

Community Service Achievement Awards

The annual Community Achievement Award ceremony took place on Thursday 23rd February at the Uttlesford District Council Offices in Saffron Walden. This year the awards in Birchanger were won by Mrs Ellen (Bet) Gilbey and Andrew Cameron.

The citations for each winner were read out to a packed council chamber before a certificate was presented by Councillor Peter Wilcock. Recipients from all over Uttlesford were present most of whom were accompanied by their sponsors or family members.

The Citation for Mrs Gilbey (my Mother) related her contribution to the Cubs and Scouts in the village, as well as her involvement with the Over sixties and concentrated particularly on her efforts in relation to the annual poppy appeal.

Andy Cameron's award related his contribution to the Birchanger football club, his ongoing involvement in the parish council and finished with recognition for his vital association with this publication as our distributor and delivery co-ordinator.

In total forty awards were made. The evening was shared with The Mary Porter Environmental Awareness Awards which were won by The Mountfichet High School and the St Thomas More and Katherine Semar Primary Schools in Saffron Walden.

After the awards there was a press photo call followed by a buffet reception. Congratulations to all of the winners and especially to Andy and Bet. We're proud of you!



Bet and Andy with their awards

PARISH COUNCIL NEWS FROM

Elizabeth Godwin

Parish Plan update

A very big thank you to all those who took the time to contribute to the Parish Plan, by completing the two long surveys, and to the youngsters who also completed their surveys, and who gave us their views for what will be their village in the future. Details of their responses feature elsewhere in the magazine.

The plan was well supported, with some 64% of the village responding to the Demographic Survey, 51% to the more difficult issues questionnaire, and 46 to 10 to 17 year olds responding to the young person's questionnaire. The survey was anonymous, and members of the team analysing the questionnaires do not know who responded, or from whom each response came.

There were many differing ways of life emerging from the survey which reflected the diversity of Birchanger. The most common facts have emerged from the Demographic Survey from those who responded were as follows:

Most people read the Village magazine.
Not many used the village surgery, although for those who did use it, it was a vital service.
Most people visit dentists outside the area.
Although the Club and the Pub are used frequently, other village activities do not find the same support.
The footpaths and woodlands are popular.
There are few problems with crime.
Most homes are privately owned, and there are relatively few on the housing list.

At present the Parish Plan team are working on the issues questionnaire, which will help to inform the plan in its final state. More details of the plan, and the findings will be given at the Annual Parish Meeting on April 12th.

Annual parish meeting

This year's meeting will be held at 8.00 pm on Wednesday April 12th in the Church hall. Everyone is welcome.

Telephone masts in Birchanger

Telephone masts are seemingly everywhere these days, and we have far too many in Birchanger. The Parish Council has opposed every single application, and those which have been allowed have mainly been allowed on appeal.

The latest appeal which unfortunately had been successful is for a new mast close to the roundabout at the junction with the A120 with the B 1383. It is inconceivable as to how the inspector at the appeal allowed this latest mast. Not only is it far too near existing homes, it will also be a traffic hazard. It can only be a matter of time before some driver demolishes it, but the cost to the driver could be very dear. The ways of the planning inspectorate continue to be a mystery, but it really is time that they got their collective acts together over these masts.

Birchanger Parish Council's response to Runway 2 consultation

Birchanger Parish Council thought long and hard about the response to the second runway consultation. The primary response of an unequivocal "no" was the easy bit. Our response was important as everything we raise would become part of any subsequent inquiry, even though this consultation was more remarkable for what it left out in the way of necessary information. The effects we experience now at 22 million passengers per annum would be much worse at 76 mppa.

The Parish Council raised all the issues BAA have not yet addressed. These include real noise contours, atmospheric pollution, ground engine running and taxiing, numbers of the population affected, community safety, soil pollution, kerosene and de icing pollution, vibrations from heavy aircraft, infrastructure, and blighted homes in Birchanger.

