

Birchanger

December 2012



Magazine

Issue 120

WE ARE TEN

We have now been publishing this newsletter for ten years. It seems a long time ago that the village sign was erected to mark the new millennium but that was our first story and front page. In the intervening years we covered a murder right on my doorstep, a huge number of village events, fetes, quizzes and garden parties etc.

There has been some controversy along the way, I have managed to upset the school, the club, the over 60s club and various contributors, even members of my own committee in one way or another.

We are the Parish council's principal information outlet and with out Elizabeth Godwin's contributions there really would not be much to print! The church and the club also give me regular copy in order to fill up the pages.

We do have a few other contributors, Sally Tilstone and Henry Teall have given us an insight into the world of the sight impaired and physically handicapped people. And we would love some more people to try to contribute something that other villagers might like to read.

Every issue produced is proof read before it goes to print so we can be sure it's factually accurate with good grammar and spelling, currently Pim Godwin and Malcolm Roberts are doing a splendid job of this.

The magazine continues to be financed by a combination of direct donation (Parish council, Social Club and Art show committee), by advertising subscriptions and some fund raising done at various times by members of the committee, at the fete etc. All of the financial matters are looked after by Ken Wheatley, who also does my jobs when I want to take a holiday. So thank you Ken.

We have been very fortunate in our production arrangements as our costs have not increased at all in ten years so we owe a real debt of thanks to Ken Devine for continuing to provide our printing.

We are also fortunate with Trevor Stone who continues to manage our distribution. And our platoon of deliverers without whom none of you would get your copies. Thank you all!

Finally I must thank my wife who tolerates me spending hours in front of a monitor when there are so many more useful things I could be doing with my time.

MERRY CHRISTMAS EVERYBODY

PARISH COUNCIL NEWS

Elizabeth Godwin

Another year almost gone

And what a special one it was as well. Although not the best year ever for some, reputations were shredded, jobs lost, economy still gloomy, it has been a year when much of the bad news will be forgotten and the year will be remembered for its outstanding events.

We are unlikely to see the Olympics back in the next century, but the memories will become embedded and it will be remembered as the year when Britain performed the impossible, pulling off not just one high profile event but two. We also welcomed the world to the Jubilee earlier in the Spring. The off shoots of which continued for the rest of the year.

The thing which must never be lost is the community spirit and kindness which prevailed at the main event and was very obvious in most of London. Strangers and different nationalities actually spoke to each other. We joked on the tube and it wasn't because the train had broken down again, we actually shared our experience, we wanted to help and to be a part of it all. We helped those who were lost, we smiled at our neighbours. We began to live a little.

The year has gone. Tube lines are back to being closed again at weekends, we are starting not to communicate so well all over again. If I was granted just one new year wish, it would be to bring back the Jubilee/ Olympic spirit. Don't wait for the next Olympics to get it back.

Plans approved for the Church Hall extension

As far as the Planning Department is concerned it is all systems go for the extension to our Church Hall. There are still building regulation hoops, builder's tenders and a mountain of red tape to go through, but the green light is definitely on and the project is up and running.

As mentioned before, odd people will be in and out of the hall in the coming months, there will be building with all that entails, but the instructions are to keep disruption for existing users down to an absolute minimum.

Call for a skate park again

Some years ago the Parish Council at the request of local residents looked at the possibility of a skate park for youngsters in the village. The possibility of using the Recreation Ground was investigated, but we cannot

concrete over the amount of land required and cost was prohibitive.

A skate park is only really possible if there is a dedicated band of people who will raise the minimal £30,000 required, having persuaded a local landowner, not in the green belt, to give up some land for the project. It has been done at Saffron Walden, with the help of youth workers and hard work by the youngsters by fundraising. If there is the right commitment from the groups and their friends who want a skate park, the prospect is not impossible.

New emergency plan for Birchanger

Birchanger has an up dated Parish Emergency Plan. It lists people who may be able to help in an emergency and has some useful contact numbers. It is available to view on the Birchanger Website. www.birchanger.com

Must we lose our identity in the voting system?

Under new Electoral Commission Plans that is exactly what could happen as Birchanger could be included in a possible four member Stansted Ward. At present our Birchanger Ward includes the old Birchanger Boundary with Forest Park.

The problem has arisen out of the decision to decrease the number of district Councillors from 44 to 39. This has meant that many ward boundaries have been redrawn to include around 1800 voters in each ward.

This might seem fine, but the new proposal could have the effect of sucking Birchanger into Stansted. Yes we do share many services with Stansted, but the nature, character and needs of Birchanger are fundamentally different and there is a presumption in favour of not bringing individual villages under the overall wardship of larger neighbours.

We are surrounded by villages similar to ours, with the Hallingburys, Farnham and Manuden. Would we not be better served by joining with one of several of these? Could we not be left the way we are now with Forest Park?

