.

Learning to read is a complicated process. It works best when the children are really interested and enjoying their books. This initiative hopes to promote reading enjoyment for everyone.

New email address for parents

The days of sending a note home will soon be over for most parents at Birchanger School. Every parent is about to be issued with their own individual email address by the school. This means that the school will be able to contact them where necessary and the parents will be able to access the school directly in return. The days of lost notes and missing reports will soon be gone for good.

Children in need

The Children in Need Appeal day is one which is always keenly anticipated by everyone. This year the day really was different, as all children and staff had to think out of the box and do something different they spent the day thinking up new ideas, and sometimes whole new approaches to daily life. It turned out to be a different kind of a day for everyone.

Beating bullying before it starts

Bullying can make anyones time at school a true nightmare. Most of us have experienced it at some time or another at any stage in our lives. It is certainly not confined to children or the work place either. In any walk of it can be a major concern, and we need to learn to deal with it at a very early age.

Bullying is always regularly discussed, and as an issue it is never hidden away although in any walk of life it can be very hard to detect. At Birchanger it is regularly discussed with the children, and strategies and support measures discussed. At this Autumn's anti Bullying week all the issues were raised again, and every class brought their own new and very individual ideas to the debate. The main message is that wherever the bullying is, it must always be addressed in some way by everyone involved. They thought long and hard as to the ways in which they could help others and consider their needs and feelings as well as their own.

Help wanted

These days children in Class 1 are very young. The school takes children from as young as four years following the introduction of the Early Years Policy which includes children in school as pupils in the year in which they have their fifth birthday. This has meant that the Class has been adapted for younger

children.

Equipping any classroom is an expensive business, but one of the most successful areas has always been the Play House, and Class 1 needs a new one. It is also a piece of equipment which children do grow out of fairly quickly, and somebody somewhere may well have one which they would like to dispose of.

If you do have a Play House you need to part with, or indeed any other suitable item please ring the school on 812362. Other items can be disposed of through the services of an organisation known as freecycle which has a branch in Bishops Stortford at www.freecycle.org/bishopstortford.

Thank you

The school would like to say a very big thank you to everyone who collected Tesco and Sainsburys Vouchers earlier this year. It was a very worthwhile effort. From Tescos the school has acquired 2 scanners, a digital microscope, Bee Bot Starter Pack and CD, Kid K'nex Class Set, Leap Frog Manic Maths Set, and a pack of 100 CD-R's. The order from Sainsburys is for rugby balls, rounders balls, footballs, netball bibs and Davies Scoop Set.

The Tescos sports voucher scheme closed last month, but if you do have any remaining vouchers, these can be accepted up to the end of December. Thank you all very much for helping the school in this way. As you can see it does make a big difference.

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Village Diary November/ December 2007

November

25th St Mary's 11.00 am
Holy Communion

December

2nd St Mary's 11.00 am
Advent 1 Matins

9th St Mary's 11.00 am
Family Christingle

16th St Mary's 11.00 am
Advent 3 Matins

21st St Mary's 6.30 pm
Evening Carol Service

23rd St Mary's 11.00 am
Advent 4 Holy
Communion

30th St Mary's 11.00 am
Christmas 1 Matins



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... making moves

Christmas waste collections in Birchanger.

There will be NO separate collection of kitchen waste and dry recyclables in the week beginning December 24th. Non recyclables (black bin) only will be collected sometime either on Thursday December 27th or Friday December 28th.

In the week beginning December 31st there will be collections for both dry recycling (green bin) and kitchen waste (brown bin) on Thursday January 3rd. It is advisable to place bins at the usual collection point on the evening before the collection date. Normal collections will resume in the week beginning January 7th.

On Saturday December 22nd the green waste, wood and dry recyclable skips will be at the Stansted Lower Street Car Park between 9am and 3pm.

On Saturday January 5th between 9am and 3pm there will be a skip to collect Christmas Trees in the car park at Lower Street Stansted.