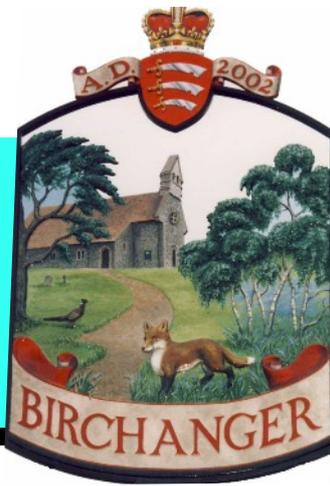


Birchanger

January 2015



Magazine

Issue 145

ELIZABETH STEPS DOWN FROM THE DISTRICT COUNCIL

It is time for me to say farewell to the District Council. Everything has to come to an end sometime and it is time now for me to stand down as an Independent member of Uttlesford District Council. This is a decision not taken lightly after 15 years, but I am uncertain as to how I will be able to maintain all that I am doing for too much longer. I would hate to have to retire mid term.

I have thoroughly enjoyed my work as ward member. I have met so many interesting people, worked with a great many truly committed officers and members that it is going to be a wrench to leave. Hopefully I will be back on the parish Council and do not intend to give up any of the other things I try to do.

I have always felt that party politics play no part in local issues. What I have attempted to do has been for the benefit of Birchanger first and foremost, rightly or wrongly, as I perceive it. I would hope that my successor would see things the same way. That of course is up to you.

Whoever you choose, I will support in every possible way.

Elizabeth



WELCOME TO OUR NEW PARISH CLERK



Birchanger has a new Parish Clerk. Keith Williams started work at the beginning of this month. Any questions about all matters appertaining to the Parish Council should now be addressed to Keith on 814473.

We wish Keith all the very best in his new role.

The role of Parish Clerk has become a far more complicated matter in recent years. There is a great deal of accounting work now, and new legislation has meant a new set of rules which even the smallest Parishes have to adhere to. It is the role of the Parish Clerk to guide councillors through the maze and a lot of training is provided to help new clerks. It will be a steep learning curve.

We would like to wish our past Parish Clerk, Julia Peachey and our new Parish Clerk Keith Williams all the very best for their futures.

TOT LANE TO CLOSE

Tot lane is scheduled to close from Jan 26th until Feb 23rd for scheduled works to the Gas main. The closure will remain in force until the works are complete or 18 months which ever occurs first.



PARISH COUNCIL NEWS

Elizabeth Godwin

More lights for the Lane?

Birchanger Parish Council has asked the District Council for at least two more lights in Birchanger Lane, to be paid for by section 106 money. One would be placed outside the hall, while the other one would replace the twice destroyed light, but this time on the opposite side of the lane by the recreation ground. Two previous lights in this position were already destroyed by the hedge cutter and it is no longer practical to have the light in its original place. Far too expensive as well!

The Parish Council has to pay for all the lights in the lane and this has become increasingly costly in the last few years. The council is looking for ways to bring the cost down. One way would be to request that modern bulbs and units would replace the old units which are very uneconomical now. This again would be by using Section 106 money. Another way would be to follow the example of other areas of Essex, and have the lights out altogether between midnight and 5 am.

These two measures would save a considerable amount of money. The Parish Council is only responsible for the lighting in Birchanger Lane. Essex County Council provides, maintains and manages the rest of the lights. People get very concerned about switch offs, but where these have happened, complaints are very rare and the crime rate has dropped. Road safety has been an issue, but there is very little traffic in the lane between midnight and 5 am. Birchanger is basically a low crime area, but recent events have thrown a certain amount of doubt about this in busier areas.

Precept going down?

Birchanger Parish Council is managing to reduce the precept this year. Although there are still bills to come in from the Recreation Ground and the VAT on the new equipment is still outstanding, it is expected that the precept will reduce for this year and that Uttlesford District Council will not increase the Council Tax rate either.

Would you like to be a Parish Councillor?

Amazingly we have another election year. The four years since the last elections have gone by really quickly and it is now time for all the parish councillors to stand down and if they so wish, to seek to be elected again.

It is not perhaps only the councillors who may or may not seek election, it is open to any member of the electorate, that means anyone who is registered on the Electoral Role can put themselves up for election. Potential candidates would need to find two proposers and to furnish proof of identity among other general requirements.