A copy of the letter will be available at the Annual Parish meeting

Missing roundabout

Vandalism in the recreation ground has made the roundabout dangerous with the exposure of the ball bearings, which could seriously injure a child's hand. The roundabout has now been removed while funds are raised for its eventual repair. The repair is expected to cost over £3000, but to replace it with a lesser model would be in excess of £6000. Unfortunately there is a pole left, which is crucial to the installation. There was a protective cover over this, but, guess what, the vandals have been at this as well. Please take great care when using the play area. If the cover is replaced, those who do not give a fig for the children who use the recreation ground will have destroyed it at the first opportunity.

Free bus travel for everyone over 60

The Government's scheme for free bus travel for all who are over 60 comes into effect from April 1st. The responsibility for administering the scheme in this area lies with the District Council, who will issue the concessionary passes. Essex County Council also co-ordinates a county wide travel scheme which allows all pass holders to travel free after 9am on all journeys that start in Essex.

To find out more and to arrange for your pass, please call Uttlesford District Council on 01799 510561.

Crisis support team Essex

Could you become a trained crisis support worker to help those affected by disasters such as the recent Tsunami, 7th July Bombings, and the Paddington Rail Crash? Basic skills required are the ability to be a good listener, be interested in helping others, willing to drop everything at a moments notice, and have previous experience in helping people.

Volunteers are required from all walks of life with very diverse backgrounds and beliefs. Once trained, volunteers would be working alongside Family Liaison Officers, operating a telephone hotline, explaining procedures and legal rights, and giving practical and emotional support to anyone affected by a disaster.

Volunteers will be fully trained for whatever role they might be called upon to deliver, and are supported throughout their involvement with the scheme. If you want to know more, call the Emergency Plans Unit on 01245 430378.

New mental health foundation trust for North Essex

One in four people living in Birchanger may experience mental health problems at some time in their lives, and many others will be involved in the care of someone who is suffering from a mental illness, or who has problems with drugs or alcohol. The proposed Foundation Trust will mean that mental health services will be more accountable to the people whom it actually serves. The trust will have a board of governors which it will elect, and a membership open to anyone over the age of 14 which will influence the trust's future direction.

The Mental Health partnership is to hold a series of public consultation meetings to which everyone is invited. The one for our area is to be held on Wednesday March 22nd between 7pm and 9pm at the Uttlesford District Council offices, where you will be able to find out more about the trust, and how you could become a member or a governor. If you cannot attend and would like to find out more, call 0800 169 1625.

Anyone who has used the mental health services in our part of the world, will know there is certainly room for improvement, and patient involvement in what they want, and what actually works best.

The latest Barclaycard Scam

Fraudsters are calling credit card holders claiming to be from the Security and Fraud Department of their credit card company. They suggest that the card may have been the subject of a fraud, and are carrying out an investigation. They are plausible in that they will not ask for the card number, it seems they already know that somehow, but they will ask you to confirm that you have possession of your card, and ask for the security number on the back. Do not give it to them under any circumstances.

Development at "Churton" 300 Birchanger Lane

The response from the council to this planning application can be found on the Birchanger website at www.birchanger.com/BirchangerPC.html

If you have objections to this development they must be submitted to Uttlesford District Council before Monday April 3rd

Proposed development at Churton 300 Birchanger lane

The proposed demolition of this fine old house became an issue in the public domain after our editorial meeting on March 6th. At the time the members of my committee had varying views on the benefits or problems that this development might pose.

In essence the current resident Mr John Gibb has proposed to knock down the existing house and replace it with an estate of seven houses on the most dangerous double bend in the village.

Mr Gibb is the only likely beneficiary of such a scheme and his reasons for doing it are probably just a way of leaving the best legacy to his family that he can. This at least is understandable.

The legacy that is left to Birchanger is less attractive. Seven new houses mean up to twenty more cars as well as any vehicles requiring access to the new estate, all emerging onto the lane on a blind bend, at a place where there is no proper footpath.

There is a suggestion that some of the properties would have to be “affordable housing” to meet the needs of local residents. However houses in the open market in this area do not remain “affordable” for long.

