

Birchanger

February 2015



Magazine

Issue 146

TRAFFIC CALMING NEEDED!

Now we have a brand new sign and a gate arrangement at each end of Birchanger Lane, which is supposed to help to slow down traffic, or encourage people to use an alternative route other than speeding through the village.

However, the very best traffic calming of all, has been the closure of Tot Lane. For the vulnerable on Birchanger Lane, this has been a bonus, and the old question arises, should it be closed permanently?

We have had a really bad few months of traffic incidents



There have been two quite serious accidents by the dangerous bend by the guest house in the last three months, one causing a car to crash through the fence and end up straddled across two of the cottages front gardens



and another a delivery van that was too badly damaged to drive away and had to wait to be removed by a breakdown vehicle. As well as a close shave for two buses at Duck End. Please see Paul Ferret's Photo.

Fun and games on the buses



PARISH COUNCIL NEWS

Elizabeth Godwin

More plans for the Junction 8 Services

I always feel uneasy when I see more plans for the service station. It is a mess as there simply is no proper entrance or exit directly from the motorway, thanks to the cut backs imposed when the M11 was built and the services commissioned. The result is that Junction 8 is seriously overloaded, the access to the services seriously blocked at times, which in turn causes congestion right across the roundabout. A relatively small amount of money at the construction stage would have saved all this tweaking to try to ease the flow and to improve the facilities for the traffic using it.

The plan is to widen the access road to the services. This is a better option than constructing an additional access on our Birchanger roundabout as was proposed a few years ago. If that ever happens, it would become almost impossible to get out of Birchanger Lane. It is bad enough already.

There is also some internal tweaking of the caravan and parking facilities and there will be alterations to the bank, but the overall height should not be lowered. It is a very busy service area. This should have been anticipated, as it is the right timing from the channel ports for the drivers to need to stop. That was not foreseen by highways, although it certainly should have been.

You can contact the Highway Rangers

The Highway Rangers have been with us for sometime now and are a small team who work on small highway and pathway projects in Uttlesford. They clear pathways, cut verges and hedges and tackle all the smaller jobs which Essex would not have the time to do. They have worked on various sites in Birchanger. They can also clean and repair non illuminated signs.

Maybe you know a piece of land owned by Essex County Council or the Parish Council, which has been neglected and is sorely in need of a good clean up? Did you know that you do not have to go through the hassle of contacting Essex County Council or the Parish Council? You can in fact contact the Rangers themselves without reference to anyone else. They can be reached on 01799 510 442.

Why are we in such a mess with our Health Services?

For many of us it has been a long and very difficult winter, a prolonged virus at Christmas time meant that many people struggled with their illness only to end up attempting to see their GP and finally getting the antibiotics for the secondary infections which they so obviously required. If they called 111 they often encountered ill prepared and medically untrained operators who sent them unnecessarily to hospital. GP surgeries are not open at weekends, pharmacists are often helpful but cannot always supply the drugs the patient needs. If you went to hospital you might have found yourself waiting for hours on a stretcher, as hospital wards have been closed to save money.

The population has risen and this was never going to work. We need more facilities not less. There is a far greater demand for GP services and £700 million injected into health services is not going to be enough to open wards as well as to increase the number of GPs throughout the UK. Sticking plasters are not the right remedy for an amputated limb.

We need more money in our health services, but it must be spent where it will do the most good. Try providing more GPs, more beds, more hospital staff and more ambulances for a start. If there was better social care for our elderly to keep them in the community this would help both them and the rest of us.

It never ceases to amaze me, if we can see this, why are the powers that be so blinkered? It will cost, but better health is an asset to be valued by all.

Do you shop In Saffron Walden?

I do and I love the town, but may have some difficulty parking there in the next few months as Waitrose remodels the store and Fairycroft Car Park.

This will be a tricky time for everyone, but there are some new parking arrangements to assist shoppers. Waitrose will run a shuttle bus from the Swan Meadow car park to a specially set up bus stop in Hill Street.