The Electoral Commission has gone out to consultation on this and your views are very important. Please have your say either by logging into www.lgbce.org.uk or write to the Review Officer, Uttlesford, Local Government

Police commissioner farce

Last month we were supposed to go out and vote for someone who would oversee our Police Force in Essex for the next five years. The problem was that most of us did not have the remotest idea of the candidates, let alone who would be the best person for this responsible role which commanded a salary of some £70,000.

It would have been too much for the candidates with their limited resources, unless they were attached to a political party, to actually canvas the whole of Essex. Public speaking opportunities in rural areas were virtually non-existent, so the average voter had no idea who fitted the role best. It was easier if you held strong political beliefs, but profiles were mainly inadequate even then.

It was the closest I have ever come to spoiling my ballot paper. In the end the easiest option was to give it a miss, but that was a decision many would be voters felt had been thrust upon them and not the best decision in the interests of democracy.

After all the fuss, could you be a Foster Parent?

There is a shortage of foster parents all over the country. There are far too many children in care who only need a good stable family and the comforts of a real home. Essex County Council appeals regularly for people to come forward offering their services as foster parent.

Many people would like to do this, but are thoroughly put off by the social service hoops which they have to go through. Perfectly good parents are members of all political parties, but will think twice before applying now. Some people are turned down because of the colour of their skin just happens to be wrong. What happened to the anti-discrimination laws? Some people are turned down because they are deemed too posh, and have the word "Hall" on the name of their house. With some both would be parents are actually working, some live in the wrong area, so it goes on. One trumped up excuse after another.

Nobody wishes children to have unsuitable placements, but proper monitoring should surely alert authorities to this. Besides what happened to actually listening to the children involved?

This Christmas please consider fostering a child despite all this. It is still very important and well worthwhile. Hopefully the authorities will adopt a more equitable approach in the future. If you believe you can do it, you most likely can.

The first one is to watch out for an elderly large gentleman who seems to like watching children. He is not known to anybody, but he turned up uninvited to a children's ballet class last month and showed great reluctance to leave.

When he was finally persuaded, he sat in his car, a silver Ford Escort Estate, for a considerable length of time. The police were called and they do have the car's registration number. The man is described as tall, with a large face, greying hair, wearing a distinctive Reggae jacket featuring Bob Marley, checked trousers and brown shoes. He speaks with a strong Essex accent, and has been stopped by the police before in Ugley.

Broken Kerbstones in Birchwood.

Once again kerbstones are smashed in Birchwood, and once again Essex County Highways have been asked to repair them. This time they have declined as they have been asked to go to Birchwood to do just this, too often.

There is quite rightly a lot of concern about school parking in Birchwood and the school is constantly trying to remedy this and to remind parents to park considerately. The worst of the broken kerbstones is not at the school.

It is not vandalism which has broken the kerbstones this time. It is the refuse lorries as they have to mount the pavement or squeeze close to the kerb to get past the parked cars.

There is a remedy. Please use the car parks in Birchwood as much as you can on refuse collection days. There are four car parks. Apart from school collection and drop off periods they are largely unused, as shown by some photographs taken at evenings and at weekends which showed that they were mainly empty. Because of this the district council is threatening to build on them and have only desisted because of the school.

If we can clear the streets on Fridays, maybe Essex County Council will repair the kerbstones for us.

A letter to the Editor

I would like to add weight to the proposal to reduce the speed limit to 20-mph throughout the village of Birchanger.

Living close to the lane I am acutely aware of speeding vehicles throughout the village. I regularly observe parents with young children heading towards Birchanger school on foot and with prams, warily making their way along the narrow path from the corner of Churton to beyond the village Green. These parents and their children are frequently required to stop walking or take shelter in a resident's drive as vehicles attempt to pass one another. This manoeuvre sometimes results in one of the vehicles mounting the kerb. It also creates frustration for drivers who then accelerate quickly to regain lost time.

It is apparent that since the Forest Hall development, increasing numbers of vehicles are using the lane as a 'rat run' for access to and from the M11 and 120 bypass. This can be evidenced during peak periods for example in the morning when vehicles queue as far back as the ambulance station trying to enter Birchanger roundabout. During this period a 'camel trail' forms of fast vehicles pressing one another along.

Whilst increased traffic may not necessarily mean greater danger, I am, however, witnessing growing numbers of 'near misses' and skidding vehicles as drivers, weave around cars (partially parked on the pavement) attempting to avoid both pedestrians on the narrow path and oncoming traffic.

In the interests of safety I believe a blanket speed reduction throughout the village is vital. Varying speed limits throughout the village may be confusing and lead to non-compliance. However, if cost limitations prevail, restrictions at least along the straighter sections of the lane where vehicles tend to increase speed. For example from Churton to Birchanger Sport and Social Club and the Three Willows public house to Duck End.

