

March 2004

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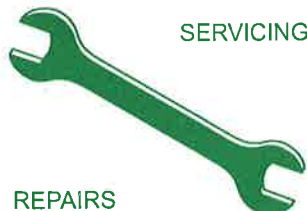
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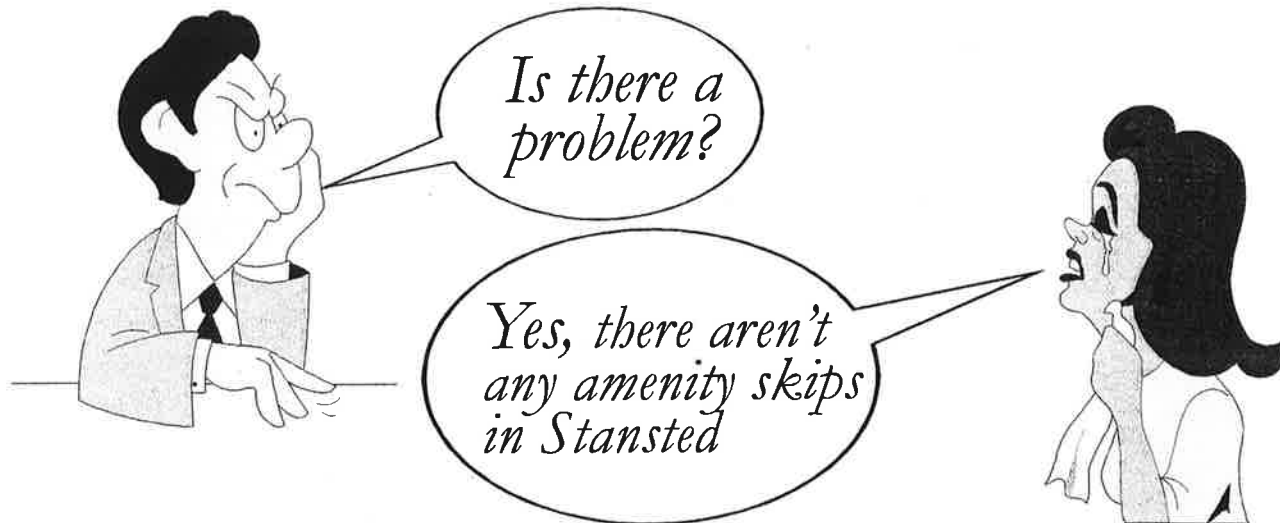
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KEEP STANSTED TIDY

The Link (price £3.50 per year) is published monthly by Churches Together in Stansted

Editor: Derek Honour

Advertising enquiries to Wendy Moss Tel 01279 812797

All other enquiries to Janet Townsend Tel 01279 812593

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by 15th April for publication on 1st May

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

Quaker Pacifism

The peace testimony has been a source of inspiration to Friends throughout the centuries. Its roots lie in the personal experience of the love and power of Christ which marked the founders of the Quaker movement. They recognised the realities of evil and conflict but it was contrary to the Spirit of Christ to use war and violence as a means to deal with them.

William Penn, a well known Quaker, wrote in 1693, "A good end cannot sanctify evil means; nor must we ever do evil, that good may come of it". Pacifism is not an easy ideal to hold to, but then neither is most of Christ's teaching.

The following poem was written by W.N. Ewer in the aftermath of the First World War and has enduring relevance.

Virginia Marshall

Five Souls

First Soul

I was a peasant of the Polish plain;
I left my plough because the message ran:-
Russia in danger, needed every man
To save her from the Teuton; and was slain.
I gave my life for freedom – This I know
For those who bade me fight told me so.

Second Soul

I was a Tyrolese, a mountaineer;
I gladly left my mountain home to fight
Against the brutal treacherous Muscovite;
And died in Poland on a Cossack spear.
I gave my life for freedom – This I know
For those who bade me fight told me so.

Third Soul

I worked in Lyons at my weaver's loom,
When suddenly the Prussian despot hurled
His felon blow at France and at the world;
Then I went forth to Belgium and my doom.
I gave my life for freedom – This I know
For those who bade me fight told me so.