Whether this application is successful or not the property will eventually change hands either to Mr Gibb’s family or to another buyer, all of whom will see the development potential of the site. A subsequent application may prove to be even less attractive than this one.

If I have one question for Mr Gibb it is this. If he were still Chairman of the parish council and lived hypothetically in a different property. What would his response to this application have been?

Ed Gilbey

Do your bit for recycling

We are all being urged to recycle as much as possible to help save the environment and I'm sure most of us “do our bit” by putting out the green and black recycling boxes on Thursdays. However we can do more and Birchanger Cub & Scout Group can help. We are part of a scheme that recycles inkjet printer, laser printer and fax printer cartridges to help raise funds for the Group.

We don't stop there though, we also recycle old mobile phones (with chargers if possible) and PDAs.

So next time you get new cartridges for your printer, get a new printer (in which case take the cartridges out before disposing of it) or a new mobile phone remember to drop your old ones in at 244 Birchanger Lane, I'm in most days, or at the Scout Hut on Wednesday or Friday evenings.

If you use printers as part of your job find out if there is a recycling scheme, if not we can help.

You'll not only be helping the environment but helping your local Scout Group as well. If you have any queries give me a call on 814311.

Dave Dartnell

WHITE ELEPHANT STALL

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 contact her at 3 Duck End or call 816171.

All proceeds raised are to benefit village funds.

1st Birchanger Cub & Scouts

EASTER PRIZE BINGO

Saturday 8th April 2006. In the Church Hall

Eyes down at 7.15pm

Tickets £6 adults, £5 concessions and £3 children under the age of 13. Available in advance only from:
Sally 812994, Pauline 831811, Linda 814938, Elaine 815887 or Dave 814311

The Future Of Birchanger Church

Last month the PCC had to face some unpalatable truths about the finances of St Mary's. The treasurer of the PCC had to tell members that, **due to the continuing shortfall of income from collections and donations against the day-to-day running costs**, the Church would be insolvent within eighteen months. Doing nothing was not an option. It would appear that the only way forward need not be to close St Mary's altogether, as was the situation some years ago, but to begin a consultation as to how the Church could remain open for special services, rites of passage, high days and holidays. Advice will be taken to review the various options with the Archdeacon, but ultimately the decision must rest with the PCC.

One option that could be suggested is that the PCCs of St Mary's and St John's Stansted could be merged. This would provide the much needed support for the PCC, who do feel somewhat that they are fighting a battle without support from the community at large. Stansted has larger resources and expertise to help members of Birchanger PCC.

This option could open the door to other shared community projects. There are five schools, all of whom feature in the work of the Church. Shared resources and the utilisation of Church trusts by the combined PCC, could mean that more work with the youth in the Benefice, involving after school and holiday clubs among other projects, and the possible use of the Church for these activities.

Other ideas may come forward, and although it is the PCC's decision ultimately, it is also one on which the community will be consulted. Nobody wants the Church to close, but it cannot carry on as it is. **If it is to remain open then doing nothing is no longer an option.**



St Mary's Birchanger Decorate an Easter egg competition

This competition is open for all children in Birchanger to enter. Here's how:-

First collect your egg at the the Mothering Sunday Service at St Mary's on **March 26th**. (These are special white painted eggs all of the same size) Alternatively eggs can be obtained from Pam Lee or Cheryl Dare on 815938.

Then decorate your egg. There will be two prizes, one for the best traditionally decorated egg and another for the most imaginatively decorated.

Next hand in your decorated egg either at the Palm Sunday Family Service on **April 9th** or to Pam or Cheryl before the service. Make sure you include your name, age and a contact number. All entrants will win a prize.

The winners will be announced at the Easter Sunday Service on **April 16th**.

School News

Breakfast club is a hit

The idea of coming to school early would not have been very popular thirty years ago, but some 44 children attended the first ever Breakfast Club at Birchanger School last month. The children were able to tuck into a breakfast of cereals, toast with honey or marmite and fruit while chatting to their friends before school started. The whole idea was so popular that it is to become a regular Friday morning feature from now on.