Keith Robins

The Big Birchanger Switch On.

A very big thank you to all the households who brightened up the gloom of a very cold December 1st by switching on their lights that evening. Many were struggling to complete their installations as dusk fell. The result was well worth it. The Christmas Season in Birchanger was well and truly welcomed in.

Some of the lights were switched on by a group of children lead by the MacArthur triplets who called at various pre arranged houses to switch the lights on, but there were too many taking part to visit everyone. Perhaps this could be done in a more organised manner next year with groups of children taking on their own areas, with small Christmas treats at some of the houses.

The evening coincided with the Church Christmas Fair and the special Christmas Member's Night at the club. It was a suitable ending to what has been a truly memorable year.

A Christmas message to the reckless drivers of Birchanger lane

Please show a little consideration of others when you drive through Birchanger in future.

It is not funny to shower elderly residents, children, party goers and everyone else with surface water as you drive through the village. It may seem a fun way to bully the community and have a laugh at their expense, but try being on the receiving end.

Try not to force other vehicles up the kerb. It would help if you slowed down a little.

Stop hooting in the middle of the night. If you can't see an oncoming vehicle or pedestrian then you are driving too fast or worse.

Remember, as you speed through the village, that people do actually live on your self-designated race track, and may actually be trying to move about as you speed through.

There is a school here as well. The four by fours might get you well before the police do.

You have given us a very bad time so far, but be warned, enough is enough now.

Meanwhile, wherever you are, and whatever you are doing, have a good Christmas, and please remember someone who is elderly, unwell, or who lives on their own. They might welcome a visit or an invitation this Christmas.

School News

Farewell to Miss Chinnock.

Miss Chinnock is leaving Birchanger School to take up an appointment nearer to her home. She has been a very popular teacher in Birchanger School, and her knowledge of computer technology, science and maths has meant that lap tops are standard equipment, science has become interactive and maths far less scary. She managed to set up the camera and computer so that everyone could watch the progress of the baby blue tits, from nest building, egg laying, hatching fledging and finally flight each spring. It all became compulsive viewing as the tiny blue tits hatched, grew their feathers were fed and then finally flew away.

It is sad to say goodbye to someone who has worked so hard and consistently for the school. With every sad farewell there is a new beginning and the children are looking forward to working with their new teacher, Mrs Channing next term. The children participated in the interview process. They were asked about the candidates after they had met them and been taught by them all. Apparently as far as they are concerned, the selection panel made the right choice.

It was another fun pyjama day

Last month there was no excuse for being late on a particular Friday as everyone came to school in their pyjamas, slippers and dressing gowns. It was all in aid of Children in Need, and as well as having a lot of fun, considerable amounts of money were made as well. The trail of pennies alone raised over £80 and took a very long time to count. One very enterprising young man sold daffodils in a special pot which hopefully will be blooming for Christmas in many homes. The total for the day came to £186.

Could you read 6 books in 6 weeks?

This is what Owls class in Birchanger School are doing. The plan is that the children will read books by 6 different authors in a six week period, and be able to review them and comment on what they have read.

It sounds a big challenge, and it is. It has already started for the children, but they are inviting parents and friends to take part in the challenge as well. If enough are interested they will have their own leader board as well. Many of us would like to join in, but six books in six weeks is too big an ask for most adults until holiday time, but the prospect is very tempting.

Lesley Hayward

A funeral service for Lesley Hayward was held in St Mary's on December 13th with some 90 family and friends present. After a second short service at Parndon wood Crematoria there was a wake held in the social club.

Lesley Passed away at Addenbrookes Hospital on November 25th after a long battle with poor health. She will be remembered as a member of the Social Club and for conducting the Saturday Meat draws for several years.

Husband Rick would like to thank Leslie's Mother, Pam Lee, the Rector, Graham at the club and Alicja Konczak for their help during a very difficult time.

Christmas Waste Collection Arrangements.

Sorry, but there won't be a waste collection in Christmas week. The waste will be collected as usual on Friday December 21st. There will be no collection then until Saturday January 5th, when the green bins and food caddies will be collected.

The following week the black bins and food caddies will be collected on the normal day, Friday January 11th. The Christmas tree and greenery collection skip will be at Lower Street Car Park Stansted on Saturday January 13th between 9am and 3pm.

