

118 Acre Solar Farm – Approved!
See page 14

Birchanger Village Magazine

February 2026 Issue 277



Eddie Gein's Sausage & Beans
Page 11

"Where there is Love there is Life" - Mahatma Gandhi

Over recent months, people living in Birchanger and Stansted have come together in overwhelming opposition to the proposed largescale housing developments on Green Belt land surrounding our villages. In total, over 1,400 resident representations are recorded on Uttlesford District Council's planning portal against the linked Birchanger and Stansted Mountfitchet planning applications, reflecting widespread and strongly held concerns. Both Parish Councils have also united to appoint legal expertise and submit comprehensive, detailed objections on behalf of our communities.

Residents raised significant issues around infrastructure, emphasising that our roads, utilities, GP surgeries and schools are at breaking point. Many objections spoke passionately of Birchanger's countryside setting, narrow lanes, ancient woodland, productive farmland and biodiversity. There was strong emphasis too on the importance of protecting the Green Belt and its critical role in preventing urban sprawl and coalescence with neighbouring communities.

Concerns are shared by a range of official and statutory bodies, including highways authorities, NHS representatives, the National Trust, environmental consultees, utilities companies, archaeological and landscape experts. A considerable proportion of these representations echo serious concerns around transport and infrastructure capacity, environmental harm and the loss of important Green Belt land. They also highlight shortcomings in City & Country's applications, with calls for more surveys, financial considerations and the need for more detailed information.

Uttlesford District Council Planning Committee is expected to meet towards the end of February to determine both applications. At the same time, we are awaiting confirmation, expected any day, on the adoption of the emerging Local Plan, which will be a key factor in future development decisions.

In this uncertain period, it is clear that people in Birchanger feel very strongly about these proposals and that our Green Belt land matters. We must remain united in standing up for the character, environment and future of our village.

Birchanger & Stansted Greenbelt Preservation

You can still object! - See Page 3



magazine@birchanger.com



07488 315349



217 Birchanger Lane CM23 5QJ



The_Ed's InBoxBag ©



Dear Villagers,

An incredible strength in opposition to the City & Country plans, possibly the largest submission in recent times has hopefully put the Uttlesford Planning portal into melt-down! If you've submitted something please check it's recorded there, because every letter counts.

Congratulations to the Grunwell family for winning the village lights competition with a spectacular display and providing some fun for the kids too. The village suddenly switches into the darker days of January and February and it's very noticeable when all the lights come down again.



Still, we can always rely on Valentines Day to cheer people up. I challenge you this year to go a bit 'old school' and send your valentine a real card with real writing on it. Forget all this daft online stuff, it's means much more to write your own words, or even buy a flower or more to brighten up someone's day. Or forget altogether and watch the sparks fly.

As Humphrey Bogart famously said, it could be the beginning of a beautiful friendship
The_Ed

Dear The_Ed,

Was feeling quite low over the festive period as I still haven't managed to secure any work. Mum has been trying to keep my spirits up. She told me even Bram Stoker didn't write Dracula until he was 50 and I realised that Dracula didn't even kill anyone until he was dead. So there's always time. Anyway, here's a picture of me auditioning for "Nosferatu - The PlayStation Chronicles" in Bishop's Stortford. Waiting to hear if I got it. Will send you £200 which I stole from Mum, Yours, Master Charles of Churton.



How people who pronounce the first "R" in February look at everyone else



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Liz Godwin's News & Views



How are your New Year's resolutions?

If they are anything like mine they will be in tatters. In fact I no longer bother to make them. Perhaps I aimed too high and set impossible targets, but anyway they never worked for me.

I admire anyone who actually seriously makes a New Year's resolution and sticks to it, at least throughout January. Those with New Year resolutions not to drink, seem to help each other through a dry January but the resolution ends at the end of the month with much celebrating in February.

Outside Dry January, it is surprising just how many people are actually stopping drinking or drinking very rarely. Are their evenings among their friends any less jovial than they used to be? Do they visit pubs and the club as often? Has their social life changed so much they visit the badminton court or gym instead of the pub?

If our old tried and well tested venues are visited less frequently their takings will fall. They may be forced into making unpopular changes. Not all of them will be able to survive.

It is yet another time of change. To survive venues will have to offer something else other than alcohol and a few soft drinks alone.. There is still an appetite for good pub grub, but people are more canny with what money they have left after they have covered all the essentials, tax bills, rent, mortgage transport and food to name a few.

Sad to say club economy does depend in part on the consumption of alcohol. We just need to try and use alcohol wisely. We also need to support our local pubs. Too many have closed in recent years. You don't need to drink alcohol when you visit a pub or club but if you don't or you have cut back your alcohol consumption there is a strong possibility that the establishment will have lost revenue and they needed that revenue to survive. But the pubs and clubs are responding to the challenge. Across the country more pubs are serving really good food and more clubs are developing their menus. The choice of non alcoholic drinks is improving.

