

Stansted Mountfitchet

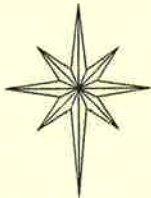
The Link



Proclamation



Preparation



Incarnation



CHRISTMAS 2004

<i>In this issue...</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Humour	p11, p15
<input type="checkbox"/> New Licensing Laws	p13
<input type="checkbox"/> Refuse Collections	p17
<input type="checkbox"/> Looking Back: Stansted 1935 - 1985	p25
<input type="checkbox"/> Looking Forward: Skateboard Park Ph. II	p19

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Index to Advertisers

	<i>Page</i>		<i>Page</i>		
Animal Care	Angels4Animals (pet sitting)	29	Household Services	Executive Carpet Care	16
	Mercer & Hughes (vets)	22	<i>(continued)</i>	Express Picture Framing	8
Community & Care	Alzheimer's Society	26		Flowers for all Occasions	20
	Hearing Help	10		Foster Plumbing & Heating	FC
	Helpline	18		G.P. Clark (roofer)	12
	MIND	20		Iron Maiden	5
	Stansted Day Centre	12		JDW Gas Heating Specialist	FC
	Uttlesford Carers	18, 22		Knights Windows	16
Computing	Alan Horsley	18		Mark Robinson (handyman)	12
	Computer Help	10		R.D. Ellis (furniture restorer)	8
	MCM Computer Services	12		Ray Morton (painter/decorator)	8
	ShadowFax	26		Stansted's Painting Ladies	8
	The Cartridge Centre	10		Tim's Tiles	8
Education	Birchanger Nursery Unit	26	Leisure	2DiVE4	30
	Montessori Nursery	12		Celebrations	28
	N&W Essex Adult Comm Coll	27		Elsenham Golf Centre	28
	Rainbow Pre-school	10		Graham School of Dance	28
	Sideways Pre-School	16		Newport Croquet Club	12
	Uttlesford Learning Link	24		Romeera Leisure Centre	29
Electrical	Corbett Electrical	29	Motoring	Autopoint Car Sales	20
	Zelta Batteries	10		D Bonney & Sons	28
Financial & Legal	Davidson Oakley & Co	29		Nunn's Garage	26
	Greenways Financial Planning	FC		Onward Driver Training	29
	Pothecary & Barratt	22		Rowland Ridgwell	22
	Vickers	26	Personal Services	CK Men's Room	8
Food & Lodging	Bistro 49	29		Fancy Fingers	12
	Chimneys Guest House	FC		Glynis Cheers (hypnotherapist)	8
	Courtyard Gites	30		Grave Concern	8
	Eddie Ho Fish & Chips	26		Lower Street Clinic	16, 18
	Royal Tandoori	30		NLP Solutions	18
Funeral Services	D.C. Poulton & Sons	30		Slimming World	16
	Daniel Robinson & Sons	30		Sue Leech (chiropodist)	22
	J Day & Son	10		The Eye Practice	22
Furniture & Furnishings	Bubbles Bathrooms	FC		The Park Clinic (weight loss)	22
	Fabrications	29	Printing & Publishing	Copyzone	24
	G E Sworder & Sons	30		Millway Stationery	18
	Kate Harrison	20		Playsongs Publications	18
	Stansted Carpets	26	Property Services	Aldwych Construction	FC
	Valley Carpets	FC		City & Country Residential	28
	You're Furnished	20		David Lee	18
Garden Supplies & Services	D Honour & Son	20		Inter County	20
	Garden Design	10		Mullucks Wells	30
	JR Johnstone	26		PHD Associates (architects)	8
	Perry's Garden Centre	25	Retailers	Family News	26
	Selina Rankin	16		King's Family Butchers	10
	Steve Hall's Gardening Services	20		R & K Newsagents	18
	The Mower Shop	28		R P Ellen Ltd (fashion shoes)	29
	Ware Planters	12	Other	Alsa Christmas Trees	6
Household Services	A Better Aerial	16		Stansted All-Steel (gates,railings)	20
	ADA Decorating	10		Ugley Village Hall (for hire)	20
	Clive's Maintenance Services	22			

SOCIETY OF FRIENDS

Quaker Meeting House, Chapel Hill

Clerk Mrs Anthea Lee
24 Lea Close
Bishop's Stortford
Tel: 01279 656707

Meeting Sunday 11.00am

Reflections on Unity

A few weeks ago Churches Together had their annual reunion with the Church of the Cherubim and Seraphim from Birmingham – a link that was established many years ago. This year 20 of their members came to Stansted and we had a joint service at the United Reformed Church and a meal together afterwards. It is always an enthusiastic and heart-warming occasion with lots of choruses as well as the carefully planned service.

It caused me to wonder afterwards why we all feel this is a contact we do not want to lose. Apart from the friendships formed over the years I would feel it a loss not to experience such a completely different form of service – it brings a refreshing perspective and plenty of food for thought. I always like one of our Quaker Advices written in 1737:

“The unity of Christians never did nor ever will or can stand in uniformity of thought and opinion, but in Christian love only.”

This underlines that ecumenism is an appreciation and enjoyment of each other's ways of expressing our joint belief in the eternal truths. The fact that Quakers find that for them silence forms the best basis makes no difference to our appreciation of the beauty and meaning of symbols, the orderliness and ceremony of traditional services, the joyousness of spontaneous song and dance. Experiencing this variety enriches us all.

We are lucky that locally many of us have over the years reached a point of easiness with our different ways and have realised through a variety of joint activities that we are all pilgrims or searchers with the same goal. Our joint events have become times of great enjoyment – hard work sometimes but not duties.

It has always seemed to me that in order to operate effectively in our joint projects it is wise to have a central body such as Churches Together in Stansted to co-ordinate projects and provide a stable central core as a forum for discussion and a jumping-off point.

Another extract from Quaker Faith and Practice perfectly expresses the value of diversity: “What then is the focus for Christian Unity? It must be Jesus, who calls us not into structures but into discipleship and to follow him in his way. Can we not know that we are one in him when we are faithful to his calling and when we exercise towards one another that greatest gift of love? Can we not rejoice in our diversity, welcoming the opportunities to learn from each other? Can we not seek a recognition of each other's ministries as the work of the same Spirit? The Spirit can, if we are ready to adventure, lead us into ways we have not known before.”

Katharine Hurford

UNITED REFORMED

Chapel Hill

Minister Rev'd David Simpson
11 Church Manor
Bishop's Stortford
CM23 5AF
Tel: 01279 504900

Contact Mrs Janet Townsend
58 Chapel Hill
Tel: 01279 812593

Preachers for December

5th	2.30pm	Rev'd D Simpson
12th	10.30am	Mrs S Devereux
19th	10.30am	Rev'd D Simpson Gift Service with Communion
25th	10.30am	Rev'd D Simpson Christmas Day Family Service
26th	10.30am	Carol Service

Dates for your Diary - December

5th	3.30pm	Afternoon Tea
8th	8.00pm	Discussion Group, B/S
9th	1.30pm	Discussion Group, Stansted
13th	6.00pm	Pilots
20th	2.30pm	Monday Club

Operation Christmas Child

By the time you read this copy of 'Link' 220 shoe boxes will have started their journey from Stansted to Eastern Europe. A record of 135 was made up at the Coffee Evening at the Lecture Hall on 9th November from items donated. Add to this 29 from Manuden Girl Guides and 23 from the Catholic Women's Group with the remainder having been left at my home over the past couple of weeks.

On behalf of all the children and the charity I would like to say a big thank you to everyone who supported this very worthwhile cause. In the new year it is hoped to have an evening when a representative on the charity will come and speak about their work. More details later.

Janet Townsend



Details of Christmas services at all the churches are included in a leaflet being distributed throughout Stansted.

ROMAN CATHOLIC

St Therese of Lisieux
High Lane

Priest Father Joe White
The Presbytery
St Therese of Lisieux
High Lane
Stansted
Tel: 01279 814349

Masses Saturday 6.00pm
Sunday 9.00am and 10.30am

Holy Days of Obligation 8.00am and 8.00pm

Tuesday-Saturday 9.30am

Confessions
Saturday 10.00am
and by appointment

Baptisms By appointment

Christmas - A Festival of Love

When the birthday of Christ is now surrounded by so much materialism, and the message of Christmas has, seemingly, been lost among all the glitz and razzmatazz of a commercial world, it is as well to reflect that it is not all on the downside.

Even if the real meaning of Christmas is forgotten or 'put aside', it is still a wonderful day of celebration. It is a celebration of love. A time of healing when relationships are sometimes restored, a time when families get together, old and young, to enjoy each other's company, and share a meal. A time when love is expressed by the buying and receiving of gifts, often well thought out. A time of goodwill. A time when many people remember the poor and needy, and those who are alone. Then the essence of Jesus is not forgotten, even if He is not overtly remembered. The attributes He would wish for in people are there, love, generosity and goodwill, and thus it makes Christmas a time of celebration for all.

