

# Birchanger *Village Magazine*

January 2005

Issue 25

## WE ARE TWO!

Yes folks issue twenty five means we have survived for two years. Two years of really quite varied items ranging from village fetes, open gardens, to all of the activities at the school, a house fire in the village and the stabbings at Duck End.

In the past year we have lost a number of friends and neighbours all of whom made their marks on Birchanger and we know they will all be missed.

The Nursery and School continue to flourish and the outstanding exam results of Emma Lucas prove that Birchanger has its share of brains.

We continue to benefit from varied social organisations in the village. We still have a Brownie pack, Cubs and Scouts, the over sixties club, an excellent pub and the best social club in the district!

### Birchanger *Village Magazine*

August 2004

Issue 20

#### ALL THE FUN OF THE FETE

A bright sunny day greeted the village on fete day. The earliest of the participants to arrive at the Thane Willows car park was Jay Leavers to set up his new legendary Pig roast. Soon others were arriving to set up their attractions and by twelve noon all was ready.

The fete was thickly well attended with villagers arriving as soon as it was open so a brisk trade was soon being done all over the pub gardens. Several of the stalls actually sold out, notably the Turkey Tombs run by Ann Smith, the Magazine bottle stall and the Pig roast. The cake stall was a usual very popular and the other stall holders all reported a successful afternoon.



Harrie Man playing his Cards right for the over 60s

Many of the visitors remarked on their preference for the pub as a venue due to the compact nature of the garden and a general feeling of togetherness it generated.

The pub remained open throughout and finished off the day with a performance under the marquee by a jazz band. All in all everyone involved declared the fete a great success for which we must give our thanks to Paul and Paula at the pub.

The highlight of the afternoon was the result of a poll to see who was declared the most desired victim for the Greek Tank, this honour was won by Dave Tucker who after stepping for action was duly, immortalised with a red sticky note to chest and laughter from the crowd. However Dave's day was not yet complete as maybe declared elsewhere in the town!



Hang on Dave, the UN inspectors are just down the road

Birchanger Village Magazine 1

### Birchanger *Village Magazine*

March 2004

Issue 15

#### DOUBLE STABBING TRAGEDY

The night of March 1<sup>st</sup> 2004 will not be recalled in Birchanger with any fondness. Sometime between 8.30 and 9.00 pm a violent attack on two young men occurred in Birdcutter Lane at Duck End, leaving one of the victims lying in the lane with multiple stab wounds. Passers by were quick to raise the alarm. One lady, who was on her way to the club, drove back to the ambulance station to alert the crews on duty. Some of the residents of Duck End gave what aid they could, until the police and ambulance service arrived at the scene.

At this point a second victim, who had also received a wound, presented himself, and both were rapidly transferred to hospital. At about 9.40 pm the police started to cordon off the lane and began taking statements from the witnesses.

A police presence remained in Duck End overnight their investigation continued into the following day. By 7.00 am BBC Essex were reporting that 22 year old Ben Handwiche had died in hospital and that his car a gold Nissan Micra, had been found burned out in Great Chesterford. By 9.00 am they reported that two men had been arrested in connection with the attack and that the police were now conducting a murder enquiry.



The Police search team.

In Duck End an intensive forensic examination of the area including residents gardens was carried out and more interviews of witnesses took place.



The floral tributes on the tuesday

The police cordon around Duck End remained in place until 6.00 pm and Birdcutter Lane was re-opened. Straight away a number of floral tributes and bouquets were placed on the grass verge adjacent to where Mr Handwiche was found. A steady flow of friends and family have since been seen visiting the site.

Precisely what the cause of this appalling incident was remains the subject of speculation within the village. We can only hope that the authorities are able to establish the facts, that justice is done, and nothing like it happens in Birchanger again.

Birchanger Village Magazine 1

On the down side

we still see evidence of the idiots who like to destroy or deface anything they have no use for. There is still the occasional airport parker and the Rochford's housing development inches ever closer to completion. All of these challenges are there to be overcome time will tell what the outcome will be.