Fourth Soul

I owned a vineyard by the wooded Main,
Until the Fatherland begirt by foes
Lusting her downfall, called me, and I rose
Swift to the call – and died in far Lorraine.
I gave my life for freedom – This I know
For those who bade me fight told me so.

Fifth Soul

I worked in a great shipyard by the Clyde;
There came a sudden word of wars declared,
Of Belgium, peaceful, helpless, unprepared,
Asking for our aid: I joined the ranks, and died.
I gave my life for freedom – This I know
For those who bade me fight told me so.

ROMAN CATHOLIC

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High Lane

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The Presbytery
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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 has long gone. The fairy lights and tinsel are back in their boxes. Christmas with its Christian message of hope and renewal is synonymous with light, but by contrast the early months of the year seem dark and dreary; so much gloom after the festive cheer!

However, darkness is very much part of the Christian experience. It has its own religious significance, its own symbolism with which to carry us through the gloom in our lives.

Night and day are both part of the divine plan, alternating like winter and summer, all given by God. Darkness is not necessarily evil. The dark earth of winter is alive with dormant seeds. Fairy lights can't turn winter darkness into summer light, but the darkness is part of the rhythm of life. Light gives us confidence and darkness renders us dependent. The readings in the Gospels can take us deeper into darkness; especially during this period leading up to Easter. We read of Christ's suffering in the garden of Gethsemane and on the Cross, but we do this in the knowledge of the risen Christ. We trust fully that the risen Christ will light up the gloom and darkness around us.

Eileen Quinn

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 March

7th	2.30pm	Rev'd David Simpson
14th	10.30am	Mr P Smith
21st	10.30am	Rev'd David Simpson – Communion
		Mothering Sunday
28th	10.30am	Mr M Dyer – Joint Service with our Methodist Friends

Dates for your Diary

7th	3.30pm	Afternoon Tea
8th	6.00pm	Pilots
15th	2.30pm	Monday Club
20th	10.00am- 3.00pm	Children's Activity Day
22nd	6.00pm	Pilots

Join us for tea on 7th March 3.30pm–5.00pm. Please ring Janet on 812593 before 1.30pm if you need transport.

Pilots

On Saturday 31st January the Pilots enjoyed an energetic disco! It was great to see so many children and adults enjoying themselves in our refurbished Lecture Hall. Garry King provided the music and games and worked very hard to make the disco go with a swing – thank you Garry! Also thanks to Cherry who worked hard in the kitchen and provided the children with good things to eat and drink, in all it was a memorable start to our 'new' Pilot group.

On 9th February 26 children came to the first Pilot evening of the re-established Pilot group. The theme for the evening was journeys based on the lives of St Paul and Gladys Aylward. With Henry Playle our Youth Organiser for the Province and 10 adults with the different groups, we were able to use all the Church premises for the Adventurers and Voyagers while the Deckhands used the Lecture Hall for their activities, having fun with games especially when David our Minister joined in. Pilots will continue to meet on alternate Monday evenings during term time and we hope to visit Legoland as a group on Saturday 15th May. We are also looking forward to Saturday 20th March our next Activity Fun Day, followed by a special Mothering

Sunday service on the following day. There are still a few places left for our fun day. If you have not yet booked your place please ring Valerie on 813433.

Easter

Planning is now well under way for our Bygones exhibition over the Easter weekend 10th, 11th and 12th April. There will be items of local interest as well as postcards and the Women's Institute table cloth. In the Church will be a display of wedding dresses, flowers and photos of couples who have been married in the Church. If anyone has a wedding photo taken at our Church and they would like to be included please contact Janet on 812593.

There will be a Service of Praise on Easter Sunday evening at 6.00pm.

The exhibition and displays will be open –

Saturday 10.00am-6.00pm
Sunday 2.00pm-6.00pm
Monday 10.00am-6.00pm.

Refreshments will be served throughout the weekend.

Book the date now!

Janet Townsend

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 Reception Ground
Stansted
Tel 01279 813579

Email methodists@stansted.net

All services start at 9.30am unless otherwise stated

Services and preachers for March

7th	Rosamunde Page
14th	Rev'd Jim Gill
21st	Rev'd Keith Page – Holy Communion
28th	Joint service at URC at 10.30am Don't forget to put clocks forward!