Stopping drinking is fine but that doesn't mean you have to boycott establishments selling alcohol. Pubs and clubs now offer a great deal more than just booze. They are meeting places, feeding places and somewhere where lasting friendships are made. They are places where families can go and there are more venues where children can play.

In Birchanger we have a thriving pub and a thriving club. Something to be pleased and proud of. We are said to be the envy of people for miles around. Their villages may be bigger than ours, but they don't have our facilities.



Its Not Too Late to Object!

From Page 1 - You can still raise your objections to City & Country plans. Uttlesford Council are still accepting representations and so, if you haven't yet submitted an objection, it's not too late. Just send a short email to planning@uttlesford.gov.uk putting

"Objection to UTT/25/3011/OP and UTT/25/3012/OP"

in the subject box. Then just give 2 or 3 reasons for your objection and put you name and address at the foot of the email. This will only take a few minutes and your objection could make all the difference.

For The Love of Dog Daisy & Rosie



Daisy is 10 and Rosie is 5 although you would think it was the other way round as Daisy is full of energy and Rosie loves nothing more than to lay down, preferably in the sun!

Daisy sits at the end of our garden for

hours in the summer just watching the tiny insects and chasing the shadows whilst Rosie just lays on the outdoor sofa!

They both love walking around our village, they are pretty good off the lead unless they see a rabbit or squirrel in the woods. Rosie is the friendliest with other dogs whilst Daisy is a bit nervous and will keep her distance through choice. They are the loveliest, sweetest furry friends and we love them to bits!

Paul & Mandy Cousins



Birchanger 'Pavement Parkers' Beware!

January 8th: The UK government has confirmed plans to give local councils in England new powers to fine drivers who park on pavements, tackling "problem pavement parking" that blocks footways and endangers pedestrians. Councils will be able to issue fines where parking causes "unnecessary obstruction", with guidance due in 2026, and full powers expected to come into force once secondary legislation is completed later this year. Source gov.uk

A New Family Pantomime Adventure!

WANTED



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ROBIN HOOD

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The Three Willows Pub & Restaurant

327 Birchanger Lane CM23 5QR

Our menu is based on great British pub classics with a modern twist, and of course the very popular fresh fish options and a classic selection of home-made desserts.

Menu



Children and dogs welcome

thethreewillows.com
info@thethreewillows.com
+44 (0)1279 815 913



Reverend Colin Fairweather's final sermon in Birchanger - Christmas Day

Dear Ed, Please can you print Revd Colin's final sermon as I believe it speaks volumes about our Church at this time

Thank you, Pam Lee

Isaiah 62.6–end • Luke 2.8–20

There is a quietness to Christmas morning that we sometimes forget. We know the carols, we know the crowds, we know the story – but the Bible reminds us that the birth of Christ was first revealed not in the noise of celebration, but in the stillness of the night. Isaiah speaks of watchmen on the walls, calling out hope to a city not yet restored. Luke speaks of shepherds on a hillside, a handful of people keeping watch while the rest of the world slept. Christmas, from the very beginning, has belonged to small groups of faithful people who have not given up keeping watch.

As I stand here today, on my last Christmas Day with you in **Birchanger**, those images feel very close. Isaiah's watchmen and Luke's shepherds were not many in number. They were not influential or powerful. They were not surrounded by success. But they kept going. They stayed awake. They held open the possibility that God might speak into the darkness – and God did.

Birchanger knows something about smallness. It knows something about quiet seasons, and long waiting, and the sense of standing on the margins rather than in the centre. Not every church lives in a time of growth. Some live in a time of watching. Some live in a time of holding on. Some live in a time when the future feels uncertain, and the present feels fragile. And yet, Scripture tells us again and again that God chooses such places to reveal His light.

And part of the dignity of **Birchanger** is its age. This is by far the oldest of the Five Churches – a place where Christians have kept watch for close to a thousand years. These Saxon stones have seen seasons of joy and seasons of hardship, seasons of full pews and seasons like this one, when only a few remain. They have stood through plagues and reforms, wars and changes of every kind, and yet the prayers have never ceased entirely. A church that has endured this long does not measure its life by numbers, but by faithfulness. And there is something profoundly moving in knowing that, in this quiet corner of Essex, the praise of God has been spoken generation after generation, like a long echo of hope that refuses to die out.

The shepherds on that first Christmas night were not a flourishing congregation. They were a handful of weary people doing their best to keep going in the dark. And yet it was to them – not the crowds, not the priests, not the centres of power – that the light came. God has never measured worth by size or success. God chooses small places, quiet corners, unlikely people, and says: 'Here too, my glory shall shine.' If that was true on the hills of Bethlehem, it is true in **Birchanger** as well.

Isaiah speaks a promise over a city that felt abandoned: 'You shall be called Sought Out, a city not forsaken.' It is not a promise given to the confident and the strong – it is spoken to a people who weren't sure they had a future. And yet God insists that His faithfulness will endure where human strength falters. That is the heart of Christmas: not that we find our way to God, but that God comes to us – even when we feel small, or tired, or unsure of what comes next.