For those of you who are still not aware of it there is now a village website at [www.birchanger.com](http://www.birchanger.com) where you can find a whole plethora of village information including the village archive and links to all of the magazine issues from 2003 and 2004. This is mostly due to the efforts of Ken Wheatley who manages to combine chairmanship of the Social club with a seat on the parish council and treasurer for this publication. I don't know when he finds time to sleep!

Finally we would like to say thank you to all of our sponsors and advertisers without whom we would not be here.

I have not heard as yet of anyone from Birchanger who has been directly affected by the tsunami disaster on Boxing day. (And I will of course be happy to print any thoughts on the matter that our readers may have.)

Having been around now for over half a century, disasters both natural and man made seem to come along with such regularity that the effects of them and their ongoing consequences seem to be so commonplace that the senses become numbed. The past year alone had its share of earthquakes, the one at Bam in Iran left 30,000 dead and 70,000 homeless. There were nine Hurricanes ( including Ivan and Jeanne which left 3000 dead between them) as well as Typhoons and other tropical storms.

However the sheer scale of the south Asian event has awed me in a way no other similar disaster ever has. When you get the strongest earthquake in forty years coupled with casualties in telephone numbers affecting eleven countries over a vast area, you do start to realise just how precarious and unpredictable life can be.

The other sobering thought was how unavoidable it was. The tsunami did not discriminate by age, sex, intelligence, religion, colour or creed. If you were

there, you were involved and no one could withstand the sheer power of the thing.

But tragic as they are, the estimates for casualties do reveal some other food for thought The fatalities of 150,000 are dwarfed by the estimated 5,000,000, who were instantly made homeless. In this light the local inhabitant was thirty three times more likely to lose his home than his life! If you were a local and survived, you probably lost everything.

Although the tourists were far more likely to be killed outright, especially if they happened to be on the beach at the time or in their beachfront apartments, sleeping off the previous night's excesses. If they survived the waves, then so long as they had suffered no injury or loss, they could go home afterwards and continue with their lives scarred only by the memories and the thoughts of what might have been.

However much help they get, the locals will eventually rebuild but they will do it knowing that it's only a matter of time before it all happens again.

*Ed Gilbey*

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## A letter to the Editor

Birchanger Social Club  
Birchanger Lane.

2<sup>nd</sup> January 2005

Dear Eddie

Please pass on my thanks to **John Morris** a village based Plumber who came to the rescue of the Club on the afternoon of Christmas Eve.

That afternoon I discovered a water leak that threatened to ruin our Christmas. However after calling John on **812318** he quickly arrived and remedied the situation so allowing the Social Club to continue to trade as normal over the holiday period. A truly useful person to know.

Yours truly

Tony Lucas  
Steward of Birchanger Social Club.

# PARISH COUNCIL NEWS FROM *Elizabeth Godwin*

## Youth Shelter on course.

A group of young people met with members of the Parish Council to discuss the provision of a shelter on the recreation ground. Everyone was very enthusiastic and anxious to get on with the project. The type of shelter was selected and this will cost in the region of £6000. A meeting has been arranged with the manufacturer's representative as regards siting and installation.

All good news, but although over £1200 has already been banked for the project, there is a very obvious shortfall and there will need to be a series of fund raising activities. The first is likely to be a sponsored litter pick, which will benefit everyone. We shall be looking for sponsorship from everyone, so please help if you can.

## Lazer Youth Group.

Have you heard of the Lazer Youth Group? It is possible that there are many Christian youngsters in Birchanger, between the age of 11 and 16, who do not realise that the group exists.