In our multicultural society of today, many other faiths celebrate Christmas for these reasons. Although not recognising the divinity of Jesus, they, too, are able to express their love and generosity at this time of year. The remembrance of loved ones, old friends and new, are brought to mind in the sending of Christmas cards. How warming this must be to many people who thought they were alone and forgotten. People can indeed emulate the qualities of Jesus at this time of year. So Christmas is a wonderful feast, a time of love and goodwill to all men. A Happy and Blessed Christmas!

Rita Morson

METHODIST

Meets in Quaker Meeting House, Chapel Hill

Minister Rev'd Keith Page
2 South Road
Bishop's Stortford
Tel: 01279 654475

Secretary Mrs Catherine Dean
49 Recreation Ground
Stansted
Tel: 01279 813579

Email methodists@stansted.net

All services start at 9.30am unless otherwise stated

Services and preachers for December

5th Jerry Heyhoe
12th Rev'd Keith Page – Holy Communion
19th Rev'd Hilary Cheng – a joint Christmas service with the Friends

We are invited to join in worship at the United Reformed Church on Christmas Day and on 26th December, both services at 10.30am.

Catherine Dean
813579



A Celebration of Christmas

Saturday, 18th December, 2004 at 4.00pm
St Mary's Church, Stansted



The usual concert of carols, Christmas music, readings and poetry will take place at 4.00pm on Saturday, 18th December 2004 at St Mary's Church, Stansted. Singers from all local churches are invited to join the choir for the musical items.

Rehearsals will be from 8.00pm-9.00pm on the following evenings at St John's Church, Stansted:

Wednesday, 1st December

Wednesday, 8th December

Thursday, 16th December

Glynis D Morris
(01223 263640 or
church.music@stansted.net)



All enquiries are welcome at **The Church Office** located upstairs in St. John's Church Hall, Stansted CM24 8JP

Monday	Open from 9:00am-12:00noon
Wednesday	
Friday	

(01279) 815243
church.office@stansted.net

Administrator
Mrs Elizabeth Jennings

Christingle Service
12th December 3:00pm

Uttlesford District Council/
Primary Care Trust

Carol Service
7:30pm 15th December

Crib Service
3:00pm Christmas Eve

Like on a first date

On the Friday before Remembrance Sunday, I was in the Oxford Street branch of *Monsoon*. When I heard the line "Sleigh bells ringing . . ." being crooned over the PA I felt myself turning into Victor Meldrew. The effect was moderated only because of the pity I found for the sales assistants, who told me they were already being driven mad by canned festive cheer, and reprieve was still too far in the future to matter.

I try to avoid writing about Christmas, because it's usually a waste of time. I don't mean the world-weariness of the annual Santa theme park, I've not found anyone who actually likes the seasonal shake-down of their credit cards. I mean that, for all the good it does, any talk of Christmas is as effective as talking Martian. I think we need five years break from Christmas so we can re-discover it.

It would be like a first date, listening to the stories with all the curiosity that comes with enchantment and a desire to understand; a blank page ready for whatever possibilities the other unveils. Rather like falling in love, it would be nice to come new to Christmas attentive to every shade and nuance of what it has to offer, open to all outcomes and hoping against hope that there may be a me-shaped gap there, just waiting for me to complete the picture.

I think what we miss is the opportunity to come to Christmas as adults. Because we rehearse a festive script from childhood each year, we think we know what we're doing. Yet, as each year of adulthood brings its

failures, broken dreams, and choices we'd rather forget, so we become ever more distant from Christmas as we consign it to the distant time of childlike innocence. In so doing, it is lost forever in a mute world with *The Water Babies*, *The Woodentops*, *Muffin the Mule*, *Camberwick Green* and *Listen with Mother*.

The point is that Christmas only makes sense when you're grown up, and have started to accrue a mixed past. In my last parish, I actually refused a local church school permission to have a nativity in church, until the teachers had actually read Matthew's and Luke's Christmas stories (which they had never done), and were able to tell me what they thought was going on.

Luke has angels appearing to bandits: shepherds too poor to have pasture for their sheep, who take them to fields to graze under cover of night while the landowners are asleep. This year in church, we are reading Matthew's nativity stories, bleak and bloody tales with more darkness than light. In Jesus' family history, Matthew slips in four women who were each considerably less than your presumed models of chaste piety: Tamar, Rahab, Bathsheba and Ruth, to forewarn the reader that God was about to be irregular again, as Matthew discloses that his tale begins with a girlfriend telling her bloke she is pregnant, and God did it.

The examples are rife through the gospel stories. They are there to tell grown-up people, with not-very-pretty pasts or presents, that God comes into lives which haven't given up dreaming that there might be something more than this. God can be found in the tangle and mire of human loss and failure, and that this child will grow up to tell stories to teach the squeaky clean that they are not.

To find all this, we have to learn to meet it all again for the first time. Maybe next year, I'll cancel Christmas, keep the nine lessons in their box, and the teatowels and tinsel in the attic. Next year I've a mind to take my lot down to the Quaker Meeting House, leave my collar behind, and we can sit in shared silence and listen to life, in all its colours and shades, and for God deep in its midst. AS

Diary

Sundays
8:00am Holy Communion
9:30am Parish Communion with Sunday School

Wednesdays
10:00am Holy Communion followed by coffee
7:30pm Intercessions and Night Prayer

Groups

Lazer Group is a 12-16 youth group which meets weekly on Sunday evenings at 7:30pm for activities in the church hall. The evening concludes with candlelit Night Prayer in the chapel in church.

Prayer Group for Healing meets monthly in the parish. Contact the Church Office for details of meetings.

Housegroups There is a reading group studying Philip Yancey's *What's so Amazing About Grace?* at 5 Bentfield Gardens each Wednesday, contact Andy at 813003; and *The Bluffers Guide to the Bible* at the Rectory on alternate Tuesdays, Contact Andrew 812203 or the Church Office for details.

Rector
Revd Andrew Spurr
The Rectory
St. John's Road
Stansted Mountfitchet
Essex, CM24 8JP
phonelfax
(01279) 812203
rector@stansted.net
Day off: Thursday

Assistant Curate
Revd Dr Caroline Currer
The Church Office
(01279) 815243
curate@stansted.net

Director of Music
Mrs Glynis Morris
phonelfax
(01223) 263640
church.music@stansted.net

Sunday School
Mrs Sandra Wood
(01279) 647054
sandra@stansted.net

Church Hall Bookings Secretary
Mrs Joy Lambe
(01279) 817937
joy@stansted.net

Open Door Service
(Ecumenical All-Age worship)
Mrs Frances Richards
(01279) 812748
richkidz@waitrose.com

Lazer Group
Mr Gary West
phone
(01279) 815243
gary.west@zetnet.co.uk

Housegroups

The Rector
(01279) 812203



(continued)

Registers for October

Baptisms

17th Eleanor Lily Silvester
Lewis Harrison Ward

Marriage

22nd Joanne Nicola Green and John Paul Ivory

Funeral

11th Frederick Campbell



SHALOM

On 6th December there will be an Advent Meditation at the Friends' Meeting House.

On 13th December we meet at 7 Blythwood Gardens for our 'bring and share' Christmas party.

All meetings start at 8.00pm. and are open to everybody.

Catherine Dean
813579

NEWS FROM STANSTED DAY AND COMMUNITY CENTRE

Our home cooking has been very successful and we are now going to have it on Tuesday as well as Thursday and Friday. We are very grateful to our two cooks, Bridget and Veronica, who make delicious meals for us and these are very good value at £3.50 for two courses.

We are now allowed to have people over 55 years, disabled of any age and carers and they will all be given a warm welcome.

We are sorry to be losing our organiser, Vanessa, but we are delighted that she is leaving for such a lovely reason – she is having a baby in April and we wish Vanessa, Adam and the new arrival every happiness. We will be advertising for a new organiser and if anyone would like to know more about this position please phone Brenda Scarr, 01279 813080.

We are always pleased to have volunteers to work either two hours weekly or fortnightly or maybe to go on the relief team when you would work as and when you can. If you are interested please ring the Day Centre on 01279 815091.

Drivers are also urgently required for Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays. If you can help with this please contact Bridget on 814440 for more information.

A little advance notice – we are having a Coffee Morning on 27th April 2005 in aid of these charities, mostly local ones, eg Hearing Help, Saffron Sight, Heal, Uttlesford Community Travel and others. Do put the date in your new diaries.

ST JOHN'S CHURCH

19th December 11.15am

THE OPEN DOOR SERVICE

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40 minute presentation

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All ages welcome with the opportunity to participate in well-known carols as part of the presentation.

Please support this new venture as part of our Christmas celebrations

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Catherine Dean
813579



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MOUNTFITCHET GARDEN CLUB

Thirty members and visitors attended the November meeting and were able to feast their eyes upon a wide selection of garden photographs shown by Mr. Harpur. Mr Harpur said that he had been a professional photographer for 12 years and worked with his father who had been in the business for 35 years. They concentrate on plants and garden subjects and their photographs are used mainly in magazines and newspapers.