What does being a Parish Councillor actually mean? On a basic level it means attending monthly meetings and taking an area of responsibility, such as highways or the Recreation Ground, monitoring what is happening with the area and reporting back to the Parish Council. The role also means general care for everyone in the village and trying to help where you can when people experience difficulties. It is a role which individuals develop for themselves within the established format. It is interesting and you may meet a great many interesting people along the way.

If you would like to find out more, please call me on 812793 or any member of the Parish Council.

Big Birchanger switch on

It may all seem like light years ago, but the big Christmas Lights switch on was a huge success. Birchanger was a mecca for other people who simply came through to see the lights and to gasp in amazement at the collective effect. It was stunning, particularly so in areas which were grouped together such as the area around the hall and the end of High view. Sadly the houses there were not visible from the road so many missed seeing them. The village was asked to vote for the best lights, which was hard as there were so many who were all so good. In the end the house chosen, the only thatched house now in the village, creatively decorated by Tom and Matt, was voted the winner by a considerable majority.

Second to this were the traffic lights which had been a plague for several weeks. Needless to say nobody was actually going to give them the prize, and this went to John and Trudi Revell, with Charlie, whose very creative lighting has been an inspiration to everyone throughout recent Christmases, was voted the real third place. The last year's winner in High view was well up in the voting but I think that many had come to see the site early in the evening when the lights were not on. In any event those participating found the choice very hard. A very big thank you to everyone who did their best to make Birchanger a much brighter place this Christmas.

Would you like a patient passport?

Well I think I would, but until late last year I had never heard of them. Apparently a Patient Passport is a small plastic card which you can carry with you, add to your key ring or keep in any handy place. It resembles a store card and you will have your own unique number on it. With your consent it will allow a health professional immediate access to your relevant and crucial information, which will help all health professionals treating you to provide the right sort of care.

How many times have you been to the doctor or hospital and cannot remember the exact names of the drugs you are already taking? Do you know the details of your past medical conditions, the dates of past treatment, your allergies and the latest blood test results? If you have a health plan, those details can be accessed from it as well.

This card will definitely help if you have to go to casualty, or on hospital admissions as you won't need to remember the information. It will stop the prescription of a drug which is not compatible with one you are already taking and very useful for those who are taking warfarin.

You can access your own medical information through your own confidential password, which you can change when you wish. We are assured that the system will be confidential and secure. Your information will never be passed to anyone who is not actually involved in your care.

You do not have to sign up for this system, which is expected to be rolled out in the coming months, but not to have to remember all the medications, the names and the dose make it a no brainer for me. All I will have to do is to remember where I put my card. On the main key ring is best for me I think. Now where did I put those keys?

How was your emergency admission to hospital?

A great many people in Birchanger have had routine surgery which was by a planned admission, but there are others who suddenly found themselves whisked off to hospital in an ambulance, finally returning home with disproportionately worse general health than when they went in. There is a study looking into the causes of this, but the chief reason seems to be the five day working week currently being operated by most of our big hospitals.

The worst thing to do is to have an emergency admission on a Friday. The four hour must be dealt with rule has meant that patients are either sent home too soon or to a ward which is not suited to their needs. There they are left to rot as no one has dared do anything until the consultant comes round on Monday.

Frequently the patient's condition has deteriorated over the weekend. Joints have stiffened, which a physiotherapist could have quickly sorted, the wrong diet has been administered and nobody gets the patient up as no doctor has given the ok that the patient may do so. Nobody knows the patient or has the time to find out either. The list is endless and the result is that people stay in hospital

for far too long, but are less able to cope when they come home as their general condition has certainly not improved by this treatment.

Hopefully you managed to stay away from hospitals in the last few weeks, otherwise you might have found that there was no room at the inn over the Christmas period and the weeks since.

Checks for common Cancers saves lives

Both males and females get cancer in equal numbers, but there are two which can be easily detected and cured when they are caught in time.

Women in Birchanger have suffered increasingly with breast cancer as have men with prostate cancer, but there are simple tests for both these cancers. These are regular blood tests for men and mammograms for women.

Men need to see their doctor to request the test which is usually freely available, while women under 70 are regularly summoned to the screening van at Herts and Essex Hospital. Those over 70 can request a mammogram at any time. It is up to you to make sure this happens.

Still a few days left to join the big Essex County Council energy switch

Last year a large number of people across Essex joined the Big Energy Gas and Electricity Switch, thus saving themselves on average some £200 per household.

The offer has been renewed again this year and once again the county council is bidding on our behalf.

