

Birchanger

December 2011



Magazine

Issue 108

MERRY CHRISTMAS EVERYBODY

2011 has given us all in Birchanger plenty of food for thought. The year began with snow on the ground and very slow progress at the Churton development which is now more or less complete. The year continued with some controversy over the route of a footpath through the allotments. Then we had the Royal Wedding. In the meantime various pathways have been built in Birchanger wood. The Summer culminated in a very successful fete and Art show. We must try to build on these successes in Olympic year. Merry Christmas to all our readers and sponsors.

Wiki One Year On.

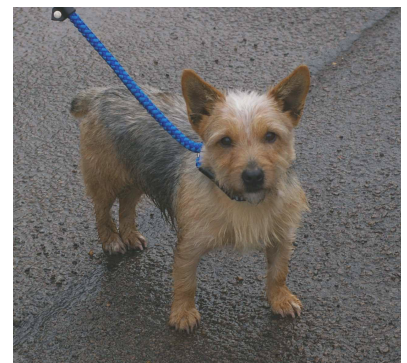
It is just over a year since the little Jack Russell Yorkshire Terrier Crossbred dog was first seen in Birchanger. He alluded attempts to catch him over a six week period and risked his life on the road several times a day. One year on, Wiki knows his new home and his new owners very well. He is friendly with one of the cats he lives with, and has a kind of mutual agreement to ignore the other one.

His road sense, if he ever had any, is still poor. Cyclists, scooters and squirrels can still be very interesting to chase. Somehow he finds ways out of the securest areas but he returns very quickly always. He is still very nervous. He was spotted being maltreated by children and is very wary of them. He is also very wary of men he does not know and anyone with a stick or umbrella in their hands. I just have to bring out a duster with a handle and he is off.

All this paints a sad picture of what he endured before he was caught. He may never get over this. In every other ways he is happy. Loves going out in the car, chasing squirrels and can walk for hours. Loves being with people he trusts.

We intended to have another dog at some point, but frankly were not quite ready. We have a very large family we have to see and sometimes that causes problems. I have been very grateful for all the help I have had with from my friends who have looked after him. He prefers his home comforts as he is nervous in kennels so I am told.

All in all it has been a great year for us all. A steep learning curve on both sides but we would not part with him for the world.





PARISH COUNCIL NEWS

Elizabeth Godwin

So Now We Have no Local Police Station

They may think we are a low crime area, but those who have suffered at the hands of criminal activity might be forgiven for thinking otherwise. The police may tolerate low grade criminal activity, but what is so aptly called "low grade" by the police, does not appear that way to the victims.

For too long we have had to put up with low level crime for which little action seems to be taken. Do the police bosses who make the decisions, not remember that so many criminals, who get away with so called low grade activities, rapidly graduate to serious crime? There should be zero tolerance for crime, whatever the level and proper detection efforts right across the board. Bringing mobile police stations round at times when most people are at work is not the answer either. We need positive, pro-active policing with a bite!

Olympic Route

Uttlesford has been selected to be a pathway for the Olympic Torch on Saturday July 7th, as it makes its way across East Anglia. It is expected to use the B1383, which means it is expected to go through a small part of Birchanger, but not the main village en route to Stansted and Saffron Walden.

Contrary to popular expectations, most of the journey will be made in the Olympic Bus, with runners only carrying the torch through the main towns and villages. It could be a case of blink and you will miss it here. In the 1948 games large teams of runners travelled longer distances to carry the torch. They did not travel over so much of the country but there were far better views for the smaller places along the route.

Stansted Airport is expecting an incredibly busy August. You can forget the night period flights will be 24/7 for much of the time, as teams and visitors arrive. Tempted to go away? Avoid August 13th. That is expected to be the airport's busiest day ever. You have been warned!

Fancy a Jubilee Street Party?

I still have £1000 to spend on the village. Some villages are planning a street party. Anyone fancy having one here? £1000 will not go far but it is a start. Any other ideas?

Speeders are Clocked

You want to be very careful if you are speeding through Birchanger these days. The police are taking a series of readings at spots throughout the village. Speeds of over 46 mph have been clocked so far. The drivers can expect to be clobbered themselves instead of the residents for a change. As most people who live in the lane already know there are a great many people who put the resident's lives at risk on a daily basis. Sadly this has now been proved.

I would not like to face a hefty fine just before Christmas would you? Some people will.

Burglars are in Peak Season

Sadly there are a lot of those out there who prefer someone else to do their Christmas Shopping for them, and then collect it already gift wrapped from an easy access house.