Fellowship meeting is on Thursday 11th March



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

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

(01279) 815243
church.office@stansted.net

Administrator
Mrs Elizabeth Jennings

Open Door Service

All-age Ecumenical Worship meets in February at St John's at 11:00am.

- **7th March:**
All-age communion
- **21 March**
Mothers' Day All-age worship and baptism

Donors needed for organ transplant

I suppose every job has its spectres, apart from making sure I don't drop babies, my personal one is the thermometer. I don't mean the meteorological kind, I mean the naff two-dimensional board which get erected in churchyards when there is the need to raise money, usually for the church roof or the organ, and the red line rises as funds get nearer the target.

We've done pretty well to avoid a St John's thermometer so far. The parish church in Stansted is maintained by about a hundred people, without whom we wouldn't exist. Just occasionally things happen which require a special effort, and we've got to bite the bullet and deal with one of these in the next couple of months.

In simple language, the organ at St John's is no longer functioning. We need about £22,000 to replace it, and I've been encouraged by donations which are already coming in from community organisations, and I would like to say thank you very much.

The St John's organ is famous for having the thickest file in the cabinet of the diocesan organ adviser. Our organ has been threatening to pack up for over twenty-five years. Each time it has come close, we have patched it up, said a quiet prayer of gratitude, and then forgotten about it till the next time. I'm as guilty as everyone else on this.

These days, the instrument is a long way from the pristine form that would have attracted grants or heritage funding. To restore the pipe-

work, mechanics and leather would cost us just short of £100,000. As Christians we think that spending such a sum on an instrument would be immoral. When we look at our financial statement at the end of each year, we want to be able to see how the church has made a difference in people's lives, not how we have maintained our building.

This is the mind of the Parochial Church Council, so we have voted to replace the pipe organ with a digital one. A manufacturer has offered to let us have one on trial over the Easter period, so we can get a feel for what it will mean to move from wind and pipes to bits and bytes.

Visually, St John's will look the same. The pipework is an integral part of the look and design of the interior, and this will remain unaffected.

We have developed a strong musical tradition at St John's over the years, and we are keen to support it and develop it further. Worship is part of what a church gathers for. A digital organ is a way of nurturing the tradition, and creating new possibilities for the future, without a long drawn-out fundraising campaign which would drain us of any energy for carrying on Jesus' mission.

So, if any readers would like to consider helping us buy a new organ, we will be very grateful, and it will ensure that when you do visit us, we will be able to continue to worship God in the best way that we can. AS

Diary

Sundays

8:00am Holy Communion
9:30am Parish Communion
with Sunday School
11:00am Open Door Service
(1st & 3rd Sunday of the month)

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 office for details of meetings.

Housegroups

Meet fortnightly on Tuesday evening at 30 Maitland Road. In March the course is entitled: *The story of Ruth: twelve moments in every woman's life.* Leaders: Lyn Hillier & Sandra Wood.

April 9th 2004

Good Friday Holiday Project

Is on again this year!
Opportunities for adults and young people to join workshops and put together a presentation in the afternoon.

Registration deadline:
Monday, April 5th
Call the Church Office for details.

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

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

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

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

Honorary Assistant Priest
Canon Derek Jackson
phone
(01279) 652664

Sunday School
Mrs Sandra Wood
(01279) 647054

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

Housegroup
The Rector



Registers for January:

Baptism

4th Lucas Henry Hitchmough

Funerals

20th Doreen Stock age 84 years

23rd Alice Viner age 94 years

STOP PRESS
See coloured page



**CHURCHES
TOGETHER
in STANSTED**

Lent Groups

Lent Groups are taking place during March on Monday 1st, Tuesday 9th, Friday 19th, Thursday 25th and Monday 29th.

All are held at 8.00pm in the Quaker Meeting House on Chapel Hill. We will be following a course on the 'Hard Sayings of Jesus'. Each session is free standing, and each of the churches will be taking it in turn to lead a session.

Following these, an Agape service will be held at 6.30pm on Sunday 4th April, followed by a 'bring and share' supper. All are welcome.

Ruth Rawlinson

Christian Aid
We believe in life before death

Mark the 10th!

It is ten years since the Fairtrade mark appeared on products. Last year a new logo was designed and hopefully this is familiar to 'Link' readers. In 10 years a whole host of fairly traded products have been added to the original tea and coffee. There are now over 180 from over 80 companies.

