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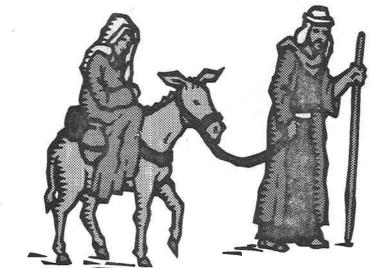


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MAY OUR LIFE'S JOURNEY BRING JOY TO OTHERS

HAPPY CHRISTMAS

The Link is published monthly by Churches Together in Stansted

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United Reformed

Chapel Hill

Ministers: Rev'd Margaret McKay

1 Howe Hall Cottages Littlebury Green Tel 01799 528155

Rev'd Lydia Rapkin 23a St John's Close Saffron Walden Tel 01799 523296

Contact:

Mrs Janet Townsend 58 Chapel Hill Tel 812593



CHRISTMAS IS COMING

Quite probably most of you are by now well into your preparations for Christmas - we respond to the commercial world's wish to spread our spending spree over as long a period as possible. Anyway for many it is great fun and exciting to start planning what we are going to do and what we are going to give for presents this year. Certainly all the village community celebrations have reached the advanced stages of planning and how good it is to have the service in St Mary's and carol singing in the streets and among the houses. There is a tremendous excitement in anticipating Christmas. Above all there can be a warming and inspirational renewal of our spiritual lives as we prepare to celebrate the coming of the Christ child. The story of the baby born in surroundings of poverty. difficulty and suffering, welcomed by shepherds who themselves must have been poor and probably disadvantaged is heightened rather than destroyed by the commercial razzmatazz and comparative affluence of a modern English Christmas.

Keeping in mind the very down to earth circumstances of the birth of the baby Jesus should help those who find Christmas a difficult time to discover and make real the message of hope that Christmas brings. For whatever reason they are troubled whether for example it be the absence of someone they love dearly, fear for their own future or that of their families, poverty or a feeling of not belonging or being despised, they can take heart that it is for them above all the Jesus came into the world and in the Spirit is present with us - 'Emmanuel, God with us'.

A URC minister, the Revd Stephen Brown has written this prayer:

Coming God.
coming in our Lord Jesus,
coming for outcasts.
coming to confound the proud,
coming to surprise with joy the sad.
Come amongst us now
in the power and presence of your Spirit,
as we come into your presence in praise.
In the name and for the sake of Jesus Christ.

Margaret McKay

PREACHERS FOR DECEMBER

7th 11 am Mrs C Bonner
14th 10.30amRev L Rapkin and Mrs C Bonner
Group Gift and Communion Service
followed by coffee and mince pies
in the Lecture Hall
21st 11 am Lessons and Carols
25th 10.30amRev L Rapkin Group Christmas Day
Family Service
28th 11 am Rev M McKay

Our best wishes for a speedy recovery go to Rev Lydia Rapkin following her recent back operation, and congratulations to Olive and Bob Bunting who celebrate their Golden Wedding on December 31st.

Methodist

Meets in Quaker Meeting House, Chapel Hill

Minister: Rev'd Michael Hayman

2 South Road, Bishop's Stortford

Tel 654475

Secretary: Mrs Catherine Dean

49 Recreation Ground. Stansted

Tel 813579

SERVICES AND PREACHERS FOR DECEMBER

7th BIBLE SUNDAY, Service led by Liz Good, Louise Dean and Michael Dyer

14th The Revd Ronald Rawlings, Holy Communion

21st United Carol Service with The Friends

28th Mrs Maureen Hilson of Manuden

We share Christmas Greetings with all the village - May God bless us all.



Church of England

Parish Church of St. John the Evangelist

Rector designate:

The Revd. Andrew Spurr

The Rectory

Stansted Mountfitchet, CM24 8JP

Office:

812203

Home:

815025

Email:

andrew.spurr@zetnet.co.uk

Diary for December 1997

Regular worship continues with an 8:00am said Holy Communion and 9:30am sung Parish Communion services on Sunday mornings with said Evensong at 6:30pm. There is a said Holy Communion service on Wednesday mornings at 10:00am and Prayers at 7:30pm pm on Wednesday evening.

Other services of Holy Communion include 10:30am November 4th at Norman Court, 10:30am November 11th at Mead Court and 11:00am 25th November at Hargrave House.

On Advent Sunday at 6:30 in the Evening there will be an Advent Carol Service at St. Mary's, Birchanger. Guest Preacher at the 9:30am Parish Communion service this month will be Dr. Jane Freeman on December 14th. The new Rector of the Parishes of Stansted Mountfitchet with Birchanger and Farnham will be installed by the Bishop and Archdeacon of Colchester at 8:00pm on Tuesday 16th December at St. John's, Stansted.