Easy access means no lights on in the evenings. Doors left unlocked at the back or keys in an easy to find "safe place". It also means going away for Christmas and not having somebody around to keep an eye on your home. Telling strangers you will be away is not exactly advisable either.

Please tell the police if you are going to be away. If you do see something suspicious tell them at once on 999. For non-urgent matters please use the new 101 number.

Don't leave packages in your car in full view. Helping themselves to someone else's shopping is another favourite trick.

Burglaries at Christmas have a nasty habit of wrecking everything for their victims. Don't let it happen to you.

Decision Time Looms on Section 106 Agreements

The Parish Council has been holding meetings with Essex County Highways to discuss the traffic improvements to the village following the construction of Forest Hall Park. Recent surveys have confirmed that the traffic in the lane has doubled, and that there is also a serious speeding issue.

The possibilities for work include,

1. Traffic Island at the junction with the B1383 and Birchanger Lane. A mini roundabout is too costly and Highways believe it would incur more

people to cut through Birchanger Lane. An island would benefit those who wish to turn right as well as pedestrians.

2. Closure of Tot Lane and the creation of a Bridleway and Cycle Track there. There have been instances of horrendous driving on Tot Lane, as well as a huge weekly bill to clear up fly-tipping.
3. Speed display units, possibly on a moveable basis on Birchanger Lane.
4. HGV prohibition orders with appropriate signage.
5. Entrance gates at both ends of the lane.
6. A pedestrian crossing near the Church Hall.

All these possibilities are expensive and we shall not be able to have them all. Highways would like to know what you think about the suggestions now. They will be meeting with members of the Parish Council in January having worked up a scheme. It may be that you would like others to be considered.

The team will be at the Annual Parish Meeting in April, when the proposals will be out for official consultation. Your views prior to this would be appreciated. Please call me on 812793.

Watch Out, There are Still Travellers About

The people who have caused the problems at Dale Farm in recent months did not belong to the true gypsy community. They were Irish tinkers who come over seasonally, mostly from homes back in Ireland. Some who were actually resident in this country actually left homes to join the travellers at Dale Farm over the past year.

The problem is that the temporary accommodation they are finding is just that, and there are many open spaces around Birchanger which travellers have been "eyeing up" in the past few months. I have reported several large white vans towing large caravans around the Birchanger roundabout to the police in the last few weeks and they have acted on this.

The land opposite the ambulance station is not secure and is owned by the Highways Agency. The fence is broken in places and access would be very easy. There are many other such sites, one on the B 1383 was used last summer.

I cannot be around all the time, but anyone can report a traveller sitting to the police. If they are parked anywhere, call 999, or the Duty Officer on 07801 461666. When the landowner co-operates with the police at the time the travellers arrive, they can be removed immediately, as happened in Takeley. If they do not solve the problem with all its attendant aggravation, it will be around for months at best. You have been warned.

Christmas Controversy.

Everyone loves a Nativity Play, particularly those who are related to one of the participants. Everyone also wants to take pictures and to film the event as well. The problem is that nobody knows where these pictures end up. Some end up in local newspapers, some are posted on the internet and are freely accessible to all. The difficulty is that children across the country are in situations, where at some point in their young lives, they have been victims at the hands of a parent, relative, so called friend. They are in a situation where their whereabouts have to be protected to ensure their continuing safety or well being. Sadly just about every school in the country has had, or currently has, this situation. The only way of managing this is for the schools to be in control and to see every picture opportunity is taken under close supervision. Photo sessions are arranged, but for those who are currently caring for the child only.

After all nobody wants to see a child's Christmas ruined just because a published picture led to the exposure of their protected identity.

Birchanger Wood Celebrates the Opening of Another Footpath.

Birchanger Wood Trust has managed to find the money to complete the second path in its work to make all parts of the wood available to those with wheelchairs and buggies. It was opened by Caroline Spelman last month and is complete with benches and picnic areas. The wood was shown at its very best. The day was a beautiful warm Autumn day with still enough leaves left to make a colourful backdrop. Only one tree was lost to create the path. Birchanger Scouts have been very busy planting new elms as well.

The wood is fit, lovely and well worth a visit. More improvements which will retain the natural aspect of the wood are planned.

Open Gardens Has Money For Birchanger Projects.

Birchanger Open Gardens will be discussing ways to spend the money they raised at the Art Exhibition in September to help small projects which individuals and groups may have which will be of benefit to the Birchanger community when they meet in January. They need ideas and proposals from you. If you have an idea or project which you think might be helped by someone or some group in Birchanger please contact Sheila Devereux on 813843 before January 12th. something pleasant to think about over Christmas perhaps?