There will also be a specially set up car park on Saturdays only at the Gold Zone Car Park in Saffron Walden High School with a special shuttle bus into the town. Other designated car parks will be operating as usual.

On Saturdays there will also be the car park at the council offices for public use.

Traders in the town are worried about the affect this will have on their trade, and it is hoped that these measures will help them as well.

The Councils have their eyes on your burger.

The latest state of the county's health annual report has just been published. As expected it wants to promote a healthier lifestyle with more walking or cycling to work, more use of the gym and Exercise clubs of all sorts, but it is also taking a look at just what is in your takeaway. They want to make it more healthy for a start. That means reducing calories, chucking out salt, improving the nutrition generally. This will also mean less sugar and fat as well as the possibility that the menus could change and alternative takeaways will be on offer.

Not surprisingly they are not targeting larger outlets, can't see this going down too well at Macdonalds, although they do say they are trying to make their menus more healthy. They will go to medium and small outlets first. It is understandable, as an awful lot of common illnesses are blamed on the fact that most of the population is quite simply too fat, and if we do not do something about it, they will. After all it is costing the NHS an awful lot of money which is actually needed elsewhere.

It might even be that we like the new choices on the menu and the healthier burgers. However I can't help looking forward to the fish and chips I am going to have later. Light batter, I wonder. Well a start maybe.

How to choose your healthcare option.

We cannot always find a pressing need to see a doctor on a convenient day. One of the worst times is over a weekend with a bank holiday attached. The local chemist is not open, the GP is taking the bank holiday too and you are totally uncertain about the way forward to seek advice. Is it bad enough for hospital treatment? Would pain killers do? You just don't know. It does not seem to be an emergency but you do need help.

Despite all the reports in the press NHS 111 is staffed by trained advisers who are supported by a team of doctors and nurses. They will assess your condition and advise you on your next steps.

The Emergency Department at Princess Alexandra

Hospital is not for non urgent treatment. It is not a surgery for those who cannot see their doctor over the weekend. Advice is there from 111 and they are, despite allegations

to the contrary, there to help and advise you.

They will know if there is an accessible out of hours GP service and will direct you to it if this is possible.

In the meantime, make sure your common cure remedies are in stock and up to date. If you have a long term condition, keep the prescriptions filled and remember to actually take the tablets. Some of us are very bad at that!

Will our railway system be able to cope with the increased demands of extra houses?

The government decrees that everyone has to build thousands of new houses, not just in Uttlesford but right across the south east. We are wondering if they actually care about the effects these new houses will have on over crowded roads, bus services and the under provision even now of our railway system.

There is a new consultation process out now, looking at what is needed and the funding necessary for the railway system which serves us. Needless to say the funding will not be nearly enough for what is really required. Everyone knows that what is what we really require for commuters and airport passengers are four track routes and larger stations. However at the London end, this would require so many houses to be knocked down, that tunneling and access to alternative stations at the London end is an expensive but necessary option. Fine but the funding from anywhere is by no means certain. We even need a new tunnel at Stansted, but nobody wants to pay for that either.

There are the same old arguments, lengthen the trains so they can take more people, but that will mean that the platforms at Elsenham, Newport and Great Chesterford will have to be made longer too. Even then there will not be enough capacity on the train between 8 and 9am in the morning.

The forecasts all assume that Stansted will not grow above the allocated single runway capacity. It is not surprising that so many people are wondering just what is really happening to development in this country and why this cannot be reasonably spread to other regions who would welcome it. Do we have to wait until the south east has become so crowded and polluted that people cannot wait to move elsewhere and the trend is finally reversed.

In the days of developing internet facilities and the increasing skills of the population it is becoming a much easier option to work anywhere from home.

It is official, start walking or die!

A recent study in Cambridge alongside one in America has discovered that lack of exercise is a bigger killer than obesity. This follows a study of over 300,000 Europeans through a 12 year period. The researchers discovered that 50% more of those who died, did so from lack of exercise and not because they were simply too fat.