Housegroups are underway. The Revd. Andrew Spurr and Dr. Jane Freeman are leading housegroups based on the British and Foreign Bible Society's *Emmaus: the Way of Faith*, a course about the faith-journeys of established Christians and enquirers and those new to Christian belief. The course begins with an introduction to Christian faith and is intended for those who want to grow in their faith as well as forming a basis for those who want to prepare for baptism and/or confirmation in the Christian Church. Those wishing to obtain preparatory material for the course should contact Jane on 814084. Meeting dates and locations are avaliable at the back of St. John's church, membership is not limited to Anglicans.

Christmas Services

Monday 1st 3:00pm Carols at Hargrave House

Saturday 13th 3:00pm Carols at Broome End Nursing Home

Friday 19th 9:15am St. Mary's with Peter Kirk School

Carol Service at St. John's Church

Saturday 20th 4:00pm Carol Concert at St. Mary's Church,

Stansted

Sunday 21st 3:00pmCarols and Christingle at St. John's Church Christmas Eve 3:00pm Crib Service at St. John's Church

Christmas Eve 11:30pm Midnight Communion St. John's Church Christmas Day 9:30pm Parish Communion

FROM THE REGISTERS

Baptisms

Oct 26th Edward George Oliver, son of Perry and Elizabeth

Joseph Frederick Coles, son of Lee and Toni

Marriage (P&D)

Oct 12th Peter Cannon and Elizabeth Davies

Funerals

Sept 22nd Keith Alfred Belcher (Parndon Wood Crematorium)
Oct 8th Lilian Pryor, (St. Mary's - Parndon Wood Crematorium)
Oct 21st Aubrey Richardson (St. Mary's, burial)

Nov 3rd Lilian Morgan (St. Mary's, burial)
Nov 20th Evelyn Harrington (St. Mary's, burial)

TINY TOTS

Are you free on the second and fourth Tuesday every month during the school time? Would your pre-school child enjoy a short biblical story and the chance to create something to take home or simply like having a bit of fun in church? Would you like to meet new friends over refreshments in St John's Church Hall?

If so, why not come along to Tiny Tots, a pre-school Christian group that meets in St John's Church, Stansted, at 2.15 pm?

So far this term we have covered Harvest time, making plates of food with cutlery to take home; we have looked at our hands and feet and how we use them and we have learned how Jesus helped his friends with their fishing, making small rods with the fish still attached. Afterwards we had fish-shaped biscuits which the children enjoyed with their drinks.

We always finish with our special Tiny Tots prayer when we close our eyes and put our hands together before retiring to the Church Hall for playtime and a natter over refreshments.

For more information please contact Margaret Duly, 816053.

NEW RECTOR

We are delighted to announce the appointment of a new Rector for the United Benefice of Stansted, Birchanger and Farnham. He is to be Rev'd Andrew Spurr, at present our Assistant Curate.

We look forward with joy to Andrew's ministry among us and we invite your prayers for him as he prepares for the tasks ahead.

Andrew is to be installed by the Bishop and Archdeacon on 16th December at 8 pm in St John's Church and all are cordially invited.

Peter Jones

Alastair Bone



CAROL SINGING 1997

This year, as for many years past, a scratch team of carol singers will be roaming Stansted's streets on the four evenings before Christmas. Do join us to sing (no auditions are held), to play (we welcome all travelling instrumentalists) or to help with the collections. We shall be meeting at 7.30 every evening in the following places:

Sunday 21 December

In St John's Road, outside the

church

Monday 22 December

At the junction of Chapel Hill

and Sunnyside

Tuesday 23 December

At the junction of Cambridge

Road and Croasdaile Road

Wednesday 24 December At the junction of Church Road

and Mountfitchet Road

Our collections this year will be in aid of the Huw Johnson Club, a local charity which needs no introduction to the readers of the Link.

> Helen Baker Michael Dver Jane Freeman Peter Jones

A GOLDEN WEDDING

In July I was asked to write an article for the December "Link" and on Saturday 20th September Joan and I celebrated our Golden Wedding so - in the 50 years 1947 to 1997 what changes have we experienced, both socially and ecumenically?

Our wedding took place at the Church of St Thomas of Canterbury, West Hill, Wandsworth. Clothes and some foods were still rationed, housing was very scarce and at that time "mixed" marriages were not encouraged. Joan was, still is, an Anglican, so we were not allowed any hymns or music. However, because we had only "borrowed" the church, a Priest who was a friend of my family actually married us and we were able to have music for my wife's entrance and use of the High Altar for the ceremony, rather than a side chapel, and retiring music (the Wedding March?).

Now, fifty years later, we were able to write our own service, have both the Catholic and Anglican priests taking part, have friends from all the Christian communities in Stansted to share in the service and in the celebrations that followed. We were very proud that we were also able to have our family around us and all were able to take part in the service.

Rationing of clothes and food are long gone, although housing can still be difficult for some people and we thank our Lord for all the blessings that we have received during our years together.