1st-14th March is Fairtrade Fortnight

Look out for special promotions on products in shops. Those who are not giving up chocolate for Lent might like

to log onto www.fairtrade.org.uk/resources_recipes for some delicious mouth watering recipes for cakes and puds.

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A Fairtrade village?

The churches in Stansted and organisations like Shalom already use fairly traded coffee and tea. It would be great if all other organisations would do the same. For further details of the range of products please contact me on 813579.

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Triodos Bank is offering Fairtrade enthusiasts the chance to invest in Cafedirect Shares. You can also open a Fairtrade Saver Account with the bank.

Visit www.triodos.co.uk.

Catherine Dean



I'M ON A COMMITTEE

Our Midlands reporter, Lyn Everitt, a former 'Link' advertising manager, has sent the following. Does it resonate with you too?! (Editor)

Oh give me your pity, I'm on a committee
which means that from morning to night,
we attend and amend and contend and defend
without a conclusion in sight.

We confer and concur, we defer and demur
and reiterate all of our thoughts,
we revise the agenda with frequent addenda
and consider a load of reports.

We compose and propose and oppose,
and the points of procedure are fun,
but although various notions are brought up as motions
there's terribly little gets done!

We resolve and absolve, but never dissolve
since it's out of the question for us.

What a shattering pity to end our committee,
where else could we make such a fuss?



SHALOM

Irish Concert for Corrymeela

The 'Shalom' Group is arranging an Irish evening on 13th March, the Saturday before St Patrick's Day, as the annual fund-raising event for the Corrymeela Community in Northern Ireland. This will be a lively evening with a series of performances of Irish interest, including Irish music and singing, a display of Irish dancing and an excerpt from 'The Importance of being Ernest' by the Irish playwright, Oscar Wilde. We hope it will go with a swing and be enjoyed by everyone.

The Corrymeela Community is one of the best-known organisations in Northern Ireland, which worked tirelessly throughout the 'troubles' to try and bring about reconciliation between the two communities, working especially with young people and families for nearly forty years. This work continues as, in spite of the more peaceful atmosphere in the country, enormous problems remain and Corrymeela's presence is still needed, together with the money to fund the work.

For Concert Tickets, telephone 814190 or 816972

Margaret Whitelaw

Meetings

March 8th at 7 Blythwood Gardens

- We will watch a video about the Corrymeela Community in N Ireland, and Margaret Whitelaw will update us on the work of the Community.

March 22nd at the Friends Meeting House

- We will be given a spiritual insight into the painting "The Prodigal Son".

All meetings start at 8 pm and are open to everyone.

Catherine Dean

**COFFEE MORNING
& OPEN DAY
STANSTED DAY CENTRE
Wed 28th April
10 am - 12 noon**

Proceeds are towards the purchase of new curtains for the Day Centre, which will cost at least £2,000

Please come and support this event and enjoy the stalls and company



Mountfitchet High School PTA

QUIZ NIGHT

7.30 pm Sat 13th March

Tables of up to 8

Tickets £6 incl supper

Tel. Linda 812100 or Mike 812780

Licensed Bar

Bentfield School PTA

Casino Night



Saturday 13th March

8 pm

£6 incl light buffet

☎ 647650



QUIZ NIGHT

Saturday 6th March

7.30 for 8 pm

Stansted Day Centre

Tables of 6

Bring your own drinks

£6 (incl ploughman's supper)

Tel 813871

WOMEN'S WORLD DAY OF PRAYER



2 pm Friday 5th March

St John's Church

**'In Faith,
Women Shape the Future'**

Prepared by the Christian women of Panama

Do come and join in this World-wide event



LENT GROUPS

'Hard Sayings of Jesus'

Quaker Meeting House 8 pm

Mon 1st, Tue 9th, Fri 19th,

Thu 25th, and Mon 29th March

All are most welcome

Sessions are 'free standing'

Irish Nite

in aid of Corrymeela
Music • Singing • Dancing

8 - 11 pm Sat 13th March
 St John's Church Hall
 Adults £6 Family £15 incl. refresh.
 Bar ~ Raffle
 Please tel. Mary on 814190
Everyone Welcome



