

# A DAY AT THE RACES

## Well five days actually

Fourteen year old Bernice Edgeworth, who lives in Harrisons, Birchanger, was in winning form during the Hertfordshire ASA County swimming championships over three weekends during March this year, taking a massive haul of 17 medals.

Ten of the medals were gold, three silver and four bronze. She also won three open championship trophies with a host of personal bests. Bernice is Hertfordshire County champion in her age group for 50, 100 and 200 metres Breast Stroke, 50, 100, 200 metres Free Style and 200 metres Individual Medley.

She won the open championship trophies swimming against women 17 years of age. The three silver medals were for other open categories only being narrowly beaten by girls three years older, the bronze medals were won in the team relays. Bernice has recorded qualifying times for the Eastern Counties ASA championships and National trials to be held at Crystal Palace.

Bernice trains with Bishop's Stortford Swimming Club for 18 hours a week, 12 hours of which are at 05.30 for 2 hours a time. Bernice believes her success is due to dedication and training and is looking forward to the eastern counties championships in May.

## By Keith Edgeworth



Bernice with her amazing haul of medals and trophies

## PARISH COUNCIL NEWS FROM

#### The war memorial is refurbished at last.

After over a year's work spearheaded by the last few members of the British Legion in Birchanger, the restoration of the names on the War Memorial has finally been completed. The work which cost over £3000 was commissioned after months of negotiation with Diocesan Authorities. An incredible amount of red tape had to be deciphered and many forms completed. Permission finally arrived last autumn and the final instructions were given to the stonemasons.

The memorial is constructed of sandstone, which is not noted for its robustness. The names could not be re-inscribed, but panels looking like sandstone were added to the memorial and the whole structure was cleaned and repointed so it now has a much lighter appearance. In the cleaning process a further inscription, which has been undecipherable for years, was discovered. This is to be added to the front panel as well.



The newly refurbished War Memorial

## Elizabeth Godwin

A great many people in the village have contributed to the refurbishment, including the Club, open gardens and the old fete committee as well as many private individuals and the British Legion. The work should last for the next fifty years. A big thank you to everyone involved.

#### Tot Lane closure

Despite the closure signs Tot Lane continued to be used for several months and was finally closed last month. This has caused problems to many residents and was a decision taken many years ago when the relevant Section 106 agreements were made and implemented after a lot of damage had been caused to council property, on Tot Lane and Birchanger Lane. There was also serious danger for any pedestrian walking either lane.

Most of the damage was done by lorries attempting to access Parsonage Farm, with increased rat running. Parsonage Farm should be accessed from the south by traffic using the A120, Bury Lodge Lane, and Church Road. It is hoped that proper signage, which was not in place at the start of the works, will reduce the extra traffic in Birchanger Lane.

Access onto the B 1383 is a problem, and will continue to be one unless we can get a roundabout in place. The traffic lights at Pesterford Bridge will ultimately become permanent and will break the traffic flow. This is one of the penalties of the Rochfords Development. Sadly the lights will become very necessary as the occupancy rate grows, and our rural area becomes increasingly urbanised.

Urbanisation is something which the Parish Council has opposed for years. We went to court over it with three other parishes. We did not win, but we have been continually fighting to get the best deal ever since. Frankly it is hard to achieve much, but that will not stop us fighting on. We were very sceptical about the traffic forecasts produced. It gives us no pleasure to be proved right. Safety measures and road improvements are part of the Section 106 agreements which the developers will have to fund. The exact highway measures have yet to be finalised and it is becoming very clear that access out of either end of Birchanger Lane is a very serious issue.

#### The Church Pastoral Committee

Despite the acute financial difficulties facing St Mary's Church, the Pastoral Committee is as active as ever. Pam Lee is to hold a plant stall on Saturday May 6<sup>th</sup> at 11am at her home, 4 Harrisons, Joy will have her coffee morning at Moorswood on Wednesday May 24<sup>th</sup> from 10.30 am to noon, and there will be a garden buffet at Moorswood on Sunday July 2<sup>nd</sup>. More events are planned for the Autumn, and the church will have four stalls at the fete in The Three Willows on July 9<sup>th</sup>. Watch this magazine for further details.