Our celebration with our family and friends reminds us that this month we will be gathering together again to rejoice in Our Lord's birth at Bethlehem. It is also a time to remember those who are less fortunate, who have no family, no one to care for them. Please offer up a prayer for them and for all God's people that this Christmastide may be one when all can share in celebrating His birth and His blessings.

Francis Mercer



Rev Eric McIlwain

It is with sadness we record the death of Rev Eric McIlwain on 26th October after a long illness. Mr Mac, as he was affectionately known, was minister of the Stansted Group U.R.C. from 1978-1989. I can still vividly remember being told back in August 1978 that a minister from Canada was coming to live in Cambridge. He would like to come and conduct our Harvest Festival service with a view of becoming our Minister and would I please meet him off the train from Cambridge as he had no transport. My first reactions was I wont be able to understand a word he says and how can be our minister when he lives 25 miles away without a car. I still find myself using Canadian expressions, and he quickly bought a car and we realised that distances in Canada are so great that 25 miles was just round the corner to him.

He became a friend to us all, together with his wife Doris, sharing in our joys and sorrows as we shared in theirs.

Eric soon became involved in S.A.C.C., or as it is now, Churches Together in Stansted, and he designed the cover that we still use for the Link magazine.

His great friend Sister Agnes told him of a church in Belgium who wanted to know more about English church life and the Chevetogne exchange visits were born; and we all know how successful they have become.

The last few years have been difficult especially since the death of Doris in March this year. But the visits of the Rev Ward Murray and Rev Barry Rose and many of his numerous friends including those from the Stansted Churches meant a great deal to him.

We will all miss him and our thoughts and prayers are with Colin and Gail in Leeds and with Sandy, Maureen, Wendy, Judy and their families in Canada.

Janet Townsend

Society of Friends

Quaker Meeting House, Chapel Hill

Clerk:

Mrs Anthea Lee 24 Lea Close Bishop's Stortford

Tel 656707

CHRISTMAS IN TRAFALGAR SQUARE

I am not a great lover of London, but Trafalgar Square has a special fascination - so much is always happening: swirling traffic, big demonstrations, tourists feeding the pigeons for being photographed with the lions, national celebrations.

My first encounter with Trafalgar Square was during a December in wartime London, when I was taken to one of the lunchtime concerts at the National Gallery - these were given free by the leading musicians of the time - and hearing Myra Hess playing 'Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring'. For someone with little knowledge of classical music or concerts it was a revelation; one of those moments that you never forget. The concerts were followed by soup and sausage rolls in the underground canteen (now called Pret-a-Manger and a very much more up-market affair!).

Now in December the Square presents two different aspects of Christmas: the feeding and sheltering of the homeless in the crypt of St Martins in the Fields, and in the centre of the Square the magnificent spruce from Norway hung with sparkling lights. It is one of the strange paradoxes that our best-loved Christmas decoration is a pagan symbol of a snow-covered fir tree, which we use to celebrate the birth of a Jewish baby in the searing heat of Palestine. Perhaps it is unimportant what we use as long as we do celebrate and rejoice.

Katharine Hurford



SHALOM

Dates for December

1st

Meditation with Jim Brand Venue: Mike & Marion Dyer 7 Blythwood Gardens

15th

Christmas Party Venue: Ruth Ra

Venue: Ruth Rawlinson Mont House, High Lane

Meetings are at 8 pm: all are welcome.

Roman Catholic

St Theresa's Church, Millside

Priest:

Rev'd Joe White

The Presbytery, 12 Millside, Stansted

Tel 814349

Masses:

Saturday Stansted Sunday Stansted 6.00 pm 10.30 am

Henham

Stansted

9.00 am

Holy Days Stansted Henham

8.00 pm 7.00 pm

9.30 am

Weekdays (Tues-Sat)

Confessions on Saturday after 9.30 mass



"UNTO US A CHILD IS BORN..."

Uttlesford Carers & Alzheimer's Disease Society

CARERS SUPPORT GROUP

A discussion of carers issues over a cup of tea & biscuits

2 - 4 pm Monday 1st December Quaker Meeting House Everyone welcome Tel 01371 875810 / 872519

Peter Kirk School

Quiz Night

7.30 for 8.00 pm Friday 5th December £5.00 (incl supper) Tables of 6 Bar ~ Raffle

✗ STANSTED MILLERS Christmas Stall

outside 'Savages' Lower Street (opposite the butchers) 9.30 am to 12 noon Saturday 6th December

LLAGE EVENTS December

Carers Support Group Mon Shalom Group Wed Coffee Morning Gardening Club Local History Society 4 Thu

Quiz Night 5 Fri Windmill Christmas Stall 6 Sat

Cake Stall Christmas Fayre Village Music Club

8 Mon to

to

24 Wed

Skip at Crafton Green 11 Thu Huw Johnson Coffee Morning 10 Wed

Huw Johnson Concert Thu 11

12 Fri Lib Dem Committee Dinner

13 Sat

Installation of Revd A Spurr Tue 16

20 Sat Sun 21

Evening W | Carols Liberal Democrat Ploughmans Tennis Club Dinner CTS Carol Concert