Apparently all it takes is just 20 minutes a day and you don't have to have a dog either, so get the boots and start walking!

Wonder why they chose Europeans? We have always assumed that the Americans were even fatter than us!

Rapid route to better sight

It is well known that getting a cataract is just yet another thing which happens to people as they grow older. The wait to see the ophthalmic surgeon can be long and your eyesight is deteriorating all the time.

Harlow's Princess Alexandra Hospital has taken all this on board and has started a speedy 6 week process from diagnosis to surgery. As soon as it is decided that you need an operation to remove the cataract you go for the necessary assessment on that day. Within forty eight hours someone will telephone you to arrange your surgery, to actually happen within the next 6 weeks.

You may have experienced the new service, I hope so, as too many in Birchanger have waited too long for their operations. If you needed the operation, and had it under the new fast track system, how was it for you?

New electronic system at Princess Alexandra Hospital

At least that is what they tell us, and if not now, it will happen soon. The wicked side of me tells me that we will know when it has happened, as our hospital appointment system will, temporarily we hope, become even more chaotic, the hopeful side says that we may eventually have more co-ordinated care.

We all know how irritating it is when nobody knows anything about our past history, as it is embedded in the bottom of our enormous files and try finding it in that maze. As for our prescriptions, we need to remember to take our list with us, as the probability of forgetting what was on it is very high. Of course we do not expect anyone to remember us from appointment to appointment, but at

least we should not waste valuable appointment time going over the information again and again.

GPs will be able to access the information as well. It will also aid nurses and midwives in the district so community care should improve as the information is shared between the different specialities. It will be of great benefit in A and E as your medical information will be there even if you are unconscious.

There are inevitably going to be gremlins in the system to start with. Hopefully we will not be the ones who are caught up in it. The system will be put into place over a weekend, and will take time to become fully effective. We are told it is confidential, but there is very little information that the cleverest hacker cannot find. I console myself by thinking that these clever hackers cannot possibly be interested in me!

Still time to register to vote!

The general election is about 75 days away, but you will not be playing any part in it or in the local elections for District and Parish Council if you have not registered to vote.

There is time to put this right. You can register at www.gov.uk/register-to-vote.gov.uk or contact elections@uttlesford.gov.uk or you can talk to someone on 01279 510300.

Don't miss this one. If you are uncertain of your eligibility to vote, such as newly moved, students away for part of the year call the number above.

Annual Parish Meeting

The Annual Parish Meeting will take place on Wednesday March 18th at 8pm in the Village Hall .
Everyone is very welcome.

Deliverer required

The Magazine needs a reliable deliverer for the bottom end of Birchanger Lane including Hillside cottages
There about 25 to 30 copies to deliver once a month

If you would like to help
and can spare about 30 minutes each month

Please contact
Trevor Stone on 812994 or
The Editor on 816171

Annual Parish Meeting

Wednesday March 18th
At 8.00 pm

In the Church Hall
Everyone is Welcome

BIRCHANGER SPORTS AND SOCIAL CLUB JANUARY 2015

CLUB SUPPORTS ENGLAND TO RUGBY VICTORY:



February saw the return of the ever popular 6 nations rugby tournament and the highly anticipated Wales v England match. As with many key sporting fixtures, the club were proud to show the game on their giant HD screen with the new professional sound system to a host of loyal fans. The game was Wales's to lose and in the first half it looked like England were going to give the match away, but an incredible rally in the second half supported by an enthusiastic club crowd took them to a nail-biting last-minute victory. Many people who entered the club that evening had little or no interest in the rugby, but it is certain that everyone (bar a few of our respected Welsh members) left huge England and rugby fans. We will continue to show key matches in the club over the coming weeks so make sure you come along for the next best thing to being in the stadium.