This is not all that the Pastoral Committee is about. There are many who live on their own in Birchanger, who are retired or long term sick, who simply do not get out as much as they would like to, and who rarely see anyone on a regular basis. The Pastoral Committee are happy to visit anyone who may have these difficulties, once they know who they are.

If you do know someone in this situation who might like a visit please call me on 812793.

Perhaps you would like to help the Pastoral Committee in this work or would like to find out about a scheme which trains individuals in Pastoral Care in areas beyond Birchanger. There are many roles to be filled as a Pastoral Assistant which include prison and hospital work and working with caring agencies in the community. Some Pastoral Assistants work in business and industry. To find out more about this, call 01245 294455 and ask for Christine Reed.

#### Aircraft noise and bad track keeping

Birchanger suffered particularly badly from noise problems this year with the wind predominantly in the east. There were also many flight infringements, particularly at night. Both noise infringements and bad track keeping are part of the statistics which are presented to the Stansted Airport Consultative Committee and are subject to fines. We do need to report them where possible. You should receive a reply if an infringement has occurred.

In addition to the telephone number 870558 for the Flight Evaluation Unit, you can email the Flight Evaluation Unit at

stanstednoiseline@baa.com or complain to SSE at

noise@stopstanstedexpansion.com

They would like a copy of your email in any event for their records.

#### Volunteer needed

For many years Jenny Gardner carried out the annual collection for the Red Cross in Birchanger. She moved way from the village last summer, and the Red Cross organisation is anxious to find her replacement. It would involve making the house to house collection on an annual basis in the village. If you think that this is something you could do, please contact me on 812793.

### Skip Visits

The skip will visit Birchanger on three occasions as follows.

Sunday May 21<sup>st</sup> from 8.00 am to 11.30am Saturday July 22<sup>nd</sup> from 8.00 am to 11.30 am. Sunday October 15<sup>th</sup> from 8.00 am to 11.30 am.

# Youth rings the changes

A couple of months ago every house in the village received a questionnaire concerning the Parish Plan which was designed to give the Parish Council an idea on how the village population felt about their surroundings now, and going forward. This questionnaire, while very worthy, was distinctly aimed at those unlikely to see their 20's again so it was decided to give the younger residents a say in how their village should look in the future and what steps should be taken to safeguard the environment. To this end a 'Young Persons' Questionnaire' was drafted and given to everyone under the age of 16, these questionnaires, as with the wrinklies version were returned anonymously to ensure candour in the replies. This article deals only with the returns of the Young Person's version and is only designed to show trends with maybe a sense of fun thrown in.

The questionnaire had a good response and it seems that over 50% of those who replied actually read the Village Magazine, but strangely for such a computer literate generation very few had ever accessed the Village Website. This could be because nobody has ever pointed it out to them or maybe it is because of lack of relevant information. Whichever it is we will be doing something to rectify this important issue, a more relevant page or pages for the younger browser has been suggested and will be considered, after all the internet is often the outside world's gateway to our community and if we don't use it how can we expect others to? Other suggestions were to have more notice boards, including one in the school, better advertising of forthcoming events and most importantly, adults to actually talk to children: consider youselves told!

By the way the Village Website is - <a href="http://www.birchanger.com/">http://www.birchanger.com/</a> - This and any suggestions for content would be gratefully received (send to the magazine addresses and we will ensure all correspondence is passed on).

