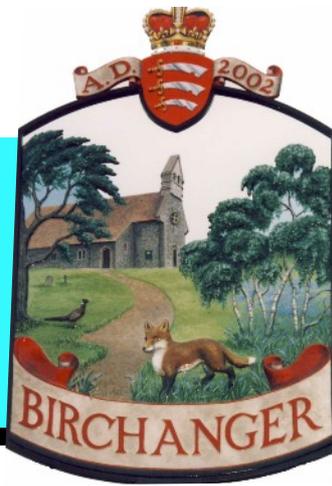


Birchanger

January 2013



Magazine

Issue 121

2012 THAT WAS THE YEAR THAT WAS

2012 will be remembered in Birchanger for a number of different reasons

The year really got underway in February when we were treated to the deepest snowfall for several years. The springtime arrived early and we had some of the best weather of the year. There was a drought and a hosepipe ban.

Probably the most significant change at this time was the Three Willows changing hands

Summertime began in earnest with the Queen's Jubilee. My own particular memory was the Royal barge sailing up the Thames in a cloudburst.

In the UK generally the 2012 Olympics gave us so many wonderful memories and I found myself pleasantly surprised at the haul of medals that Team GB managed to accrue.

In the village we managed to celebrate the jubilee in our own ways, we followed up with a successful village fete and art show.

The Autumn months culminated in the internal changes at St Mary's.

The end of the year was characterised by rain more rain and then rain after that. If that was not bad enough a lot of villagers suffered from the winter vomiting virus at Christmas time.

We should also remember Birchanger lost some significant people along the way:- Dave Tucker, Violet Ferbrache, Norman Grey, John Gibb, Lesley Hayward all passed away in 2012 and they will all be missed.

2013 is beginning with the news that we may now be swallowed up by Stansted. The end of our independent representation at district level is in sight and we won't even get a say in the matter!

PARISH COUNCIL NEWS

Elizabeth Godwin

Birchanger to be warded with Stansted?

The proposal to put Birchanger into part of a two member ward for Stansted South has been sent to the Electoral Commission. This means that while Birchanger with only 725 electors is too small to be a ward on its own in these days of cutbacks, however the proposal to push Birchanger into Stansted has not been well received.

Viable wards should consist of around 1700 voters in these tough economic times, so when the District Council decided to cut back the total number of councillors from 44 to 39 all small wards faced change and amalgamation.

The principle is that smaller villages should not be subsumed into larger towns, but that does not appear to be happening in Birchanger's case. The village will become part of the four ward unit of Stansted. It will be hard for a district councillor to appreciate the differing needs, especially if not resident in the village. There is an alternative, a link with Manuden and Farnham instead. It has been proposed, but will the electoral commissioners listen?

Suddenly St Mary's is a more convenient place

If you have not visited Birchanger Church in recent months, be prepared for a big surprise. The font has moved and in its place there is a brand new mini kitchen and a brand new toilet which has facilities for use by anyone with a disability. It is hoped that this will make the church more user friendly for those who might want to use it for concerts, with the magnificent organ, meetings and any manner of gatherings.

It is all part of a big make over for the church. The damp has been hopefully finally treated, there is new paint on the walls and electronic candles complete the setting. It was all seen to great advantage, despite a few more jobs to do before completion, during the Christmas Carol service where the congregation was treated to a glass of wine and a mince pie after the service, which took place with the benefit of the new candlelight. The service was led by the largest choir of recent years and one of the biggest congregations of the year.

We have a church to be proud of, now we need to use it more often. The project was put in place by Pam Lee, who somehow managed to brush aside all the

obstacles amazingly quickly so that it could be enjoyed before Christmas.

Waiting for elective surgery?

Many of us are waiting for an operation in the coming months. We may have been given a rough idea of when the surgery is likely to take place, but other than wait, we do not make any plans to assist our recovery. Obvious ones include people to look after home, business, garden, children and the elderly, but if the patient just happens to be a smoker there is a lot more they could be doing.