The group meet every Sunday evening between 7.30 and 9.00 pm in St John's Hall Stansted, where there are a variety of fun activities on offer. It is hoped to extend the program, which already offers Ice skating, murder nights, fireworks, to include five a side football, and sailing on special weekends as well. If you would like to find out more, call Gary on 815243, or e-mail him at [gary.west@zetnet.co.uk](mailto:gary.west@zetnet.co.uk)

## Pals with paws

You may well wonder what this is, especially if you already think you have a pal with paws. These paws are very special. They are development from Dogs for the Disabled, who have started a special program to provide assistance dogs for disabled children. Previously this service was only available for disabled adults but now with funding from the Pets at home stores, they are training dogs for the specific requirements of children.

## Rochford's goes to appeal.

The design and layout of the houses on the Rochford nursery site did not find approval with the District Council. The applicants have gone to appeal and they can take up to a year. The main problems were the closeness to the road of the houses and the parking courts at the rear. It was feared that cars would still park in front of the houses, on what will be narrow roads. Some of the buildings were unsuitably high, although the developers have tried to address this. There were police concerns regarding the layout, as it would be difficult to police and to supervise.

## The future of the Skip in Birchanger.

The skip visits Birchanger on three occasions each year and up to now this service has been provided free of charge.

The use of the skip has been abused throughout the district over the past few years, when items that are not permitted to be disposed of in the skips have been dumped there anyway when they have been left unattended over the weekend. They have also been over filled. Waste items not permitted in the skips include car tyres, gas cylinders, batteries, and any other hazardous waste. The District Council has decided that any skip in any location must be manned, and this is going to be very expensive for the smaller parishes.

The Parish Council has decided to pay for a skip in the village on 3 occasions a year, for half a day only. Dates and times will be announced as soon as they are known.

## Electric blanket testing.

Did you get your electric blanket tested by the District Council this year? Of those who did, 31% failed. The scheme will be in operation next October, meanwhile if you do have any doubts about your old blanket, chuck it out!

# News from Birchanger Nursery

After a busy last week of term, including a hugely successful Christmas party in the village hall, the nursery said a sad farewell to a number of children as they left go on to 'big school'. The final event was a nativity play which the children performed to an audience of proud family and friends, needless to say there was not a dry eye in the house!



Thomas Moss, Billy Pinnock, Jovi-Lee Radford, Chloe Monk, Imogen Williams, Thomas Lindley, Jacob Waite and Ethan Ward

## A new kitchen for the nursery

Over the Christmas break a team of volunteers and tradesmen, worked hard to install a new kitchen into the nursery building. Plans for the project were begun over a year ago and a grant was successfully acquired from Uttlesford Council for £750. The remainder of the money needed has since been raised at a number of events throughout 2004. The new kitchen will enhance the nursery's facilities, add much needed extra storage and increase the opportunities for the children to take part in cooking activities.

## More frustration

Everyone knows that speed kills, particularly in built up areas, and places where people actually still do walk, or children play. Everybody in Birchanger has been aware of the motorists, who probably are only using the lane as a rat run, who speed through the village, thereby putting everyone at risk.

We had to fight to be allowed to have a mobile speed monitoring unit in the village. At the beginning of December we actually had one, which worked for a day. It would have gone on working, if some young men who clearly do not give a fig for children, their own or otherwise, or anyone else, decided that their Christmas gift to the community would be another spot of criminal damage. So they overturned and broke the unit. Good news for those who put the lives of others at risk by speeding through the village, bad news for the caring majority. I hope their actions will not come back to haunt them.

### A QUIZ NIGHT

IN AID OF CROSSROADS  
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7.30 for 8.00

At The Council Offices

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# Art for Art's sake

The home of Harrisons resident Brian Gough is filled with works of art of the widest variety. This is because Brian has been a talented professional artist for all of his adult life, having worked for clients including P&O, Spears Games, Barclays International and even Tottenham Hotspur, although there are only “So many things you can do with a cockerel on a ball!”

A look around Brian's home reveals the wide range of artistic skills he has, with examples of portraits, landscapes, life studies and caricatures in evidence everywhere, especially in his bright and airy studio.

