

Birchanger Village Magazine

February 2021

Issue 217



Uttlesford District Council withdraw objections to Stansted Expansion!

The proposals to allow Stansted to expand to a passenger throughput of 43 million passenger a year (mppa) - about the same size as Gatwick - will be decided by a public inquiry which began on 12 January. A panel of three planning inspectors will preside over the Inquiry which is currently scheduled to finish in March.

For more than three and a half years, Stop Stansted Expansion ('SSE') has spearheaded local opposition to the expansion proposals since they were first announced in June 2017. Stansted Airport originally expected Uttlesford District Council ('UDC') to approve its proposals without fuss, and within three months.

There is a sense of disbelief that the Government has insisted that this public inquiry must start at the height of a pandemic. Stansted currently has permission for 35mppa and its highest ever throughput is just over 28mppa. Its passenger numbers started to decline in mid-2019, long before the pandemic.

Stansted handled just 7 million passengers last year and it is expected to take many years to return to pre-pandemic levels. There is no urgency whatsoever to increase Stansted's permitted throughput from 35mppa to 43mppa and, apart from the huge cost of a Public Inquiry, there are obvious risks in holding this in the midst of a pandemic, even though it has now been decided that the actual hearings will take place online.

SSE has pledged to do its utmost to fight the expansion proposals "tooth and nail" even though UDC officials have now, behind the scenes, agreed to approve the airport expansion plans subject to a few "hollow" conditions. The planning inspectors have however said that they are unimpressed with this and that they wish to hear all of the evidence, not least from SSE, before reaching a decision.

SSE has appointed two QCs and four external consultants to assist its own local expert team at the Inquiry and will be presenting evidence on 11 topics.

Brian Ross

Free Covid-19 tests

Free Covid-19 tests are now available for those WITHOUT SYMPTOMS who live and work in Uttlesford.



Around 1 in 3 people who have coronavirus have no symptoms so could be spreading the virus without knowing, and this testing is designed to identify these people and make sure they self-isolate. The tests – known as the PCR test – are particularly aimed at key workers, those who have informal caring roles and those who cannot work from home.

You will be able to pick up a test for yourself or people in your immediate family/support bubble from:

- Turpin's Indoor Bowling Club, Saffron Walden CB11 3EG
- The Rowena Davey Centre, Great Dunmow CM6 1EQ

You do not need to book an appointment, just turn up within the opening hours (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm). The centres will operate while stocks of test kits last.

Help Available

There is help available for picking up shopping and collecting prescriptions etc., for the vulnerable or self-isolating from the Uttlesford Community Response Hub on 03333 408 218.

This service is highly recommended by everyone in Birchanger who has had cause to use it. It is hard getting shopping delivery slots even if you are vulnerable these days and the vulnerable are increasingly finding themselves forced into having to go out for essential items.



Editors Letter Box

Dear Readers,

Due to her recent move, I would like to thank Charlotte Martin who for the last year has been responsible for distributing the magazine to your local distributors each month. She has managed through thick and thin, rain or shine, wind or cold and without her you would not have received your copy of the local news. So, a big thank you Charlotte from the magazine staff and good luck in your new home.

To replace Charlotte, I am very pleased to announce that Christine Roberts of Harrisons has kindly volunteered to take over from Charlotte. I am also pleased that Tim Howard of Birchanger Lane has agreed to volunteer as reserve distributor. I would like to express my thanks and those of the magazine team to these two local residents for stepping up and helping ensure the continued distribution of the magazine.

Letters to the Editor

Letter to Birchanger Parish Council from Uttlesford District Council Regarding the Travellers in Birchanger Lane

Apologies for the radio silence at this end. You may be aware that Sarah has been on maternity leave since May. Firstly, we have no pending news regarding the Planning Appeal, as you may recall we had a virtual hearing scheduled for September which was postponed by the Planning Inspectorate following objections from the agent for the travellers. We await the agreement of what I assume will be a physical hearing, which in our current circumstances will be delayed even further. I am totally frustrated with the lack of progress from the Inspectorate. A hearing/inquiry should certainly have been accommodated long before we had all even heard of Covid 19.

In addition, I understand that the parish council received complaints that large static caravans had been brought onto the site. Since we served the injunction on the travellers way back at the beginning, they have been required to check with us any changes on the site. Which I must say they have been good in doing.