One of the best moments of his professional life was seeing his photograph of an echinops enlarged to 12 square metres and used at the Chelsea Flower Show several years ago.

His strangest request for a plant photograph was from Ireland and was for the most common of plants – a photograph of a blade of grass was required for a fertiliser advertisement.

Although he has photographed many different types of gardens ranging from Beth Chatto's and Glen Chantry to modern 'designer' gardens, his favourites are those that are planted to give a changing display throughout the year. Gardens consisting mainly of conifers are not his favourites!

Mr. Harpur ended his talk by saying that plants photograph best in dull light and the best times to take photographs were very early in the morning or just before dusk – strong lighting tends to wash out colours. He added that garden photography depends on chance and good luck - many plants are at their best for only a short time.

The Chairman, Cyril Stoneham, then thanked Mr. Harpur for his talk and excellent photographs.

The next meeting, on Wednesday 1st December at the Day Centre at 8.00pm will be a Christmas buffet and quiz. You are invited to join us. For non-members the admission fee is 75p.

David Loynds

INTERFAITH QUIZ - 15th JANUARY 2005

You are warmly welcome to a quiz to raise funds for The Stort Interfaith Group on **Saturday, 15th January 2005, at St John's Hall, Stansted, 7.00pm for 7.30pm start.** The quizmaster will be David Morson. Please bring your own drink. Refreshments will be provided, and a raffle will be held.

Tickets, £5.00, are available from David Morson 850209, or at the door. Tables of six to eight persons are recommended.

The Stort Interfaith Group comprise members of different local faith communities who are trying to work together to overcome divisions in our society. Funds are necessary in order to facilitate meetings, to produce a newsletter and other promotional materials, as well as organising educational events.

David Morson



The second concert of our Ninth Season is on Sunday 5th December at 3.00pm and features pianist Bobby Chen.

Bobby entered the Yehudi Menuhin School as a pupil of Ruth Nye in 1991, where he participated in masterclasses with many eminent teachers. In 1996 he was selected as a soloist in a CD issue on the Classic FM label entitled 'Yehudi Menuhin's Young Virtuosi' and toured Britain with Lord Menuhin and the Warsaw Sinfonia, performing Beethoven's Triple Concerto.

More recently, at the Royal Academy of Music, he continued to study, winning no fewer than six awards including the Musicians Benevolent Fund Music Education Award and a 'Star' Award from The Countess of Munster Musical Trust.

Bobby's programme will include Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata, Mozart's Sonata in B flat, Britten's Notturmo and Chopin's Sonata in B minor.

The Countess of Munster – Recital Scheme, will sponsor this concert.

The venue will be St John's Church, Stansted, and the concert will start at 3.00pm. Tickets are £9, concessions £7, children £3, and children/grandchildren of members £1. Available from Stansted Carpets, Chapel Hill, Stansted; Nockolds Solicitors, Market Square, Bishop's Stortford; Options Hairdressers, Elsenham; Sonia Levy, 31 Chapel Hill, Stansted (01279 815282) or at the door.

Our January concert will be on Sunday 23rd January 2005 at 3.00pm featuring Catrin Finch – The First Royal Harpist, and the final concert of our 2004-5 season will be on Saturday 5th March 2005 at 7.30pm when we will be welcoming The Carducci Quartet.

Alan Corbishley
01279 813040

CHRISTMAS TREES



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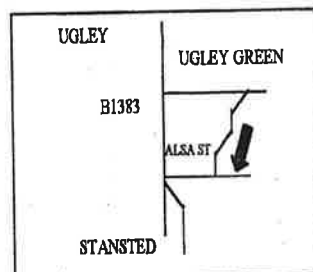
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WEDNESDAY 1 DECEMBER
to
THURSDAY 23 DECEMBER

CLOSED MONDAYS



 **STANSTED MILLERS**
Windmill Goods Sale
Saturday 4th December
 9 am - noon
outside 'Savages' Lower Street
Gifts suitable for Christmas

 **Bentfield School PTA**
Christmas Fair
Saturday 4th December
 from 2 pm
 Santa's Grotto ~ Raffle
 Tombolas ~ Crafts
 Plants ~ Cakes
 Entertainment 

FUN MUSIC QUIZ
& LIVE MUSIC
with CHARITY
Sat 4th December 8 pm
Elsenham Bowls Club
 Tickets £4 from Elsenham Bowls Club
 or Rachel ☎ 815851
 All proceeds to Muscular Dystrophy

VILLAGE EVENTS			
December			
1	Wed	Mountfitchet Seniors Mountfitchet Garden Club	Day Centre 2 - 4 pm Day Centre 8 pm
4	Sat	Windmill Stall Christmas Fair Music Quiz	Savages, Lower Street 9 am - noon Bentfield School 2 pm Elsenham Bowls Club 8 pm
5	Sun	Village Music Club Afternoon Tea (after service)	St John's Church 3 pm UR Church 3.30 - 5 pm
6	Mon	Shalom Group	Quaker Meeting House 8 pm
8	Wed	Open Morning	St Mary's School 9.15 am
9	Thu	WI	St John's Hall 7.45 pm
11	Sat	Christmas Fair Lib Dem Ploughman's	St Mary's School 12 noon - 3 pm Day Centre noon - 2 pm
13	Mon	Shalom Party	7 Blythwood Gardens 8 pm
15	Wed	Mountfitchet Seniors Party	Day Centre 1 pm
17	Fri	Huw Johnson Concert	St Mary's School 7.30 pm
18	Sat	Celebration of Christmas	St Mary's Church 4 pm
19	Sun	Water Lane Drama Group	St John's Church 11.15 am
22	Wed	Village Carol Singing	St John's Church 7.30 pm
23	Thu	Village Carol Singing	Cambridge / Croasdaile 7.30 pm
January			
5	Wed	Mountfitchet Garden Club	Day Centre 8 pm
6	Thu	Local History Society	Day Centre 8 pm
8	Sat	Lib Dem Ploughman's	Day Centre noon - 2 pm
13	Thu	WI	St John's Hall 7.45 pm
14	Fri	Jazz Concert	St John's Church 8 pm
17	Mon	Shalom Prayer & Praise	7 Blythwood Gardens 8 pm
22	Sun	Village Music Club	St John's Church 3 pm



 **THE VILLAGE MUSIC CLUB**
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Saturday 11th December
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Wednesday 22nd December
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 Followed by refreshments
 All are welcome
 Hope to see you there!
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Please tel 814059 to arrange music

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The Story of Joe Carpenter
 A 40min nativity play with a difference
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 as part of our Christmas celebrations
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November has been a busy month for all of us here at Rainbow. Many of the children participated in the Operation Christmas Child scheme, making Christmas boxes for children in war-torn countries. Some of the enthusiastic DIY wrapping was extremely interesting!!

We have continued to work on the theme of Percy the Park Keeper and our 3-D forest is looking absolutely fantastic in the corner of the classroom. In addition to the usually creative activities, the children all helped to make a Christmas cake. Ingredients were weighed out and stirred up in several mixing bowls and the final mixture was taken home and baked by Yvonne Hardy. It smelt delicious the next day and the children are now looking forward to icing their own individual portion.

November is a wonderful month for festivals. The children enjoyed talking about bonfire night. They all enjoyed watching fireworks and waving sparklers. Some had even taken part in traditional activities such as apple bobbing. They all produced a picture of fireworks in the sky, red and yellow paint spotted and splattered on a black background made a very effective seasonal picture.

We learnt about the Hindu festival of Divali. The children enjoyed looking at Divali cards and hearing about the celebrations. We listened to some Divali music and made some Indian sweets from condensed milk, icing sugar and coconut. Delicious!

We are currently raising money towards the purchase of a new climbing frame. Please come and support our sweet tombola stall at the St Mary's Christmas fayre on 11th December. We will also be running our annual Christmas raffle. Tickets will be available from the pre-school from the beginning of December.

We are looking forward to our events in December. Parties are planned for all children in the last week of term and our annual nativity play takes place on Monday 15th December at 10.45am in St Mary's School Hall. Our Christmas raffle with a fantastic Christmas hamper as first prize will be drawn at this event.

Our Website is currently being redeveloped but a copy of our prospectus can be downloaded from:

www.rainbowpreschool.net

If you are interested in a place at the pre-school please contact Gill Pursglove on 814701 for information about our waiting list or e-mail at info@rainbowpreschool.net.

Rainbow Tots Rainbow's messy play session for children aged 18 months and over has proven to be extremely popular. We have a long waiting list and are currently considering whether to run an additional session. This would be on a Wednesday afternoon between 1.00pm and 2.30pm commencing in January. If you have a child of 18

months and over and think you would be interested please phone Gill Pursglove on 814701.