News from Birchanger Social Club



Opening Hours & Food Availability Christmas & New Year 2012

24/12 Christmas Eve	11.30 to 24.00	Winnie live on stage	No Food or Quiz
25/12 Christmas Day	12.00 to 14.00		No Food
26/12 Boxing Day	12.00 to 17.00*	Whisky Draw	No Food
27/12 Thursday	Normal Hours	Bingo	No Food
28/12 Friday	11.30 to 23.30	Poker Night	Food Lunch/Evening
29/12 Saturday	Normal Hours	Free Snooker/Pool/Juke Box	Food Lunch/Evening
30/12 Sunday	Normal Hours	Free Snooker/Pool/Juke Box	Food Lunch
31/12 New Year's Eve	12.00 to 00.30	Disco through the Ages	No Food or Quiz
01/01 New Year's Day	12.00 to 17.00*		No Food

***Note! Closing times on Boxing Day 26th Dec and New Year's Day 1st Jan subject to Stewards' discretion**

Wednesday 19th December - Christmas Carols at the Club

BSSC will host a Christmas carol service in the clubs sports field from 6.30pm to 7.30pm which will be open to all families and friends of Birchanger. The carol service is in aid of MENCAP at Grove Cottage and will be led by the reverend Paul Wilkin. After the service the club will offer FREE mulled wine, sausage rolls and mince pies, in addition hot food will also be available to purchase at the bar. Song sheets will be supplied so all you need is a torch, warm clothes and your good humour.

Free drink with collection of award points!

Collect one point for each alcoholic drink you buy between 1st and 23rd December and when you reach 8 points exchange your voucher for a free drink on 26th January. Note! Voucher is redeemable only between 7pm and 11.30pm on 26th January 2013. Please ask for details at the bar.

New! Steak Night Every Wednesday from Jan 2013

Starting In January 2013 the club will introduce a steak night every Wednesday evening so why not come along and try a tasty midweek meal and a pint.

New! FREE; Pool, Snooker & Juke Box

That's right, yet another free offer! Starting in November the club offers free pool, free snooker and free Juke box on Saturday and Sunday evenings (excluding entertainment nights). So if you have nothing better to do why not have a game or two in the club.

BSSC Club Membership

As most Members are aware, renewal of membership is required by the 31st of January 2012. After this date an extra administration fee will be applicable. The renewal fee for 2013 will be the same as 2012. However, from now on Life Members also need to renew their membership annually but of course will not pay for membership.

The Officers, Committee & Staff would like to wish all their Members a very Happy Christmas & Prosperous New Year

When Sally met Brett

I had arranged to meet a man named Brett at Audley End station. Brett had travelled on the trains from Stevenage with his guide dog Rigsby.

I am used to guide dogs and although I wanted to make a fuss of him I knew that he is a working dog and it is best to let him do what he is trained to do

At Audley End House I took Brett through the kitchen, laundry and dairy explaining and describing things to him.

Luckily on that day there were people dressed in period costume and playing roles of cook, servants etc and Brett was enjoying listening to the duties of the household etc,

However when we went around the house it was a little different. Certain room guides were very good and spoke about the family and the room contents

Unlike the museum Brett could only listen, and was not allowed to touch any items and it must have seemed very boring walking from room to room being talked at. I sensed Rigsby was a little uneasy when we walked through the room containing stuffed birds and animals

At the end of the tour we were asked to give feedback as a vision impaired visitor but I sensed that the manager was not very keen to change anything or relay your remarks to anyone.

We ate a meal at the restaurant before going to the stable block and the gardens then I escorted Brett back to the station for his journey home. Brett had booked assistance for his journey but here was no one at Audley End who could give it.

I ensured they got onto the correct train and realised how hard it can be for people like him when faced with these things.

Brett emailed me later to confirm he had arrived home safely and had really enjoyed our day.



Sally Tilstone

News from St Mary's

Christmas Bazaar

Some charitable organisations are reporting a reduction of income from seasonal events but this was not the situation here in Birchanger! In deed, many people turned out to support our annual bazaar and to enjoy chatting to old friends over a hot cuppa and mince pie.

It was a similar story on the 10th December when many people visited Moorswood for the Christmas Coffee morning. Liz and Pim welcomed every one into their home which was beautifully decorated for the festive occasion and they provided refreshments.

The bazaar raised an incredible £715 and the coffee morning made £178.



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Village Diary

December 12/ January 13

December

23rd 11.00 am St Mary's
Advent 4 Communion

24th 8.00 pm At the Club
Winnie

26th 12.00 pm At the Club
Whisky Draw

30th 11.00 am St Mary's
Matins

31st 8.00 pm At the Club
New Year Disco and Raffle

January

6th 11.00 am St Mary's
Holy Communion

12th 8.00 pm At the Club
Ainsley

13th 11.00 am St Mary's
Holy Communion

20th 11.00 am St Mary's
Holy Communion

26th 8.00 pm At the Club
Second to none

27th 11.00 am St Mary's
Holy Communion

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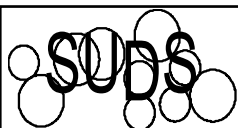
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