Back in the autumn, they did check in with me to request that they swap one caravan for another. We have operated the one on/one off approach throughout. One of the families have a personal requirement for a larger caravan (to include WC accommodation which is very rare for travellers). As such, I agreed to that wish. Technically, provided they are not increasing the net numbers they did not need our consent. I appreciate that the static caravans are somewhat large however, they still qualify as caravans. Sadly, the passage of time and the growing age of some of the children on the site, has resulted in the need for the travellers to upgrade their caravans etc. We are obliged to respect and react to any changing health challenges.

It is clear that only Sarah and I have a working knowledge of the site. As such, with the restrictions on site visits brought about through lockdowns, and restrictions on me personally there has been a delay in me getting out there. I managed to pay a visit just before Christmas and went on the site. The nature of the site remains unchanged, apart from a couple of smaller vans being swapped for larger ones. I am mindful that this time of year, irrespective of lockdown restrictions, is a prime time to travel and as such if anything there was less on the site than I recalled.

I intend, subject to my own shielding restrictions, to go back out during January to check, to ensure that liberties aren't taken when they return from their Christmas travels.

I can also confirm that we have agreed with the travellers that they can renew their access with some tarmac. We did agree this way back in the Spring, and I was surprised that the access way was still as poor as ever.

Nigel Brown MRTPI - Development Manager - Uttlesford District Council

Don't forget, your magazine is only as good as the content it receives, so please keep sending me your news, views, notices, concerns and complaints. Advertisers are also welcome. All copy should be submitted by the 16th of the month, preferably sooner and may be edited depending on space and content. Please contact me by E-mail, phone, or letter as shown below. Thank you and Kind Regards,

Peter Sampson

Join us on Facebook: www.facebook.com/birchanger/



magazine@birchanger.com



07817 904333



2 Harrisons, Birchanger

VILLAGE NEWS

By Elizabeth Godwin

Coping with Winter Lockdown

We are in the middle of our third lockdown and at the time of writing there are no clear indications that this one is going to end anytime soon. How did we end up here again? Well, for a start, the virus has mutated and updated itself to cope with our 'hands, face, space deterrents'. Furthermore, imported tough little reinforcement bugs from South Africa hasn't helped and means we are still trying to catch up with the virus's antics. These new strains are even more infectious, and it seems inoculations are the only way out right now.

Most of us complied with the edicts imposed by whatever tier we were in but Christmas shopping and largely unauthorised revelry on the part of just a few people helped to put us where we are now. The motorway remained busy most of the day which showed that people were doing a lot more travelling around than they were supposed to be doing. We all end up paying the price and some of us a lot more highly than others. Now we have to continue to try to make the best of a horrible situation. We cannot solve the problems caused by the virus but there are a few things we can do to help to make things easier for the people around us and ourselves in the process.

Let's start with the telephone. Call a friend you haven't seen for a while. It could make you both feel a bit better. Look at your Christmas Card List. A card at Christmas is fine but how about an email or a call now as well? You could use FaceTime, Zoom or one of the other social media platforms for communicating. Get a group together and start to have regular online dates. Shop for the vulnerable when you do your own shopping. You might be able to go shopping or cope with the intricacies of online shopping but can your neighbour?

When the first lockdown happened, it was during spring and early summer, we could go outside and that helped. In November we were motivated by Christmas and all the things that go with it and for many of us it was an opportunity to get things done. Now post-Christmas, in the grey cold and wet days, it all seems hard and difficult to get motivated to do anything. There are things we can do indoors and perhaps it's time to be outrageous! Why not paint a room in a bright colour, or ditch the old curtains and make some new ones? Turn out the cupboards and get rid of a lot of the

things you will never use. Charity shops may not be open now, although some will still collect, but this situation will not last forever, nothing ever does. Lockdown will end and we can be ready for it. Have the odd lie-in but try and maintain a regular routine, with children around you have to.

Work commitments are still there and there are still deadlines. Meet these and then find something to do that you like doing. It is easy to make life one long round of drudgery when you are at home and that could lead to depression which can stalk us all in times like this. Mental health is especially important. Those who have suffered with it in the past know about it but everyone needs to look out for all aspects of their health right now. Spot the signs and act on them. Doctors know that these and other ailments do not disappear for Covid, in fact they generally increase. Be thankful that doctors and other medical staff are there to help you to take care of them.

