

Burns Night Bonanza

It was yet another sell out Burns Night for Birchanger last month. Once again the event was heavily oversubscribed with a long waiting list for what is proving to be one of the main events of the year.

All the right ingredients for a successful and traditional evening were there, from the Haggis, piped in with traditional style, down to the tables bedecked with tartan cloths. The speeches followed the Burns Night tradition with the ode to the Haggis performed in true Scottish style by Alex Stuart, then the toast to the Immortal Memory by EES Chairman Peter Saunders, followed by the toast to the lassies with somewhat Sassenach humour by Pim Godwin and finally the toast to the lassies with an ironic and witty slant by Jayne Devine. Brian Ross as Master of Ceremonies co-ordinated the whole evening in true Scottish style.

The event was organised by SSE led by Carol Barbone, Brian Ross and Alex Stuart with strong local help from Birchanger and other SSE members. Although with two years experience it is now a very slick event, it still requires an huge input from a lot of people, and those who were involved with the organisation would like to thank the people who live in Birchanger and beyond who helped to make the event possible.

Now, do you want it back next year? The rumour is, it might be! Watch this space.



Alex Stuart suitably armed for Haggis



PARISH COUNCIL NEWS

Elizabeth Godwin

Yet another consultation on the local plan

Sadly this is not something which the government will allow to quietly go away and die. They have said we must have 10,150 new homes in Uttlesford by 2026 and if we don't find somewhere to put them, they will. The good news is that some of the homes have planning permission already, but around 4000 new homes are still required.

The consultation will hit your doormats shortly, in fact it should have done so already and it does need your response. The council needs your opinions on where these houses should go. A great deal of work has been done following the last consultation in 2007 and the points made then have been worked upon by a council team and their consultants.

Unfortunately for many, Elsenham still remains the council's preferred option by a majority vote in the council. This would take 3000 houses, the prospect of an Eco town having receded for the time being. There are still huge traffic problems for this proposal in Stansted and the surrounding villages, something which will need to be addressed properly, but how is not clear. In reality this will mean 5 new houses in Birchanger, which we already may have if the development at 300 Birchanger Lane goes through, although these are not the homes that Birchanger really needs for its young people.

We also have to accommodate more gypsies. Not something which will please everyone, as their experiences from the gypsies a few years ago was bad. Then there were instances of children stealing goods from the DIY stores and local businesses which have left a lasting bad memory in many people's minds. Gypsies need to have access to local facilities, but residents in many parts of Uttlesford report bad experiences so until a great deal more work is done by everyone, including the gypsy population, the required sites will meet resistance everywhere. The sites must be chosen with care and supervision until good relations are established with local people.

Birchanger is surrounded by Green Belt. It is a vital link separating Essex and Hertfordshire as well as a much needed cordon against opportunist development. Some land has already been lost to business use, the Industrial Estate at Parsonage Farm is a blot on the landscape for Birchanger. We have more than enough

of this with the airport industrial landscape. Do we really want anymore?

There is a lot to think about, and please don't think your views don't matter. They do! You can use the form attached to the leaflet or you can go to www.uttlesford.gov.uk. If you do have any difficulties, please call 01799 510461/510454. You have until April 10th to make your response. Should you not receive the leaflet, please contact me on 812793.

Snow heroes

There have been many people who braved the awful weather to help their neighbours and those living in our district as a whole. These people went out in all weathers to keep essential services running and to make sure that their neighbours and friends were able to cope.

The bin men started work early in order to get as much of their rounds done as they possibly could. They noted the homes they had been forced to miss and tried to return if they could on another day.

Our Post man never missed a day. At times the cold must have been almost unendurable. The papers were delivered on most days, albeit a bit understandably late. Some other delivery vehicles managed to get through, as did the buses throughout most of the period.

There were also all those neighbours who offered help or gave lifts to those less able than themselves. The club allowed those trying to access the school parking in their car park by day. Despite the school closure some staff did actually make it in, and made sure the school was in itself all right, while doing some of the work they need to do while pupils are actually in school. Birchwood was lethal with ECC cutting back on gritting all but the most major roads there was no likelihood that they would ever get round to gritting there. The club very kindly offered the use of their car park then and in perpetuity outside club opening hours.

A big thank you to everyone who helped Birchanger residents. We did appreciate your efforts. It seems this situation could come again. The lesson seems to be that we all need to make sure we have supplies of non perishable foods such as canned food, rice, pasta, long life milk and the odd standby item in the freezer from November onwards. Our weather will always be uncertain and we are never safe from the possibility of extreme weather in any form.