In the long history of this church – in the Saxon walls and the Norman arches, and in the generations who have prayed and sung and wept in this place – God has been faithful. **Birchanger** has seen seasons of life and seasons of decline. It has known times of gathering and times of scattering. And yet the light has not gone out. There is something honourable, something quietly courageous, about those who continue to keep watch here. Something that echoes Isaiah's watchmen and Luke's shepherds: a willingness to hold open the door for Christ, even when only a few gather.

As I take my leave of you, I do not pretend that **Birchanger** is a church without challenges. It is small. It is fragile. It stands in a time when many things feel difficult. And yet the message of Christmas is this: God is not deterred by small numbers, or tired hearts, or uncertain futures. The angels did not look for a perfect congregation. They looked for people who were willing to listen.

So this morning, I simply want to offer a blessing. Not a blessing of triumph, or certainty, or easy answers – but a blessing of hope. Hope that the God who spoke to shepherds will continue to speak here. Hope that the light which shone in the darkness of Bethlehem will still find its way into this place. Hope that the faithful watch – however small the number of watchers – will not be in vain.

May Christ, who came to the quiet hillsides, come also to **Birchanger**. May His light rest on this church. May His peace steady your hearts. May His faithfulness guide whatever the next season holds. And may you know, today and always, that you are seen, and known, and loved by the God who comes to small places first.

Amen.



Gordon Bleu & his restaurant review Sushi & Salad



5A Cross Street
Saffron Walden
CB10 1EX
sushiandsalad.com

A new year so time to try new things - according to every social media platform, newspaper and influencer. Having successfully ignored them all, it was the mother-in-law that reiterated this message on a recent stay and so who am I to disagree in order to ensure a harmonious start to 2026? To Saffron Walden we ventured and if you believe the hype it is the best place to live in the UK (although clearly the writer has never visited Birchanger). It's always nice to have an excuse to visit somewhere you've not been to for a while and having looked at various food offerings for a late lunch in this very genteel of towns, we opted for Sushi and Salad, largely because we can enjoy a relaxed meal served "family style" which ensures something for everyone and a chance to try a variety of smaller dishes.

It's a gem of a place I must say. A delightful, bright but not fussy interior welcomes you whilst the staff, Veronica in particular, put you at ease - especially when faced with 237 items on the menu. The other benefit of sharing plates is that you can have as much or as little as you fancy, although of course in the interests of providing a full and balanced review, I simply had to try as much as I possibly could. Not too many surprises on the menu, but everything is executed well - the sashimi was fresh and thick-cut - it almost dissolved, the tempura light and delicate. A particular delight was the pork belly, wonderfully tender and in a sticky but not overly sweet sauce, whilst the tuna carpaccio which was just sublime, bathed in ponzu, roe and sesame seed. Hard to find niggles really - the Japanese white wine we wanted to try was out of stock and call me a philistine, but only Wagamma consistently delivers the perfect Katsu curry. The one we shared was fine. I'll be back to Saffy for sure, but only if the Mother-in-law desires it.

Valentines Word Search Find all 20 words relating to this day

T	S	Z	M	H	C	S	R	H	R	S	C	I	L	J	S	R	D
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Quick-fire-five for February

1. Which Roman God is February named after?
2. Which country first officially adopted February 29th as part of a leap year system?
3. In the UK and Ireland, what traditional feast day is celebrated on February 2nd?
4. Which birthstone is associated with the month of February?
5. Which US President's birthday is commemorated as President's Day in February?



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Birchanger All Girls Society

The 'BAGS' welcome women to join them on the last Wednesday of the month at 8:00 pm in the village hall.

Next Meeting:
Wednesday February 25th
7:45pm for 8:00pm

bags@birchanger.com
Rosemary: 01279 814 678
Liz: 07473 508 056



BIRCHANGER SPORTS
AND SOCIAL CLUB

CLUB NEWS & EVENTS



**RENEWALS FOR
MEMBERS & LIFE
MEMBERS
BY END OF
JANUARY!**

Welcome to the latest Birchanger Social Club Newsletter!

With Spring in the air and (hopefully!) warmer days on the way, there's a real buzz building about what's ahead at the Club, as we look forward to longer evenings, great company, and plenty to enjoy in the coming months!

We've got an exciting line-up of entertainment planned, from fantastic live bands to our ever-popular FREE quiz nights, and it's already shaping up to be our biggest and best year yet. Alongside all the fun, we're delighted to be launching a brand new food menu, packed with great options to enjoy. Members

can also take advantage of our brilliantly discounted drinks menu, with savings across all our ales, wines, spirits, and everything in between. There's truly never been a better time to get involved, become part of the community, and enjoy everything Birchanger Social Club has to offer.