When it comes to facilities for the young in the village, while most used the Church Hall, the Rec, the Scout hut, the mobile library and Youth bus these were considered as being transitory (excuse the pun), and the majority advocate extra activities including various sports such as football and badminton, dancing, War Hammer, bingo and a gym/health club. These activities are excellent ideas but one that seems to be ideal would be a Youth Club which, in turn, could be an umbrella for all other activities. There are many who are down on the young in the village because of anti-social

behaviour, but most of this stems from boredom, if there was a centre in the village that catered exclusively for the young as the Social Club does for the parents maybe the problem would reduce. So what we need now are volunteers to run a Birchanger Youth Club. Please form an orderly queue to the right, thank you

Following on from the above issue, just over half of the returnees thought there was little problem in the area of crime and policing. But that means that just under half thought there was a problem and tellingly over half thought the village to be insufficiently policed, a fact echoed in the adult version of the questionnaire. Oh, one point here, a lot of the children thought they were being unfairly blamed for all of the vandalism that takes place and they place the blame on adults doing the damage and being happy to let the youngsters take the blame. Just a thought.

As far as safety is concerned, the biggest issue is seen as speeding through the village, with blind bends, glass in the Rec, the need for more street lighting, a clamp down on off-road motorbiking, vandalism, too many heavy lorries (living in Duck End I sympathise here) and litter all featuring.

The villages environs were mentioned at length in the questionnaire and the replies were broadly of the same opinion:

- · Natural habitats, woods and fields to be kept
- · Footpaths to be maintained
- No new homes
- · A shop/Post Office would be nice

What was interesting was that almost all thought the church to be important to the village and that the War Memorial was also integral to the history of the community.

A lot of the respondees used bycycles or public transport to ferry themselves around but the vast majority also relied on the Parents Taxi Co. for transport, the clear message was that for people to take the buses seriously, there had to be more and they had to be reliable, a sentiment most would share.

What shows through is a section of our community who, because they don't usually have a voice, are usually unheard, well this questionnaire has given them a voice and as they are going to inherit the running of the village. Should they not be listened to? They have proved themselves interested by replying and responsible and considered in their comments, well done and thank you.

## Help Needed Urgently

For those of you who attended the Parochial Church Council Annual General Meeting, nothing of what I have to say here will be news. But I hope it will serve as a reminder that we all need to pull together if we are to ensure that St. Mary's Church remains open for regular worship.

Those of you who are in my age group (and you know who you are!) will remember a time when it was the norm for families to attend church every Sunday. The church was always packed and the service was a social event where you got to have a chat with friends and neighbours who you had not seen for a few days. Children went to Sunday school, joined the choir (if they could sing) and went to social events that were organised on behalf of the church.

Sadly, as adults, we have not taken the time to introduce our children into the church scene – mainly, I suspect, because today there are so many other activities available for them to do and, so my son will tell you, church is "boring". Over the coming months, I hope that this perception will begin to change.

Across the country, many small parish churches are experiencing a reduction in income and attendances, particularly where a priest is not available full time and no one from the congregation has come forward to provide assistance. If the situation does not change soon then these small parish churches will probably close.

We are fortunate at St. Mary's there are a number of people who have put themselves forward to take services on days when the rector and curate are not available. These services are well attended but there is always room for more and whether you are a resident in the parish, or are just visiting, you will be made welcome.

I know that there are some of you that do not feel the need to attend church each Sunday but do want St. Mary's to remain open for regular worship. That can only happen if, as a village, we pull together and provide financial support. Therefore, over the coming month, you are likely to find me knocking at your door. I will be asking you to show your support by completing a direct debit form. I hope that you will do so.

Unless financial help is forthcoming from this community then:

- 1. St. Mary's will become a church of "ease". This means that it will not be open for regular worship or for weddings or baptisms. Parishioners will be expected to attend services in Stansted. The rector has already asked Birchanger PCC to consider this.
- 2. If Birchanger PCC merges with Stansted PCC, Birchanger will lose control over the substantial sums that are presently held under trust. These monies, and the interest that has accumulated, can only be used for capital projects something that I would like to investigate (for the benefit of this parish) if St. Mary's stays open.
- 3. Lay members of the regular congregation are willing to continue taking services each Sunday and these are generally well attended.

Do something now, before it is too late!