With New Year resolutions probably gone with the decorations, midwinter is not the most auspicious time to get the motivation for any more tortuous plans, but there is proof that giving up smoking could reduce the risks which all smokers are subject to when facing an operation, to a much greater extent. These include heart and lung complications, postoperative infection, impaired wound healing, with a good chance in ending up unnecessarily in ITU and a higher risk of dying or a prolonged stay in hospital.

Under a new initiative known as Stop Before Your Op, patients will be encouraged to stop smoking before their surgery. This will not be a condition for having the surgery but it will benefit them in the postoperative stage, or long term if they permanently cease to smoke. If you are interested in the program, ask your GP to refer you. You will receive help to quit for a four to six week period before your surgery. It is not easy to do this, but it is an opportunity to make sure that you are in the best possible condition for a smoother and easier recovery.

Christmas is over, but there are happy memories.

There are memories not just of Christmas, but what has been a very special year. A Jubilee and Olympics in one. The chances of seeing this combination again are almost impossible.

The spirit which the Olympics engendered seems to be still alive. The Christmas Fairs earned more much needed cash than ever before; money which is badly needed just to maintain services as they are in some cases. The School Fair which was brilliantly put together by the PTA was one of the most enjoyable as

well as profitable in recent years making a record breaking £1900. It was also very well supported and it was particularly good to welcome back past pupils to the school. Hopefully they will keep coming in the years ahead, they are very welcome.

More innovations came from the Mencap fundraising Carol Evening at the club. The rain made sure that the event could not possibly take place outdoors as originally planned. Instead those who did brave the torrential rain enjoyed a very pleasant evening carol singing inside the club, with mulled wine and beer readily available, and delicious hot snacks to follow. The event was entirely to support Mencap and raised a total which would have been higher if the weather had not interfered. There are firm plans to repeat the occasion and another opportunity to raise the roof, hopefully new, next Christmas.

Thanks to those who "Lit up Birchanger"

The lighting displays were the best ever in living memory in the village and were much appreciated. It was good to see the lights shining through the rain through the wettest December we have ever known. Thank you to everyone who did their best to cheer up their neighbours.

Early warning, it is planned to bring back the big light up next year, with children visiting their neighbours to turn on the lights for the Christmas Season. Watch this space in November for details.

Hate crime

We may not be aware of it but sadly hate crime is all about us. We may never have the misfortune to be a victim ourselves, but many others will be. We may also witness it as we go about our daily lives. Hate crime of any sort is a criminal offence and this means that it is an offence where the victim or third party perceives that the offender is being motivated by prejudice or hate. The prejudice is based on the victim's race, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, age, or disability. It can take the form of physical or verbal offensive mail from any source, phone calls, graffiti, damage to property, arson, and various other acts designed to hurt the victim.

Nobody should have to put up with this. In an emergency the best course of action is to dial 999, but for longer term abuse there are other means of help. Uttlesford Citizens Advice Bureau can help and advise on 08444775986.

There is also help available from Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111. Incidents may also be reported on www.report-it.org. A full list of particular organisations is also available from the council.

Christmas on the net

The number of Christmas cards I received were down this year. Not that I have lost friends it seems, but that more and more of them are sending an email greeting. Lovely pictures with some of them, friendly greetings and a long mass newsletter but there was still something missing. A printed out message looks a bit out of place with the rest of the cards, assuming you bother to print it in the first place.

When you get a card, with or without the typed newsletter, it is something personal for you. You open it up, remember the sender, mainly fondly, and display it

somewhere. It becomes part of your Christmas until the decorations come down. The pictures may be kept, made into gift cards, or given to charities. It has a purpose. Your email greeting is rarely printed, well why should you? It arrives with the at least 50 other emails all trying to sell you things you don't need and things you would rather not know or work you have to do. It is read hastily and sifted along with the rest. You may reply or you may not. Most often the recipient will delete and forget. The senders claim that the money saved will go to a charity, fine, but great numbers of people send cards purchased directly from a charity anyway. Some support local groups and artists who rely on the Christmas trade for part of their income.

It may come that one day I shall be forced to take resort to the internet through disability or ill health. Until then I shall continue to deliver to my friends and post the cards I cannot deliver. It is still my way of saying Happy Christmas and that I at least, am glad they are still around.

Over 70?