**BRINGING THE LOVE
THIS VALENTINES NIGHT!**

*Parallel
Covers*

14th FEBRUARY

AFTERLIFE

⚡ Rock Music Across the Decades ⚡

SATURDAY 28th FEBRUARY



NEW MEMBERS WELCOME

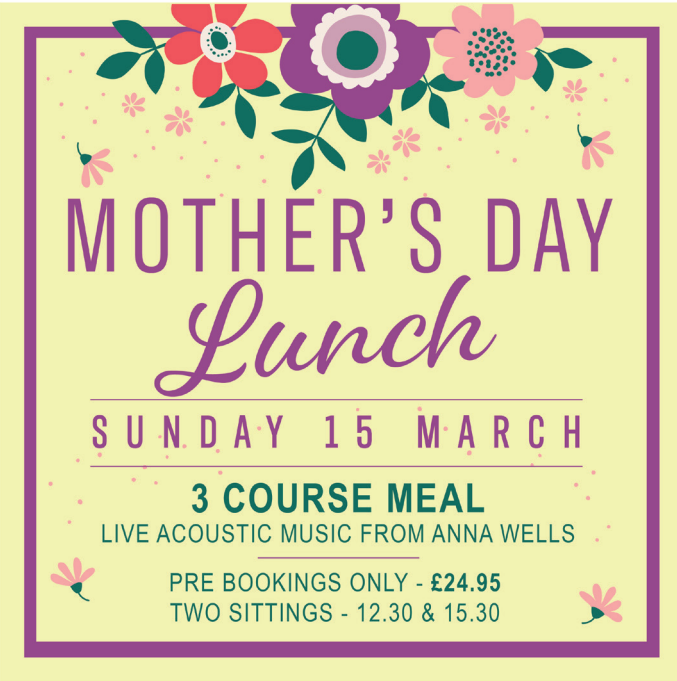
We welcome new members. To join you can either complete the online application or speak to a member of staff at the Club. For more information visit www.birchangerclub.com



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





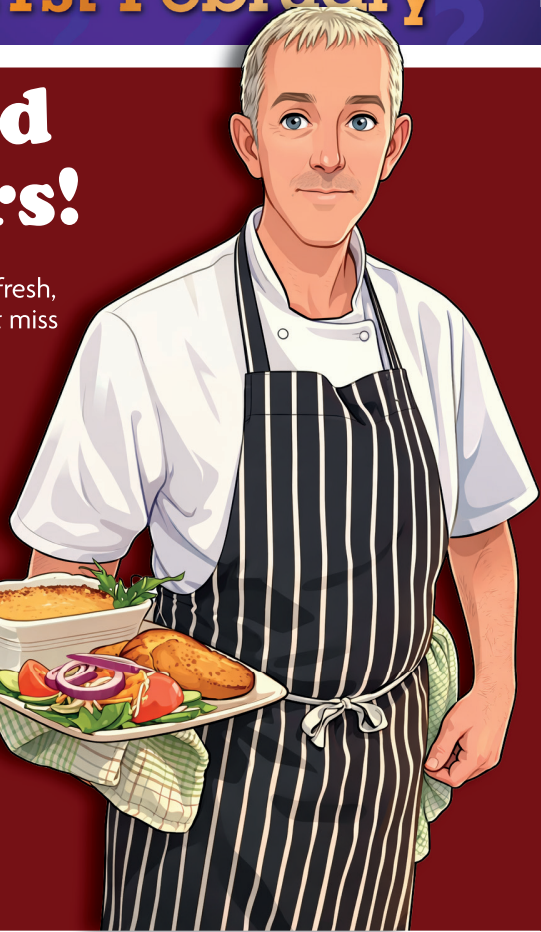
MOTHER'S DAY
Lunch
SUNDAY 15 MARCH
3 COURSE MEAL
LIVE ACOUSTIC MUSIC FROM ANNA WELLS
PRE BOOKINGS ONLY - £24.95
TWO SITTINGS - 12.30 & 15.30



8pm **FREE QUIZ NIGHT**
VOUCHER £40.00
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VOUCHER £30.00
Congratulations you have won
VOUCHER £20.00
Congratulations you have won
21st February

Notes from Chef and Latest Special Offers!

There's something new cooking! New menu coming soon, created with fresh, seasonal ingredients and served from lunch through to dinner. Also don't miss our legendary Sunday Roast Dinners, alongside your favourite pints, gins and wines. Pop in, unwind, and let the team take care of the rest!



SPECIAL OFFER



25% OFF MENU

WEDNESDAY EVENINGS & THURSDAY LUNCH

*NOT INCLUDING STEAK DISHES



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Website: www.birchangerclub.com