Thank You Birchanger



The lights throughout Birchanger this year were the best ever. Maybe we even shot ourselves in the foot as the lane was packed with tourists between 4.30 and 6.30 every night! A big thank you to everyone who made Christmas a happier time in a year where we have needed something special to cheer us up. You were amazing and very much appreciated - all of you. Even a simple string of lights makes all the difference to a gloomy night.

This year has become a fundraising year thanks to the enterprise of Chris Emery who set up a fundraising page for those who liked the lights. This year the money raised is going to support Grove Cottage. Hopefully, we shall be able to do something for this or another local charity next year. Perhaps the winner can choose who to support?

A White Christmas for Birchanger?

Apparently just a single snowflake makes a White Christmas according to the BBC! Well, if that is the case single snowflakes fell in Birchanger on Christmas Morning, although the sun was shining at the time. More than one person saw this so it must have been the case. So we had a White Christmas after all.

Birchanger All Girls Society

The 'BAGS' regret that due to the effect of corona virus, all future meetings are cancelled until further notice.

For further details telephone:

Olivia: 07568 574703

Rosemary: 01279 814678



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The Essex County Council Support Blanket

With high winter fuel bills and Christmas costs to pay, depression can easily creep up on any one of us. Add the Corona virus into the mix and it is no surprise that many of us feel out of our depth. Here are a few things which may help some just a little.

There has been a great deal in the press about free school meals. Essex County Council provides free school meals for children who need them. These are available throughout lockdown and the school holidays.

Many of us are struggling to pay our bills. However, Essex County Council has funds to help those in difficulties. Call ECC Emergency Support on 0300 7900124. You can also call for help on the Essex Wellbeing Service on 0300 303 9988

If you are a vulnerable adult just coming out of hospital you can request a 'Winter Warm Package' to help you keep warm. However, this time around, there will be no food parcels for the vulnerable. Don't forget one of our oldest sources of help, the Samaritans are available on 116 123 or email them at jo@samaritans.org

Do You Know Someone Who is Struggling?

They probably won't admit it but some people you know are probably finding life particularly hard. They most likely make light of their problems but a little more contact can mean they will open up a little more. Maybe it is just with shopping, trips to the doctor but keeping in touch by phone, email, zoom or such like, can make their day, and yours, a little more meaningful. Set dates for online chats and for collecting shopping so that you find a weekly structure for both of you.

Phoney Phone Calls

As we wise up to scams, the scammers get smarter and change their way of presenting their scams. Calls or emails from fraudsters purporting to be from Amazon, the source of too many scams already, now contact us about an expensive order which apparently, we made. If it was not our order (and of course we know it wasn't) and the amount they quoted is alarming they ask you to contact a number to solve the issue. Whatever you do don't call that number. If you are concerned and suspect a scam, end the call, and contact Amazon using their known phone number or online service.

Another scam is the old broadband fraud. You get a call purporting to come from BT claiming that your Broadband is about to be cut off unless you follow instructions on your computer. In reality the scammers want to guide you into making moves on your computer which will allow the fraudsters to use it and collect personal data. BT will never do this, so just hang up if you are in doubt. If you do believe that criminals may have accessed your computer, contact a trusted computer expert for advice. Report the scam online to 'Action Fraud' at <https://reporting.actionfraud.police.uk/login> or call 0300 123 2040 Monday to Friday 8am - 8pm. If you are calling from abroad, please call +44 300 123 2040.

Don't Undo All the Good Work

So, the Christmas pounds fell away in January as some of us cut out drinking, others went on a diet and many even managed both. That may be behind us now, but as we settle down into the New Year why let all that abstinence go to waste when a little healthy eating could keep the weight problems at bay.



One of the things many of us find hard to do is to drink enough water. The amount we are asked to drink is 1.5 litre a day at least. We should take 1.5 litres to work and try and get through it all in the course of a day. Tea and coffee are in addition to this. Quite an ask for

most of us! It is no surprise to find that any healthy eating plan includes your five a day. Luckily, it seems fruit juice is included in this now. It is also old news too that you should not skip breakfast which a great many people do. Just a bowl of sugar free cereal or porridge along with one of the five a day and you are fine. Better for you than grabbing one of those delicious but full of calories coffees at the station.