Quaker Meeting House 2 - 4 pm 7 Blythwood Gardens 8 pm Hargrave House 10 am - 12 noon Day Centre 8 pm Day Centre 8 pm Peter Kirk School 7 30 for 8 pm Lower St 9.30 am - 12 noon Outside URC 10 am Bentfield School 2 - 4.30 pm St John's Church 8 pm

62 Chapel Hill 10 am - 12 noon Peter Kirk School 7 for 7.30 pm URC 8 pm The Cock 7.30 for 8 pm Day Centre 12 - 2 pm Chilli Club, Bishop's Stortford 7.30 pm St John's Church 8 pm

St Mary's Chruch 4 pm

Carol Singing around the village (see below)

Bentfield School CHRISTMAS FAYRE

Games, Craft Stalls, Face Painting, Carols by the School Choir plus

FATHER CHRISTMAS

Everyone welcome 2 pm to 4.30 pm Saturday 6 December



THE VILLAGE MUSIC CLUB

CONCERTANTE ENSEMBLE

with soloist Neil Shewan 8.00 pm Saturday 6th December St John's Church

Tickets from Stansted Carpets 812019, Sonia Levy 815282 and at the door £7 adults £4 concessions £2 children

Stansted Evening WI Readings & Carols

to celebrate Christmas 8 pm Friday 12th December United Reformed Church

followed by refreshments All welcome - hope to see you there!

CHURCHES TOGETHER STANSTED

Carol Singing

You are warmly invited to join in singing round the village Meet at 7.30 pm

Sun 21 St John's Rd (by the Church) Mon 22 corner Chapel Hill/Sunnyside Tue 23 corner Cambridge Rd/Croasdaile Wed 24 corner Church Rd/Mountfitchet

Followed by refreshments All are welcome Hope to see you there!

Recorder, flute & clarinet players also welcome

Please tel 814059 to arrange music



Coffee Morning

10 am - 12 noon Wed 10th December 62 Chapel Hill Stall ~ Raffle Entrance 60 pence

Concert

of carols, sketches & songs

7 for 7.30 pm Thurs 11th December Peter Kirk School

Refreshments ~Raffle ~ Tombola

CHURCHES TOGETHER IN STANSTED



A Celebration of Christmas

Congregational carols, readings and poetry 4pm Sat 20 December St Mary's Church (parking in Mountfitchet School) Evergone Welcome



HuwJohnson Club

Just when everyone thought that fireworks were over for 1997 we once again held a very belated fireworks display. But this time we did not disturb the residents of Stansted, instead we shattered the peace of Saffron Walden. We were celebrating the 21st birthday of Clare who has been a club member for many years. Clare was born on November 5th so it was fitting to include fireworks at her party. We held the party at Clare's home at the invitation of her parents who laid on a wonderful feast. We say a big 'thankyou' to them for allowing more than forty people to trample all over their house. We transported our Stansted members to Saffron Walden in the Peter Kirk mini bus.

Many of our members come from Saffron Walden and they thoroughly enjoy our evenings. We do, however, rely heavily on our drivers and we are always looking for more people to join that loyal band. We ask people to drive once a month and you would only make the journey one way, either bringing members to club or returning them home again. If you could help us in this way please let me know on 812284 as we have potential club members anxious to join us.

Please remember our Concert on 11th December at the Peter Kirk School. You are invited to join us at 7 pm for our 7.30 pm performance. We will have a tombola and a raffle on that evening. Look out for the posters.

Everyone at the club would like to say a big thankyou to our many benefactors and wish you all a very Happy Christmas.

Marion G Johnson

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STANSTED MOUNTFITCHET EVENING W.I.

The November meeting brought Hugh Joscelyne to talk about the Clement Joscelyne business and family. Originating in the French pre-Conquest village of Jossalin, he showed a family tree from the 18th century to the present day. His grandfather Clement started the business but died at 56 after many years in a wheelchair, his wife continuing with the firms activities. We saw pictures of the building which eventually became the shop, some parts of it had been a post office, butcher's and slaughter house and the smaller building next to it a public house. Regrettably the original shop has been destroyed by fire, but will be rebuild to look like the original building at the front but with a modern shop at the back. The company now has seven shops in Essex, Hertfordshire and Norwich.

The meeting continued with the A.G.M. Our Treasurer, Mrs Sue Holland, reported that we have a healthy balance but fund raising must continue. Secretary, Mrs Judy Colliver, in the committee's annual report, reminded members of all the things we had done during the year, like quiz evenings, jumble sales, fashion shows, outings to London and the various afternoon teas and a supper.

Our competition winners were then presented with monetary gifts for their efforts during the past year. First was Mrs Jean Fuller with Mrs Judy Colliver and Mrs Pearl Wellings joint second and Mrs Ann Johnson third. Mrs Sally Smith was asked to look after the shield we had won at our County Show with our entry in "Grandma's Birthday" class.