Vicki Brice



Stansted
Evening
Women's Institute

November - the month of our Annual Meeting and a time to look back on a busy and enjoyable year. We are pleased that we have managed to attract some new members and hope that they will continue to come and enjoy all that the WI has to offer. We have had some good speakers this last year ranging in subjects from Woodcarving, 'Antiques for the Poor', an Australian evening with wine-tasting and Policing the Past.

We have been evident in the village in many ways, helping at a coffee morning for the new curtains in the Day Centre - which look very nice, and many of our members help out there serving teas and lunches too. We have helped at another coffee morning for AIDS victims and had our own in aid of Essex Air Ambulance and County Headquarters for disabled access. We were able to send £100 to each of these causes. We have since been told that the alterations to our premises in Chelmsford were going to be way above the budget and so the existing ones will be sold and new premises sought. Meanwhile County have taken a lease on premises in Hatfield Peverel - a former dairy and milking parlour. It has been refurbished to a high standard so I don't think WI Classes on milking cows will be on offer! We have been assured that all the money so far raised by Institutes will be put into a special fund and used when our new headquarters are found and bought.

We have one change in our committee this year, Angela Pottinger having resigned after several years and a new member Marley McClinton has joined us. She won the Competition Cup for the most points in our competitions this year and is looking forward to being on the committee. It is a good way to learn more about the WI as a whole and to get to know people. Marion Pretty has again agreed to be our President for 2005.

So now we look forward to the next year, all the speakers have been booked and in December we are having a talk on glass engraving as well as homemade mince pies - eating them that is - not having a talk on them - though that could probably be arranged! Come along and join us.

Judy Colliver
812470



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Our next ploughman's lunches will be on Saturday, 11th December, and Saturday, 8th January 2005, 12 noon to 2.00pm. All are welcome.

Ruth Rawlinson

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STANSTED MOUNTFITCHET

LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

It seems that the Members of the Society like to give support to their own and there was a large audience to hear Ralph Phillips tell us of 'Local Justice in Elizabethan and Cromwellian Times' at our November meeting. Ralph had researched a number of sources to obtain an overview of legal cases which had occurred in and around Stansted in the 16th and 17th centuries and this created a fascinating picture of life at that time.

Details were given of many people who had appeared before the Courts, although it was inevitable that in several instances the outcomes were incompletely recorded or had been lost in time. One reason for bringing charges was the matter of religion – Mary I had sanctioned 277 deaths on religious grounds alone – and Bishop Bonner (who had put the 'Bishop' in Bishop's Stortford) burned about 300 martyrs. Later, when England became Protestant, Catholics were charged with practising their faith. Another cause of trouble arose in Essex when the wood trade collapsed, bringing much poverty. In addition, the cost of living rose by 100%, while wages went up by only 50%. The temptation was to steal and many cases arose of theft and burglary. Not all the guilty were hung, however. Members of the clergy and, later, all who could read were 'allowed clergy' or could opt to be tried in an ecclesiastical court. Here, the sentences of 'penances' were far less severe – in fact, peers of the Realm did not even have to do penances!

Charges of witchcraft were rife at one stage and many were tried – although Ralph suggested that much of the concern was raised by members of the newly arising medical profession who objected to the large numbers of practising 'wise women' who were still using their skills. Most common of the misdemeanours appears to be theft, burglary, poaching deer and highway robbery, as already mentioned, although murder was also represented. One charge not recognised by most in the audience was the one of barratry or the raising of vexatious litigation – an idea which could, perhaps, be useful today. Mention was also made of football, not quite as we would recognise it now, but taking place in the area between two villages, involving an unlimited number of players, with no referees and no rules! Needless to say, the occasional death during a match came before the Courts.

A large proportion of those convicted were hung and a hint of the siting of the Stansted gallows is in the name Gall End. The last man to be executed in this manner in the village, however, was hung on the border with Manuden so that his mother living in that village could see his body chained there. Compassion did not seem to be a strong point! Considerable drains on the rate-payers of the parish were the Poor Law and the Houses of Correction. A town or parish was responsible for its destitute parishioners wherever they were living and they would be shipped home without hesitation. The Courts became involved in many cases of adjudication between two parishes, often

acrimonious. Ralph even suggested that the high number of those hung could have been influenced by the saving in daily maintenance falling on the rate-payers! However, he came across no record of children before the Courts and no note of action against debtors – perhaps the depth of poverty around meant that none were considered 'credit-worthy'! We were very grateful to Ralph for his talk and all his preparation.

In spite of the reference in the Calendar of Events in last month's Link there will be **no** Historical Society meeting on 4th December. We have been invited by the Manuden Historical Society to join them later in the month and as accommodation is limited we are unable to issue our usual invitation to attend. Our next open meeting will be held at the Day Centre on Thursday 6th January 2005 when we will be holding our annual Members' Evening – a series of short contributions made by those from our own ranks – it would be nice if you could be there. In the meantime and on behalf of the Historical Society, I wish you all a very Merry Christmas!

Ian Seavers

THE NEW SAUCEPAN

My sister-in-law was pleased to receive as a free gift a nice new saucepan in the post.

She asked me to assemble it for her.

Here are the:

INSTRUCTION OF USE FOR THE DOUBLE WALL MILK PAN.

This pan is delivered with the dismantled handle.

1. How to assemble the saucepan:

Take the handle. Put the end out of steel side rounded towards the handle (the end must be inbricated perfectly in the mussel of the handle.) Then insert the screw in the hole (which is under the handle) and strongly screw.

2. How to be useful itself of the saucepan:

- Clean before any use the pan with a product nonabrasive..
- Put approximately 30ml of water in the double wall.
- Make heat with average fire.
- This pan has a double bottom what makes it possible to dissolve the chocolate or to heat the milk or sauce.
- When the of food in other containers, made attention not pour a same side as the hole of supply water. You will thus avoid reversing water.
- Be used on all fires induction except.

CAUTION: Never block the hole of supply water, it is necessary that the vapour can evacuate.

Despite these directions I did get it together, but hot water poured out all over the place - I must have reversed the water after all. I advised my sister-in-law to throw it away!



Judy Colliver



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UTTLESFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL

Well, we now have a provisional East of England Plan for the years until 2021. It provides for a quarter of a million homes in the six counties of the region, of which 8,000 are proposed for Uttlesford. About two-thirds of this number are already known about in existing plans and include such sites as Rochford Nursery. If the Government eventually endorses the plan, sites will have to be found for the remaining 2,700. It's also about creating jobs nearer to where people live. A public consultation will run from December until March 2005, so please watch out for details on how to make your views known.

The regional assembly met in Southend on 5th November to decide this plan. Guy Fawkes was not spotted in the basement! The assembly is made up of seventy-odd councillors nominated from all district, county and unitary authorities plus thirty-odd representatives of business, environmental and other bodies. It isn't elected, but at least it meets in public and is more transparent than the old system under which regional planning details were worked out in smoke-filled rooms. The main difference now is that county councils have been cut out of deciding how many homes should be built in each district. The plan won't be finalised until 2006 so a lot could change before then.

The November assembly accepted my proposition to oppose a second runway at Stansted and demonstrated it is prepared to oppose Government policy. The plan accepts that much of Uttlesford is sensitive countryside not suitable for major development, so I think we can say goodbye to daft ideas about a new town around Henham. However, Uttlesford's towns and villages need to be thinking whether they want some growth to provide necessary, affordable homes for our children and to support local services such as schools and shops.

In Stansted there seems to be no end to the struggle to find a suitable location for a health centre and we have to start asking ourselves whether planning restraints around our community are stifling progress on essential services.

Finally, as Christmas approaches, we at least have all our post boxes operating in contrast with last year. Discussions are continuing on a new counter and sorting office. To end on a bright note, Stansted now has its own police community support officer, Sharon Cooper, who is now patrolling our streets along with PC Neil Russell and his fellow police colleagues. Welcome, Sharon!

Councillor Alan Dean
Tel: 01279 813579
email: cllrdean@uttlesford.gov.uk

New Car Parking Regime Update

On 1st October 2004 the Council took over from the police the enforcement of parking regulations in the District, such as yellow line restrictions and on-street parking.

The Council's aims are:

- ❖ To benefit pedestrians, cyclists, bus passengers as well as all other drivers by reducing the amount of illegal and inconsiderate parking
- ❖ To improve road safety through enforcement action against drivers of illegally and dangerously parked vehicles
- ❖ To reduce congestion by controlling the parking of vehicles on street
- ❖ To improve the street environment, for those who visit, live or work in the District

Enforcement of parking regulations is making a difference in the short time that the Council has had responsibility. Some 583 penalty notices have been issued up to 5th November. Of these, eight were in Cambridge Road, of which five were for parking on a bus stop. A further 11 were issued in Lower Street, seven of which were for parking on yellow lines. The record for penalty notices currently goes to a motorist in Saffron Walden who has got eight against his name. Our parking attendants tell me that they can see real changes in our high streets because of their presence.