Pam Lee

## Joy Wright Officially Retires

Joy Wright has retired as a Church Warden of Birchanger Church after 28 year's service. It was her decision and although she has officially retired as Church Warden, her other work for Birchanger Church will continue as before. This means that she will still be doing most of the work which she has always done, apart from official church duties. We shall still see Joy leading prayers, arranging flowers, looking after the church, hosting coffee mornings, working on the PCC and the Pastoral Committee and much more.

Twenty eight years is no mean feat. It is more than most of us can ever achieve at any purely voluntary effort but Joy's service to the church has been unstinting, truly loyal and totally unselfish. She is a treasure which is found only very rarely and is possibly insufficiently appreciated by the community at large.

The Church Community acknowledged Joy's contribution with gifts which included a painting of the church by one of Birchanger's artists Brian Gough, which is seen from the south east aspect. There are special items of jewellery and a garden makeover planned for her. The week ended with a celebratory lunch attended by over 45 people.

In her time Joy has seen off ten rectors, she began as a girl in the choir at the tender age of ten and has served the church since then. She says "The church has been my life" and is especially proud of a letter thanking her for all she has done from the Bishop of Chelmsford.

Thank you Joy, from everyone in Birchanger who cares about St Mary's and all you have done. It is a fantastic achievement.



Joy seen at home with the painting by Brian Gough

## Another era is to end

It seems that far less than a decade has passed since Andrew Spurr first arrived in Birchanger full of energy and ideas who almost immediately had Birchanger fund raising for Bosnia and dispatching local residents to deliver the goods. Much has changed since then. The departure of our then Rector Bob Wallace meant that Andrew did not remain Birchanger's curate for long as Andrew was invited to take Bob's place. This meant that Birchanger saw a great deal less of our new Rector, and the job became a great deal harder when much of the clergy support was withdrawn.

In the past decade we have seen a great many changes which have been forced upon us by circumstances, but which nobody has liked. It has not made the work of any rector any easier. It may well be in the next decade that the work of all rectors will become much more difficult as they are expected to take care of ever larger groups of parishes. There is simply not enough clergy or money to go around.

Andrew will be here throughout the summer so there will be plenty of time to say farewell. It will be a time when all the three parishes must plan for their future, and think hard about the way ahead.

Elizabeth Godwin

This next is a notice which, when it comes down to it, is one which is not easy for me to make.

Last week I was invited by the Bishop of Worcester and the Chapter of Worcester Cathedral to become the next incumbent of Evesham, with Norton and Lenchwick. I have accepted the invitation and, although we have yet to set an installation date, it would be in everyone's interests if we were well in place by the beginning of September.

By the time I leave I will have been here for 10½ years, the longest I've lived anywhere since I left home for university. I can't pretend that it will anything less than quite a wrench to leave here. Anna and Will will have been here for two years, and Anna was saying to me how much she and Will have been made to feel welcome here; and how good it has been to make new friends among the very many we have in these parishes.

My new parish includes a small church to the north of Evesham called Norton and Lenchwick and the main parish is centred on a church in the marketplace in Evesham, bordered on three sides by a meander in the river Avon. The site became a place of prayer after an 8th century swineherd had a vision of the virgin Mary, whereupon an abbey was built. All Saints church was built much later in the 12th century by Lady Godiva.

While I was musing with a close friend who is a Catholic priest on what it would mean to preside at Lady Godiva's altar, he said he had no idea, but Palm Sunday processions must be something to behold!

Any illusions I had about people being heartbroken at our departure were quickly dispelled when I went to tell a friend in Farnham the day after the interview. She said, "that's alright, we've still got Elizabeth Jennings".

Anyway, there it is, I said it. When we have a date for a move, I'll let you know.

Revd Andrew Spurr

## **School News**

#### Book week bonanza

March has meant book week for a very long time in Birchanger School and this year's book week was judged to be both stimulating and enjoyable yet again. The week started with a visit from a real live author, who as well as showing the children what being an author was like, there was also the opportunity to write a story of their own.

Class 4 were shown how to write a play, cast it, rehearse and perform it to the rest of the school in a single day. Quite a challenge, as there were props and costumes to consider as well, but it was also a challenge which the rest of the school enjoyed.