Birchanger boy takes rugby County trials in his stride

Birchanger resident, year 9 Birchwood student and Bishop's Stortford RFC player Daniel Crossley's rugby prowess has been recognised with two County trials over the past month

Dan was put forward for selection by Birchwood High School and he was selected to attend an floodlit evening selection session at Letchworth RFC on the 7th of November. It was a cold evening but a successful session even after his dad, Mark hit a deer while driving there!

Unfortunately the session ended with Dan sustaining a neck injury and so all thoughts of progression were shelved, but, a week later all concerned were delighted to hear the news that the selectors had seen enough in the first session to invite Dan back for the next stage of the process

Dan, a back row player (6, 7 or 8) for Bishop's Stortford RFC's Under 14 age group was especially pleased "I thought my chance had gone when I hurt my neck in the first trial, but now I have another chance to impress"

Old Albanians RFC in St Albans was chosen for the next level of trials and so around 40 hopefuls pitched up on a sunny Sunday afternoon to do battle. It was a fierce session but it was conducted in a disciplined and competitive manner, the physio having his work cut out for sure!

We don't know how Dan got on yet but even if he goes no further this year, Birchanger should be proud to be represented by athletes of all ages, shapes and sizes who commit to their sports and, if the opportunity comes along, fly the flag for our village at representative level



11.11.11 in France

While Birchanger marked Armistice Sunday in the usual way with a big input from the Scouts and Brownies, in France they were also commemorating the day, but there it is always on November 11th as that day is a Bank Holiday there.

Two Birchanger residents, Peter and Brenda Cook, moved to Croisilles in northern France last summer. They are integrating quickly into the small village not far from the Somme in Northern France and have made many new friends. There are five war grave cemeteries in the village where soldiers of all nationalities who fought in the great war are buried, including many British soldiers as well as the crew of a Lancaster bomber which crashed in the vicinity. They told me what happened at Croisilles on 11.11.11.

The local mayor and a large group of residents in Croisilles met at the Mairie before driving to the civic cemetery. Every grave had a large bunch of chrysanthemums which had been placed upon it, as is the French tradition, on All Saints Eve on October 31st. They were accompanied by a policeman in his ceremonial white kepi and white gloves, with the traditional standard bearer.

After a minutes silence they went to the nearby British Ceremony where two wreaths were laid on the war memorial there. They then went to the graves where the crew of a Lancaster bomber are buried, before returning to the main square. There the children read letters and poems from the two wars which they had researched themselves. The Mayor made a speech after which the bugler sounded the Last Post and the band played the Marseillaise.

Then the company all retired to the Town Hall for Champagne, or Kir served with dainty biscuits.

The children, like our Scout, Cubs and Brownies were closely involved throughout; something which is very important in the struggle to find world peace.

In Birchanger the Poppy Appeal raised £3200 this year, well done to all those who made it happen.

Birchanger Sports and Social Club

Christmas opening hours And entertainment

Xmas Eve 11.30 to 12am With Hit and Run at 8pm

Xmas Day 12 to 2pm

Boxing Day 12 to 5pm Whisky Draw at 12.30 pm

Bank Holiday Tuesday 27th 12 to 5pm

**New Year's Eve 12 12.30am Music through the ages
Disco at 8pm**

New Year's Day 12 5pm

**Bank Holiday Monday 2nd Jan
12 to 3 pm and 7 pm to 10.30pm**

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BETWEEN 24/12 AND 2/1/ 12**

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School News

Happy Christmas Everyone.

It is a special time of year. I hope it is a time when troubles can be parked for a while and everyone in Birchanger can enjoy a truly Happy Christmas Season. School News.

Chance to Try the School Dinners

Parents and governors were invited to sample a school dinner at the school last month. The weeks menus were the ones the children deemed to be their favourites. There were the usual choices and a cold lunch or jacket potato on offer as well. The menus included fish and chips and roast chicken in the course of the week. Curry has also become a favourite dish, with wonderful smells coming from the kitchen as it is prepared. Everything is freshly prepared. There are no frozen dinners. The bread is always fresh for the cold lunches. Children know the menus two weeks in advance so that they can make their selections in advance. That way nothing goes to waste. School dinners have come a very long way since I was at school. Maybe I should lunch there more often. It is hardly surprising that the numbers of children taking them continue to rise all the time. Taste the dinners week proved to be hugely successful with both parents and children. Mrs Quadri, the chef found herself preparing up to 82 dinners a day. Enjoyable, but if the school is to operate a canteen, more staff will definitely be required.