Council to take over control of Public Licensing

Fundamental change is happening to the licensing of various activities with the modernisation of outdated legislation which is no longer relevant to the way in which we now live. This will bring greater freedom and choice for the licensing and entertainment industry balanced against tougher controls for the police and the Council, and an opportunity for concerns to be raised by local people if problems arise.

Under the Licensing Act 2003 licensing functions will be transferred from the courts to the Council and the grant of premises and personal licenses for the sale and supply of alcohol, certain forms of entertainment and late night refreshment. This will take effect from August 2005. Existing licence holders will have six months commencing February 2005 to apply for new style personal and premises licences. The Council's draft Licensing Policy and further details of the Licensing Act can be viewed on our website.

The Local Government Association has warned that Council tax payers could be forced to foot the bill for local authorities' new licensing responsibilities. Concerns are growing that if the Government fails to set fees at a high enough level to cover costs, councils could be forced to pass the cost on to tax payers. As yet, there is no indication of whether the fees, being set by central government, will cover the cost of setting up and running new services. Uttlesford will continue to operate on a tight budget next year, so any shortfall in funding would be damaging.

Councillor Geoffrey Sell
Tel: 01279 815925
email: cllrsell@uttlesford.gov.uk

ALL OF A MISTY EVENING



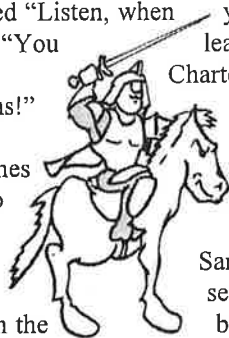
It was Alec's practice to take an afternoon walk from his home on the edge of Elsenham down to the railway, across Stansted Brook and along the stream side to Elms Farm and then back via Lower Street and Grove Hill. Often he put up a solitary heron or encountered a group of mallards on the water in the railway triangle and on a good day met a kingfisher on its daily patrol. There was always something to be seen and, apart from the occasional train or less occasional aeroplane, a refreshing respite from urban noise.

One November day he left his outing to later than usual. The overcast sky and mist rising from the brook brought on the shades of evening but this only added romance to the rural scene. He had reached to within 400 metres or so of Elms Farm when he saw a white horse approaching across the field. It was larger than the two hacks which were almost permanent residents there and it carried a rider. Horse and rider turned to cross the path and jumped the brook. "Strange", thought Alec, "I didn't see a break in the fences yesterday". His surprise was compounded when they crossed the railway and the horse's fetlocks disappeared from view. Open-mouthed he watched horse and rider cross the car park and vanish in a swirl of the mist. With some trepidation Alec moved on to where he thought they had crossed the path. No broken or missing fence was evident. Did he imagine it? There was something odd about the fish he had had for lunch; could it have induced hallucinations? There were so many worrying tales about toxins in the food chain. Fortunately, the remainder of his walk passed without incident and by the time he reached home he had almost persuaded himself that it was all a trick of the mist or the fish.

He determined to prove the point by walking the same route at the same time on the following day. This time no horse emerged from Elms Farm. Confidence returned; he even wondered if it was his memory that was at fault. He was level with the new skateboard park when he was suddenly attracted by a fire in the car park. Flames and smoke were rising and there were shouts and laughter. A large number of people were obviously celebrating. A tall figure rose behind the fire, waving something white, and a man's strong voice caused the shouting to subside. Alec speaker stood down and a great cheer rose. When it had passed there was neither sight nor sound of people, fire or smoke. Just a deserted car park. Alec was dumbfounded. He leaned on a fence post and tried to calm his whirling thoughts. Eventually the evening chill made him walk on. He had no recollection of the familiar route or the time. He just knew he reached home.



A fitful night's sleep brought little relief and he considered seeing the doctor. However it was Friday and that was the evening he and his old mates from the bacon factory met over a pint. Should he tell them? They were all local, shared a similar background and met like this for years; perhaps they could detect something that he had missed. He decided to risk derision and tell them, It proved to be a mistake. One of them, Mike, told him straight that the white horse was the name on the bottle. As it happened there were only the three of them in the bar except for a man in the corner who took no notice of the noisy banter, so no-one witnessed Alec's discomfort. He felt devastated .utterly alone in a rising tide of self-pity. He knew he had seen these things but at the same time began to doubt his sanity. The conversation round the table moved on, inevitably to football. Sandy, a devoted Millwall supporter, held forth on his team's certain victory in tomorrow's clash at Leicester. Apparently the Midland team suffered an imbecilic manager and were largely a bunch of debilitated cripples. The outcome was a foregone conclusion. The man in the corner abruptly rose, came across and stood over their table. He was bearded, wore a rough woollen coat, a thing like a Shakespearean tabard and thonged leather boots. "Did I hear you say Leicester," he shouted rather than spoke and in a thick foreign accent. "I shall be there when winter's passed and give de Montfort what he deserveth. 'Twill be done before St. Peter's tide." Sandy was ecstatic "Only if your lot get there before Millwall, 'cos we'll massacre them," he taunted. The stranger was obviously affronted "Listen, when you miserable villeins lie below yon castle mound I will still be hailed from the ramparts," he roared. "You England's greatest and 'tis our strivings with the king. Paysans!" Charter we have toasted these past three days". You have no thought for our the door and turned. "Tell that He gave Sandy a buffet that pitched him from his chair. He went towards cringing landlord to send his ale to Leicester. It will surely give de Montfort the agree. Adieu, mes enfants." With a mighty guffaw he went out, slamming the door behind him. The three were too astonished to speak. A few moments later there came the clatter of rapidly receding hoofbeats. Apprehensively, they opened the door and looked out. Nothing. Just the murmur of distant traffic. Only Sandy found words, "He got it wrong Connolly's their striker, not de Montfort. And he needs to see a dentist real badly." The usually garrulous Sandy tailed off. William the landlord peeped nervously from the bar-room doorway "Has he gone? I knew he'd be bad news. He paid for his drink with foreign coins."



Alec had had all he could take. He left the other two without a word and half walked, half ran, towards home. Would he now be believed; what if they declared no recollection when they next met? Would he have to leave Elsenham as a figure of pity or contempt? Perhaps it was all imagination, the ravings of a demented mind. He was so preoccupied that he stumbled over something in the path. A heap of horse manure, steaming. And with it a fleeting but strong aroma of woodsmoke. Yes, he definitely would change his walk and certainly never touch another fish.

Adapted from the Chronicle of Ralf de Benfeild

HELP DESK

Dear Tech Support,

Last year I upgraded from Boyfriend 5.0 to Husband 1.0 and noticed a distinct slow-down in overall system performance - particularly in the flower and jewellery applications, which operated flawlessly under Boyfriend 5.0. In addition, Husband 1.0 uninstalled many other valuable programs, such as Romance 9.5 and Personal Attention 6.5, and then installed programs such as Premier League 6.0, Heineken Cup 5.0 and Golf Clubs 4.1.

Conversation 8.0 no longer runs, and Housecleaning 2.6 simply crashes the system. I've tried running Nagging 5.3 to fix these problems, but to no avail. What can I do?

Signed,

Desperate

Dear Desperate:

First keep in mind, Boyfriend 5.0 is an Entertainment Package, while Husband 1.0 is an Operating System.

Please enter the command: `http: I Thought You Loved Me.htm`, download Tears 6.2 and install the Guilt 3.0 update.

If that application works as designed, Husband 1.0 should then automatically run the applications Jewellery 2.0 and Flowers 3.5. But remember, overuse of the above application can cause Husband 1.0 to default to Grumpy Silence 2.5, Happy Hour 7.0, or Beer 6.1. Beer 6.1 is a very bad program that will download the Snoring Loudly Beta.

Whatever you do, DO NOT install Mother-in-law 1.0 (it runs a virus in the background that will eventually crash the entire system). Also, do not attempt to reinstall the Boyfriend program, in particular versions 6.0 and later. These are unsupported applications and will delete Husband 1.0.

In summary, Husband 1.0 is a great program, but it does have limited memory and cannot learn new applications quickly.

You might consider buying additional software to improve memory and performance. We recommend Hot Food 3.0 and Lingerie 7.7.

Good Luck,

Tech Support

Stansted Tennis Club



Christmas Dinner

This will take place at Stansted Bowls Club on the evening of Saturday 4th December. It is proving very popular and places are limited, so if you want to come along, please make sure that you add your name to the list on the clubhouse noticeboard as soon as possible.

Clavering Junior Tournament

Stansted Tennis Club was represented by several young players at the Clavering Junior Tournament, which was held for different age groups over two Saturdays in October.

Congratulations to Ruby Hollis (12), who for the second year running won the Girls' Under 12 Tournament. Also to Alex Lupton (10), Charlie Kirby (12) and Ross Armorgie (12) who all did well in the Boys' Under 12 competition. Ross got to the semi-finals, where he was beaten by Charlie, who in turn was beaten in the final by Alex.