NEW MENU:



February sees the launch of our new fresh food menu. The club has long prided itself on its great value, great tasting food offering. This year we are trialling a new menu with our members to ensure we continue to offer the very best of what people are looking for. Long standing members will be pleased to see that classic favourites such as sausage and chips, steaks and jacket potatoes remain alongside lighter bites and child sized portions for the family. We are also looking to re-inforce the freshness of our items with regular specials and a focus on locally sourced ingredients such as the freshly caught fish that goes into our fish and chips. So if you fancy a night away from cooking, but don't want to pay through the nose for good quality then come along and give us a try.

PRINCE OF POP COMES TO BIRCHANGER:

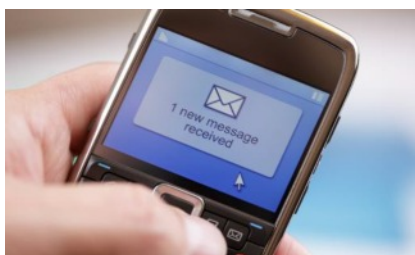


February 28th should be a real treat for fans of classic music as we see the virtual return of the prince of pop himself, Michael Jackson (well perhaps not quite). Rory Jackson, is a long term fan and dedicated tribute act, whose passion for all things wacko jacko translates into a great evening of classic hits and ballads and most of all great entertainment. Whether you are feeling Bad, are up for a Thriller Night or simply want to treat that Man in the Mirror, remember, You Are Not Alone, so put on your best Billy Jeans and come down to the club!



Live Entertainment - Great Food - Excellent Bar - Snooker - Darts - Pool – Football - Cricket - Bowls

LATEST NEWS STRAIGHT TO YOUR PHONE:



If you are interested in receiving a free text on a weekly basis to remind you of everything happening down the club, it's simples! Just text the word 'YES' to 0786 002 0400.

BOWLERS GETTING IT UP!



This month will see the final stage of the club transformation taking place as we erect the bowls club pavilion. The club are receiving a brand new purpose built pavilion on their green to ensure they have the facilities they need. The club always welcomes new players of all ages, so if you are interested do get in touch.

ENTERTAINMENT

28th Feb – Rory Jackson as Michael Jackson



It don't matter if you're black or white...

14th March – Tequila

Back by popular demand this trio will set your hearts racing with some incredible tunes



28th March – Rachel's Robot Army



Rachel's Robot Army - A cover band like no other! Formed in the deep, dark recesses of Space (Ok so it was Essex) R.R.A guarantees to have you rocking out like no other!

Treasure Chest – 20th Feb + 06th/20th March

Wheel of Fortune – 27th Feb



Weekly events At the Club:

Weekly	Event	When
Saturdays	Meat Draw	1.00pm
Saturdays	Bingo Lottery	Ask bar staff
Mondays	Quiz night	9.00pm
Wednesdays	Steak night	Evenings
Thursdays	Bingo night	08.30pm
Fridays	Tote Draw	Evenings

Birchanger Sports & Social Club, 229 Birchanger Lane, Birchanger CM23 5QJ Tel: 01279 813441 email: club@birchanger.com Follow us at: www.birchangerclub.com

News from St Mary's

St Mary's Birchanger Annual General Meeting

As you can see, it is the Annual General Meeting on the 8th March following the Holy Communion service at 11am. If you want to find out what is going on in church or get involved, come along. The meeting usually does not take too long (less than an hour). We really do need some people to join the PCC to bring in some fresh ideas. Meetings take place 4 times a year and we are a friendly bunch so you will be made most welcome. After all the work that has been done to bring the interior of the church up to scratch, come and help decide what should happen next. We also need someone to volunteer to audit the books once a year. Cheryl Dare has carried out this inspection for the past 4 or 5 years but now Pam Lee is the Treasurer, this is no longer appropriate. Could you do this?

Brenda Hayden

We were very saddened to hear of the passing of Brenda Hayden and extend our sympathies to Harry and family. I have fond memories of playing Badminton doubles in the Church hall with her during the 1970s.

Christine Waterman

Christine Waterman was also lost to the village in late January. She had lived in Birchanger Lane since the 1970s. We also extend our sympathies to Trevor Sage and Christine's family.