How well are they caring for you in Hospital?

The recent reports of frankly second rate treatment being meted out to those over 70 is causing great concern among the great majority in this age group, who are mainly active and participating fully in the community in one way or another. To write off this age group with second rate treatment is totally unfair and short sighted. We are told we are all going to be retiring later and will be expected to work until well into our seventies, which is what a great many people do anyway.

So if you suspect that the treatment given to your friends or relatives seems to be falling short of that received by younger patients, start asking questions. Older people have mainly worked long and hard and are entitled to as good a course of treatment as anyone else. The problem is that they are often too polite, too trusting or too sick to ask for it or to fight for it themselves. That is where the rest of us come in. We can help to make someone properly well again as well as to right an injustice in our health system. Sometimes there may be a good reason to withhold treatment, most times there is not, other than to save money.

Possible disruption in Birchanger Lane

The electricity company is to replace posts, transformers and poles in Birchanger Lane at the southern end in the course of the next few weeks.

Most of the cables will also be placed underground where possible. To do this, the road will have to be closed for up to a week while the cables are run under the lane.

At the time of writing it is not clear as to exactly when this will all take place, and it may depend on the weather, but it will happen sooner or later.

You have been warned. That may stop the "rat running" for a while.

Everyone's a winner at MENCAP's Grove Cottage

Thursday the 13th December saw a very special Christmas event at Birchanger Club with a version of the popular game; "Play your cards right" at MENCAP's Grove Cottage in Bishops Stortford. The evening was organised for adults with learning disability by Dave and Sue Woods with a little help from Peter Sampson from Birchanger Sports Social club. Around Fifty grove cottage members joined in the fun and games and somehow everybody seemed to receive a prize of chocolates, jelly babies and books! Shouts of "higher" or "lower" mingled with raucous laughter caused uproar in the club and a lot of happy smiling faces. Later in the evening Santa Claus himself arrived at the centre in his brightly lit sleigh (courtesy of Stort Valley Rotary club) who gave everyone sweets and a few loud Ho-Ho-Ho's before distributing even more presents from two rather large sacks. "As always, we were made so welcome by the volunteers and the members alike" said Dave Woods from Birchanger Sports & Social Club who sponsored the evening, "Our reward was seeing their happy smiling faces throughout the evening and we felt humbled by the whole experience. We will be back again very soon with some new games and challenges".

Jackie Hall from MENCAP Grove cottage summed up the evening by saying "The evening was a great success and everybody really got into the games and Christmas spirit, including the staff and sponsors. We are so pleased that Birchanger Sports & Social Club is willing to spend time and effort in helping us, especially at Christmas time" she concluded. Anyone interested in volunteer work and wish to help please contact info@hardsoft.co.uk



Christmas Viruses.

Sadly this Christmas saw a very large number of both adults and children devastated by Noro virus and flu. Both viruses are extremely contagious, and struck earlier than usual this year. Numbers in the school were greatly reduced in the last week of term with only 6 children left in Class 1 and over a third of the staff also affected.

If you suspect that you are coming down with something, please stay away from school or work until you have fully recovered. Both viruses strike very quickly and with Norovirus you may be infected for at least a week from the start of the illness. Hand washing and proper disposal of tissues are a must, with whatever virus you may have, if you do not want to affect those around you. It will get better, in the end, and it is only really necessary to visit your doctor if you develop secondary symptoms or are in a vulnerable health group.

Please have a safe and healthy New Year

Art Classes in Birchanger

Artist Heather Brown will be continuing the classes held in her Wood Lane studio in 2013. They are small friendly classes to suit all abilities from complete beginners to those with some experience. The studio walls are filled with a variety of original paintings. Just make an appointment to go and have a look. Artist and Tutor Heather Brown has been painting and teaching art for over 30 years. Phone 815453 to find out more.

Tuesday January 29th 10am to 1pm Rough seas in soft pastel step by step £18 per person

Friday February 8th 10am to 4pm Farmhouse with sepia ink brush pens and wash step by step £35 per person

Monday February 18th 10am to 4 pm Bring your own subject and materials. Individual advice and guidance will be given £30 per person

Wednesday February 27th 10am to 4 pm Landscape in soft pastel step by step £35 per person

Materials will be available at extra cost.