Activity Fun Day

Saturday 20th March

**Art & Craft • Music • Drama
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Stansted URC Premises

10 am to 3 pm

For children 5 to 14 years

Book now - limited places

☎ 813433 (Valerie) or 758611 (Michelle)

Please bring a packed lunch plus £2



THE VILLAGE MUSIC CLUB

DAMIEN GIRVIN Piano

**8 pm Sat 20th March
 St John's Church**

Beethoven • Brahms • Chopin

Schumann • Poulenc • Liszt

Tickets from usual outlets

Sonia Levy 815282

or at the door

£9 adults, £7 conc, £3 or £1 children

VILLAGE EVENTS

March

1	Mon	Lent Group	Quaker Meeting House 8 pm
3	Wed	Mountfitchet Seniors	Day Centre 2 - 4 pm
		Bookstart	Library 2.15 - 2.45 pm
		Garden Club	Day Centre 8 pm
4	Thu	Local History Society	Day Centre 8 pm
5	Fri	Women's World Day of Prayer	St John's Church 2 pm
6	Sat	HEAL Quiz Night	Day Centre 7.30 for 8 pm
7	Sun	Afternoon Tea (after service)	UR Church 3.30 - 5 pm
8	Mon	Shalom Group	7 Blythwood Gardens 8 pm
9	Tue	Lent Group	Quaker Meeting House 8 pm
11	Thu	WI	St John's Hall 7.45 pm
12	Fri	Lib Dem Supper Club	Day Centre 7.30 for 8 pm
13	Sat	Lib Dem Ploughman's Lunch	Day Centre noon - 2 pm
		PTA Casino Night	Bentfield Primary School 8 pm
		PTA Quiz Night	Mountfitchet School 7.30 pm
		Irish Nite for Corrymeela	St John's Hall 8 pm
16	Tue	Stansted Millers AGM	Day Centre 8 pm
17	Wed	Mountfitchet Seniors	Day Centre 2 - 4 pm
19	Fri	Lent Group	Quaker Meeting House 8 pm
20	Sat	Activity Fun Day	UR Church 10 am - 3 pm
		Green Waste Skip	Lower St Car Park 1 - 4 pm
		Village Music Club Concert	St John's Church 8 pm
22	Mon	Shalom Group	Quaker Meeting House 8 pm
24	Wed	Carers UK Coffee Morning	Day Centre 10 am
25	Thu	Lent Group	Quaker Meeting House 8 pm
26	Fri	PTFA Music Quiz	St Mary's School 7.30 for 8 pm
28	Sun	Car Boot Sale	Mountfitchet School 8 am - noon
29	Mon	Lent Group	Quaker Meeting House 8 pm

April

1	Thu	Local History Society	Day Centre 8 pm
4	Sun	Stansted Windmill Open	2 - 6 pm
5	Mon	Shalom Group	7 Blythwood Gardens 8 pm
7	Wed	Bookstart	Library 2.15 - 2.45 pm
		Garden Club	Day Centre 8 pm
8	Thu	WI	St John's Hall 7.45 pm
10	Sat	Bygones Exhibition	UR Church & Hall 10 am - 6 pm
		Lib Dem Ploughman's Lunch	Day Centre noon - 2 pm
11	Sun	Bygones Exhibition	UR Church & Hall 2 pm - 6 pm
		Stansted Windmill Open	2 - 6 pm
12	Mon	Bygones Exhibition	UR Church & Hall 10 am - 6 pm
		Stansted Windmill Open	2 - 6 pm

CARERS UK

Uttlesford Branch

COFFEE MORNING

Wed 24th March

10 am to noon

Stansted Day Centre

Cake Stall • Raffle

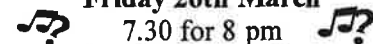
Admission 50p

ST MARY'S SCHOOL PTFA

MUSIC QUIZ NIGHT

Friday 26th March

7.30 for 8 pm



Tickets (incl supper) £6.50

from school office or

Sarah 07746 535107

Bring your own drink

All are welcome - not just parents

Come as a group or alone

A fun evening guaranteed!

