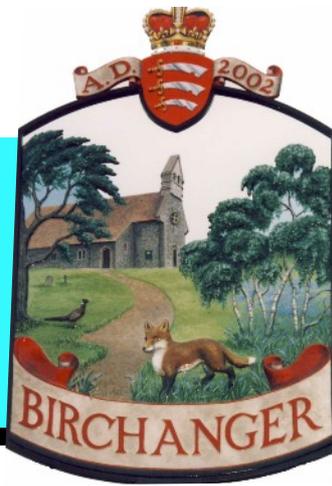


Birchanger

February 2013



Magazine

Issue 122

AMBULANCE STATION TO CLOSE

For years in Birchanger we have been happy in the knowledge that we have an ambulance station at the end of the lane, should we need help at any time. Sadly that station does not dispatch ambulances any more, and soon the paramedics will be moved elsewhere. Exactly where is anybody's guess at the moment. Could they be parked up in the cold on some roadside waiting for their next call? Wouldn't they rather be in the warmth of their home station?

Closing the station raises a lot of questions. For instance, what happens when there is a serious accident on the motorway? Those involved could face a much longer wait for an ambulance. What about the people who live in this part of the world. Will they have to wait for an ambulance from Basildon, Cambridge or Bedfordshire, as some have already experienced. Being part of the East of England Ambulance Service may sound all very well, but unfortunately, "beam me up Scottie" does not work in real life, and people with life threatening conditions could find themselves waiting a dangerously long time for help.

Surely no one can seriously believe this is a step forward? Seems like a good recipe for saving money in expensive treatments as the patients may not survive in time for proper care. The ambulance service will also save money with fewer stations, and presumably fewer staff. This is progress? Not many will think so, especially those who have already been on the receiving end.

I shall investigate this further in the weeks to come. People in Birchanger have always had a good relationship with the ambulance station, we shall miss them for several reasons when they are no longer there.



Still manned for the time being

PARISH COUNCIL NEWS

Elizabeth Godwin

Thanks to the Snow heroes

A big thank you to Jay Levers who stored the salt supplied to the village to combat the snowy weather last month. He also was instrumental in spreading this with his chief assistant Peter Davey.

Members of the Parish Council also took salt for distribution in their own areas. The salt could have been distributed further had there been more volunteers. Ideally there is a need for at least two volunteers from every side road in Birchanger, as most days the gritter does go through the village so Birchanger Lane is usually covered.

The salt is stored locally so the supply to volunteers can be easily arranged. Two to four volunteers from every road would be all that is necessary and it would be a tremendous help to the many who have to try to negotiate the side roads.

Please call me if you think you can help on 812793.

Solar farm set to come to Uttlesford

Would you want a solar farm in the fields around Birchanger? They are marginally better than a wind turbine according to some, and in the right location they are not conspicuous at all. To date there are none in Uttlesford, but if all goes to the proposer's plans, the first solar farm will be erected later this year.

As opposed to sticking up in the air solar farms occupy whole fields. From the air they look like greenhouses with dull glass. The panels are plastic and accordingly not so translucent so do not reflect the light in the same way as glass. They are situated in lines 8 metres apart and the panels are up to 3 metres high. There are an awful lot of them!

I visited my first solar farm in Cambridgeshire last month. Set back in a field, surrounded by a hedge down a muddy track it was actually hard to spot at first. Coming into the field you are just confronted by rows of these panels with transformers in the middle of every sixth row. They seemed to stretch as far as you could see, and actually the whole vista was incredibly boring. Somehow I had expected a control room at least, but there was a small hut only, from which everything seemed to happen. Solar farms are actually incredibly simple. They are at their most efficient in the winter, and the electricity collected from the sun's radiation in DC mode is transformed into an AC current. It is then sent via an underground cable to join the electricity network on the nearest road connection, in this case just a few hundred

metres away. A small percentage of the electricity is lost through the cable, so the main collection point needs to be as close to the farm as possible. It was also silent. Only when you stood close to the transformer could you hear a faint hum. The company has never received a complaint about noise on any of its sites.