Club Open sessions

All adult members are welcome to come along and join in any of the following open club sessions:

Sunday mornings from 9.30am

Wednesday mornings from 10.00am

Wednesday afternoons from 2.00pm (please note the new time for the winter months)

Friday mornings from 9.30am.

Coaching

Martyn Taplin is currently holding adult coaching sessions for club members who wish to improve their game. Two classes take place between 2.00-4.00pm on Saturday afternoons. Please call Martyn on 816386 if you would like to find out more or would like to join in.

Chris Hollis' junior groups are now restricted to Saturday mornings. These will continue until March when it will be light enough to play again during weekday afternoons. Chris will be available for individual lessons at various times during the day, so whether or not you are a current member of the club and are interested in having a lesson, please call Chris on 319155.

Tennis Balls

The Tennis Club has donated a lot of tennis balls to be included in the shoe-boxes for Operation Christmas Child. This means that, at present, there are no balls for selling on. But don't panic as the supply soon builds up, so watch this space!

Half-price Membership

Why not take advantage of the half-price club membership, which runs from October to March? Just call Kate Rutter on 813053 for full details.

For any other enquiries, please contact either Richard Mott (Secretary) on 01279 466348 or Janet Hollis (Chairman) on 01279 812073.

Chris Hollis

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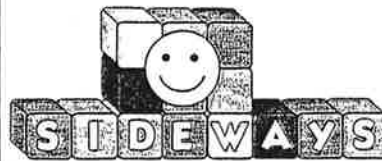


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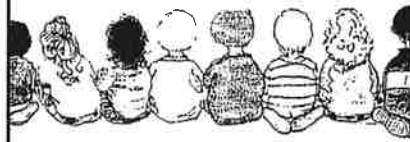
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Here's an update on some items covered last month, and some new ones:

Memorial Gardens

We hope you will have all noticed that the final surface has now been laid on the path. The delay was beyond our control, and that of our contractors, but the wait has been worthwhile, we hope you will agree. Over the course of the winter, some trees, bushes and self-seeded scrub will be removed from the gardens, and replacement yew trees will be planted as per the plan agreed a couple of years ago. We are awaiting a date for removal of the existing railings and gates, their subsequent refurbishment and replacement.

Community Support

We are pleased to welcome Sharon Cooper, our Police Community Support Officer, to the village. Sharon has started work and has spent November shadowing PC Neil (Jack) Russell - her own shift pattern will start in December. We take this opportunity to stress again that, although the Police Office is not open to the public for very many hours each week, it is essential that incidents are reported via telephone at the time that they occur. The telephone switchboard at Braintree can make contact with officers on duty, or indeed can transfer your call so that you can speak direct to an officer.

Car Parking

We have recently resurrected our Car Parking working group following on-going complaints from parishioners about various aspects of this thorny issue. I should say, hurriedly, that we do not expect to find one easy answer to solving the problems of fly-parking, airport-parking etc, but if we can identify where they are we will have made a start. It is our intention to work with Essex County Council, Uttlesford District Council (who now enforce waiting restrictions) and the local police. One common complaint is about the number of vehicles that park with two wheels on, and two wheels off the pavements, causing obstruction to pedestrians. This is still an offence and should be reported to the POLICE!

Parish Cemetery

As many are now aware, the Parish Council has a duty of care to staff and the public alike, and testing of the memorials in the Parish Cemetery is a requirement. An independent test of the memorials in our cemetery will take place during the week commencing 25th January and will be carried out by a firm called Memsafe Ltd. We shall be writing in December to the owners of all the memorials (where their details are known to us) to provide further detailed information. If you are the owner of a memorial in the cemetery, and have not received a letter from us by the

end of December, please contact me, as we are not always made aware of changes of address etc.

Christmas Refuse Collections

Finally, on a practical note, we have received details of Christmas Rubbish Collections from UDC - these are as follows:

REFUSE TO BE AVAILABLE FOR COLLECTION FROM 7.00AM

Usual Collection Day

Monday 27th December
Tuesday 28th December
Wednesday 29th December
Thursday 30th December
Friday 31st December
Monday 3rd January

Tuesday 4th January

Wednesday 5th January
Thursday 6th January
Friday 7th January

Revised Collection Day

No collections
No collections
Normal Collections
Normal Collections
Normal Collections
Tuesday 4th January -
DOUBLE COLLECTIONS
Wednesday 5th January -
DOUBLE COLLECTIONS
Thursday 6th January
Friday 7th January
Saturday 8th January

Normal collections will resume on Monday 10th January 2005.

Ruth Clifford
Parish Clerk



Huw Johnson Club

We do hope to see you all at St Mary's School, St John's Road, Stansted on Friday 17th December at 7.00pm for 7.30pm when we will entertain you at our Christmas Concert. Entrance is free. There will be a raffle accompanied by a mince pie and a glass of wine.

We are hoping to go to Porthcawl which is in South Wales for our holiday in 2005 to a hotel which is especially for the disabled. This holiday will cost a lot more than in previous years but as some of our members are becoming more disabled we feel that we should endeavour to raise the money, so we will be taking a leap of faith in booking this holiday. For the same reasons we will also need to hire a coach with a lift or ramp as we can no longer safely lift our wheelchair members on and off the coach. The cost of this coach will be £3,600. We will therefore be organising some money raising events in 2005 which we hope you will all support, including another concert in the garden of Four Winds, the home of the Lenton family, and Garry King is hoping to do a sponsored walk along the Pennines.

In spite all this will entail, we all intend to be optimistic, so we wish you all a very Happy Christmas.

Marion G Johnson



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SKATEBOARD PARK

After years of controversy and financial doubts, the Skateboard Park duly arrived in October with a well-attended opening, live music and many 'guest' skaters. The second phase planned for the spring has already attracted over £1000, most of which was, and continues to be, raised by the skaters. Sponsorships through Stansted Fun Run went a long way towards this sum.

The Skateboard Working Group is intending to hold a Quiz and St Mary's School is to have a Cake Stall to raise funds. Local businesses also will hopefully chip in with donations.

For non-skaters the plan will give some idea of present and future features. Congratulations to all concerned.

The Editor



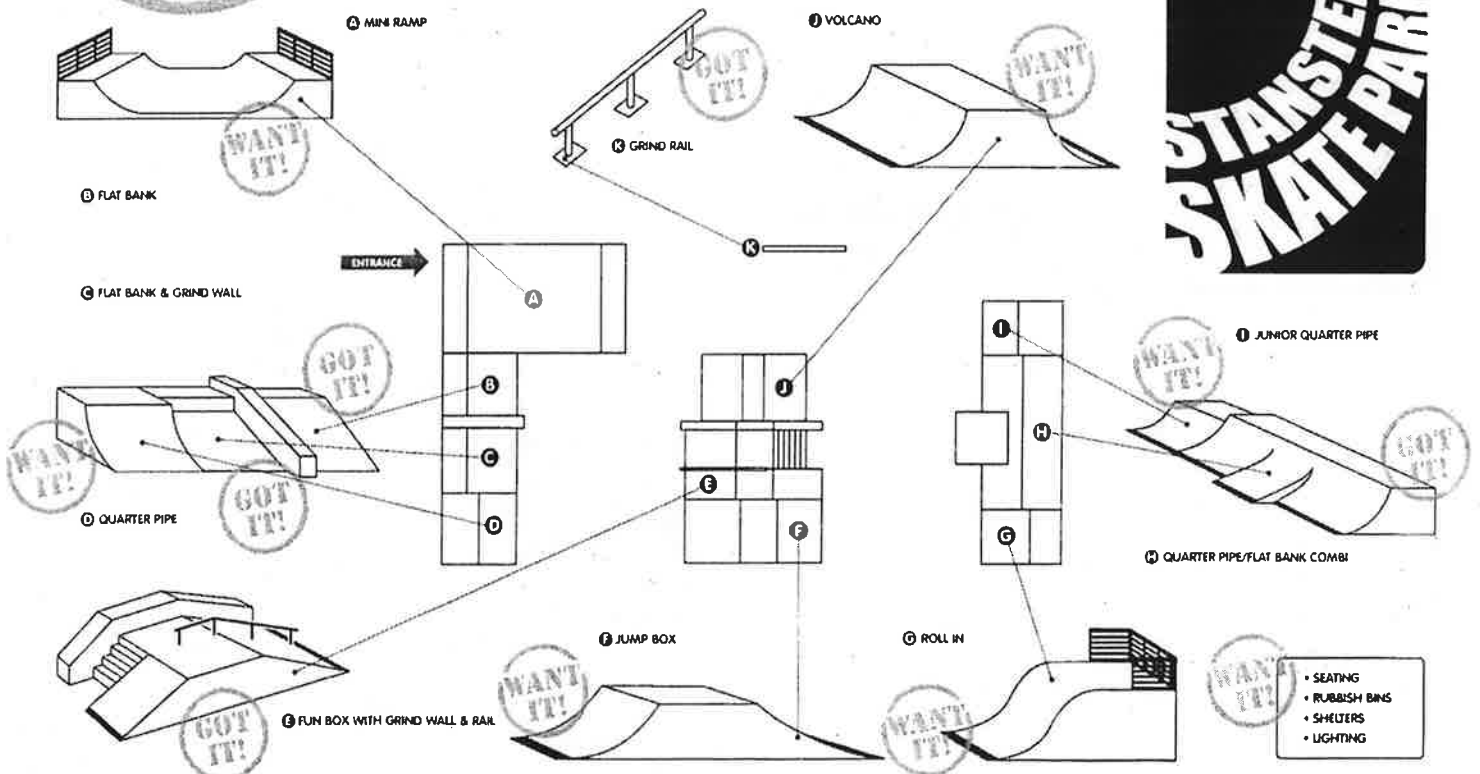
Photo: Keith Upton



 = PHASE 1: Completed in summer 2004

 = PHASE 2: Proposed for summer 2005

Stansted Skate Park needs to raise more money to make Phase 2 a reality. So if you have any great fund raising ideas to help us achieve this aim, then please contact Jo on 01279 812524.



