

STRANGE CREATURES INFEST CLASS

The fascination of school age children for creepy crawly animals is one way which is almost guaranteed to stimulate young minds. So the visit of Zoolab to Birchanger Primary last month was well received.

Hissing Cockroaches, Mud Puddle Frogs, a Snake a Tarantula and a Rat are not normal visitors to the school but they were all brought to the school and all caused a predictable excited reaction from the pupils.

Zoolab are a project that introduces a range of different and interesting animals to children and gives them the opportunity to handle them, and learn all about them. Their "Rangers" have been visiting schools colleges and libraries across the UK since 1997 and offer a variety of presentations

to support the science curriculum such as the "Rainforest Road show" or the "Minibeasts Workshop". The presentations can be tailored to the individual school and cover subjects such



**A Mud Puddle Frog
from Costa Rica**

as availability of habitat, invertebrate life cycles and the differences between different species and how they are classified.



**William Grange, Jordan St Hilaire
and Alex Roke from Class 3**

The children thought it was great, although some of the staff were not quite so keen on some of the animal's nastier habits. They all enjoyed the follow up work, which was linked to several areas of the curriculum.

We would very much like to hear the views of the children who attended the presentation. The best article or drawing printed will win a prize!

PARISH COUNCIL NEWS FROM *Elizabeth Godwin*

New research shows Essex is under pressure

The fact that Essex is under pressure has been glaringly obvious for a long time. Roads are not as well maintained, anti social behaviour is on the increase, largely as a result of boredom, despite the fact that there is a well documented lack of skills in the 20 to 24 age group. Despite compulsory testing and targets, 29% of young adults lack formal qualifications, and 22% lack basic skills. 40% of all parishes have no post office, 67% have no village shop, and 63% lack a village pub. The highest rising population group is the over 80's and all health care services are under severe pressure and relying increasingly on the support of voluntary groups.

The government seems to think that the answer lies in a bombardment of initiatives and programmes which only serve to confuse the issue and this frequently results in duplication of provision, or confusion as to where the provision is to be initiated.

It has been shown that where there is greater interaction between people in the community, there is much better community well being. Local people know who is sick and who is experiencing particular difficulties. There are some very good people in Birchanger who realise this and who actually do something to help. They certainly don't need a government paper to tell them what to do. We cannot repair a pot hole, but we could perhaps help a neighbour clear a blocked drain, or repair a fuse.

Villages used to be about community. Perhaps if the villages get it right, the rest of Essex will follow.

Essex County Council has given £1000 to villages in Uttlesford, mainly to improve IT services for Parish Councils. Saffron Walden is one of the few small towns in Essex to receive a larger cash sum.

Want to stop smoking

Many of us would like to stop smoking, sometimes we give up for months at a time, but it never lasts. The Primary Care Trust is offering free Stop

Smoking counselling sessions, friendly help, and advice to anyone who would like to try to stop smoking. Call them on 01371 767010.

The smell is back

With warmer weather ahead and longer evenings, people are once again noticing the smell of kerosene in the village. BAA are at last acknowledging the problem and have told us that we are welcome to use the Flight Evaluation Unit's Freephone number, which is the same for noisy planes and off track flying. The number is 0800 243 788. Please use this number, or BAA will come to believe that there is no problem and also there will be chance of anything being done about the fly parking menace in Birchanger.

Would it be better if the council's housing stock was transferred to a Housing Association?

That is the question which Uttlesford District Council and all the council's tenants have to ask themselves over the next few weeks and it is certainly not an answer which the council can give on its own. Every effort is being made to ensure that the process does not become a political issue.

The process is the direct result of a government directive to all councils who, like Uttlesford, still own housing stock and it is not so very long ago that the tenants in Uttlesford voted against any change. The government have set out guide lines regarding the options they wish to be considered and the manner in which they are to be considered. Shortly every tenant will receive a questionnaire about housing services and all the replies will be fed into the process. In addition individual tenants can chose to be further involved with the process and are encouraged to do so by contacting their independent tenant adviser John McCormack, on freephone 0800 169 7058 or through the council's own Tenant Participation Officers, Helen Joy or Rebecca Procter on 01799 510571.