It helps to plan your meals for the week ahead and never shop if you are hungry. Dried fruit snacks and cereal bars are fine and you could try rice cakes. Use low fat, low sugar yoghurts, whole meal pitta bread and hummus as part of your regular diet. Remove all fat from any meat before cooking and limit eating out to just once a week. If you can, take your own sandwiches to work. Cut out carbs gradually, find out what works best for you and don't eat things you really dislike. (Shame nobody ever said that to my mother!)

Cold January - Bigger Bills



The cost of heating our homes continues to rise and despite all our attempts to insulate our homes, January and February are when the heating bills hit hardest. Many of us pay our energy suppliers monthly to spread the load, but are our suppliers giving

us the best deal? On average, people save £230 pounds each year by switching to another supplier. You can register for the switch online using:

Essex Energy Switch through Essex County Council web site: <https://bigcommunityswitch.co.uk/uttlesford/home>.

Registration should only take five minutes and you will need a copy of your latest energy bills. The more people signing up means the lowest price can be obtained. I have done it for years and in a time of steadily rising fuel prices we have been saved a great deal of money.



Emma Marks
Men and Boy's Haircuts

Tel: 01279 814273
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99 Birchanger Lane,
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What's on in the village...

February 2021

**All events are subject to Covid-19 restrictions.
Please contact and check with event organisers**

Mon

Tue

Wed

Thu

Fri

Sat

Sun

Bin Collections: Bradley Common collected on Fridays. Rest of Birchanger on Thursdays. **Garden bin collections marked with #**

Birchanger Parish Council Meetings: Meets on the first Tuesday of each month at 7.30 pm in the church hall - **Open to the public.**

1 Church hall: 19.30 Apton Dance Studio	2 Church hall: 12.00 Tap Dance 16.45 Ballet 18.30 Apton Dance Studio	3 Church hall: 10.00 Tai Chi 14.00 Tea Room 14.00 Fencing 15.30 Apton Dance Studio	4 Black Bin # Church hall: 11.00 Line dance 19.30 Apton Dance Studio	5	6 Church Hall: 09.00 Apton Dance Studio	7 St Mary's Church: 11.15 am
8 Church hall: 19.30 Apton Dance Studio	9 Church hall: 12.00 Tap Dance 16.45 Ballet 18.30 Apton Dance Studio	10 Church hall: 10.00 Tai Chi 14.00 Tea Room 14.00 Fencing 15.30 Apton Dance Studio	11 Green Bin Church hall: 11.00 Line dance 19.30 Apton Dance Studio	12	13 Church Hall: 09.00 Apton Dance Studio	14 St Mary's Church: 11.15
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BIRCHANGER SPORTS AND SOCIAL CLUB

NEWS FROM THE CLUB!

As the Queen has said, "We will meet again", if only we could say when! Many of you, I know, will be yearning for the time when you can meet up for a pint and a bit of banter in the club. The loss of social contact with our friends and even those whose views we do not share has been recognised as having a detrimental effect on people's mental wellbeing. So, it is vital that the place that provides that facility - namely the club - is still there when the time comes for the current restrictions to be eased. This is by no means a given thing, for although the committee are working hard to ensure that every possible grant and assistance that we can claim is obtained, members need to be aware that the long-term future of the club depends not on government handouts, however welcome these may be, but on the support of the members.

I know that for many, the current position is a difficult one, with worries about the health of loved ones and uncertainty about employment. However, I would like to appeal to those of you who can help the club by ensuring that your membership has been renewed. The £20 fee can be paid online or by cheque but please ensure any payment is accompanied with your name, address, telephone and email address). For those fortunate enough to have qualified for life membership can I make a special appeal. Please can I ask you to consider making a voluntary donation, however small or large, to assist your club in these most difficult of times. I would also publicly thank those of you who have already shown their generosity in this manner.

TAKEAWAY / DELIVERY

The club has re-launched their menu and have on the team an excellent new chef who has transformed the previous menu. It now includes options for vegetarians and gluten free options. The prices are very reasonable and the food excellent so please do try our takeaway service if you haven't already, we hope you will be pleasantly surprised!

We have recently partnered with 'Associated Gets' to arrange delivery to those outside of the village who would like to order from the comfort of their home.

In the meantime, the Committee would like to wish all our members and supporters a very Happy New Year!