11.11.11.

Remembrance Day with the once in a lifetime date of 11.11.11. It was a day when expectant mothers hoped that their babies would arrive, and a special one in the school as the children remembered those who had died in war in their own particular way. They especially remembered the family of the most recent soldier to die in Afghanistan. They thought about all those children's lifetimes, there really will be peace o'er all the world.

Non Uniform Days with a Purpose

It is always fun to ditch the school uniform and come to school wearing something completely different for a change. At Birchanger it happens with a purpose. The first day was for Children in Need. The school council decreed that nobody needed to get dressed at all as everyone was to come to school in their pyjamas, and if they just happened to be spotty, so much the better.

Throughout the day they thought about children less well off than themselves and set about raising money to help them. A very spotty fun day, which benefited children way beyond Birchanger.

The following Friday uniforms were dumped again. The penalty for this was a red or green item for their Christmas Tombola. This has to be one of the best ways to get a tombola together. Again it is fun, easy to do, and it really works.

Christmas Fair Makes a Healthy Profit

Times may be hard, but the Birchanger School Christmas Fair was well supported again this year. There were several innovations and many willing helpers from parents and staff alike. Over £1600 was taken, and while at the time of writing there are still bills to be paid, Barclays Bank have promised to match whatever the profit turns out to be. This very good deal should end up the at least £2000 for the benefit of the school.

Birchanger School First Ever Strike Closure?

Birchanger School has never been closed for a strike in recent memory, possibly ever. last month while the children enjoyed a day playing in the late Autumn sunshine, three out of four teachers felt so strongly about their current situation that they were prompted to take a day out on strike.

The decision to take this action was not taken lightly. The decision to close the school was taken only after the governor's had considered the situation carefully and reluctantly concluded that there was no safe way that the 100 children in the school could be supervised appropriately and safely on the day of the strike. Parents had offered to help, but in these health and safety ruled days, the offer could not be accepted.

The children on the whole did not mind at all. It was their parents who bore the brunt of the situation and many had to take the day off.

We live in a democracy and we have been taught to respect each others views; this being the case days like this are to be expected occasionally. Not easy for the adults, although non striking staff all turned up to school and did some vital work in planning, organisation and clearing in preparation for one of the busiest fortnights in the school year.

Birchanger C of E Primary School

Job Vacancies

Learning Support Assistants (part time) (2 fixed term posts)

Band 2 to mid point (range £14,733 to £15,726 pro rata)

Start date: January 2012

30 hours per week (negotiable) term time to August 2014
17.5 hours per week term time to August 2014

If you have an abundance of energy and an unending supply of patience, we have two pupils who need you. You will need to have worked with children with special needs, and for one post experience with children on the autistic spectrum would be desirable. For the other post you will need to work with the class teacher and specialist teacher to deliver a personalised programme of support.

We are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and expect all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. The posts will be subject to an enhanced CRB disclosure.

If you are interested in applying, please contact Mrs Warbrick, Headteacher, at Birchanger Primary School on 01279 812362 or admin@birchanger.essex.sch.uk to request an application pack. Visits to the school are welcomed. Closing date for application is 6th January 2012 and interviews will be held the week beginning 9th January.

More Volunteers Needed.

Birchanger Scout Group is very active and very well used. Unfortunately the group does need more help than it is currently getting and this means that more volunteers are urgently needed.

If you think you would like to help the scouts on an occasional basis, or would like to know more, please call the Birchanger Scout Leader Kim Perry on 0791 72762790. She can also be contacted by email at BirchangerScouts@yahoo.com.

St Mary's Epiphany Lunch

At the Church Hall

12.00 pm Sunday January 15th

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Village Diary December/January

December

23rd 7.00 pm St Mary's
Evening Carol Service
24th 8.00 pm At the Club
Hit & Run
25th 11.00 am St Mary's
Christmas Day
Family Service
26th At the Club
Whiskey Draw
31st 8.00 pm At the Club
Music through the Ages
Disco

January

1st 11.00 am St Mary's
Matins
7th 8.00 pm At the Club
Draggs Aloud
8th 11.00 am St Mary's
Holy Communion
15th 11.00 am St Mary's
Family Service
15th 12.00 pm Church Hall
Epiphany lunch
21st 8.00 pm At the Club
The Jags
22nd 11.00 am St Mary's
Holy Communion
29th 11.00 am St Mary's
Matins

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