The President, Mrs Brenda Ryan, then thanked her outgoing committee for all their work and co-operation during the year. She said how pleased she was to report that we had welcomed many new members and hoped this would continue. The President, Secretary and Treasurer were then presented with flowers as a thankyou from the members.

Mrs Ryan was then returned as President for the coming year with Mrs Colliver as Secretary.

Our December meeting has an historical theme when Tony Rook talks about "One in the eye for Harold".



FROM OUR U.S. CORRESPONDENT

Last April David McLean, who lives and works in Seattle, joined the aid trip to Bosnia organised and funded jointly from Birchanger and Rainham in Kent. This account of an incident which remains among his most vivid memories of the mission first appeared in the Seattle Times and is reproduced with his permission.

The Border

David McLean

The clock doesn't change in the customs cabin near Wihac, Bosnia-Herzegovina. We arrive in the fading light of seven pm, and the clock, which hangs above a map of an intact Yugoslavia, reads 5:19. The second hand hops silently around the face, but an hour later the hands haven't moved and neither have we.

No matter. We are resigned to spending the night here and the cabin is warm thanks to a gas heater in the corner. The best we can hope for is that the customs official, a pleasant but weary looking man named Miro, will finish our paperwork tonight and have us ready to clear the border first thing in the morning. Eight of us are travelling in two vans and a truck carrying fifteen tons of food, medical supplies, blankets, clothing, laundry detergent, chocolate and other sundries. We have driven from south-eastern England and our final destination is the Red Cross centre in Zenica, a city about fifty miles north of Sarajevo. We left Britain four days ago on what is now an annual trip for aid organisers Keith Dando and Alan Phillips, Keith's wife Cynthia and Alan's nephew, Jason Rixon, our truck driver. Keith and Alan met on a humanitarian journey to Bosnia in 1994. The war was still raging then and each had answered the same newspaper ad looking for drivers to make deliveries to Bosnia. "They needed the help and I thought it would be good to show people that someone cared" Keith, a retired British Telecom worker, said when I asked him why he'd answered the ad. "I was also interested in a little excitement", he added with a grin.

That first journey was poorly planned and under funded and although the goods got delivered it cost all involved a lot of aggravation and a few hundred pounds out of their own pockets. Afterwards, Keith, Alan and four others decided to form their own group to collect and organise aid. The trip I am accompanying them on is the fourth for Kent Humanitarian Aid for Bosnia and the largest in terms of people and goods. It is being run in conjunction with the people of Birchanger, a small village north-east of London, whose vicar, the Reverend Andrew Spurr, is a friend of the Dandos, Alan and mine (thus my presence on the trip).

I walk out the vehicles and find Jason and Cyn sitting comfortably in the truck, but the Birchanger contingent is fighting the cold in its van. It is late April but the temperature is below freezing and we are surrounded by fields of snow. Although the nearest villages are less than a mile away in either direction, they are out of sight, giving the border a desolate look. Roy, Neal and Kevan are trying to stay warm and dreading the night's sleep to come. Aside from a single night in a Slovenian hotel, we have slept --badly-- in the vehicles on the drive from England.

Two trucks smelling of livestock arrive as I return to the customs cabins with cans of beer and bags of potato chips. The musty livestock smell is strong and in the fading light I see the black noses of sheep protruding from small holes in the aluminium trailer. The customs cabin has no electricity and it is now too dark to read. Miro has managed, using white out and a photocopy machine in another cabin, to produce blanks of the final forms we need to pass through the border. He screws two long white candles into empty soda cans and sets one on each side of the mechanical typewriter on his desk. Alan offers to fetch a flashlight but Miro waves him off. "It's no problem. I can type papers in darkness now. This will only take a few minutes." He lights the candles and begins to peck slowly on the typewriter in their golden glow. He is the first of many Bosnians we will meet that I will think extraordinary for functioning so easily under these difficult conditions. A man enters the cabin and begins talking to Miro. "I must go out" Miro says "Please wait".

Waiting was no problem for Keith and Alan. Earlier in the day we spent nine hours at the Slovenia-Croatia border while customs approved our paperwork. Last year they waited 38 hours at that border, drove three hours to this border and then waited 36 more hours to get their aid into Bosnia. We have had it easy so far and Keith stoically rolls a thin cigarette with his cracked, dry hands and Alan sits next to the gas heater, patiently amused by everything. For amateurs they are real pros at delivering the aid. "This is what it's all about, isn't it" Keith says to me.