The offer ceases on February 3rd so there are only a few days left to take advantage of the scheme. All you need to do is to register your interest and you will receive an offer from Essex county council based on your current consumption of gas and electricity on February 13th. You have a month to make up your mind. It does not matter if there is no gas supply to your house, electricity users only benefit as well.

If you would like to participate in this scheme please log on to www.essex.gov.uk/energyswitch.

Cash for your group?

The Art Show held in October was again very successful and also profitable for the village. Having cleared the expenses inevitably incurred, there is now money for groups in Birchanger to apply for, to help and to improve all the things that they do. Everyone who has a small group, or a particular project is invited to apply to the group.

Applications should be made to Sheila Devereux who is the group's secretary on 813843 or to myself on 812793. Perhaps you would also like to discuss possibilities with either of us first and to find out more.

We would like to hear from you as soon as possible, and in any event before the end of February.

In praise of all things local

Having lived in Birchanger for more than 40 years in three different properties I am well aware of how lucky we are to live in such an interesting and very convenient situation.

I am extremely thankful for the talents of local architectural designer Peter Davey who fulfilled an almost impossible brief and produced a charming and unusual house for us which is a joy to occupy. It was constructed by a local builder who was very skilled at delivering the specifications without going over budget: a rarity these days. Having decided to organise a Birthday Party for my husband recently I was determined to keep things local once more and I would like to thank all the talent and services which really contribute to the quality of our life.

Firstly a very big Thank You to Trudi Revell who helped me enormously with all the village hall arrangements and recommended Birchanger Voices for the entertainment. They provided a lovely medley of songs and even managed a pop song for the benefit of my grandchildren. Sincere thanks and I hope this is the start of many such musical recitals. Food was provided by local Masterchef Contestant Saira Hamilton (Small Aubergine) and was truly delicious. We were also delighted with the array of beautiful festive lights provided by Trudi and her neighbours which greatly contributed to the festive spirit and everyone 's enjoyment.

Finally a big Thank You to the village Travel Lodge .We stayed there the night of the party to spend time with visiting guests and everyone was amazed at the beautiful setting and excellent value for money of the accommodation.

Birchanger offers rural tranquility but also access to all sorts of talent and services and we are extremely thankful to live in such a lovely village.

Diane Deane Bowers

Farewell to Derrick Porter

Derrick lived in Birchanger with his wife, Doris, for over 40 years. They had two children, Roger and Glynis.

Derrick was a carpenter and joiner. Before retiring he worked at Orford House - here he undertook maintenance work but also taught woodwork to the residents as part of their occupational therapy. His work was also his hobby: Derrick won awards at a national level for his miniatures which included doll's houses, a billiard room and ships. Locally, he helped the village schoolchildren to make nest boxes to sell and he also enjoyed sharing with them his experiences during the war when he was a firewatcher in the East End.

Derrick continued to live in Birchanger after Doris died, until ill health forced him to move to a nursing home. He passed away on New Year's Eve, aged 88 years.

Maureen "Mo" Brick

We have also been saddened to hear of the passing of "Mo" Brick, who was a very active member of the club for very many years. She passed away on January 12th our thoughts are with sons Graham and Simon.

Church Hall Hire

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Please contact

Mrs Trudy Revell
01279 812309

PANCAKE COFFEE MORNING



In aid of Church funds

Tuesday 17th February
10.30 till Noon

Moorswood 330 Birchanger Lane

Everyone welcome





BIRCHANGER SPORTS AND SOCIAL CLUB JANUARY 2015

NEW YEAR PROMOTION:



Firstly, a very happy new year to all our members and neighbours as we enter 2015. It is with glee that we announce a new promotion for 2015. Following on from the success of 2014, we are re-running our new member promotion. So for any of our existing members if you propose a new member for the club, once they become a fully paid up member of the club we will get you a free drink on the house in recognition of your recommendation. So as the days are short and bleak, now is the time to spread a bit of Birchanger cheer, spark up a conversation with your neighbour or colleague and tell them why it's worth joining the club for great value food, drinks and entertainment! If you're thinking of joining for the very first time this year, why not pop down and see what we're all about, new members are always welcome!