Thank you

Steve Hopkins
Chairman

For all general enquiries

Telephone 01279 813441 Email: club@birchanger.com
Website www.birchangerclub.com

Follow us on Social Media

For all news and announcements





BIRCHANGER SPORTS
AND SOCIAL CLUB

NEW TAKEAWAY MENU

Fish and Chips	£8.95 / Sml Portion - £4.95
Scampi and Chips	£8.95 / Sml Portion - £4.95
Prime Beef Burger	£7.95
Hunter's Chicken	£8.95
Chicken Goujon Bap	£6.95
Sausage and Chips	£4.95
Veggie Sausage and Chips	£4.95
Halloumi Fingers	£4.95
Veggie Burger	£6.95
BBQ Pork Ribs	£13.95 / Small: ½ Rack - £7.95
Chicken and Chips	£8.95 / ¼ Chicken (Leg or Breast) £6.95
Chilli Con Carne	£7.95
Five Bean Chilli	£6.95
Mushroom Stroganoff	£7.95
Chickpea Curry	£7.95
Chicken Curry	£8.95

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For all general enquiries

Telephone 01279 813441 Email: club@birchanger.com
Website www.birchangerclub.com

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Birchanger Primary School

Challenging Times

By Claire Berry - Headteacher

As you will know the new year greeted our school with lots of challenges. Challenges that are shared by parents everywhere who are having to learn to juggle working from home and teaching their children.

At our school approximately 80% of the school community are learning at home and the staff at school have worked extremely hard to create provision that supports and extends learning. We have also scheduled small group lessons where members of staff teach the children face to face online with work that the children and families can complete in their own time. These sessions cover reading (and phonics for our early readers), maths and writing.

We are immensely proud of the breadth of our curriculum and so other lessons such as science, history, geography, French, art, and PE are also covered in learning.



Our families have been amazing and have supported the children as we have all adjusted once again to learning at home. Not only are they supporting their children, but they are taking the time to send us photographs of the work that has been done so that we can share them on our website.

Each week the teachers will select some children for 'Work of the Week' (just as we would do at school) and this is shared on our weekly newsletter, 'The Buzz'. If you would like to see some of this wonderful work, then copies of The Buzz can be found on our website.

Whilst most of the children are working from home, around 20% of our children are coming into the school for face-to-face lessons. At school, the children are divided into two small groups where the learning reflects the content of home learning. The classes are called Eagles 1 and Eagles 2 and the children in these groups are getting used to their new class settings and the new friends that they see every day.



The teaching teams who are in school are making life in school as 'normal' as possible whilst Mrs Field continues to be on call in the office and Mrs McArthur still creates wonderful lunches to go home for some of our children whilst cooking hot lunches for those of us who are in school.



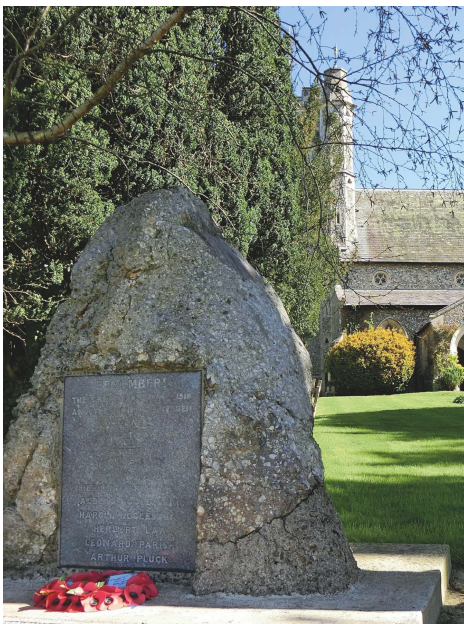
During this exceedingly difficult time our children continue to work hard, laugh a lot and inspire us. However, we look forward to a time when we can all be together again.



The Hundred Parishes Society

Our area has a good number of so-called “Hertfordshire puddingstones”. I am not convinced that Hertfordshire has any real justification for claiming the puddingstone because examples can be found on both sides of the Essex / Hertfordshire county boundary. I recently acquired a copy of “Puddingstone Walks in Essex”, a neat little book that describes walking routes which in total pass more than twenty puddingstones or groups of puddingstones in the Essex part of the Hundred Parishes.