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DECEMBER



Originally the 10th month of the Roman year

6th Feast Day of St Nicholas, Bishop and Patron Saint of Russia, who lived in the 4th C. He was said to be very benevolent and associated with the giving of gifts. His identification as Father Christmas began in Europe and spread to America where his name became Santa Claus. Although we are accustomed to exchanging presents on Christmas Day or Boxing Day some countries still keep to 6th December.

29th Feast Day of St Thomas a Becket, born 1117 and murdered in 1170. He came from a wealthy family and became Chancellor, a brilliant diplomat and figure at Court. He served the King well but when he was made Archbishop of Canterbury he changed and was zealous in his Church duties thereby coming in conflict with Henry II who, having expressed his wish of wanting to be rid of "this turbulent priest", later regretted it.

21st Winter Solstice (from a Latin word meaning 'stop' or 'stand still') when the sun is at its furthest point from the Equator making this the shortest day in the Northern hemisphere. Many people believed that the Sun God was weak at this time and special rituals were carried out, followed by celebrations when the sun began to return and the days lengthened. Fires were lit to bring light and the Norsemen burned Yule Logs, from Anglo-Saxon 'Yula' or 'wheel of the year'. As the early Christian Church was unable to stop converts from carrying out these practices they endeavoured to incorporate some of them into their religion, hoping the more boisterous and outrageous would be eliminated. (Has it worked?)

The 21st also marks the first known published adult crossword. Devised by Arthur Wynne of Liverpool it appeared in the New York World in 1913. Before this time there were very simple word puzzles for children which were arranged so that the letters read the same vertically and horizontally. Within a decade most American newspapers were featuring crossword puzzles and ten years later they appeared in Europe. As you can see, this first puzzle was not arranged as they usually are today. The answers will appear in next month's 'Link'.

Oh, and don't forget to open the door at midnight on 31st December to let the old year out and the new year in.

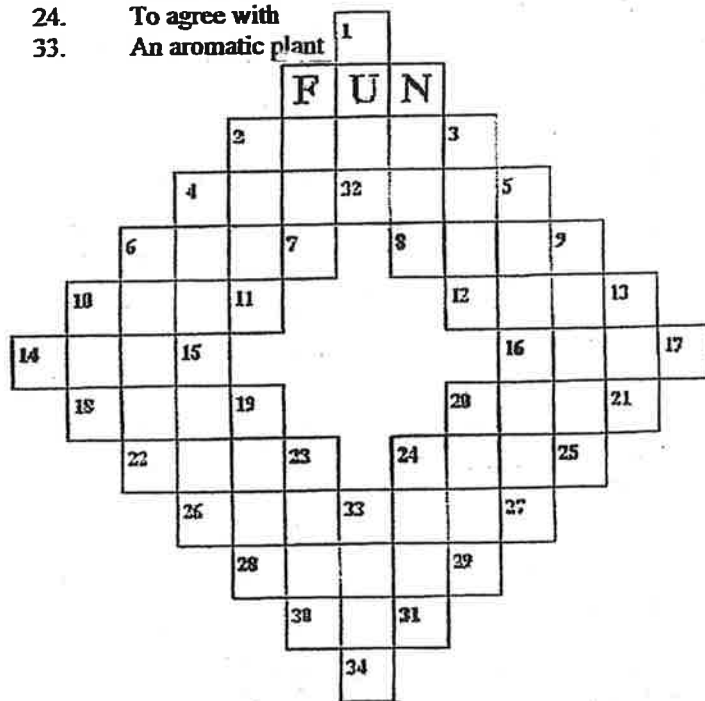
Peggy Honour

Across

- 2. What bargain hunters enjoy
- 4. A written acknowledgement
- 6. Such and nothing more
- 8. To cultivate
- 10. A bird
- 12. A bar of wood or iron
- 14. Opposed to less
- 16. What artists learn to do
- 18. What this puzzle is
- 20. Fastened
- 22. An animal of prey
- 24. Found on the seashore
- 26. The close of a day
- 28. To elude
- 30. The plural of is

Down

- 1. To govern
- F. Part of your head
- N. A fist
- 2. A talon
- 3. Part of a ship
- 4. A day dream
- 5. Exchanging
- 6. What we all should be
- 9. To sink in mud
- 10. The fibre of the gomuti palm
- 13. A boy
- 19. A pigeon
- 20. One
- 23. A river in Russia
- 24. To agree with
- 33. An aromatic plant



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SCANDAL NARROWLY AVERTED!

In his Newsheet to all constituents our MP broke from tradition by apparently arranging a husband-swap. Fortunately this was one the tabloids missed! Sir Alan may rest assured that both Marion Johnson and the Editor found the error utterly hilarious.

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St Mary's Primary School



Headteacher's Report

We are now well into our school year at St Mary's and it is a huge task to summarise everything that is going on here. It is important that a school knows where it is going and anyone involved in school life will be well aware of the amount of time taken up with action and development planning. In St Mary's we have been looking at our aims as a school, to ensure that learning is at the centre of everything we do, while keeping our unique identity as a caring, church school.

The result of these discussions is below. Our vision statement summarises our aims and these are given in greater detail following that. We also thought it was essential that children had an understanding of our overall aims as a school, leading to our school 'slogan' of 'Caring, sharing, preparing for life'.

Vision Statement:

St Mary's Primary School aims to be a Christian community in which every individual is a valued learner who is cared for through its organisation, teaching, worship and quality of relationships.

Our aims:

The school aims to create an environment for effective, enjoyable and challenging learning:

- *Where all feel respected, safe and valued within a Christian community and can develop positive attitudes towards the contributions of people of all races, beliefs, abilities and genders.*
- *Where self-respect and confidence are gained through working cooperatively and taking a pride in learning.*
- *Where knowledge and skills are acquired to develop abilities to their full potential and to prepare children for the future.*
- *Where children learn to take an increasing and life-long responsibility for their behaviour and their role in the learning process.*
- *Where curiosity, originality, perseverance, open-mindedness, independence of thought and the ability to reflect are developed.*

The school recognises the importance of children, families, staff, governors, St John's Church and the wider community working in partnership to achieve these aims.

We would like to think that our aims emphasise the importance of the community to our school, whether that is our immediate community of the children and parents or the wider community. In St Mary's we try very hard to keep communication with parents open and up-to-date, using written and verbal methods; I enjoy talking with parents out on the playground or at the school gate at the end of the day.

Our Focus Group gives parents the opportunity to discuss issues and to take an informal part in consultations about possible changes. The PTFA is highly effective at fund-raising and we are grateful for all of their time and effort.

Recently we have also had a great deal of practical help in the form of decorating from employees from Barclays, which has saved money to spend elsewhere in school and brightened up parts of our school! We also encourage our children to think about other people, such as our recent fund-raising effort for NSPCC.

If you would like to find out more about St Mary's ... you have the perfect opportunity! We will be holding an Open Morning on Wednesday 8th December, starting at 9.15am. We will all just be doing what we normally do: learning, but visitors will be taken on guided tours and I will give a short presentation on the school and on how we fulfil our aims. If you would be interested in attending the Open Morning, please telephone our office (01279 812212).

Wendy Wood
Headteacher

PTFA Report

For those of us on the PTFA committee hoping for a quiet run up to the traditional Christmas frenzy, we have been sorely disappointed this month. November has been particularly busy for the PTFA, in terms of raising, and spending funds.

We had another successful Disco on 4th November, which was well attended by children across the school. It always amazes me how into music the children are, especially the younger ones. It was great seeing them all singing along and joining in with the actions, whilst the adults stood by and watched, admiring their boundless energy! I hope that they arrived back home worn out and ready for a good night's sleep!