This is a decision which has to be made and it is the tenants who will provide the answers.

On line banking scams

It seems that more and more on line bank accounts are being hit by fraudsters who e mail people to tell them that their on line bank account is about to expire, and ask them to complete their details to renew on line.

No bank will ever ask you to do this, no matter how plausible the invitation appears to be. It may seem to be entirely genuine, with special offers, and the chance to win prizes every time the on line account is used. Whatever you do, do not respond on line, and check with your bank if you are considering any other action.

Rabbit control means a tree massacre

Many residents were dismayed to discover mass tree felling in the cause of pest control in the Birch Wood surrounding Stansted Manor Hotel.

The owners of the hotel were as dismayed as the residents. The trees which were felled were on land which is not owned by the hotel but they were vital to the hotel's rural aspect. It is understandable that work to clear brambles and some trees was necessary, but not the entire wood. Apparently DEFRA has confirmed that it is up to the farmer to protect his own crops, not to expect his neighbours to take radical action or in fact any action at all.

Reminder

The Annual Parish Meeting is on Wednesday April 13th, at 8 pm in the Church Hall. Come and have your say on village matters, meet the Local Youth Organiser, the Anti Social Behaviour Officer and hear about the Parish Plan. It is a good chance to talk to your neighbours and the Parish Council, over a cup of coffee at the end of the meeting.

Julia takes us one step closer to becoming a quality parish council

Congratulations to Julia Peachey who has passed the new Parish Clerks AQA examination, which involved some sixty hours work and study and which is one of the things necessary for Birchanger to become a Quality Parish Council. The next step is for everyone to complete the issues questionnaire, which will be delivered to every household in the next few weeks. This will lead to the drawing up of the Parish Plan, which is the next step to quality status.

Stansted Parish Council became the first Parish Council in the District to achieve quality status, and they are already starting to enjoy the cash benefits that this achievement brings.

The Friends of Birchanger C of E Primary School

Present

A Millionaires Night



To be held on Saturday 21st May

In the school hall

At 7:30pm- late

Tickets price £8.50 each

Includes Candlelit Supper + £500 "play money"

Licensed bar (over 18s only)

Smart Dress / Black Tie

Tickets available from school or
PTA members



A Youth Shelter for the village

A goodly sum of £1200 was raised at the village fete held at the Three Willows last summer. Many thanks to Paul Tucker for hosting the very successful day. So, what do we do with the money? The Parish Council had received many complaints about some of the youth of the village congregating (excuse the pun) at the Church Lych Gate. As we all know there is nowhere in the village for our teenagers to go without attracting some complaint. So the building of a youth shelter was proposed. Two meetings have already been held involving two parish councillors, Paul and Paula from the Three Willows and six teenagers from the village. At the first meeting, the idea of a shelter was discussed, its possible location, and the design.



Can you see yourself hanging out here?

The second meeting was held and was also attended by "Jiff" (who is well known to the teenagers, being the co-ordinator of the Youth Information bus and employed by Uttlesford Locality Youth Service) and by a representative of Urban Engineering. This is the company who make the teenager's chosen shelter.



An alternative view

These shelters are not cheap! £6000 is needed for the shelter plus a bit extra to provide some kind of lighting. So at the moment everything is still at the planning stage. A lot of fundraising needs to be done, so please support the village youth when they come up with their ideas for money. Grants from community funds and other sources are being explored and donations from any group or individual will be welcomed. The Parish Council is overseeing the project and will control the financial matters.

Ed's note: It will take four more years of fundraising at the current rate to make this proposal a reality. Somewhat more contentious will be the eventual location, as the intended users will no doubt prefer a site that is somewhat secluded. While those who have the responsibility for its care and maintenance will prefer a location in plain view but still out of residents earshot!