CHEESE & WINE NIGHT

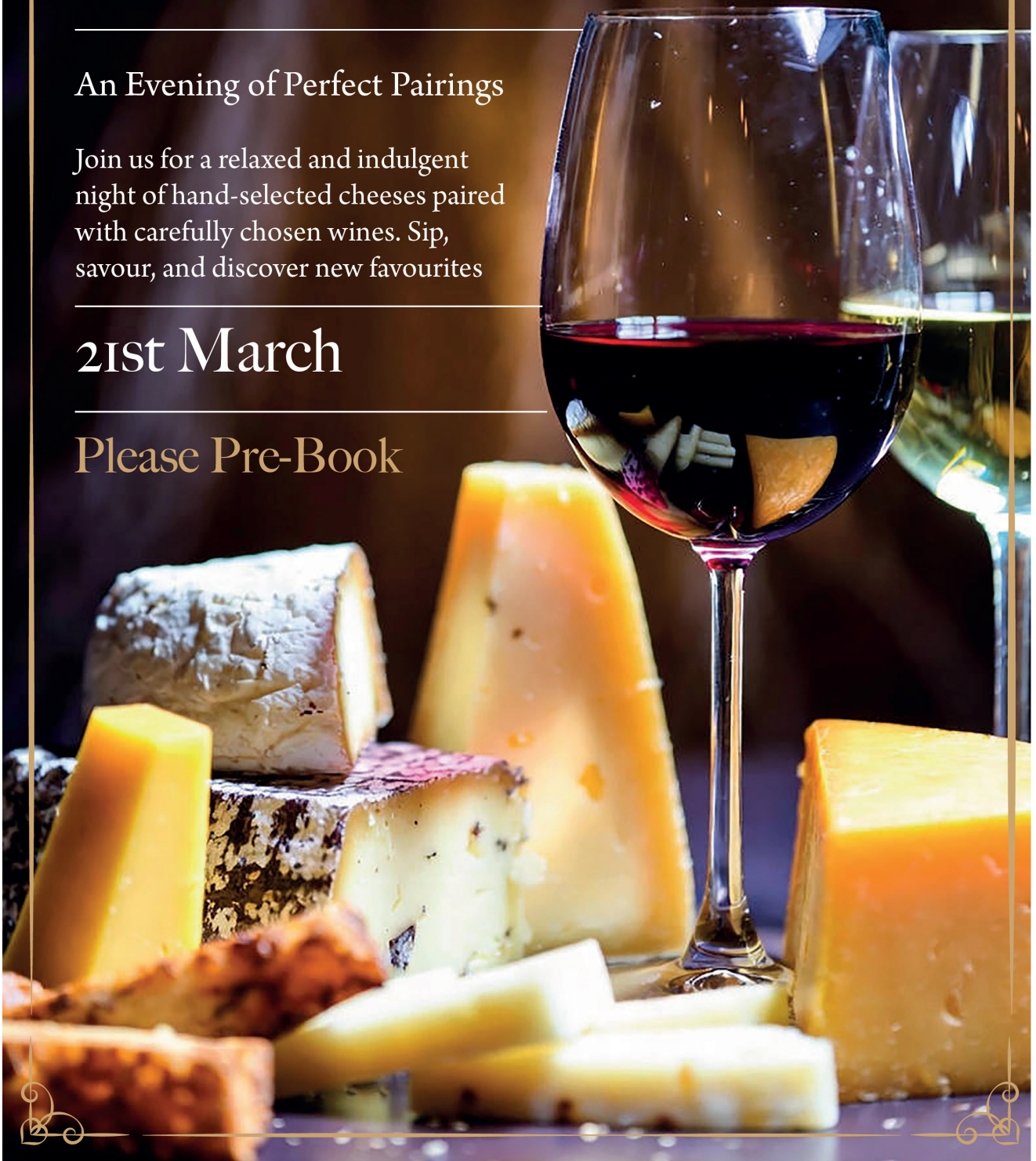
HOSTED BY LWC SOMMELIER

An Evening of Perfect Pairings

Join us for a relaxed and indulgent night of hand-selected cheeses paired with carefully chosen wines. Sip, savour, and discover new favourites

21st March

Please Pre-Book



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The Story of Subscriptions!

Well it's that time of year again when the club's annual subscriptions are due. Currently these are at £25 per year and have been since 2024.

In the beginning subs were paid quarterly, 6d per quarter or 2/- (10p) per year. Some people struggled to manage the payment and one of the club's first challenges was excluding those who failed to pay.

In 1886 an unnamed member reapplied for membership, but was declined due to his refusal to pay his subscription arrears.

The subs remained at the same level until 1943 when they doubled to 4/- (20p), they were still paid quarterly. The subs continued to be paid at this level until 1972 when they were increased to 50p paid annually.

Since 1972 the subs have increased much more frequently in 1990 they had reached £3, by 2000 it was £6. In 2005 the £10 sub had arrived taking

nine years to double again to £20 in 2014. Then in 2002 a new plastic membership card was introduced that did not record the subscription paid.

During my time at the club my subs were collected by Norman Grey, Rick Hayward, Ken Sturgeon and Ken Wheatley.

So guys make sure your subs are paid in by January 31st or you'll end up on the naughty step!

We would like to wish all of our members old and new a very happy new year!

By Eddie Gilbey



Why Join Birchanger Sports and Social Club?

More than just a club - it's a community!

Birchanger Sports & Social Club offers more than outstanding facilities — it provides a refined environment where sport, leisure, dining, and community come together seamlessly.