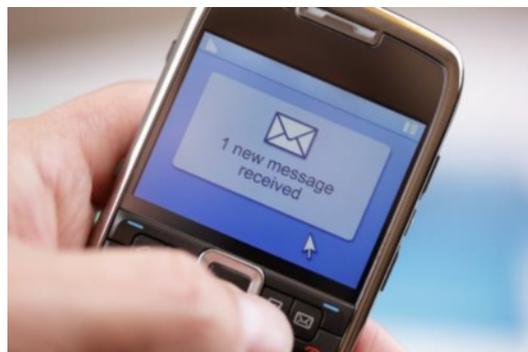
NEW YEAR, NEW YOU:

By the time you read this newsletter many of your best intentions will probably have dropped by the wayside. Still not managed

that 20 km jog? Finding dry January a bit drab? Well why not come along to the club and make 2015 the year when you join one of our many sporting successes. We have facilities for cricket, football, pool, snooker, darts, cribbage and a whole host of other teams looking for new blood, so come along and be a part of it!



LATEST NEWS STRAIGHT TO YOUR PHONE:



One of the key challenges for the club is ensuring that all our members are kept abreast with the latest developments in the club. It is easy with such a packed calendar to forget when steak night is, Passover the treasure chest game or miss out on an amazing night of entertainment. This year we are hoping to pilot a new text message scheme, where if you wish you can sign up to receive weekly updates on what's going down at BSSC. You will be able to decide whether you want updates on sport, entertainment, drinks promotions, let us know your preferences with your mobile phone and we will ensure you never again miss out!



Live Entertainment - Great Food - Excellent Bar - Snooker - Darts - Pool – Football - Cricket - Bowls

YOUR CLUB NEEDS YOU!



Last year saw the club host a number of charity events that raised literally thousands of pounds for charity. Some of these were organised by the committee and staff, but a number were also conceived and created by our loyal members. We wanted to take this opportunity to remind all members of the club, that this is their club as much as anyone else's so if you have a brilliant charity you want to support, or have an idea for great entertainment that you think would support the club, we'd love to hear about it and help you raise some more funds and have some more fun courtesy of BSSC!

ENTERTAINMENT

The 2FBS – Saturday 31st January



This classic rock duo are a first for BSSC. Bringing all the power you might expect from a full band they are going to bring down the house with some rock classics. Please note that you will also be able to redeem your vouchers from December this evening so it should be a great evening

Claire Louise Rossi Saturday 14th February



Claire Louise Rossi is a class act to help us celebrate Valentine's Day. Claire has been spotted with some of the biggest names from Alicia Keys to Labrinth who she recently collaborated with.

VALENTINES DAY – Saturday 14th February



Not sure where to take your special someone this Valentine's Day? Why not come down the club, alongside Ms Rossi, we are planning a number of things to ensure cupid's arrow doesn't fail – watch the board for details



Weekly events At the Club:

Weekly	Event	When
Saturdays	Meat Draw	1.00pm
Saturdays	Bingo Lottery	Ask bar staff
Mondays	Quiz night	9.00pm
Wednesdays	Steak night	Evenings
Thursdays	Bingo night	08.30pm
Fridays	Tote Draw	Evenings

Birchanger Sports & Social Club, 229 Birchanger Lane, Birchanger CM23 5QJ Tel: 01279 813441 email: club@birchanger.com Follow us at: www.birchangerclub.com

Snake, Crane and Waves - Tai Chi in Birchanger

If you were to look through the windows of the Church Hall on a Wednesday morning you would see a group of people deep in concentration moving in a gentle but purposeful way. You would be watching the embryonic Tai Chi class that started in the village eight months ago.

Tai Chi is an ancient Chinese form of exercise developed more than seven hundred years ago as a martial art. Since then it has evolved into a non-contact form of exercise that builds endurance, enhances flexibility, balance and co-ordination. It teaches movements that allow the muscles in the body to properly support all the organs and joints and strengthens the body with minimal stress to joints. The concentration needed to perform the one hundred and eight movements in the set is a sure way to combat everyday stresses and tensions.

The Birchanger group started in May and many of us can claim positive changes in our health. For some it is improvement in balance, others are experiencing less joint pain; at least two of us have found the exercises beneficial to our normally compromised breathing patterns. It is not surprising that many physiotherapists are very happy for their patients to attend tai chi classes.

In China and other eastern countries it is usual to see hundreds of people, both male and female of all ages from small children to eighty and ninety year olds performing their exercises together in parks and squares early in the morning prior to going to school or work. The effect is a vast balletic, co-ordinated wave; many of the movements are inspired by the grace of the elegant bird the crane and the suppleness of the snake.