Birchanger All Girls Society

Come along and join us on the last Wednesday of every Month
Meeting Room in Village Hall
Doors open at 7.30. for 8 – 10 p.m.

'A Warm Welcome to all Newcomers'

£5.00 for annual membership and £2.00 subs. each month
Come and give us a try £2.00 for the first two meetings before becoming a member

Forthcoming Events

Wed 25th Feb SOSA dance fitness demonstration
Wed 25th March The Birchanger Voices are performing

Tel. Angie – 817376, Michelle - 814481, Barbara - 813007 Rosemary - 814678

Tea Room At the Church Hall



Every Wednesday

2.00 till 4.00



Everyone welcome

In aid of Hall maintenance funds

Table Top Sale

For maintenance of the Hall

Saturday 28th February 2015

1 till 4 pm

£10 per table

Tea and Coffee available

For enquiries ring Trudy Revell
01279 812309

School News

Fun in the snow

The first snow of the winter meant a struggle in to school for the children and their parents. Mostly everyone made it, for once late arrival was entirely understood.

Everyone was rewarded, the sun came out, the snow was fresh and everyone thoroughly enjoyed playtime in the snow. A school day to be remembered.

Literacy Week Fun.

Once again the school was full of new books to read, test, and enjoy for a week at Birchanger School.

There were new books in the classrooms to work with, review and enjoy, as well as a specially themed non uniform day when everyone came as their favourite fictional character.

The very best costumes were the ones which were home made, either by the children themselves or with a little help from the family. It was incredibly hard to choose the winners, one from each year group.

They showed off their costumes to the parents at the usual Friday afternoon assembly. It was a colourful occasion and a week which had been very much enjoyed by all. The parents also had the opportunity to buy any particular favourites.

Despite all the fun it was a week where knowledge and hopefully a life long love and use of books was encouraged, meaning the children will always enjoy reading, whatever else they do.

Popcorn party for a real friend to Birchanger School.

Ladybirds class said farewell to Mrs Booker who left the school last month after over 20 years service to the school. She has cared for so many of the youngest children at the school, some of whom are now parents themselves.

Starting school for the first time is an experience many of us will always remember. Mrs Booker helped to make transition of all the children from home to school a happy experience for everyone. She was a big support to all the teachers who have worked with the youngest children through the years in the school

The children held a popcorn party for her, having specially prepared the popcorn themselves. Farewells were said at the Friday assembly, which provided a chance for parents and older children to say goodbye as well. Everyone will miss her.

NEWS FROM BIRCHANGER WOOD TRUST

Hello Everyone

February is an excellent time to come along to Birchanger Wood and exercise off those extra ounces won over the Christmas period.

Birchanger Wood has approximately 5.5 kilometres of all weather, 2meter wide, winding woodland paths (on the Stortford side of the A120 and, just over 1 kilometres of paths on the Birchanger side of the A120.

If you are coming in to the Stortford side, park in Heath Row, approximately opposite no.148 Heath Row and walk up the public footpath into the Wood.

If you are coming in from Birchanger, please park respectfully in Birchanger Lane and take any one of the several public footpaths which take you down to the Wood. The shortest route is via the footpath which goes around St Mary's church and then on down to the Wood. But please take care as the public footpaths can be very muddy and slippery.

Once on our paths you will find much less mud than most of the local public footpaths, so there is less time spent looking at where to place your feet and much more time for you to enjoy the woodland environment. To use the paths is free and they are available 365 days a year.

Come on down!

Daphne Wallace-Jarvis

secretary@birchangerwoodtrust.org

Clicking with the Xhosa, a township Odyssey



Our next trip saw us driving to a place called Knysna (pronounced Nize-na). The drive took us over the Outaniqua pass, and once again through stunning mountains, down into the town called George which could have been plucked from the Cotswolds or the South downs, an absolute world away from the next excursion that had been arranged for us!!