It does seem like a big waste of good farmland but some kind of cultivation is possible. Anything higher than 8 inches would not be allowed to be grown there, but that does still mean that soft fruits such as strawberries, lower growing vegetables like spinach and lettuce could be grown alongside the panels. There is also the opportunity for animals to graze on the site. There had clearly been sheep on the farm which has been removed for our visit. There is no actual lighting, but the area is covered by CCTV which picks up evidence of wildlife only fortunately. It is a very nice little earner for the landowner. The power company has a 25 year lease, to cover the life of the panels and pays £2000 per acre per annum. Not bad in a year when most of the crops seem to have been devastated by the weather.

Does it work? The farm could provide electricity for 1500 homes. To cover all of Uttlesford we would need 20 farms of a comparable size and that would not include any industrial use. Nobody would want to overlook a field of these incredibly boring structures, but tucked away with appropriate hedging they would not actually bother anyone in the way the turbines do. Wild life continues to flourish and the company has installed bat boxes and taken other measures to promote the welfare of wildlife. The equipment takes 25 days to install and would be very easy to dismantle with no long term harmful results. Solar power is possibly a better alternative to wind turbines.

Maintenance is easy. Unless they are damaged, the panels simply require a gentle wash twice a year. It would help to solve our energy problems, but it is not the complete answer. To be self-sufficient we would need too many sites, and not all would be appropriate or welcome. However it must be a tempting option for a farmer who has seen his crops wrecked by bad weather far too often. The first solar farm in Uttlesford was approved last month. Construction will take between nine and twelve weeks and will start later this year. One way or another, there will certainly be more solar farms in the years to come and planning permission for the second solar farm near Little Bardfield will be sought shortly.

**It may be Winter
but the burglars are not on Strike**

Sadly these delightful members of our society continue to think it is ok to help themselves to other people's goods, while inflicting serious damage to the properties their victims live in. With police resources continuously stretched, it is really up to us to try to prevent crime and to keep our community safe. Prime targets at the moment appear to be sheds and other outbuildings, where tools and equipment are taken. They also like to help themselves from other people's vans, one of the latest instances happened in High View.

The police do not mind calls from members of the public whose suspicions remain unfounded. They would rather be called out than not, especially as the call could just as easily have prevented a crime. If you do hear strange noises, see something odd, strangers simply hanging about, apparently aimlessly, please give the police a call. Use 101 unless you perceive the call to be urgent when it must be 999.

Some people are genuinely afraid of reprisals and do not want their name to be publicised in anyway. In this case please use the Crime Stoppers number, where your suspicions may be reported anonymously. This number is 0800555111.

Scammers caught

Nice to know that they don't always get away with it! The perpetrators of a scam whereby the victims who responded to their fraudulent invitations, and actually used fake police logos have found that their luck just ran out. These delightful people managed to lock up the computers of the unwary and demanded a nice little ransom to unlock them again. Caught, yes, but they got away with it for some time.

The Metropolitan Police have just brought out a little book entitled "The Little Book of Big Scams". Problem is that there are so many scams around that the next edition will need the title The Big Book of Big Scams at this rate. I have an on line version I can forward to anyone interested.

Best practise is to delete anything you receive from an unknown sender. If someone really wants to get in touch they can try another way.

If you would like to find out how to make your own computer safer, please visit the website, saferinternet.org.uk.

Some of our electricity cables are going underground

Apologies for the disruption but for years our electrical wiring, posts and transformers at the southern end of the village have just about been able to function.

The transformer in our garden was actually condemned years ago as were most of the posts and connections.

How they functioned was a bit of a miracle.

Now work has started to put all the cables underground and to replace the ancient transformers. Something of a messy job in the mud and one that has inconvenienced many of the users of the lane. The transformer is being replaced by a brand new one, on the perimeter of our

garden, which will make necessary work access much easier. The fields will be free of cables and where there are posts, they have been replaced, which should lead to a more problem free service, well we hope!

Footpath Warning

After the Electricity Board put in underground cables in the field across Birchwood, and massive holes developed the badgers decided to move in. Essex County Council attempted to fill in the holes, but now the badgers have taken up residence it will be very difficult to keep the holes filled in. Please take care when you use the footpath. It is particularly dangerous to cyclists, or when covered with snow.

Do you really need to go to casualty?

Of course if you have a heart attack, broken bones, or other serious injuries you must go to casualty, but for other minor injuries and conditions you might find a speedier resolution if you went elsewhere. Casualty departments and GPs have been seriously busy throughout the bad weather.