Tea and coffee provided - please bring a packed lunch

School News

Sickness decimates the cast of the Nativity play

Well the worst happened, as a combination of flu and Noro Virus struck both the staff and children of Birchanger School on the very day that the nativity play, The Blue Star, was to be performed. The well and some not quite so well children who made it into Birchanger School and took part in the play made sure that the show went on.

At least 15 members of the cast were taken ill over the previous weekend along with six members of staff. The lead role of the Blue Star was competently taken over by Poppy at only moment's notice, and she performed so well that nobody knew that she was not the original actress until the play was over. Other children immediately took on new roles, read competently as narrators even if they had never done it before and the result was another stunning success for the Key Stage 1 children at Birchanger School.

Children keep the christingle candles burning bright

Birchanger School was the only school to hold a Christingle Service in the area it seems. This year every child at their own request made a Christingle orange, 93 in all were made. They carried their oranges carefully and well supervised down the aisle to form a magical display in front of the altar. One of the unforgettable sights of the Christmas Season in Birchanger.

Farewell to Miss Chinnock.

Birchanger can be proud of its reputation for nurturing newly qualified teachers, and seeing them develop and enhance their skills to the lasting benefit of everyone. Sadly there comes a time when a change in life's circumstances means that they have to move on.

Nobody could quite believe that the actual day for Miss Chinnock had finally arrived, least of all Miss Chinnock herself. She is a teacher with boundless energy and serious maths and science talents combined an abundance of computer knowledge. I shall never forget watching the baby blue tits on the camera hidden in a nest box and relayed to a computer in the class room. The children watched as the eggs were laid, incubated and hatched, the tireless feeding by the parents, and the sad time when all were gone for another year.

She knew all her pupils so well, was very attuned to their needs and she will be very much missed. We would like to wish her all the very best in her new job and for her wedding in the summer. Thank you for all you did for the school.

Christmas is over, what is next for our under fives?

After all the excitement of the Christmas period, the long months of January and February hang heavy for young families. It is too cold, wet, windy, and the park is less than friendly for young children, too much afternoon television soon gets boring as does too much time alone.

Friday afternoons may offer some kind of an antidote as Birchanger Buddies is still there to help on at least one afternoon each week. The group which is open to all young families with pre-school age children is open between 1.30 and 3pm every Friday in the Church Hall. There the children will find a warm welcome, a wide range of toys and activities which change each week, along with a healthy snack and tea and coffee available for all the adults. It is a regular hub where adults and children alike can meet potential new friends and it is open to everyone. Why not look in sometime very soon?

"FOUND

A pair of nearly new boxing gloves, still in packaging, found in Birchanger Lane on 5 January. To claim, contact 07900 495282 and provide a more detailed description."

Francis Oldfield

We were saddened to hear of the passing of Francis Oldfield who died on New years Day

News from Birchanger Social Club



A Happy new year to all our members!

Christmas entertainment 2012 was a wonderful success at the club with something for everyone.

The festivities started on the 15th December with the Kids Christmas Party with lots of games and goodies and later that evening the Grand Christmas draw where first prize was £150 cash. Second prize was a Kindle e-reader and many other smaller prizes including a Christmas food hamper. Entertainment was provided by the popular duo Topaz. Many thanks to retiring Committee members; Adam Roberson, Cheryl Sampson and Yvonne Gray and welcome to Mark Lee, Jay Leavers and Dave Dartnell!

Carol service at the club

On the 19th December BSSC hosted a Christmas carol service at the club. It was intended to hold the carol service on the sports field outside but with gale force winds and torrential rain we had to move inside the club! Despite the awful weather the service attracted around 40 guests and children. The carol service was in aid of MENCAP at Grove Cottage and was led by the reverend Paul Wilkin who kept everyone amused with his witty banter whilst reading the story of the Nativity. After the service everyone was treated to free mulled wine and some very nice sausage rolls and mince pies. Everyone agreed that we should do this every Christmas in future. Many thanks go to Pam Lee, Paul Wilkin and Dave Dartnell for their help and assistance. On Christmas Eve, Winnie dished out some great entertainment despite her pregnancy and set the stage for Christmas. The festivities were finished off nicely on New Year's Eve with a Disco & Raffle. Again, many thanks for all those that helped make it a Christmas to remember.