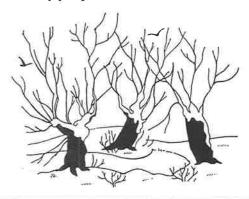
Miro comes in a few minutes later, looking even more harassed. "I'm sorry" he said "I must arrange for these two trucks of sheep first. There are 727 sheep on these trucks. They were sent from Romania to sell at our end of Ramadan but they are a few days late and holiday is over now. They have been on these trucks four days with no food or water and some are already dead. Can you imagine? Four days. I must call a veterinarian and have them cleared. I'm sorry. It might take one more hour".

I step outside again. A white cat strolls over the gravel. A man missing the lower half of his left leg swings by on crutches and enters the makeshift bar next door. The bar has a generator humming behind it, powering electric lights. The Birchanger lads have found their way there for a drink and warmth, I hope.

I walk aimlessly around the little border settlement. Figures move in the dark, mostly soldiers I see, when they pass by. Next to the bar is a cafe and next to that is a bank, both made of modified shipping crates or portable offices. In all, about a dozen cabins and a sheet metal canopy form the border between the two nations. I am cold now and things are pleasantly quiet, even peaceful. I stroll past the sheep again and return to our vehicles. Jason and Cynthia sit high up in the semi, their faces awash in the blue glow of Jason's portable television. A cold breeze blows and I can't help but imagine the things that have happened here during the past five years. From my reading and from the war-damaged villages we have driven through in Croatia, I know this was a hot spot during the Bosnian war, a region where Muslims even fought Muslims. In the morning we shall drive into Bosnia and I do not yet know what we will see there. I feel a sense of both dread and excitement. The shock of seeing the burned out villages in Croatia is still with me and I expect it will be worse tomorrow in Bosnia. I return to the cabin and Alan gives me his seat next to the gas heater. The clock still shows 5:19 and we sit primarily in silence for two hours, talked out after the four days on the road together. At about ten o'clock Miro returns to the cabin and is able to work at the typewriter uninterrupted for an hour. By eleven he has finished our paperwork. Keith and Alan shake his hand and thank him and he tells us that the border will open at seven and that he will meet us then. We return to the vans to sleep. The sheep are now gone but their thick odour remains, still strong, but not unpleasant. The others have already bedded down for the night. Before crawling into the front seat of the van to sleep I see the Hale-Bop comet spaying its light over the sky to the north-west and finally notice the moon, a day past full, hanging in the east. I look back at a cabin near the metal canopy and see through the window a soldier tip up a big bottle of brandy or whisky. His Adam's apple bobs three times before he lowers the bottle and wipes his sleeve on his mouth.

I take off my shoes and slide, fully clothed, into the sleeping bag. I arrange myself comfortably around the gear shift and quickly fall asleep. I wake at six with the sun pouring in through the windshield and step out of the car feeling cold, raw and slightly addled. A few new trucks have arrived in the night and are parked behind us. Keith and Alan and I walk to the cafe and for the first time I taste the sweet, thick Turkish coffee of Bosnia. It comes in a small metal pitcher that contains two powerful, muddy shots. Miro comes in looking ragged and tired. He explains that the sellers of the sheep had planned on making six times the cost of the sheep on their deal but in the end had to give them away losing everything. "I am glad of this" he says. "People have made enough money on this war".

He comes outside with us to see us through the border. He gets our papers stamped and wishes us well and at ten past seven we pass through the border. The morning is clear and cold and my senses feel heightened, anticipating the road ahead of us. We are in Bosnia now and no-one has even looked at my passport.



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Shopping at Christmas

Donald was getting excited. It was nearly Christmas, and Mum had been making a large cake. She said it had to be a big one because Aunts and Uncles were coming for tea on Christmas Day, and they would have to go shopping to get presents for everyone.

Donald did not like shopping; he was only small and from his pushchair he saw mostly people's legs. Sometimes the bags they carried were very near him and he was frightened he might get bumped. He wanted to play with a friend instead but was told that his friends' Mothers had too much to do getting ready for Christmas to look after him too.

It was as bad as Donald had expected in the town, everywhere was so busy. It was hot in the shops and cold outside them, and Mum was buying things for grownups, nothing *he* was interested in.

In one big shop, they joined a queue that moved along very slowly. 'I want to go home' cried Donald. Mum got a drink of apple juice out of her bag and a biscuit, and that cheered him up a bit and helped to pass the time. Eventually they came to a doorway with a curtain across it. A lady dressed as a fairy came out. She looked very pretty, thought Donald, but did not believe she was a *real* fairy. Donald was lifted from his pushchair and taken behind the curtain. A small man dressed as an elf was standing there, but Donald did not think he was *real* either.



Then he noticed a big chair and sitting in it someone in a long red coat with a white beard and a jolly smiling face. FATHER CHRISTMAS! Donald told him what he would like for Christmas and Mum stood there nodding and smiling as well. The elf handed Father Christmas a parcel to give Donald, and as he stepped forward to get it, he put out a hand and touched the beard. 'You can give it a gentle tug' said Father Christmas, 'it won't come off - I'm real'.

Donald went home in a dream, clutching the little engine from the parcel, and thinking to himself that Christmas shopping was not so bad after all.