There are other options. You can get advice from NHS Direct. This should be available 24 hours. You could go to the walk in centre at Harlow, or the minor injuries unit at Herts and Essex. Even the pharmacists can offer free help or advice. GP appointments have been hard to get for many, but when you have a problem and can't reach anyone, try the three options above?

Health Care issues are a matter of concern at present, and it will be the frailest in the community who will suffer the most.

Fly tipping close to home

Fly tipping is a menace to all but the actual fly tipper. We experience far too much in Tot Lane, but when it is lying across footpaths it becomes a hazard to everyone. Particularly when the latest unwanted offering is an asbestos flue on a public footpath.

This is a particularly dangerous dump. Hopefully it did not come from the properties close by, but the District Council is going to investigate, and a specialist team will remove the flue. It is amazing that some idiot actually thought it was ok to do this.

If you do see anything like this as you go around the village, please let me know on 812793, or tell the council direct on 01799 510510.

Annual Parish Meeting

Annual Parish Meeting Wednesday March 27th 7.45 pm in the Church Hall. All Welcome.

Sue's Lemon Meringue Pie

INGREDIENTS

6-8oz short crust pastry {or ready pastry case}

FILLING

1 Lemon
4oz caster sugar
2-egg yolks
1oz corn flour
1/2pt water
1oz butter

TOPPING

2 egg whites
3oz caster sugar
Sprinkling of granulated sugar
Pinch corn flour and splash of white wine vinegar [optional]

- 1] If using home made or shop bought pastry, put in a flan ring or dish and bake blind for 10 minutes with ceramic beans or equivalent and 10 minutes without.
- 2] Cut the lemon in 4 pieces and place in a liquidiser together with sugar, egg yolks, corn flour and water. {I always cut the really thick ends of the lemon off and throw them away as they are the bitterest part.]
- 3] Blend for 10-20 seconds
- 4] Strain into a non-stick saucepan making sure you squeeze all the juices out of the mixture.
- 5] Add the butter and heat stirring continuously until it thickens at boiling point. Turn the heat off and continue to stir until the cornflour is thoroughly cooked.
- 6] Cool and pour into flan case.
- 7] Whisk the egg whites until thick, sprinkle 1/3 of the sugar and whisk again. At this stage I usually add a pinch of cornflour and a tiny splash of white wine vinegar [optional] as I find this helps to stop the egg white weeping.
- 8] Fold in the remaining sugar with the whisk by hand, gently so as not to knock out all the air.
- 9] Pile the meringue on top of the filling, making sure you seal the edges, dust lightly with granulated sugar
- 10] Place in a moderately hot oven for 10-15 minutes until golden brown.

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.

Wednesday February 27th 10 am 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

For further information please call Heather Brown on 815453

School News

Snowfall fails to close the School

The staff of Birchanger School made sure that the children could still have their school open by coming into work, when nearly all the other schools in the area, as well as the Nursery Unit and the pub, remained closed. Some walked in from Stansted across the fields, as did several groups of children. The school will remain open as long as there are enough staff able to come into school, to ensure the children's safety, and the weather conditions do not make the journey in too hazardous. The school will also close early if conditions deteriorate. There is a very efficient telephone tree to ensure parents are informed. BBC Essex Radio and Heart Radio are also informed. The system worked well on the previous Friday, when all parents collected their children at lunch time when adverse weather threatened.

Welcome Miss Channing

The children in Squirrels welcomed their new teacher when they returned to school in January. Although they had met Miss Channing when they had met all the other candidates in the selection process last term and had wanted her to be their class teacher it was still an interesting first week as everyone got to know Miss Channing. This also included meeting the parents at especially arranged meet the teacher sessions in the first few days of term. It did not take long before everyone forgot Miss Channing was a recent arrival and by the end of the week it seemed she had always been there.

The school would like to wish Miss Channing all the very best for her time in Birchanger and welcome her to a very lively team.

There were four new children to welcome to the school. Current pupil numbers are 96.

School confronts bullying issues

There are very few of us who can honestly say they have never been bullied. Indeed some bullies get that way because they have suffered themselves. At Birchanger School the message is clear that bullying cannot be tolerated, there is a need to acknowledge it happens, to talk about it and to deal with it, or have it dealt with immediately so that the matter can be quickly resolved. The children were very clear that the parents need to know the issues, and to help to acknowledge that they could happen, and therefore to help in the process of making Birchanger School a bully free zone.