Unsurprisingly we haven't yet reached that stage in Birchanger and it will take many, many years of practice for us to do so, at the moment you will have to look very hard to see much of the snake or the crane in the Church Hall and the only waves are those of laughter. However, what you will see is a group of people taking part in two hours of deeply enjoyable exercise with a lot of fun thrown in. We have an excellent instructor and although we concentrate very hard we don't take ourselves too seriously.

There are vacancies for other men or women to join the class, which started a six week taster session on 12th January. Why not come and see what it's like?

9.30 – 11.30 every Wednesday in the Church Hall.

Sue Warr

Tea Room At the Church Hall



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For maintenance of the Hall

Saturday 28th February 2015

1 till 4 pm

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Tea and Coffee available

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01279 812309

School News

The school is delighted that there are more children cycling to school, but as with just about everything, there is a downside. Unfortunately some of these children are unsupervised and are cycling without helmets. A very lethal combination when motorists are rat running through the lane as they have been in recent months.

If your child does cycle to school, please make sure that they are properly equipped and are up to date with road safety procedures. There are cycling proficiency classes in the summer for the oldest children, but the school does not have the community police visiting as often as they used to do.

If your child would like to cycle to school, they are welcome to do so, and there is plenty of provision for cycles at the school. However it is parents and carers responsibility to make sure that the child knows the dangers on the road and the protocols for junctions and crossings.

There are a lot of speeding large heavy motors in Birchanger Lane, they know who they are and they are not all readers of this magazine.

Birchanger Breeze team produce issue number 2

The Birchanger Breeze team said that they aimed to bring out the School magazine twice a term and sure enough, the second edition went on sale on the penultimate week of term.

This issue contains items on staff pets, several puzzle pages, challenges and book recommendations and revues. All of these are written in a light and interesting way. It also raises money for charitable causes, the first edition having raised £43.50 for the YMCA. Recipients will change and this month's chosen charity is Children in Need.

The magazine is well set out, with pictures of staff and their pets and it is printed in colour. Congratulations to the editorial team.

Nativity play continues to delight

It was a very confident Key Stage 1 Nativity Play production this year. Everyone spoke clearly and sang loudly as they told the story of the grumpy camel and the wise men's long journey to Bethlehem following the magical star.

Everyone you expect to see in a Nativity Play was there, but the happiness and confidence of the very youngest performers made it seem like new all over again. It was eagerly awaited and it excelled. The performances raised £40 for the World Wild Life Fund. The Christingle Collection went to the Children's Society, along with the children's coin filled candles.

A Christmas lunch to remember

This year everyone sat down to what was called the best and the biggest Christmas Lunch ever at the school. 127 lunches were served in all and this included special diets which many of the children need now.

The food was delicious, from the crispy parsnips and potatoes to the delicious and beautifully decorated cup cakes served at the end. All this had been prepared over two days, by school chef Mrs MacArthur, who has to be congratulated for all she did.

The whole school sat down together, served by staff and governors, which in itself was a logistical feat. At the end of the lunch, the children watched a DVD which showed the staff as animated characters skiing, sledging and getting into all kinds of trouble along the way. The children loved it all from the youngest to the oldest.

Somehow the true spirit of Christmas was captured on that day.

Attendance is good

Despite the school term being a difficult one for all sorts of colds and flu, 41 children collected 100% Attendance Certificates at the end of term. The challenge is to keep this up for the rest of the year. Well done everyone.

Squirrels Class meet their new teacher.

It was an important start to the New Year this term as Squirrels Class came back to school to meet their new teacher Mrs Stanford. They had met her last term when she visited the school but January was a new beginning for everyone. We wish Mrs Stanford many long and happy years at Birchanger School.

School lunches were never like this

Imagine getting an All Day Breakfast for lunch at school? This is exactly what was on offer at the school in the first weeks of term, when the innovative Theme Lunches began this month. Not only were the children offered an All Day Breakfast with all the trimmings, they were invited to dress for the winter occasion by coming to lunch wearing hats and scarves to suit the January weather. There were also painting competitions and muffins for dessert.

My school lunches were never like this!

The Klein Karoo, The Swartburg Pass and a 'Guide Extraordinaire'

Waking up on 14th February and looking from the balcony of our little house up at the Swartburg mountains towering above us in the morning sunshine, we decided we wanted nothing more than to relax and enjoy this haven peacefully and without effort for the rest of the day. So it was that we made our way to the restaurant to enjoy a breakfast of fruit, coffee and ham & eggs.

Neither of us heard the motorbike roar into the car park or saw the wiry bearded, slightly excitable man until he came to our table and introduced himself.