Brian with his partner Annie moved into Birchanger during April last year. Where they combine his artistic activities with a small bed and breakfast business.

Brian originates from Shropshire and studied art at the Shrewsbury School of Art. He gained the National Diploma in Design in 1962, which entitles him to have the NDD letters after his name. The diploma is kept on the toilet wall not because he is blasé about having it but because it reminds him of where he was sitting when the certificate arrived.

Brian is advertising one to one art tuition in our magazine and envisages giving lessons of about an hour or perhaps an hour and a half because he says “most people can complete something in that time. I will supply the materials, unless they want to do something out of the ordinary.”



Seen here at the drawing board  
Brian in the studio

Brian's favourite medium is oil paint because he says he loves the smell of turpentine, although he is happy with ink, pencil, watercolours, or any of the other media.

Brian says. “Anyone can draw but you have to practise. It's like playing the piano: if you don't practise you don't get any better. I can't give people a talent they haven't got but I can help them to produce a picture that they will be happy with when they leave, if they continue to practise and compare results over time. Then they should see how they've improved”



A nice landscape of the beach at Dunwich.  
One of Brian's favourite places.

“The best advise I can give an aspiring artist is, only paint and draw what you like because if you're not interested in it then you won't be interested in the final results anyway.”

He has an interesting philosophy declaring, “I would rather leave ten thousand pictures to posterity than ten thousand pounds”. So if you do have a spare ten grand Brian please leave it to the magazine!

It is Brian and Annie's intention to take part in open gardens this year Brian intends to have his studio open at the time. This will give visitors the chance to have a look at his work and where he does it.



# A visit to El Alamein

By Elizabeth Godwin

It is 100 years since my father in law John Godwin was born. Some will remember him in Birchanger as one of the greater characters. He certainly was a larger than life figure in the village. He, along with many from Birchanger, fought in World War 2. He saw action throughout Europe but one of his most memorable periods was the war in the desert with the Essex Regiment and the Eighth Army, and the battle of El Alamein. This year we went to Alamein on the 11<sup>th</sup> of November.

There is nothing that can really prepare you for the vast empty space which is the Sahara Desert. It is a bleak inhospitable landscape which stretches for miles right across to the Atlantic Ocean. It is hard to imagine how Europeans could sustain life in the desert, never mind fight battles but for years they did and sadly continue to do so today.

Alamein is mainly flat and you can see for miles across the plain. It is bounded by a brilliant blue sea to the north. El Alamein was a key point on the route to Alexandria, Cairo, and the oil fields of the Middle East, and therefore an important place strategically for both sides. It became the grave yard for thousands of soldiers from all over the world. Throughout the campaign, soldiers from both sides looked out for each other, often sharing water and rations, before hostilities began again. There are many unmarked graves, and soldiers as young as seventeen, were among those who died.

The cemetery at Alamein was once part of the battle field. There are graves clustered together where men from the same regiment died together on the same day. There are separate memorials for Australian and New Zealand forces, but all are buried together at the cemetery. There are numerous unmarked graves. The names of those who were never found are inscribed on a wall at the entrance to the cemetery.

There was a short, simple and moving ceremony at the war memorial, attended by people from all over the world. This included many old soldiers, and British Legion members. A few wreaths were laid at the memorial, the rest were placed on the graves. People were silent, perhaps overwhelmed by the enormity of the scene.

Later we visited the German memorial. This is very different, as all of the 4000 or so bodies discovered so far, are buried in sixteen enormous catafalques that contain the bones of everyone in an area around a major city. Their names are commemorated in bronze on the wall. The whole area is enclosed in an open fortress, very different from the classical military cemetery layout of the Allied Forces cemetery.