We would be very interested to hear any of our readers views on this project from either the intended users or from other residents with an opinion on the matter any viewpoint will be considered but we will not print any views given anonymously.

CHOCOHOLICS WORDSEARCH COMPETITION FOR 7 TO 11 YEAR OLDS

O	G	A	L	A	X	Y	S
S	R	A	B	S	R	A	M
G	O	E	H	Z	T	S	A
G	L	V	A	W	F	D	R
E	O	K	I	T	K	A	T
R	W	X	P	J	L	Q	I
C	R	U	N	C	H	I	E
A	E	I	K	R	O	E	S

The missing Chocolate is.....

Name:.....

Address:.....

Tel No.....Age.....

Hidden in our wordsearch grid on the left are nine out of the ten well-loved chocolate bars listed below. The tenth item is missing.

Cut out your completed wordsearch grid, with the name of the missing chocolate and your details entered underneath and send or deliver your entry to the Editor at 3 Duck End, Birchanger.

The first correctly completed entry received will win a bumper prize of the missing chocolate to share with their friends at Easter. There will also be three smaller runners-up prizes as well!!!

Aero
Crunchie
Kit Kat
Rolo
Twix

Creme Egg
Galaxy
Mars Bar
Smarties
Yorkie

COLOURING COMPETITION

For 3 - 7 year olds

Below is a picture of the Easter Bunny, but it needs brightening up. Can you colour the picture nice and neatly. An Easter Egg prize will be given to the best coloured entry as judged by our Editor and his team. Cut out your completed picture and send or deliver it to the

Editor at 3 Duck End, Birchanger.



Name:.....

Address:.....

Tel no:.....Age.....

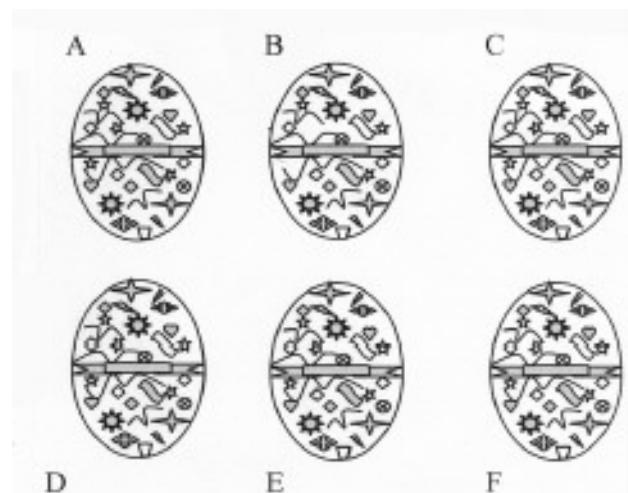
FLOWER POWER

Spring is in the air. Can you unravel these puzzle words to find 6 different flowers that can be seen in Spring.

1. F L O D D A F I
2. P O N D R O W S
3. R U C C O S
4. C Y N T H I A H
5. B U L B E L L E
6. L U P I T

ODD ONE OUT

Below are six decorated Easter Eggs, five of which are identical. Can you spot the odd one out?



New man at the helm of local hotel

Until August of last year David Middlehurst was the manager of Compass Hotels' Bath concern, the Abbey Hotel. Situated smack in the middle of Bath the Abbey was busy all year round with tourists and holiday makers eager to sample the delights of the ancient Roman spa town, so it must have come as a bit of a culture shock to have to move his family up to the Herts/Essex borders to become General Manager of the Stansted Manor Hotel.

Originally from Scotland but now based in Buntingford (to avoid living the job), David had been with Compass 17 years before accepting the post at Stansted and highlighted the main difference between his previous position and the one at the Stansted Manor "The Abbey was a classic city centre hotel with visitors using the place as a base to strike out to see the sights or visit the many bars, clubs and restaurants in the area. The Stansted Manor Hotel is a very different proposition. It is very much a business and airport hotel and that means we are quiet at times like half-term because people take time off from work to be with family which means they don't travel. Because Stansted airport has no long haul flights into it also means that there is no demand from that section of the traveling public".