Enjoy high-quality sporting amenities, a well-appointed bar and social spaces, and a carefully crafted food menu featuring delicious, freshly prepared dishes — all supported by a calendar of thoughtfully curated events. Members also benefit from exclusive discounted prices on food and drink, making every visit even more rewarding. With pets welcome, it's a place the whole family can enjoy.

Whether you're here to compete, dine, or unwind, Birchanger is a club designed to be enjoyed.

All of this, for less than 50p per week!

- An elegant bar and social space with live sport on large screens
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For all general enquiries
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Village Recipe Eddie Gein's Sausage & Beans

This month's treat is sent in by Mr E. Gein of Bradley Common. "I love sausages" writes Gein, "I used to eat this lovely pot sitting with Mother who sadly passed 40 years ago".



Hotpot Hotshot - Gein waiting to greet green belt developers with his fabulous winter warmer.

Ingredients - Serves 4/6 people, ~1 hour 15 mins

- 4-5 pork sausages
- 4 slices thick bacon, chopped
- 2 chicken thighs (optional)
- 2 cans (15 oz / 400 g) cannellini beans*, drained
- 1 onion, diced
- 2 carrots, diced
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1½ cups chicken stock
- 1 cup canned tomato's
- 1 tbsp tomato paste
- 1 bay leaf, 1 tsp thyme
- Salt & black pepper

Method

- **Brown meats:** In a heavy pot over medium heat, brown sausages; remove. Cook bacon until lightly crisp. Season and brown chicken; remove.
- **Aromatics:** In the same pot, sauté onion and carrots 5-7 min. Add garlic and tomato paste; cook 1 min.
- **Simmer:** Stir in beans, tomato's, stock, bay, thyme, salt, and pepper. Return meats. Bring to a gentle simmer.
- **Cook:** Cover and simmer on low 45-50 min, stirring occasionally.
- **Serve:** Rest 5-10 min, remove bay leaf, adjust seasoning.

**The 'Lecter' version can be made with Fava beans, and a nice Chianti.*

THE GARDENS OF EASTON LODGE

Volunteers have worked hard at the Gardens over the closed season so that there will be new things to enjoy on our Snowdrop Days. Visitors will see the new hedges, trees and shrubs that we have planted. And children will enjoy finding our new animal trail and learning about how these animals were special to the Countess of Warwick. We will have an even better catering offer than usual, with sausage and burger roll options as well as bacon, from the Giggly Pig and from Daisy's kiosk our volunteers will provide soup, vegetarian rolls and cakes and drinks too of course. We will have snowdrops in the green for sale and some new snowdrop merchandise too. Tickets can be bought in advance at a discount, through our website www.eastonlodge.co.uk or direct through Trybooking. We look forward to welcoming you back into the Gardens.

And might we interest you in joining us as a volunteer? We are pleased to welcome new volunteers throughout the year - for gardening/garden maintenance work or for front of house roles and catering on our Open Days. March is a good time to start, with the air warming up and the plants putting on lots of lovely fresh growth. Why not look up our volunteer arrangements and contact us by email to enquiries@eastonlodge.co.uk? Jill Goldsmith

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What's On - FEBRUARY 2026

SATURDAY SUNDAY MONDAY TUESDAY WEDNESDAY THURSDAY FRIDAY

	1 Church 11:15 Family Service BSSC 12:00 Sunday Roast	2 BSSC 20:00 Quiz Night	3 Garden Bin BSSC Poker Night (Members)	4 Garden Bin BSSC Poker Night (Members)	5 Black Bin BSSC Bingo Night	6 Black Bin BSSC Bingo Night
7 BSSC 13:00 Meat Draw	8 Church 11:15 Matins BSSC 12:00 Sunday Roast	9 BSSC 20:00 Quiz Night	10 BSSC Poker Night (Members)	11 Green Bin BSSC Bingo Night	12 Green Bin BSSC Bingo Night	13 Green Bin BSSC Bingo Night
14 ♥ BSSC 13:00 Meat Draw BSSC 20:00 Parallel Covers Live	15 Church 11:15 Family Service BSSC 12:00 Sunday Roast	16 BSSC 20:00 Quiz Night	17 Garden Bin BSSC Poker Night (Members)	18 Garden Bin BSSC Poker Night (Members)	19 Black Bin BSSC Bingo Night	20 Black Bin BSSC Bingo Night
21 BSSC 13:00 Meat Draw BSSC 20:00 Free Quiz	22 Church 11:15 Holy Communion BSSC 12:00 Sunday Roast	23 BSSC 20:00 Quiz Night	24 BSSC Poker Night (Members)	25 Green Bin BSSC Bingo Night	26 Green Bin BSSC Bingo Night	27 Green Bin BSSC Bingo Night

28

BSSC 13:00 Meat Draw	BSSC 20:00 Afterlife Live
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*Bradley Common waste collection 1 day after green/black bin dates above

Church Hall - Weekly Classes & Activities (holiday period may vary)