Help to protect St Mary's

The scourge of church vandalism is spreading closer to the village. For the past month villages in our around the Essex/ Cambridgeshire borders have experienced varying degrees of vandalism, ranging from swastikas on the doors to damage inside the church, things thrown about and damage to cars parked in nearby car parks. If you see anything at all suspicious, please call our police on their mobile number 07801 461666 or the Essex police on 0300 333 444 at once. They are coming closer.

Art exhibition back later this year

The Open Gardens Team which was responsible for staging the first known Art Exhibition has decided that there will be an Art Exhibition again in Birchanger, and this will include the now famous Turnip Prize. The decision was unanimous but the date will be confirmed later when it is known when the neighbouring exhibitions will be held. It is very important to avoid a clash of dates. The projected date is the weekend of September 18th/19th. The committee will be in a position to decide this very shortly so watch this space.

Still some funds available for village projects

The Art exhibition benefits all manner of groups in the village. Some money was held back to finance the next Exhibition, but the Open Gardens Group decided that it would be possible to release further funds after a long look at projected expenditure for this year. I would like any group with a project requiring cash to contact me as soon as possible to make your group's claim on 812793.

Does your house suffer from flooding?

Although the lane may flood frequently, due to inadequate drainage, I do not know of any actual properties in Birchanger which suffer from flooding. That does not mean that it is not happening somewhere in the village. If you do experience problems with flooding please let me know on 812793

Don't buy compostable bags at Tesco

Why? They do not work in Uttlesford's composting system. They will decompose, eventually but the system cannot wait that long. Meanwhile these bags are clogging things up and making the compost which is free to those who collect it, unusable. The brown bins will be monitored, and those who persistently use these bags are likely to receive a visit from an officer who will explain the problem.

New Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator

The Police have invited Alex Stuart to be the new Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator in place of Ann Kent, and he has kindly agreed to take this on. We would like to thank Alec for stepping into the breach. He can be reached on 812303, but please remember that if you do suspect a crime is being committed to call the Duty Police officer at once first.

Unemployment in Birchanger

The spectre of unemployment in the village became a reality for several with the removal of SR Technics to Switzerland. This meant an inevitable loss of highly skilled jobs for some in the village, and an unwelcome reminder of just how fragile local employment really is. This latest blow follows a steady series of job losses at the airport over the last two years.

Snowdrops at Little Easton

The Gardens at Easton Lodge will be open on 5 weekends starting in the middle of February onwards from noon until 4pm and the snow drops will be at their traditional best. The gardens will be manned by a team of volunteers, who will also be offering hot drinks and soups to the visitors. Each year the snowdrops in the garden seem to increase in number. It is always a fantastic and memorable sight which gets better every year. Make a visit if you possibly can. It is well worth it.

Farewell to a very respected Birchanger resident

Not many people are mentioned in this magazine when they move on to pastures new, but Ann Kent left for the wolds of Lincolnshire last month, following many traumas due to the vagaries of the housing market and her contribution to the benefit of the Birchanger Community will be sorely missed.

Most people will remember Ann first of all as an Avon Lady, where she visited numerous homes in Birchanger on her rounds. Then came her work with Neighbourhood Watch for which she was the village co-ordinator. Next Ann joined the Parish Council giving nearly fourteen years reliable and dependable service in all her areas of expertise, which included Highways, Transport and obviously, Community Safety. Those in the Highways office learned to take note every time she came on the line. The fact that they took ages to actually do the work was certainly not due to lack of nagging on Ann's part. She had the reputation always to be able to follow the work through until the end. What she did not know she rapidly found out, and her confidentiality and reliability were second to none. If she said she would do something, it was as good as done. She supported other village organisations in every way she could. Ann and her husband David will be sorely missed. David supported Ann every inch of the way and established himself as a skilful and reliable gardener after his retirement from his job as Head Green Keeper at the Golf Club. We wish them well in their new life, and hope to see them back in Birchanger, often.

School News

After 3 days additional holiday, the children finally got back to school. Even for some of them the weather had become a little bit beyond a joke. It was not an ideal start for Mrs Warbrick, but amazingly she managed to get into school most days and spent some valuable time familiarising herself even more with the school.

Club offers additional car parking

The Birchanger Club have very generously said that the school may use their car park in school times, provided it is clearly understood that it is at the users own risk. This could be valuable in easing the congestion around the gate and in the Church Hall Car Park at drop off and collection times and help the beleaguered Birchwood residents. Unbelievably there are still a few inconsiderate parkers. Please use the club car park if you can.