If you have someone to visit at Alamein, courteous guides will help you. There are shrubs throughout the cemetery and these are watered daily. There is a small museum, where all the forces are represented, and you can follow the history of the desert campaign. I do not believe that anyone from whatever nation can visit the area, and not leave with the sense of the enormous desolation and the utter futility of war. People are still dying as a result of the battle. At least 1000 Bedouin tribesmen have been killed by mines since the war. They continue to die, as there are at least 34,000 mines that still lay undiscovered and they will remain a threat, unless they are removed, for the next 100 years.



A view of the main British Cemetery November 11th 2004

# School News

## Christmas at Birchanger School.

The Autumn term is a very long one and a great deal of the work of the school year is actually done, or started in this term. There is all the more reason to celebrate Christmas and this was done in style.

Preparations had been going on since the start of term and the school Christmas Bazaar was a major success. There were many crafts, cakes and seasonal gifts on offer, refreshments offered a welcome respite and a chance to socialise. There was a queue to see Father Christmas in his grotto and a chance to buy items made by the children. The PTA are to be congratulated on yet another event which everyone enjoyed.

Back to school on Monday and time for the dress rehearsal of the nativity play, *Shepherds Delight*, watched by Class 4 and the Nursery. A large audience packed into the hall the next day for the performance. Mary Groves was a calm and thoughtful Mary, Daniel Crossley, a very cheeky wolf who led his pack in search of some very naughty stray sheep. Sam the Shepherd, played by Skye Fairlie Vogt, managed to rescue the flock in the nick of time. Throughout the play there were many songs, sung by small groups of children and Class 3, with a memorable duet by Rhiannon Morffew and Amy Morris.

Congratulations to Mrs Crane, who directed the music and all the staff, who arranged the costumes and stage managed the event. The play was so popular and well supported that two performances are planned for next year.

Next day some of the children were performing again in the school concert. This was followed, by the infants' party in the afternoon and the juniors' party in the evening. High Spots included a *Strictly Come Dancing* competition and a fast and furious game of red potato. The PTA provided the food and again managed to pitch it just right.

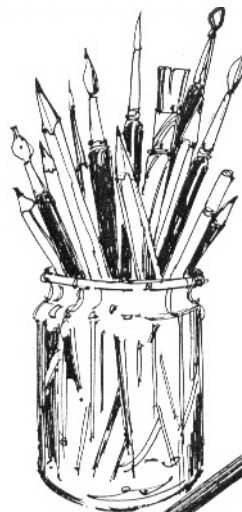
Thursday was the Christmas Lunch at which Gina and her team excelled. The children had made hats and place mats and enjoyed a traditional Christmas Dinner, with the added bonus of Yorkshire puddings. This was followed by a

screening of *Shrek 2* on a specially rigged screen in the school hall.

On the last day there was the traditional Carol Service in the Church, at which children described Christmas customs from many countries around the world. This was followed by a visit to the pantomime, *Jack and the Beanstalk*, at the Cambridge Arts Theatre. What a week!

Amid all the excitement of the Christmas Season, the children did not forget those less fortunate than themselves. They baked and sold cakes and raised a total of £46.40. The cakes were a "sell out" and greatly appreciated by children and staff alike.

Throughout the week the children showed their caring side. They were polite and considerate to everyone, and made sure that nobody was left out. Happy New Year Everyone.



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## Village Diary January/ February 2005

### January

23rd 11.00 am St Mary's  
Holy Communion

30th 11.00 am St Mary's  
Matins

### February

6th 11.00 am St Mary's  
Matins

13th 11.00 am St Mary's  
Family Service

20th 11.00 am St Mary's  
Matins

27th 11.00 am St Mary's  
Holy Communion



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## BIRCHANGER SOCIAL CLUB

Would like to remind its members that subscriptions are now due. Subscriptions are £8 each per year. Subscriptions may be paid between 8 pm and 9 pm each evening in January. There will also be a post box on the wall in the club for members to leave their subscriptions in. Membership cards paid for this way may be collected from the bar on request.

Those members desiring to claim life membership this year should do so now. The requirements are, having reached state retirement age and completing five continuous years as a full member.

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