09:45 - Kids Latin 2 10:30 - Kids Latin 1	19:00-20:30 -Apton Latin/Ballroom	17:30 - Teen Latin 18:45 - Teen Street 19:30 - Adult Street 20:15 - Rock & Roll	16:15-17:15 - Ellouise Dance 18:30-21:15 - Apton Dance	16:45-20:30 - Ellouise Dance 15:30 - Ellouise Dance
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The Birchanger Village Magazine is published on behalf of the people of Birchanger and distributed free to 450 households in Birchanger. The views expressed herein do not necessarily reflect those of the editor, the magazine or any organisations or institutions represented. Material sent to the editor will generally be printed as received providing it is considered suitable by the magazine team. The editor reserves the right to edit content if considered unsuitable or where insufficient space is available. Printers: M&B Printers Tel: 01371 874 695. Email: mbdesignprint.com.
Editor: John McArthur Tel: 07488 315349 Email: maqazine@birchanger.com. Chairman: Elizabeth Godwin Treasurer: Malcolm Roberts

The Way We Woz

Birchanger Place



5. A VIEW OF BIRCHANGER PLACE - the largest and probably the oldest house of substance in the village - now demolished and replaced by Harrisons.

Birchanger Place was one of the important properties in the village in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The house was occupied by the Harrison family, signs of which exist on the plaques in the Church.

Birchanger place was demolished in the 1960's and a new estate was built on the grounds. Many villagers still remember the house and grounds, particularly the massive Cedar tree which was used by the Village children in their games of play.

Although many of the trees were retained when the estate was built, the Cedar tree was unfortunately felled and in its position a house was built. The new estate was first of all called Birchanger Place, but was then changed to Harrisons, the old family name.



6. BIRCHANGER PLACE - South Front - Mrs. Harrison enjoying the sun.

What's that all about then?

Valentines Day

Valentine's Day has surprisingly messy and mysterious origins, considering it's now all chocolates, roses, and awkward restaurant bookings.

The day is named after Saint Valentine, although historians aren't entirely sure which Valentine he was — there were several. The most popular legend says Valentine was a Roman priest who secretly married couples when Emperor Claudius II banned weddings (believing single men made better soldiers). When Valentine was caught, he was executed around AD 269, allegedly after sending a note signed "from your Valentine". Romantic... in a slightly grim way.

Before Valentine entered the picture, the Romans celebrated Lupercalia in mid-February — a fertility festival involving goats, feasting, and a lottery where men were paired with women. Not quite candlelit dinners, but the intent was there. As Christianity spread, church leaders replaced Lupercalia with a saintly alternative that required fewer goats and less chaos.

Valentine's Day didn't become properly lovey-dovey until the Middle Ages. Poet Geoffrey Chaucer helped link the date with romance by writing about birds choosing their mates on 14 February. From there, love letters, cards, and eventually heart-shaped everything took over. So today, Valentine's Day is a curious blend of martyrdom, matchmaking, medieval poetry, and marketing — proof that romance, like history, is often stranger (and funnier) than fiction.



St. Valentine, outside The Card Factory in Bishops Stortford after having a hot snack



The Village People. This month: Jason Grunwell

Tell us about yourself and what was "life before Birchanger"

I am 40 year's old, grew up in Brentwood, moving to Witham then Braintree (where I met my wife) and now Birchanger. I left school at 16, undertaking a 4-year apprenticeship in electrical installation. When qualifying I went into Mechanical and Electrical Maintenance which led to me starting my own business in 2010. 15 and a half years later still loving the job. Marrying my wife Annette in 2016 and two amazing children Bethany (7), Lenny (2) and our dog Peggy (4). I am known in the village for the Christmas train which seems to have become a Birchanger landmark.

When did you first come to Birchanger and what were your first experiences?

My wife and I moved to Birchanger in October 2017 and instantly fell in love with the village life and on hearing about the Christmas trophy I was adamant I was going to get my name on it and took on the challenge and what a challenge it was. First getting my name on the trophy a few years later and to hear that I have managed it again feels like a real accomplishment.



What do you most like about the village?

Love the county life but knowing that we are only a short drive into town (despite the traffic!). This really hits home when I am in my garden and hear the cows from Sion Park!

What would you change about the village?

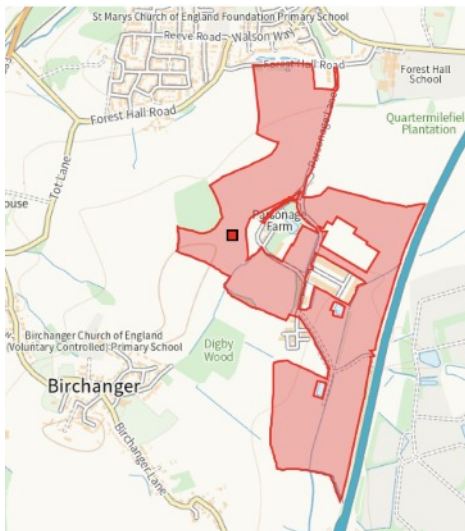
Nothing! Apart from the constant flooding on Birchanger Lane and I have often thought it would be nice to get more plants & flowers along Birchanger Lane.