"Hi I'm Charlie Nunn and I'm gonna be your guide for today". We lamely gave our excuses for not wanting to go but the enthusiasm of this dynamic little man persuaded us otherwise. "This is recognised as one of the most majestic mountain passes in the world, I'll drive you, and at the end lunch is on me. So what do you think?"



The drive up the track at the beginning of the pass is truly "heart in mouth" driving. The narrow road winds up at an alarming rate and it is hard to believe that tourist buses come up here! How do they ever pass one another? However Charlie was right the view is breathtaking. The valley from where we came is called the Klein Karoo and it is a fertile place of fruit farms and vineyards surrounded on all sides by mountains. The Swartburg Pass is 17 miles long and connects the Klein Karoo to the town of Prince Albert which is the gateway to the Great Karoo desert of South Africa.

One thing I had not mentioned up to now is the sunlight in this great country. There is nowhere in the world where the air is so clear, and any panoramic view is greatly enhanced by the clarity. Looking up you can see every crevice in the rocks, every flower or plant is delightfully lit, and it must be an artists dream to paint in such an atmosphere.

First stop with our guide was a rocky outcrop where he precariously parked the car while excitedly jumping out and pointing to a bush with delicate red flowers. "This", he said, is a cancer bush! Seeing the alarm on our faces he quickly added, "used by the indigenous people for many years to cure ailments from diabetes to Cancer and many more, and it has proven to work in many cases. It transpires that Charlie is also a homeopathic doctor with a registered practice in Oudtshoorn.

Next stop, a waterfall cascading down to the valley surrounded by flowers and at the side of it our guide pointed to a sheer wall, peppered with what appeared to be black stones. "See those," he said, "they're mussels!" Sure enough on close inspection the fossilised shells of long dead mussels were here present, hundreds of feet up a mountain. "This whole area was once completely underwater, hard to believe, isn't it?" Driving on (and up) we marvelled at the flowers, I had no idea that Orchids, Agapanthus, Pink and Red Pelargoniums and Scarlet and Purple Bouganvillas could look so lovely growing in the wild, or indeed, that they grew in such abundance here.

Almost at the top of the pass Charlie asked "how about a coffee?" Seeing as he had nothing with him we thought it was a joke. Next moment he swung the car into a ravine and marched us a small distance around a hill, and there in the middle of nowhere was a beautiful chalet. "Only for us registered guides" he winked, and proceeded to make a most welcome cup of hot roast coffee! As we set off to continue our journey Charlie quoted some profound text from the Bible about God providing and so on. It turns out he is also a Minister in his local Church. Is there nothing this man can't do?

We stopped at the peak of the pass and wondered at the natural beauty of it. I would swear we could see the whole 17 miles into the distance. The warm sun washed down over us as he explained that the pass was in fact built in the 1860s using prisoners as labour and the work is remarkable. There are dry stone walls of enormous size bridging gorges and rocks so huge I cannot fathom how they lifted them without machinery. The whole experience had been an uplifting and exhilarating day, and to think we almost did not see it.

As we drove back down to the valley there was one more flower to admire. It is no wonder South Africans have adopted it as their national flower. The fantastically beautiful Protea, or Sugar Bush. (Named after the Greek Sea God Proteus, who could change into many different shapes.)

Because of the time of year, we only saw these flowers in their dried state, but even in their dotage there is a beauty in them that is seldom found in lesser plants. Regrettably they will not grow in our climate, a great loss to gardeners of the UK. Saying Goodbye to Charlie after lunch I remarked that he reminded me of the singer in a band called Jethro Tull. "Funny you should say that" he replied. "If you're in town tonight come and see me playing the flute and singing with my Band, we're on at the Golden Grill!"

Well we didn't go to town, in fact, we had a gorgeous Valentines Night meal laid on by the restaurant, but we couldn't help reflect on the day we had spent. We leave this area tomorrow and we thank goodness for the chance we had to meet this motorbike riding, Doctor who plays and sings with a band, preaches at Church and still has the enthusiasm to make a mountain come alive for travellers like us, truly a Guide Extraordinaire.

ANY MAKE, YEAR, CONDITION

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January/February

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Matins

February

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8th 11.00 am St Mary's
Family service

15th 11.00 am St Mary's
Matins

22nd 11.00 am St Mary's
Holy Communion

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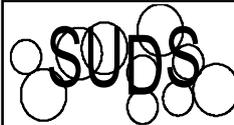
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