The older children in Owls and Squirrels classes held a combined workshop. They are to produce an anti-bullying leaflet, and they are talking to their parents about this. Hedgehogs and Ladybirds saw a Puppet Show, which

explored all the bullying issues in a way which they could easily understand and to be able to talk about. Bullying is not just in schools. We all have to confront bullies at some time and we still have them in the work place after all.

Mission X

For the future adults, space is a very exciting place and our knowledge increases daily. It will become even more so as new galaxies are discovered and mass space travel becomes a very real possibility.

To discover more about our expanding universe, the school has signed up to the space program Mission X. This is an educational program with both NASA and the British Space Agency. There will be examples of the projects which the children have participated in all around the school in the coming months.

A night to remember for the school choir

Being part of a choir is something which not every child will experience, but the very special experience of being part of 8000 voices at the O2 Arena will be something the 31 members of Birchanger School Choir will remember for the rest of their lives.

They learned all the songs, practised them in school and on the great day boarded the coach, accompanied by parents and friends to go to the actual O2 Arena. They sang their songs with other schools from all over the South East in front of the biggest audience they will probably ever experience. They stood out from the other schools with their bright yellow caps and sheer enthusiasm.

The verdict was that it was a great evening, hopefully one which other children in the school will have in the years to come. They will have to join the choir first, however.

Annual Parish Meeting
Wednesday March 27th
7.45 pm in the Church Hall.
All Welcome.

News from Birchanger Social Club

New roof for the club!

An EGM meeting was held at the club on the 27th January 2013 in order to obtain members agreement and approval for the expenditure necessary to replace the clubhouse roof. Despite several notifications and advertising over the last few weeks, a disappointing number of members attended the meeting. However, the 29 members that did attend voted unanimously to go ahead with the work.

Proposed maximum expenditure - £18,000

To start the meeting, the Chairman gave the background to the proposal explaining that the roof had been a perennial problem for some time and with grant monies received last year the opportunity to replace the roof was too good to miss! The committee obtained 4 quotes from various reputable roofing specialists and decided to go for a 3 layer high performance felt system offering a 20 years material and labour guarantee which is also insured. The preferred supplier is Malins, established over 35 years with a quoted cost of £15,000.

Summary of the meeting presented by BSSC Chairman Peter Booker

According to club rules, the Officers and committee cannot make any expenditure in excess of £10,000, hence the EGM meeting to obtain members permission. The funds were made available from the grant received last year which enables us to renew the complete roof rather than just repairing sections which has occurred in the past. The proposal, made by J. McArthur was to spend up to £18,000 for the complete replacement of the flat roof. S. Stone seconded the proposal.

From the 29 members in attendance, the proposal was voted and unanimously agreed. Subsequent questions were raised and answered as follows:

- The Chairman confirmed that this was the cheapest quote
- The Chairman confirmed that Malins was a reputable Company
- The Skylight would either be renewed or boarded over
- Lead flashing would be renewed
- No insulation planned due to cost
- Secretary to check with Warmfront to enquire whether a grant was available

This is the first of 3 phases that have been proposed by the committee for general club renovations. Phase 2 covers improvement of the toilet area and installation of a disabled loo. The third and final phase is the proposal to increase the dance floor and stage seating area by opening up the existing bowls pavilion into the main body of the club. This will allow better access to the stage area and improve the sound and visibility for the members on entertainment nights. An EGM to seek approval for phase 2 & 3 will be held shortly and members will be notified accordingly. Assuming approval is obtained; the schedule for the second two projects would start around beginning of May and finish at the beginning of September. This would fit very nicely to the BSSC Bowls Club centenary celebrations planned for the 12 September 2013.

Watch out there is a Rat About.

It seems that humans are not the only ones well into breeding during this recession. The rat population has increased by over 50%, so much so that the District Council had to restrict their visits to those who actually had rats living inside their properties.

The situation is now under control and a higher standard of service is to be explored to keep pace with the higher demand. Meanwhile we can help to stop the growth of the rat population. We all like to feed the birds especially in the winter months, but if we confined the food to bird tables and feeders, took it all in at night and swept up the debris on the ground we would no longer be so attractive to rats by giving them the treats they are coming to expect.