Librarians visited the school and worked with each year group introducing different books and stories to each class. Interest was certainly stimulated as sales at the book stall at the end of school each day were high.

At the end of the week residents of Birchwood were very surprised to see the Pied Piper, Darth Vader, Pirates, Tiger Lily, Harry Potter, Hermione Granger, Professor Dumbledore and many other well known fictional characters arriving at the school. The children came to school dressed as their favourite book characters, with prizes for the winners in each school year. Breakfast Club looked very different with The Cat In The Hat and Cinderella. Competition was intense, and incredibly hard to judge, with every child a real winner. The prizes were awarded to Tom Ward in Year 6 as Mr Tumnus, Anna and Elliott Field as the Flower Pot Men in Year 5, Benjamin Mortishire Smith as Willie Wonka in Year 4, Rhiannon Morffew as

Thing 1 in Year 3, Ellie Sykes as Dorothy in Year 2, Charlie Truscott as Shere Khan in Year 1, and Abigail Earnshaw as Alice in Reception. Every child chose their prizes from a selection of the books for sale in the Book Fair.

Book week is also profitable for the school, although this year's fair while rated highly for the enjoyment factor was not as profitable as the fairs held in previous years. The school is allowed a commission to use to select books from those for sale at the fair and each teacher was able add to their class libraries.



Ellie Sykes as Dorothy, Tom Ward as Mr Tumnus, Charlie Truscott as Shere Khan, Anna & Elliot Field as Bill & Ben, Abigail Earnshaw as Alice, Rhiannon Morfew Thing 1 and Benjamin Mortishire-Smith as Willie Wonka

#### A very nasty bug

For the first time Birchanger School came close to closure last month. A devastating bug which started as a stomach upset, but involved high temperatures, very severe headaches and very sore throats swept through the school affecting a third of the pupils at any one time and some of the staff. Those who remained soldiered on and the school remained open. At least it happened before the school visit to Norfolk.

#### A breezy visit to Norfolk

While the rest of us suffered gales and heavy rain, Class 4 was enjoying the beach at Norfolk. It was windy but there was also plenty of sunshine and warmth as well. They stayed at Patteson Lodge and used the Alymerton Field Centre as their base.

The next few days were packed with visits to Cromer where they visited churches the museum and followed the town trail, and the surrounding countryside. They studied the beach environment, visited woods and marshes and examined shingle and dune habitats.

Somehow they managed to fit in long walks, swimming and team building in between the activities. The high spot of the week for some was taking the ferry to visit the seals at Blakeney, while for others it was the visit to the Shire Horse Centre at West Runton on the last day.

Then it was back home on the last day of term, and straight into the Easter Holidays. It was the first time that the school had visited the Alymerton Study Centre, and it will not be the last. Expect to hear from the children themselves next month.

# Please stay off the Club field!

It has been noticed that the Club field is being used by children as a play area. The Club committee would like to point out that the Club field is private property for the use of members only. Access to the field is granted only when there is an authorised activity going on ie football, cricket matches, training activities and the annual fireworks display.

It is the responsibility of parents to ensure their children do not trespass on club property. The exercise of dogs on the club field is also strictly prohibited.

## Mr Hugh Allison

Hugh James Allison passed away on Wednesday 22nd February 2006, aged 54. He had been diagnosed with cancer of the Oesophagus in August 2005, although this later spread to his liver. Although gradually deteriorating over the next six months, he always kept his spirits up and those of the people he encountered. On the second of January 2006, he was admitted to Princess Alexandra Hospital following a stroke - this is where he remained until he died.

Hugh was very well known around the Village, having lived in Birchanger since 1976. Whatever people thought of him, he was definitely a very individual person, well-known for his unique perspectives, dedication to his beliefs and his charmingly off-setting sense of humour. Often seen in the Birchanger Sports & Social Club, he would speak to anyone, although he was often shy about starting conversations. He was also known for walking long distances, and I'm sure his offbeat greetings to those he passed, will be missed as sorely as he will be.