So after a quick stop in George for refreshments and refueling we found our way in the mid afternoon to our hotel high on a hill overlooking the lagoon at Knysna. The Lagoon is a natural warm water estuary where the Knysna river meets the Indian ocean. It is now a popular tourist destination being right at the centre of the 'Garden Route' at the point where the Western Cape ends and the vast expanse of the Eastern Cape begins. It was once the centre of a vibrant timber industry sending hardwoods from the Knysna forest to destinations all over the world.

When we saw the words "township tour" included in our itinerary we had the natural reaction of most people and were very apprehensive about going ahead. However the tour company assured us it was perfectly safe and so it was that the following morning we were met by our guide 'Sandilay' who explained that he was from the Xhosa tribe who made up much of the population in this area. One of the peculiarities of the Xhosa people is their ability to speak with their tongue clicking the roof of the mouth, thus producing a sound during their speech which is almost unintelligible to our European ears! It is also, as we found out, impossible for us to imitate. Barbara & I could not master it despite Sandilay's best attempts to teach us!

"Where your hotel is, the place where white people stay, we call them Whiteys, but where I am taking you is where the black people live and we call them Blackies". I pointed out to the guide somewhat embarrassingly that we don't use a term like that in our country, but he could not see the problem so I didn't pursue the point. On entering the township the first thing you notice is the closeness of the houses to one another, nobody has very much room, there is very little outside space and the roads are in poor condition compared to the rest of South Africa. However this did not seem to affect the people, everywhere we went we were met by smiling faces and the warmest of welcomes. First stop was the barbershop set inside an old ships container, where young men who all wanted to look like Eddie Murphy or Will Smith sat on dilapidated plastic garden chairs waiting for their turn in the barbers chair. Before we left they taught us the "African Handshake" a strange combination of up down and up again movements. Next stop the African Braai, the biggest barbeque I have ever seen with dozens of people sitting, drinking beer and eating enormous chunks of meat with music blaring from every direction. By this time our initial wariness of being in the township had been well and truly dispelled by the friendly nature of everyone we met and the fact that Sandilay was known to everyone meant that we felt very safe.

Next two stops were quite a contrast, the one being the local Christian Church, a bigger version of the corrugated iron houses all around it, which was filled with singing, clapping and joyful people and the other the home of the 'Sangoma' or witch doctor! She turned out to be a middle aged African woman who explained the benefits of potions made from roots of plants, medical cures using the bark of trees and other natural ingredients, and all manner of herbal remedies to benefit the human condition. Finally Sandilay persuaded me to try the homemade beer used on all occasions such as weddings births etc. I have to say it was the most sour concoction with a soapy head that took some swallowing. The Sangoma wields a lot of power in these communities and most people would not take a life-changing decision without consulting her as she connects them to their ancestors and this is very important in their culture. So it seems that as well as being a modern democratic country, there is a lot of tribal tradition that is alive and well in South Africa.

Before we entered the witch doctors house a few small children had gathered outside to see the strange white couple visiting their Sangoma. Barbara indicated to our guide that we'd like to give them a sweet lollipop each and he told them to wait outside until we came out. Imagine our surprise when as we left the house dozens of children had turned up lured by the promise of a sweet treat, so many in fact that we had to buy more lollies but it was worth it to see their happy faces as each received a coloured lolly and ran off laughing.

I like to think our eyes had been opened to life in a township and I admire the people who live in such poor conditions, and yet still have spirit and laughter in their lives. However there is a long way to go before these people will feel the benefit of the new democracy they are now part of, but life is improving slowly and they appear to be patient and hopeful about the future, I wish them good luck.

ANY MAKE, YEAR, CONDITION

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Village Diary

February/March

February

22nd 11.00 am St Mary's
Holy Communion

March

1st 11.00 am St Mary's
Matins

8th 11.00 am St Mary's
Holy Communion
followed by AGM

15th 11.00 am St Mary's
Family Service

22nd 11.00 am St Mary's
Holy Communion

29th 11.00 am St Mary's
Matins

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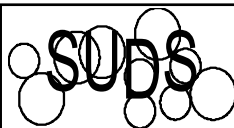
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