I know they are around. My cat seems to be enjoying them. They seem to be mainly black as well, at least the ones he brings home as unwelcome presents are. The recent very wet weather may have done some damage to their homes, at least I hope it has. They have probably moved higher up and they are great at getting into lofts. The council should be back on track now, so if you have a problem, please call them on 01799 510510.

Birchanger Sports and Social Club

March Entertainment

2nd Julie Nevada

16th Andy Loxley

30th Rebecca Ray

With grand Easter egg

Follow us at www.birchangerclub.com

229 Birchanger Lane 01279 813441

News From St Mary's

St Mary's Annual Parochial Meeting - 10th March 2013 following the 11am service

The PCC's realises that this is Mothering Sunday but it has not been possible to fix another date convenient for present officers. Please come along to show your support for your church and to let us have your views on how the church is being cared for. We need your input and ideas for the future. If you would like to join the PCC or stand for the position of an officer (Churchwarden, Treasurer or Secretary) you must complete an application form which is available in church.

If you do not want to be part of the PCC but still want to support the church, please consider setting up a monthly direct debit. Again, the form for this is available in church or from any of the PCC officer's.

If you want to join the church electoral roll, you should do so now and certainly by the end of February.

A really welcome addition to St Mary's

If you have not been into Birchanger Church lately you might be quite unaware that there is now hot and cold running water, a small kitchenette, and a toilet to accommodate everyone including those with disabilities newly installed in the Church.

The addition, which means that the font has been moved to the smaller aisle, is completely covered in beautiful oak panelling, so that the whole installation is very much at home with its surroundings.

The project was masterminded by Pam Lee and project managed by John Lightfoot. Congratulations to everyone who was involved with the work. It is a big success and a great benefit to everyone who will use the Church in the next few hundred years.

After the first service in the Church to celebrate, the Arch Deacon's visit, Epiphany and the completion of the project there was a delicious celebratory lunch in the Church Hall.

All of the internal work in the church has now been done and you are invited to come along and see what has changed.

The Bell

We have just received the report in From The Whitechapel Foundry following the recent inspection.

The existing bell was founded in 1774. It bears no inscription and is not of any particularly historical importance. The bell strap that holds it in position has obviously been damaged for some time so the bell has not been swinging freely. It has become mis-shapen and needs to be turned. The PCC has decided to do this and once a faculty has been granted the bell will be taken to the Foundry for attention.

Last month I appealed for information about the second bell that was supposedly taken from Birchanger to Farnham. Some people did speak with me about this and what became clear was that no one alive now had any clear recollection of what had happened. In fact, I can now confirm that there was never a second bell installed in the church turret. There are no fixings for another bell there at all and it seems that the tale of Farnham taking our bell was just that, a tale that has grown over time into a legend. Alan Hughes, from Whitechapel Foundry told me that over the years he had heard many stories about one village taking the bells of another. Even one case where the bells were transported by cart then barge without anyone knowing!

In any event, the PCC has decided to apply for a faculty to install a new bell to be fitted alongside the old one.



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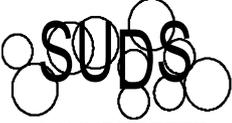
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Village Diary
 February/March

February

24th 11.00 am St Mary's
 Holy Communion

March

3rd 11.00 am St Mary's
 Matins

10th 11.00 am St Mary's
 Mothering Sunday
 Holy Communion

10th 12.00 pm St Mary's
 St Mary's Annual
 Parochial Meeting

17th 11.00 am St Mary's
 Family Service

24th 11.00 am St Mary's
 Holy Communion

27th 7.30 pm Church Hall
 Annual Parish Meeting

29th 12 pm St Mary's
 Good Friday vigil

31st 11.00 am St Mary's
 Easter Sunday
 Followed with Baptism

Published on behalf of the people of Birchanger, and distributed free to each household in Birchanger. The views expressed herein do not automatically reflect those of the Editor or any of the organisations or institutions represented. Editorial team: Eddie Gilbey (816171), eddie.gilbey@btinternet.com Elizabeth Godwin, Ken Wheatley. Submissions are welcome but may be edited depending on available space.