Hugh's funeral took place in St Mary's Church, Stansted, at 11am on Friday 10th March. Donations for OCHRE (Oesophagus Cancer Has Reached Everywhere) c/o Daniel Robinson & Sons, 79/81 South Street, Bishop Stortford, CM23 3AL.

From Hugh Allison Jnr

# Can you smell gas?

A rather careless plant operator contracted by EDS the electricity supplier caused a major gas leak that seriously inconvenienced the residents of Henham and Elsenham over the weekend of 25/26<sup>th</sup> March while working on the sand track at the rear of Harrisons.

The operator of the trenching machine breached a 180mm pipeline that supplies our neighbouring villages it took Transco three days to repair it. Fortunately the gas supply in Birchanger was not affected.

The size of the breach was considerable and evacuation of the adjacent houses was considered. However the prevailing wind was carrying the escaped gas towards Bishop's Stortford and it was decided that an evacuation would not be necessary.



The offending machine

Story and photo from Russ Barron



# Coffee Morning In aid of

## The Friends of St Mary's

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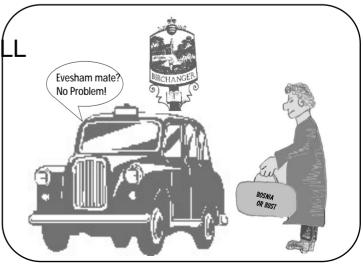




All proceeds to Church funds

## WHITE ELEPHANT STA

Sue Gilbey will be running a White Elephant stall at this year's village Fete. Anyone who wishes to contribute items of Bric-a-Brac for sale may



# New advertiser aims to beat the cowboys

I take great pleasure in welcoming a new advertiser to the happy band already helping support the magazine. Don't forget without these guys we would not be able to publish. So please support them in return. When we consider advertisers, not all are suitable, we look for people that would benefit from talking to you the villagers because they can provide a service to the local community and so it is with our latest recruit, **Clark's Oil Heating Engineers.** 

You may not know but it is only recently that oil heating engineers have had to conform to a code of practice in the same way that gas heating engineers have to. We all know the CORGI symbol and few would trust a gas fitter without this accreditation but the oil industry lagged behind for years. Basically anyone could trade as an engineer with sometimes costly results, until now that is. The industry is at last regulating itself and a new governing body OFTEC has been established to oversee and police its members.

Our latest advertiser, Lee Clark, of **Clark's Oil Heating Engineers** is a proud member of OFTEC and believes that the new regime will help stamp out sharp practice by the cowboys. A plumber since leaving school, Lee then decided to specialise in oil heating and was with a large company that focussed on this area for 4½ years. It was a move to Birchanger with his partner of 6 years, Claire, that convinced Lee that he should strike out on his own. As Lee puts it "It was a question of if not now I would possibly never have done it"

Lee's aim with his new company is to bring the years of experience he has in the industry to local people at reasonable prices and with a friendly and reliable service. He told me "I want to rely on word of mouth to gain customers and I would always use local tradesmen myself, so I am trusting others will feel the same".

#### Clark's Oil Heating Engineers specialise in:

- · Oil boiler install, repair & service
- · Commercial Heater install, repair & service
- · Oil tank installation

Outside of the oil business Lee's interests and pastimes include building a Lotus replica kit car, off roading in his Land Rover and being sweet-talked by Claire (no, he never said it was nagging Claire!)

I have a personal take on this advertiser as the Crossley household needed to get a new oil tank but did not know where to get one, we ended up booking someone from Colchester to come and give us an estimate, not a situation we were pleased with but we had resigned ourselves to it. The same day Claire called me to see if her partner, who just happened to do oil tanks, wanted to take out an ad. How spooky is that? Anyway Lee came round, got the job and we are the proud owners of a nice new, green oil tank, just ask Ed.

As always we would ask you to support our advertisers as they keep us running – Good luck Lee!

## Mark Crossley

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@virgin.net Elizabeth Godwin, Ken Wheatley. Submissions are welcome but may be edited depending on available space.



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