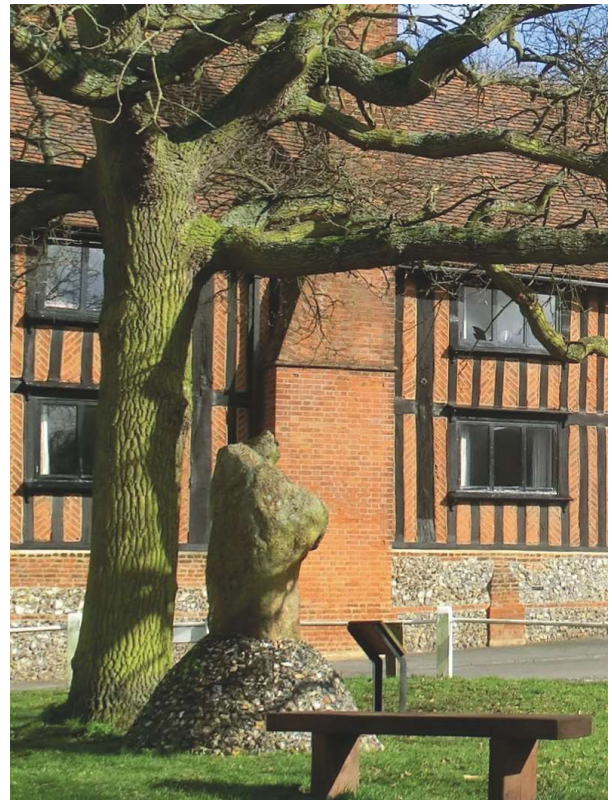
A puddingstone is a conglomerate of many small, rounded, and colourful pebbles that appear to have been cemented together. Geologists explain that they were formed around 50 million years ago and were deposited in this area by a retreating glacier, possibly only 10,000 years ago at the end of the last Ice Age.



Some puddingstones lay where they were deposited, whilst others have been moved to more convenient locations and sometimes put to good use. Brent Pelham and Arkesden have incorporated them into their war memorials. Others are visible in Arkesden in the stream of Wicken Water beside the bridge.



Stones have been used as building material within walls in Much Hadham and Wendens Ambo, in Great Hallingbury's church tower and in St Helen's Chapel at Wicken Bonhunt.



One in Standon is proudly displayed, whilst a large puddingstone in Newport seems to have been unceremoniously abandoned beside the approach road to the station. Others stand in Tilty churchyard, by the pump at Ugley Green, in Saffron Walden Museum's grounds, by the Shell House in Hatfield Forest and beside the Yew Tree pub in Manuden.



No doubt there are many more – I would be pleased to hear of any that I have missed – please email me at hundredparishes@btinternet.com, if possible, with a photo. Will we find more in Hertfordshire or Essex?

Ken McDonald, Secretary. www.hundredparishes.org.uk

THE FORGOTTEN GARDENS OF EASTON LODGE

Our hopes for getting a lot done in December were largely dashed by the weather but the rains have filled the lilypond, so there is an upside! We are now planning to complete key essential winter maintenance jobs in January. A tree has come down and needs clearing, the entrance path needs re-laying and there are more new trees that need to be planted too.

As you will appreciate, it is particularly difficult this year to look forward to planning events with confidence. We were hoping to arrange open days for snowdrops in February, but this is looking more and more unlikely at the moment due to the current Covid-19 restrictions. The snowdrops are coming through and are not ahead of themselves for once. We will continue to monitor the situation and inform you on our Facebook page and on our website www.eastonlodge.co.uk.



The good news is that the work on the restoration of the balustrade has continued. Our stonemasons in Wiltshire have been machining the 91 balusters needed to replace the broken ones and our contractors, Herringbone, are still expecting to install them on site in March. We are hoping also in March to be able to restart our weekly Open Thursdays, as planned, so visitors will be able to see the work in progress and the daffodils! But again, this

depends on the Covid-19 restrictions being lifted.



It is still not too late to support our balustrade restoration project details can be found on the website restoration page: www.eastonlodge.co.uk/the-gardens/restoration.