Even though David is looking at a very different style of hotel the basics are the same and he is getting his teeth into the running of the place as an efficient and pleasant place to stay for the business traveller and holiday maker alike, offering high class accommodation and culinary experiences while giving the feeling of a local hotel.

To this end David and the staff are keen to engage with the village in a way that had not happened before. The hotel is planning to open a lounge facility which will cater for lunches and afternoon teas in a relaxed surrounding with comfortable chairs and pleasing décor. The restaurant will be having a rethink applied to it with sections screened off if the place is not over busy, the thinking behind this, as David explains "is to allow people to dine in comfort with some atmosphere, not in a huge empty area. The trouble is that because people are travelling on business they turn up at different times and want to eat accordingly, some nights we can be very busy but it does not seem that way. I want to change that impression and have made moves to do so".

Part of David's strategy to become more inclusive of the village is to offer a 15% discount to any diners at the Wyndham's Restaurant on the production of any copy of the village magazine with their advert offering the discount.

The hotel will also be making it known through the magazine what other advantages they will be offering villagers, so watch this space, in the meantime we wish David and his staff the best of luck for the coming year!

Now we've left that draughty field
D'you fancy making some more babies?



No! I'd rather dig some more
Holes in the Hotel lawn.



School News

New school handyman

The school has a lot of small repair jobs on a regular basis, which it is not possible for the staff to do but it is proving very expensive to call in outside help. A group of schools in the consortium have clubbed together to appoint a handyman to tackle all these tasks. There will be no shortage of jobs waiting when he starts work this month.

Computers for Schools

The school are once again this year collecting the following vouchers towards school equipment.

Tesco's computer vouchers

Sainsbury's 'Active Kids' vouchers

Persil Stars

Nestle Box Tops (free books for schools)

In the past these initiatives have proved to be really worthwhile and the children have benefited so thank you to everyone who have supported us. Please continue to send them in.

Netball team

With the lighter evenings the netball team is back in training. Several matches in the league have been played, with great success. Despite the break, the sport is as popular as ever.

Public speaking competition

Birchanger School entered the competition for the first time this year. Although they did not win, the four team members spoke very well on the team presentation, a poetry recital, the sermon on the mount, and a citizenship presentation on "What it is like to be a pupil at Birchanger School." Although they did not win, the 10 and 11 year olds all spoke very well, kept exactly to their allotted times, unlike other teams and were well supported by Class 4 throughout.

New computers

The children returned from their half term break to find that their computer suite had been transformed by fifteen new state of the art computers and screens. A new contract has made this possible and the fact that all the computers are identical means that the children will be able to operate each program in the same way and this will make instruction far simpler. They will also be able to access a greater range of services.

The Friends of Birchanger C of E Primary School

Present

A Quiz Night

To be held on Saturday 2nd April

In the school hall

At 7:30pm

Teams of 6-8

(Over 18's only)

Tickets price £6.00 each

Includes Supper

Tickets available from school or
PTA members





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Village Diary March/April 2005

March

26th 8.00 pm Social Club
Mathew Winchester

27th 11.00 am St Mary's
Easter Sunday
Holy Communion

April

2nd 7.30 pm at the School
Quiz night

3rd 11.00 am St Mary's
Matins

10th 11.00 am St Mary's
Family Service

17th 11.00 am St Mary's
Matins

24th 11.00 am St Mary's
Holy Communion

30th 8.00 pm At the Club
Phill Hemingway

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ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Wednesday April 13th

At 8.00 pm

In The Church Hall

ALL ARE WELCOME

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), eddieb@gilbey54.freemove.co.uk Elizabeth Godwin, Ken Wheatley. Submissions are welcome but may be edited depending on available space.