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.

News From St Mary's

I am very pleased to be able to report that attendance at services over the Christmas period was good and many people commented favourably upon the work that has been carried out over the past few months. The font is sitting proudly in its new place in the north aisle. The toilet and kitchen is in use already and, as I write this note, the outer cladding of oak panels is being fixed.

Also, the north aisle cedar floor is being cleaned and polished. It will be beautiful when it is done.

Last month the PCC discovered that the strap supporting the church bell was broken and in need of urgent attention to prevent the bell from falling from the turret. The PCC was also advised that the bell may be of some historical significance having been made by the Whitechapel Foundry (the same firm who made the Liberty Bell). The firm still exists and on the 25th January, the proprietor will be inspecting our bell to advise on its import and on repairs that will be needed. The PCC will also ask him to advise on the possibility of replacing our missing bell and, on this subject, I need help from you.

I am told that many years ago, there were two bells but the turret became unsafe and one was removed and taken to Farnham in settlement of a debt that Birchanger owed. I cannot find anything in the church records about this but if you have any information please speak with me as soon as possible. The PCC would ideally like to have two bells in the turret.

I read with interest the letter from Keith Robins about reducing the speed limit to 20mph through the entire length of the village. I fully support the view but Keith is missing a critical issue, as are many others, the most important part of any law is the enforcement.

The 30mph would be ok if enforced but as we all know there is very little chance of being caught speeding and because of this you can witness everyday the result. I drive for a living and the most effective way of reducing the speed limit is to have some form of permanent obstacle in the road. If you drive along Church Road in Stansted you can see how effective the chicane system is.

I see Keith intimated about the cost of implementing any sort of speed reduction. Yes this would be an issue, if we cannot have the odd speed check with a local policeman there is little to no chance of getting any obstacle built.

What is the cost of a life?

Because if something is not done this is the possible horror that somebody in the village could be facing.

Peter Booker

A Letter to the Editor

I wish to respond to Liz Godwin's article under Parish Council news (Regarding the possibility's) of a skate park in our village.

Local residents may wish to think back to when the youngsters of the village pushed and pushed for a meeting place on the recreation ground.

A property was built for the youngsters of our village. From the moment it was built it had a police car parked outside it every night for quite a while. This I will say was caused mainly by an outside element visiting the village. I walk past it on a regular basis and it is now hardly used.

Why you may ask do I bring up this old chestnut.

A few years ago Uttlesford Council were put under pressure to provide a skate park in Saffron Walden. The park was built at the back of the indoors bowl club. From the minute it was built the bowlers did not stop having problems with the Teenagers who I am sure did not all come from Saffron Walden. Now you think Uttlesford Council would have learnt from this decision but oh no they have built a Skate park in Gt Chesterford and guess where it has been built, you're right it is next to the out door bowls Club.

Every weekend in the summer the bowlers have to put up with abuse from the Skateboarders, and yes, it is mainly from the outside element.

I have lived in this wonderful village for many years and we have some excellent outlets for the youngsters including the Scouts the football and cricket clubs and a new play area all at the Social club. They can now even eat in the Willows.

This is a small village like Gt Chesterford. I would suggest we think very hard before we give consideration to a Skate park in Birchanger.

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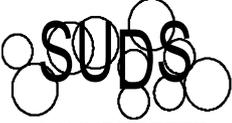
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Village Diary
 January / February

January

26th 8.00 pm At the Club
 Second to none

27th 11.00 am St Mary's
 Holy Communion

27th 7.30 pm At the Club
 Extraordinary General Meeting

February

2nd 8.00 pm At the Club
 Charity Race Night

3rd 11.00 am St Mary's
 Holy Communion

10th 11.00 am St Mary's
 Holy Communion

16th 8.00 pm At the Club
 Jamie Callis

17th 11.00 am St Mary's
 Holy Communion

24th 11.00 am St Mary's
 Holy Communion

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