Smith Klein Glaxo Workshop day

Despite many government initiatives science is too often a little understood subject at Primary School, and in later life there is a marked shortage of students for science based options. In an effort to introduce children to science subjects in an entertaining and practical manner Smith Klein Glaxo are working in schools to promote science as an interesting career option with workshops for children in classes three and four. Their workshops which have proved to be entertaining as well as educational are aimed at showing children what science means, talking about science in everyday life and the things around you, what you can do with science and making it work with actual experiments.

100 Club

Membership of the 100 club is up for renewal this month. As well as benefiting the lucky monthly winners, the club has provided equipment for the new outdoor play area in the form of road traffic signs and a zebra crossing so that the children will be learning about road safety at a very early age. The club has provided the new strip and track suits for the combined boys and girls football teams, so they create a very professional appearance on their arrival at away game venues. The club is to continue to provide sports equipment as funds allow during the coming year. If you are interested in joining please contact the school on 812362.

Football and Netball clubs

After a brief break through the darkest evenings the football club is back after school. The team are practising for the tournament at the end of the month, but meanwhile their unbroken run of success has meant they still retain their place at the top of the league. The newly formed netball club are also enjoying success, and are to compete in their first netball tournament as well this month. Members of both clubs are highly enthusiastic, and we wish them all the best of luck in their tournaments.

Field trip to Norfolk.

The school arranges residential trips for the class 4 children every two years. This year's trip will be to a field centre in Norfolk in the last week of term. The packed itinerary includes visits to the Blakeney seals, museums and churches, and field studies of the Norfolk Coast with a visit to the Shire Horse Centre on the way home. The children are busy preparing for all the things they are going to see, and the special studies they will be undertaking.

School Easter Service

Class 4 will be away for the last week of term, so the Easter Service will take place after Easter in the first week of the summer term on Friday April 21st at 9.30 am in St Mary's Church. The choir are already practising hard for the service, and everyone is welcome to come and see their new innovative repertoire.

There will be another opportunity to hear the children at the family service on April 9th, when the choir will be taking part under their musical director Mrs Mortishire-Smith. Everyone is very welcome to this service also which is at the usual time of 11am.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

The Valentine Disco held in the Church Hall on February, 11th was a great success – we all enjoyed ourselves and we raised £400 for the Breast Cancer Campaign.

We were particularly delighted with the result as we'd had a big disappointment.

Keith and Loraine Edgeworth won a free Disco as a raffle prize and together with their neighbours, Kevin and Nadia Walters, decided to use it to raise money for the Breast Cancer Charity. All was booked but with only four days to go, the DJ said he had had his equipment stolen so couldn't help us. Having sold 80 tickets by this time, we needed music!! After some frantic 'phone calls, we were back on track.

Unfortunately, we had to pay for the replacement DJ and we believed that our profits would be minimal.

However, the people of Birchanger did us proud! With raffle money and donations for entering the quiz, the money rolled in.



The organisers seen here with their cheque for £400

So, CONGRATULATIONS to us all and thanks for a great evening.

Keith, Loraine, Kevin and Nadia.

The Friends of Birchanger C of E Primary School
Present a

Music Quiz

To be held on 25th March
In the school hall
At 7:45pm

Teams of 6-8
(Over 18's only)

Tickets £8.50 includes ploughman's Supper
Bring your own drinks

Tickets available from school or
Ring Carol Willis 812407



ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Wednesday April 12th

At 8.00 pm

In The Church Hall

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March

26th St Mary's 11.00
Mothering Sunday
Holy Communion

April

2nd St Mary's 11.00
Matins

9th St Mary's 11.00
Palm Sunday
Family Service

12th Church Hall 8.00 pm
Annual parish meeting

16th St Mary's 11.00
Easter Sunday Matins

23rd St Mary's 11.00
Matins

30th St Mary's 11.00
Holy Communion



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