The Christmas Shopping Evening is in its third year now, and is fast becoming a regular event in the village diary. This year it was bigger and better than before and we had a record number of stallholders, offering a fantastic range of hand-made and unique gift ideas to solve our Christmas present problems. We hope you enjoyed a leisurely evening browsing the stalls, and managed to snap up a few gifts, and treat yourself perhaps too! The PTFA receive a percentage of all sales made during the evening, which leads me nicely onto the best bit ... what we have spent the proceeds on!

I am delighted to say that already, since September, we have spent almost £1500 on replacing and improving facilities and equipment in the school. Each class teacher has been given an amount to spend at their discretion on materials and equipment relevant to their class. The netball team now has smart new skirts, which were given their debut in a friendly match against Henham. The school has new footballs, which as you can imagine receive a battering over time! In addition, we contributed towards the Drumming Workshop and 'Trapped in Tudor Times' – a brilliant performance about life in Tudor England, which the children loved. Our biggest expense has been to provide every child in the school with Home/School Files. These have undoubtedly improved communication between parents/carers and staff. We now have

detailed records of homework objectives and deadlines, a weekly learning review in which the children reflect on their learning during the week, and regular updates from the class teacher about what the class has covered and any special events or reminders, together with other useful information relevant to school life. These files are intended to be used as a two way form of communication, and have so far proved very successful – we are now far more ‘enlightened’ about what our children get up to during the day!

Christmas is now well and truly on the horizon, and the PTFA are busy finalising preparations for the Christmas Fayre. It is being held on Saturday 11th December between 12 noon and 3.00pm. Please come along and join in our celebrations. Father Christmas is taking time out of his busy diary to visit the school, and there will be games, stalls and many attractions to while away your time. We look forward to seeing you all there.

As always, thank you to everyone who supports the school and our events. Your enthusiasm is invaluable and much appreciated by the committee, staff and of course the children, who on a daily basis reap the rewards. Thank you!

Jane Granger
PTFA Committee

Fred Payne
5 Hollyhock Road
Saffron Walden
Essex

Tel: 01799 521642

16 October 04

Can I make the following appeal in your columns.

“**The Latin Band** has been established since August 2003. They meet at Great Chesterford Community Centre each Thursday at 8.00pm. They play traditional and popular Latin American tunes and have now progressed to Latino (Latin Disco) and salsa. They need some more players who have their own transport and are adaptable. Please remember they are an amateur band. They need:-

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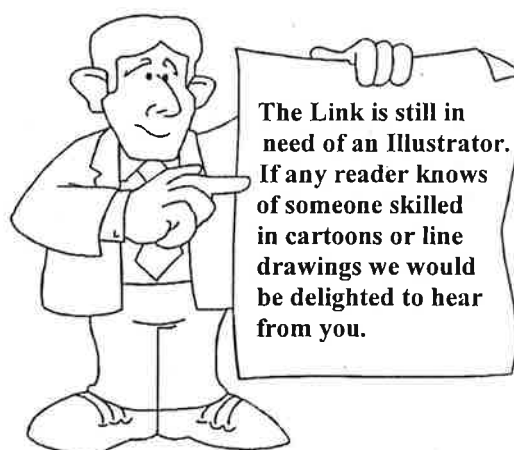
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*After all, learning does not stop when you leave school.
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REMINISCENCES

Dick Pollard of Rainsford Road (our well-known village Jester) has come across a page of memories recorded by his mother some 19 years ago. The history they contain is very precious – so different yet only a lifetime away.

“This being my fiftieth year living on Chapel Hill in Stansted, I have been comparing life in 1935 to that in 1985.

When I first lived here I was very surprised to see cows in my back garden one day. They were being driven from Burton End to Bentfield End and, seeing my gate open, they just walked in.”

Just imagine trying to drive a herd of cows up Chapel Hill today, with all the traffic and parked vehicles all over the place!

“Many years ago, my brother left his car outside our house on Chapel Hill one evening and it was not long before a policeman was at the door telling him to move it as he couldn't park there.

Stansted was a very quiet village then and until the war began, in fact, when it was livened up with evacuees and American servicemen. We were very fortunate in those days to have Greens Stores where you could purchase almost anything. I remember having a hat made in the millinery department – a huge black velvet affair with holly and berries across the front.

Long before the war my father would drive my mother to the store in a pony cart every year when she would stock up on material, bed linen, china and men's wear, and everything would then be delivered in those days.

We used to have some lovely concerts in the Central Hall (*now apartments*) which was also used as the clinic.

The recent cold weather has made me think even further back in time to the long walk from Forest Hall where I lived before I was married, to the school in Chapel Hill. We would arrive with frozen hands and thaw them out in front of the big fire in the classroom. I remember taking a can of milk to school to use in our lunch-time cocoa. We would always arrive very early for school, while the girl from the Barley Mow (*the pub opposite the school, now a private house*) was always late. We would also toast our sandwiches in front of that fire on the end of a ruler.

We would pass four shops on our way to school – Mrs Heard's and Mrs Downham's in Stoney Common, Mrs Hudgell's in Station Road and Herrington's at the bottom of Chapel Hill (*where the undertakers is now*).

We had different games for each season. There were hoops – wooden ones for the girls, and iron ones for the boys. Then it would be time for tops – mushroom shape and carrot shape which you could whip along in the road at those times. We purchased these from Miss Kitson's in Cambridge Road, a very interesting shop, especially for children.

The girls had very long hair in those days and I well remember Miss Woolley, our Headmistress, being horrified when girls turned up at school with their hair 'bobbed'. When I turned up one day duly shorn she said “Not another one” and my dad covered his face with his hat every time he saw me.


We used to like to watch the blacksmith in Chapel Hill (*where the Minimarket is now*) at work on his anvil and we could hear him hammering away when we were in the playground at school.

There is a lot more that one could say about Chapel Hill in the days when it was a lot more peaceful than it is now. Bill Matthews had a cycle shop and ran the first taxi service in Stansted (*from where the Scuba shop is now*). Mr Ecclestone presided over the chemist's shop (*now Stansted Carpets*) with his large bottles of coloured water in the window. Many people said that he was as good as any doctor in diagnosing your ills and prescribing a cure. Mr Vercoe's watch shop was a very interesting place (*between Family News and the Minimarket and subsequently a coal office*), and later Mr Houghton had a watch and clock shop just a little further up the hill.

Many years ago, Chapel Hill also boasted a photographer's (next to Stansted Carpets) and, near the bottom of the hill again, used to be Mr Roast's the cobblers shop (*now the opticians*) and when you passed by he could be seen sitting in the shop window mending the shoes.


In those days, too, everyone knew just about everybody else in Stansted and I think that everyone was probably a lot happier then with the simple pleasures that we all enjoyed and the peace and quiet of the village that doesn't seem to exist in these days.”

Lucy Pollard



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Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness – and here at Bentfield our Nursery, Reception class and Years one and two are being offered a free piece of fruit or vegetable every day thanks to the Government's School Fruit and Vegetable Scheme. We hope that this will be a positive, and enjoyable, way to encourage the children to eat healthily.

Staying with the healthy theme, Year five are taking part in Bodycare with Uttlesford District Council. This runs for a total of five weeks and teaches the children, through various activities, about how to keep healthy and active.

We had another visit from CHAOS, the group of students from Cambridge University who do wonderful hands on science. This time it was the turn of Class five to enjoy them.

The autumn term clubs are well underway, with the older children having a wide variety of after school activities to choose from including chess, netball, hockey and choir. The younger years have a successful Art and Craft Club. All children are also given the opportunity to join a French club either at lunchtime or after school. In addition we have two very popular football clubs run by Andy Scott's Soccer School. Our school football team has had a great start to the season winning all of their first five matches! Well done! The hockey club has had two training sessions on the Astroturf at Newport Free Grammar School, which hopefully will pay dividends when they start to play matches in the spring.

The choir has practiced very hard and, together with other Essex school choirs, went to the Albert Hall to perform at a concert in aid of Barnardos. It was a very long day, as they did not get home until very late, but an amazing experience for them all and one that they will never forget. Many thanks to Mrs Beszant and Miss Eldrett who organised the choir, and also to Daphne Carter who organised the parents' coach.

We are now busy looking forward to all our Christmas activities.

If you are interested in either a Nursery or Reception place in September 2005, and would like to visit the school, please give us a ring and we would be very pleased to arrange one for you.

The PTA celebrated Bonfire Night with their annual Sparkler Party. The children had a wonderful time bobbing for apples, munching donuts and braving the dare boxes. As always the sparklers were a great hit and were once again enjoyed safely under the watchful eyes of our marshals. The hot food and mulled wine helped to keep the adults warm while the children had lots of fun. Thanks to all those who helped and supported the evening.

It's hard to believe December is upon us already, but indeed it is, and with it comes Christmas!! We're holding our Christmas Fair on Saturday 4th December from 2.00-4.30pm. This is always a fantastic way to start the festive season as we've got everything to get you in the Christmas spirit. We have Santa's grotto, crafts, plants, a raffle, tombolas, cakes, entertainment, refreshments and lots of fun and games. See you there!

Marnie Tait



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