What's your best memory of the village so far?

How welcoming my family and I have felt since moving in, Oh and the cows mooing!

Solar Farm gets the go-ahead from Uttlesford District Council

The 41500-panel solar farm covering 118 acres of green belt agricultural land between Birchanger and Stansted Mountfitchet will go ahead after a 6 to 1 vote for the scheme decided at the Council's meeting on 14th January 2025.



Despite arguments made against the proposal by representatives from both parish councils who attended the meeting, the committee decided that the benefits of the 30-megawatt solar farm outweighed the environmental impact. Nick Church was the only councillor voting against. Some conditions were discussed and may be implemented regarding the possible fire hazard of lithium batteries used in the storage system and water pollution intervention. Birchanger Parish Council

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Service	Contact	Telephone No.
Allotments	Council Clerk	01279 814473
Alzheimer	Marian	07803 115826
Art Studio & Gallery	Heather Brown	01279 815453
Ballroom Dance	Fred Winters	01763 271942
Ballet for kids	Philippa McMeechan	01763 271010
BAGS	Rosemary Wheatley	01279 814678
Beauty Therapist	Sarah Whiting	07887 638359
Beauty - HEH Nails	Hana Hainsby	07730 619522
Bed & Breakfast	The Cottage	01279 812349
Birchanger Magazine	John McArthur	07488 315349
Butterflies Preschool	Carly Richards	01279 810800
BSSC Club	Terry Earnshaw	01279 813441
Car Service, MOT, Gas	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
Garden Services	Will Grange	07516 783138
Hairdresser Men/Boys	Emma Marks	07527 227943
Handyman	Charlie Grange	07514 783239
Holistic therapy/Reflexology	Shelley Williams	07476 279262
Landscaping Services	Mark Taylor	07941 357934
Laundrette	Ian Kennedy	01279 866183
Legal Services	Nockolds	0345 6460406
Line Dancing	Shelley	01279 864781
Neighbourhood Watch	Peter Sampson	07817 904333
Painting & Décor	David Debnam	07973 861268
Parish Clerk	Keith Williams	01279 814473
Pilates	Mandy Cousins	07713 272664
Printing Services	M&B Printers	01371 874695
Public Safety	Peter Sampson	07817 904333
Soft Play/Bouncy Castles	Andy / Lucie	07956 622808
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

Birchanger Primary School children bounce into the new year with fun and learning!

The children at Birchanger Primary School have had a truly wonderful start to the new year! Since returning after the holidays, they have thrown themselves into their learning with energy, curiosity, and a real sense of excitement. Lessons have been met with enthusiasm, and the children are clearly enjoying exploring new ideas and developing their skills. They have also had fun at playtimes and lunchtimes with the snow providing the perfect backdrop for games, laughter, and fun with friends.

Whether sledging down the hill, snow-walking or creating ice buckets the children have been enjoying the winter fun.

They are also eagerly looking forward to all the exciting events coming up this term, from the fun and creativity of Book Week to the thrill of singing at the O2, not to mention the much-anticipated Mothers' Day Lunch. It's clear that the children are embracing every opportunity the Spring Term has to offer!

Sharon Vessey, Head Teacher



St. Mary's Church



Services at 11.15am unless otherwise stated.

1 st February	Family Service with Pam Lee
8 th February	Matins with Jo Pratt
15 th February	Family Service with Pam Lee
22 nd February	Holy Communion with Revd Helen Flack

If you have been following Church News over the last couple of months, you will be aware that Revd Colin Fairweather has now moved on to a new posting at Gravesend, Kent. We are actively looking for a new priest but as there are so few new ordinands in training, it is likely to take some months before an appointment can be made. Added to the lack of available clergy is the fact that many other churches are without clergy support and churches such as ours, with a small elderly congregation, often are overlooked by applicants because there is no long-term security for them.

It is hard to be optimistic about the future of St Mary's when so few are interested enough to actually attend church services but nevertheless, we shall do our best to continue to host regular Sunday services aimed at all ages. Hopefully a miracle will occur, and some new faces will come along to increase our numbers.

In the interim I take this opportunity to thank all those who make regular monthly donations to the church. Without your support, the church could not be maintained in such a good condition.

Finally, we really do need a few people to join the Parochial Church Council. In particular, we are looking for a secretary (unpaid) to take minutes at meetings and cover the occasional email or letter. Nothing too onerous.

Prayer for the month

Lord, we pray that Colin finds joy and peace in the new challenges that he is facing. We also pray for our community, our families, friends and neighbours that this New Year will bring stability to our world with an end to all conflict. That you will guide all leaders into your way of peace for all.

Amen

N.B. For many years there has been an issue with the ladies' toilets at the hall being blocked due to collapsing underground pipework. To resolve this problem, new drains are being laid this month so please bear with us whilst the work is being done.



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