Word Puzzle

My first is in cake but not in pudding
My second is in Church but not in cooking
My third is in reindeer but never in sleigh
My fourth is in stocking and Boxing Day
My fifth is in bells we like to hear ringing
My sixth is in tree but not in carol singing
My seventh is in mistletoe but not in holly
My eighth is in happy but not in jolly
My ninth is in presents we like to receive
My total letters make ______ Eve

Christmas

Answer

CHRISTMAS COMPETITION

Can YOU write a poem about Christmas?

Write your name, address and age underneath and send your poem in to 58 Chapel Hill by Thursday 18th December.

The prize will be presented before Christmas, and the winning entry will be published in the February edition of the Link.

Bentfield School

The Christmas theme is well described by Liam McCullaugh aged 6. He also drew the seasonal motif below.

Happy Christmas!

Christmashigh Muscherst Masnigth wentheren Nathingto beherd. Santa was cornell oys in the Stocking's Jently and Kirid re otheris mits pyean who Brote his carut to 15 ather pears, then he went Home"

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Monday - Friday 9.00 am - 4.00 pm

mmmammmmes:4960mmmmm



21 of our 48 members, 3 visitors from County and 2 members of the Royal British Legion attended our AGM. Our President, Mrs Gabb, referred to another successful year when our efforts had shown a financial increase, and she thanked our officers and committee and all members for their hard work and enthusiasm.

The highlight of the evening was a celebration with flowers and food and wine for our Secretary, Mrs Whall, for her 50 years of membership - with 19 of those years as our Secretary.

Our Chairman, Mrs Hollis, touched on events during the past year, including the celebration of Mrs Levey's 50 years as Treasurer, Mrs Gabb's 20 years as President and Miss Law's 51 years as a member. She emphasised that we needed Mrs Gabb as our President for another 20 years! She also singled out several members for special thanks.

Officers elected are:

President - Mrs Gabb

Chairman - Mrs Hollis

Secretary - Mrs Whall

Treasurer - Mrs Levey

Committee - Mesdames Blyth, Patmore, Rowley and Thistle.

Mrs Saban from County then told us how she became involved in the Women's Section, finally ending up as Standard Bearer and Chairman of Hatfield Heath branch.

We have no meeting in December or January and our next meeting will be on February 19th 1998 in the Day Centre at 7.30 pm.

We wish all members and friends a very Happy Christmas and healthy and happy 1998.

Pat Clower



Chairman: Steve Riley, tel. 815455.

Forthcoming Events

Committee Dinner, December 12th

Ploughman's Lunch, Saturday December 13th - 12 noon - 2 pm at the Day Centre Crafton Green.

May we take this opportunity to thank you for your support throughout the year and wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.



We have a pre-Christmas treat for you on Saturday 6 December in St John's Church, Stansted, at 8 pm. Frank Cliff conducts the Concertante Ensemble in the following programme:-

Correlli's Christmas Concerto Mozart's Horn Concerto in Eb K495 with soloist Neil

Elgar's Serenade for Strings in E minor Haydn's "Farewell" Symphony No. 45 in F# minor

Tickets are available from Stansted Carpets, Chapel Hill (812019) Nockolds Solicitors, Market Square, Bishop's Stortford Sonia Levy, 31 Chapel Hill (815282) and at the door.

Adults £7, Concessions £4, Children £2.

Our first Concert in the New Year is on Sunday 18 January at 3 pm with Ann Mackay (soprano) and Sonia Levy (piano).



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Village Diary

We understand that generally in the village amongst organisations and members of the public there is concern that the Village Diary is not as accessible as it used to be. This is because the Health Clinic have not replaced the receptionist who recently moved away and the building is therefore not open as much as it used to be. The Parish Council is very aware of concerns over this function and the matter will be discussed at the Finance & General Purposes meeting in December. If anybody has any suggestions to make regarding a suitable location for the diary please contact the Clerk before the 10th December. An answerphone is in operation after 1.00 pm Monday -Friday and if you are unable to come personally to put your event in the diary just leave a message and the office will write the event in the diary for you.

REMINDER - Noticeboards

The noticeboards located around the village are for publicising non-profit making organisations, charitable events, etc. Only short-term notices are permitted. Longterm notices may be removed by the Council should space be required for something else.

Skip Dates 1998

Monday 5th - Thursday 9th January

Monday 2nd - Thursday 5th February

Monday 16th - Thursday 19th March

Monday 20th - Thursday 23rd April

Monday 11th - Thursday 14th May

Monday 22nd - Thursday 25th June

Monday 20th - Thursday 23rd July

Monday 31st August - Thursday 3rd September

Monday 5th - Thursday 8th October

Monday 7th - Thursday 10th December

Weekend Dates: 21/22 February; 30/31 May; 8/9

August; 14/15 November.

Please note all above dates are subject to confirmation.