Class four starts fundraising

The school trip to London at the end of April for Class 4 will be very special and marks a big break from the tra-

ditional school trip. It will also be very expensive. To help raise funds, Class 4 will be baking and selling special cakes they will make each week on Friday afternoons from 3pm after the Sharing Assembly. So there is no need to bake for the weekend. Just buy a cake and help to reduce the cost for this much anticipated trip.

Hats for Haiti

The children are very focused on the tragedy unfolding after the earthquake in Haiti. Children their own age were dragged from the collapsed buildings and untold numbers died. The terrible sights were seen nightly on television screens. It all made a big impression. They were determined to try to help, and did by holding a special non uniform day, paying at least £1 for the privilege and wearing a special "Hat for Haiti" for the occasion. A tangible proof that our children do actually care.

Buffy Bus is on the move

Buffy bus is to move from its regular spot in Birchanger on Wednesday afternoons. The day and time is not expected to change, but the bus is to relocate to Walson Way on the new estate, which at the time of writing is for the most part in Birchanger.

The reason for the move is that there are more young families in Forest Park many of whom do not yet have adequate public transport and the bus has been too poorly supported in Birchanger village itself. The bus is of course still open to everyone, but some people will have to travel a little bit further now. Further details will be available from the bus. It will be here until after half term.



Rock 'n' Roll over Beethoven!!

BACK BY POPULAR DEMAND AND FOR ONE NIGHT ONLY – Please be upstanding for the greatest music quiz ever*!!!

That's right, the original line-up have been persuaded out of retirement** to reform for definitely the last time***, to bring you an evening of great music, fantastic tunes, superb lyrics and possibly some Rod Stewart as well!

The last music quiz run on behalf of the Village Magazine saw ten teams battle it out for the honours with the Fat Boys emerging triumphant and we are using the same format of fun rounds, with lots of music to sing along to, in this year's fizzing contest

We are looking for a maximum of ten teams of eight members each (adults only please) willing and able to do musical battle in the Village Hall on the night of Saturday 20th March. Entrance is £10 per head and the price includes a very rock and roll ploughman's supper – The Jagger boy's favourite so I am reliably informed (bring some nibbles as hors d'oeuvres if you want) – and in the memory of all that's pop and rock we are not going to dictate what you drink man!! No man!! Bring your own.....man

Anyway, clear your diaries, organise a team and book your tickets from Jayne on 814 723

* Since the last one anyway

** Out of the bar more like

*** Until the next time, as usual

Police Update

Dear all we hope that the beginning of the year has been a good one so far. Crime wise we have been very lucky and the village remains a low crime area. Although before Christmas we did suffer with a couple of burglaries in Stansted luckily we have not had any since but we do remind people to keep their properties and cars secure. We also ask for you to be vigilant and please report any suspicious activities to us. We are still suffering with thefts from outbuildings in the surrounding rural villages so please keep your sheds etc locked and any high value items out of sight for the opportunist.

The Stansted Neighbourhood Watch have been doing a great job in recruiting members over the last year and practically have the whole village covered with around 70 members, in the near future a web page will be launched for NHW so that members of the public can sign up for updates and view what is happening locally this will be relevant for all in the Stansted North Policing area which includes Birchanger.

We would like to remind you that we have regular meetings for the public to attend and discuss any issues that you may have. We have the Neighbourhood Action Panel (NAP) which is meeting held every six weeks and where we decide what the Neighbourhood Policing Team priorities will be for the next six weeks.

Our Beat Surgeries are still being held on the Mobile Police Station once a month on the following dates; 26th February, 26th March, 30th April at 10:00 - 11:00 and from May they will be at 11:30 - 12:30 on 14th May and 11th of June. The next six months will follow in June.

All the details of our meeting's, the local Neighbourhood Policing Team and their priorities can be found on our website at www.essex.police.uk by looking under "your Neighbourhood". Or please do not hesitate to call us on the Community Mobile; 07801 461 666.

Stansted Neighbourhood Policing Team.

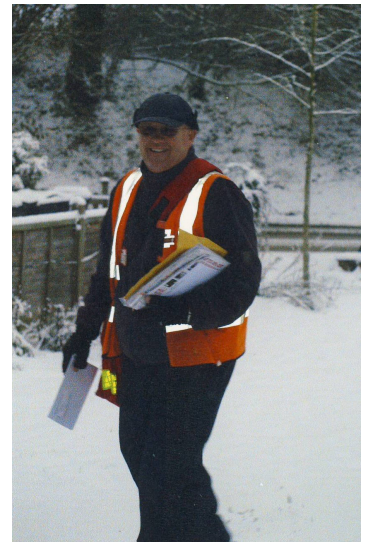
All Hail Dave

Having just delivered some leaflets around the village I feel compelled to pay tribute to our wonderful postman, Dave. Come rain or shine, he is a regular visitor to our doors with a cheery smile, something which I know I take for granted and I am sure that there are others who do the same.