I am pleased to show here a picture of the gorgeous and sweet smelling Mahonia in flower growing in the Japanese garden down by the fishing lake. In the meantime, stay safe! *Jill Goldsmith*



P. D. Tucker & P. Stapleton
Hazel End Road, Hazel End, Bps Stortford, Herts CM23 1HB
Tel: 01279 813429
Mon-Sat: 12noon - 3pm & 6 - 11pm Sunday: 12noon - 3pm

Village Services and Activities

Alzheimer	Marian	07803 115826
Art Studio & Gallery	Heather Brown	01279 815453
Art Studio & Gallery	Brian Gough	01279 815012
Ballroom Dance	Fred Winters	01763 271942
Ballet for kids	Philippa McMeechan	01763 271010
BAGS	Rosemary Wheatley	01279 814678
Beauty Therapist	Sarah Whiting	07887 638359
Birchanger Magazine	Peter Sampson	07817 904333
Birchanger Voices	Tony Wilson	01279 813007
Birchanger Nursery	Karen Reilly	01279 810800
Bird Food	Lesley Robins	01279 812248
Builders - Another Level	Matt Marks	01279 814273
BSSC Club	Steve Hopkins	01279 813441
Car Service	D. Bonney	01279 813315
Chiropodist	Julie Golden	01279 873492
Dance - Apton Studio	Maxine Williams	07854 251528
Dementia	Debbie Baker	07927 011345
Garden Services	GWB Horticulture	01799 543483
Hairdresser Men/Boys	Emma Marks	01279 814273
Holistic Therapist	Shelley Williams	07476 279262
Landscaping Services	Mark Taylor	07941 357934
Laundrette	Ian Kennedy	01279 866183
Line Dancing	Shelley	01279 864781
Neighbourhood Watch	Peter Sampson	07817 904333
Over 60's club	Jean Camp	07843 707249
Painting & Décor	David Debnam	07973 861268
Parish Clerk	Keith Williams	01279 814773
Petals Children's Play	Hana Hainsby	07730 619522
Police Special	Martin Halls	Martin.Halls@essex.police.uk
Public Safety	Peter Sampson	07817 904333
Speed Watch	Peter Sampson	07817 904333
St. Mary's Church	Pam Lee	07702 171744
Tai Chi	Cait Goddard	07415 628935
The Three Horseshoes	Paul & Paula	01279 813429
The Three Willows	Mark Boden	01279 815913
Village Church Hall	Barbora Dragoskova	01279 815243

Village Church Hall



Modern hall, superb kitchen and additional meeting room available for hire



Administrator - Barbora Dragoskova Tel. 01279 815243
Email st.johns.church@btinternet.com

Key Holder - Cat Roberson Tel. 07475092658
Email: stmaryschurch.birchanger@gmail.com

St. Mary's Church News



February 2021 Sunday Services

Due to Covid-19 restrictions, the church will be open on Sundays at 11.15am for 30 minutes quiet prayer only until further notice.

Church News

By the time you read this, Christmas will be over and most of us will have passed through the season of Epiphany without a second thought. What is 'Epiphany' we hear you say. Well, just imagine opening your eyes after a good night's sleep and when the sun is just starting to shed its light and warmth over the world. A new day dawning, a fresh start - that is how we think of Epiphany. A time when things become clearer and the future is brighter. A time for optimism. The Light of the World is here with us and all we need to do is accept Him. We pray that over the coming months you will feel able to open your hearts and minds to let the Light in.

Sadly, some residents seem to have forgotten what the Christmas season was all about. "Will there be a church service Christmas morning" they asked, but did they attend that service? No! Others commented that they had missed singing carols this year, not the carols in church but apparently carols that a group of residents had in previous years taken to singing in someone else's home. Does that mean that we should no longer go to the trouble of organising the Annual Carol Service?

Now we understand that not everyone believes in God or his son and those people have no intention of ever coming to church. But for those that enjoy singing carols, (essentially hymns celebrating the birth of Christ) where were you Christmas morning? Why were you celebrating Christmas when you do not believe in Christ?

We have a beautiful, ancient House of God in our village that a few residents struggle to maintain for the benefit of all. We pray that over the coming weeks and months you will have an epiphany and that this year God's gift to you will be that the Light enters your life and that you embrace it.

Prayer for the Month

Gracious God,
Illuminate our minds as we come to worship you.
Reveal to all of us the wonders of your presence.
Build your kingdom here on earth.
Come and be with us all.
Amen

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Village Church Hall



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