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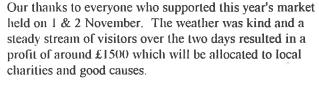


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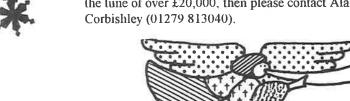
Art and Craft Market





The success of this annual village event depends on the hard work of many people; the committee, who work throughout the year encouraging artists and stallholders, dealing with publicity, erecting and dismantling advertising boards and carrying out sundry other general tasks; and also the army of other helpers who turn up at the time to erect and dismantle the display screens and stalls, prepare and serve refreshments and act as stewards during the event.

As reported in the recent "Village News" produced by the Parish Council and in the local press, the future of the event is in some doubt as several of the present committee members who have undertaken the work for many years, are wanting a break. More volunteers, perhaps with fresh input and ideas, are needed to join the committee to take the event forward. If you feel you would like to help to ensure the continuance of this event which, over the last 20 years has been able to support small local charities to the tune of over £20,000, then please contact Alan Corbishley (01279 813040).





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At the November meeting we welcomed Mr Joe Sharman from Cottenham near Cambridge to talk to us on 'Collecting plants from the wild'. Mr Sharman, obviously a keen plantsman, runs a business with his partner specialising in species collected from around the world and to this end he has travelled extensively. His talk illustrated by slides was both informative and entertaining. A number of members purchased plants from his stock of slightly unusual flora.

December Meeting

We meet on Wednesday 3 December at 8 pm at the Crafton Green Day Centre.

Mr Mark Williams from Unwins is coming to tell us about Seed Trialling and its benefit to your garden.

As usual in December we hope members will stay for a drink and a snack which will round off the evening and 1997. Raffle tickets will be on sale.

Seed Orders

All members are reminded that orders for seeds from Suttons and Unwins must be with Derek Francis by the end of this meeting. (If you have difficulty with this timing please speak to Derek).

1998

Member should note that there is no meeting in January.

ADVANCE NOTICE On Wednesday February 4th our very own local celebrity will be paying us a very welcome visit. Colin Horner is our speaker on Modern Roses. **Don't miss this one**.

Our club looks forward to welcoming new members at meetings, shows and visits.

Derek Francis



Stansted Tennis Club



Anybody interested in playing winter tennis can join the club for the winter months at half the annual rate. For further information please contact our Membership Secretary, Kate Rutter, on 813053. Don't forget we have club mornings every Sunday throughout the winter ... all members welcome!

Used tennis balls of all standards are available for sale at very reasonable prices from Janet Hollis at 105 Cambridge Road.

This year we are having our annual Christmas meal at the Chilli Club in Bishop's Stortford on Saturday December 13th at 7.30 pm. If you would like to come along please contact Sue Sebley on 812255.



STANSTED MOUNTFITCHET LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

In "Favourite Haunts in Saffron Walden" Jean Gumbrell not only showed slides of places in the town which were reputed to be, or had been, haunted but also some in Newport, Widdington, Clavering and Hadstock Airfield. No mention by her of any in Stansted to make uneasy our journey home on a dark, damp November night.

The Christmas meeting in the Day Centre at 8 pm on Thursday 4th December will bring us Kate Muskett on "A History of English Pubs". The modest sum of £1 will purchase coffee and mince pies that evening and no doubt some other festive treat will be provided. May I remind members that subscriptions should have been paid now and that there is a visitor's fee.

On New Year's Day there will be a selection of items from various speakers and on February 5th Norman Mead will tell us about "The Anti-Airport Protest Movement". Both 8 pm in the Day Centre.



Pâté

½ lb lambs liver

1/2 lb sausage meat

1/4 lb bacon

1 medium onion

1/2 glass sherry

Salt and pepper

- (a) mince liver and bacon
- (b) add sausage meat
- (c) chop onion finely and mix in
- (d) add seasoning and sherry
- (e) mix thoroughly
- (f) put in small baking tin, lined with greasproof paper
- (g) bake for 40 mins on gas mark 4
- (h) turn out when cold and slice as required

This view of Chapel Hill in the horse-drawn era comes from The Stansted Postcard Collection which has been recently acquired by David Martin of Millside. Are any of our older readers able to date the photograph or even identify any of the children? If so, we would be delighted to know. We hope to publish more of these evocative photographs in future issues. Anyone wishing to obtain copies should ring David on 814673.





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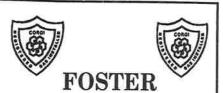
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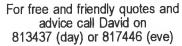
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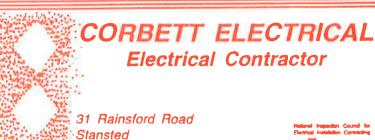
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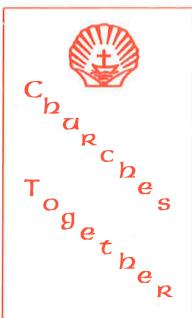
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