Throughout all of the recent bad weather, Dave continued on his round even on days when other services had to be cancelled. What a trooper!

What prompted me to write this note is that I had never before realised how difficult his job can be. Some residents have kindly installed boxes that are easily accessed so it only takes a few seconds to pop in the letters and then move on to the next address. However, there are many homes in the village where it is nigh on impossible to "post" anything. The letter flaps are low down, flaps are too stiff to open, internal brushes prevent post being inserted etc. Delivering documents to these properties is difficult and time consuming.

I would like to think that we can all do something to help make our postman's job a little easier as a way of thanking Dave for his commitment to us. If you have not already done so, please think about installing a post box near the edge of your property.



Pam Lee

News from St Mary's

Sheriff of Essex comes to St Mary's

On Monday 18th January, Rupert Gosling, Sheriff of Essex, visited our church to play the Auguste Gern organ as part of his fund raising plan for charities in Essex. Between January and April 2010 Rupert is being sponsored to play at least 26 organs in the county and we were lucky enough to be selected as one of his venues.

Sadly, arrangements were made at short notice so it was difficult to get many people in church but for those who were present there was a treat. The original plan was for Rupert to play just a couple of tunes but he loved the organ so much that he spent over 90 minutes playing some fantastic music including a piece from Phantom of the Opera. It was wonderful!

The organ in St Mary's is unique in that it is the only Auguste Gern organ in existent today that is still in its original condition. Mr Martin, our regular organist, does everything he can to keep it in good order and we thank him for that. There is a dearth of organists around the country and the result is that many churches are turning to electronically produced music. We are looking for someone to play at some of our Sunday services and if you know of anyone that may be interested please let us know.

Postponed Epiphany Lunch

Please note that this will now take place following the 11 am service on Sunday the 7th March. Tickets £10 from Pam Lee - 017702171744

Joy's Coffee Morning - Moorswood

Everyone is welcome to join our regulars for coffee and a chat at 10.30 am. Cakes for sale along with books and bric-a-brac.

Over 60's and St Mary's Quiz Night - 10th April at 7.30 pm

This will be our first joint venture so let's make it a good one. Tickets £5 per person, to include supper, from either June Foster (653128) or Pam Lee (07702171744). Bring your own drink.

Churchyard and Ashes Interment Area

Just before Easter, Rosemary and I usually go through the churchyard clearing away the previous years wreaths and other debris. We shall be doing it again this year so if you want to retain anything that you may have left on a loved one's grave, please do this now.

I also take this opportunity to remind everyone that only one pot or vase on each grave. If you have left more than one item on a grave, please remove them now. The churchyard is beginning to look a bit messy, particularly in the old ashes interment area and, if you do not remove the offending pots/plants, we will do so.

Pam Lee

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.gilbey@btinternet.com Elizabeth Godwin, Ken Wheatley, Michael Daw Submissions are welcome but may be edited depending on available space.

You may have noticed we have some new sponsors the first of these is local Italian Restaurant Bada Bing So thank you Peter and Angie for your contribution.

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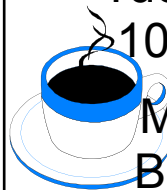
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Village Diary February/March 2010

February

21st 11.00 am St Mary's
Family Service

28th 11.00 am St Mary's
Holy Communion

March

7th 11.00 am St Mary's
Matins followed by
Epiphany Lunch

13th 8.00 pm At the Club
Harry Ray sings
Sinatra

14th 11.00 am St Mary's
Holy Communion

21st 11.00 am St Mary's
Family Service

26th 8.00 pm At the Club
Acoustic Night

28th 11.00 am St Mary's
Holy Communion
Palm Sunday

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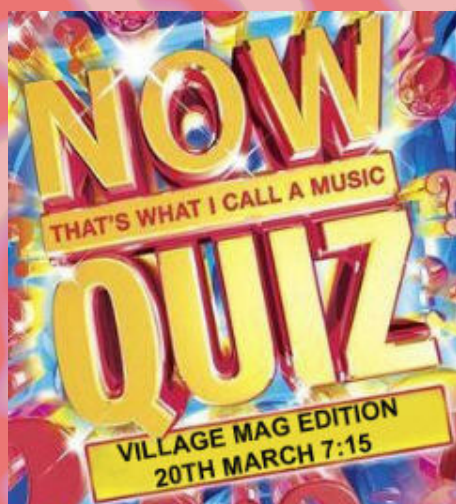
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