Mountfitchet High School PTA

Car Boot Sale

8 am to noon Sun 28th March

£6 in advance £7 on the day

Refreshments available



Tel: John 813531

or School 813384



BYGONES EXHIBITION

Easter Weekend April 10th - 12th

Stansted URC Church & Hall

Saturday 10 am - 6 pm

Sunday 2 pm - 6 pm

Monday 10 am - 6 pm

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STANSTED FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

Welcome once again to a round-up of recent activity from the crew of Station W83 Stansted. Firstly, many apologies for the recent break in the supply of reports to the 'Link', as the writer has been exceptionally busy with professional exams over the latter half of 2003, and is currently studying for a BSc.

The second half of 2003 was just as busy as the first, with the usual array of calls, ranging from lockouts to road accidents. Fire-fighters were kept busy right across the spectrum, and our watch strength has improved slightly with new members, who are currently undergoing their preliminary training. The crew has been getting to grips with a new Breathing Apparatus system, using flat twin cylinders instead of the older large single cylinder. Most of the crew have recently undergone extensive update training at the BA Training School at Chelmsford (known affectionately in the Service as 'BATS').

Chelmsford Fire Station, like that at Harlow, has a purpose-built training facility for fire-fighters to practice the art of entering burning, smoke-filled buildings in relative safety, conduct searches or perform specific tasks, such as closing gas valves, or rescuing casualties. The buildings are cunningly designed to incorporate various 'traps' for the unwary: vertical shafts with ladders, self-closing trapdoors, large items of debris, wire cages and tunnels, all of which have to be negotiated in total blackout conditions, with the addition of gas jets providing very high temperatures and smoke generator machines to 'smoke-log' the premises. Many a fire-fighter builds up a serious sweat dragging a 16-stone dummy along a 20" diameter tunnel!

The BA set each man carries generally provides enough air for about 45 minutes, although this can reduce to as little as 20 minutes when working hard, and the sets are fitted with very high-tech gauges (computerised, of course!), which enable each man to work out how much air he has left, and therefore how long he has still to work and to leave the building. Working in total smoke-log conditions can be extremely disorienting, with generally only the sense of touch to rely on. Nothing can of course be seen, and often very little heard. Fire-fighters have to be very good, therefore, at building up a picture of the building they are in, simply by touch and memorising the immovable features they come across: a door, a staircase, etc. In very large buildings a guideline is laid in by the leading crew, and subsequent crews may follow, searching off the line. Each man has a personal line attached to his harness, with a carabiner clip on the end to attach to the guideline, or to another fire-fighter. The science of searching in a smoke-filled building is an exacting one, and takes years of practice to perfect. Even a standard sitting room, when smoke logged, can seem the size of a dance hall!

Fortunately, the requirement to use the equipment does not often arise in these circumstances, but it can also be required to deal with chemical spillages, serious vehicle fires, etc., where dangerous fumes may be given off. W83 handled over 600 calls in 2003, more than the

previous year, and our callouts (by type) were roughly in line with the county as a whole, although of course being so close to the airport, we dealt with a large number of aircraft-related incidents, the most recent of which was the crash in the early hours of 9th February, when a small jet, suffering hydraulic failure, 'belly-flopped' onto the runway. Fortunately, it slithered along the runway and slid onto the grass apron, where the four occupants managed to evacuate safely.

In 2003, Essex Fire and Rescue as a whole dealt with 28,501 incidents, broken down into 12,636 fires, 1,253 road accidents, 393 floodings, 136 rescues (of various types), and 3,794 grassland fires. Sadly the Service also dealt with 11 preventable fire deaths, one of which was here in Stansted, and, annoyingly, some 1,598 hoax fire calls.

Although our main task is to respond to fire incidents and other emergencies, we are keen to promote prevention rather than intervention. If you have any queries about fire safety, please don't hesitate to contact us for advice: even if only to find out where to put those vital smoke alarms! If you have alarms already, please don't forget to check and test them on a regular basis. Testing every time you perform some other domestic chore, such as putting out the recycling box, will ensure that the alarms don't get overlooked.

On the subject of alarms, whether in a domestic, commercial or other premises, it is essential to know what to do when it goes off. It is vital to have an escape plan pre-prepared in the event of an emergency. The whole family should be involved and know what to do and where to go. Ideally, an escape route from, say, a house, should provide a feasible alternative to the stairs. If a fire broke out in the sitting-room at night and the door to the hallway were left open, then the stairs would certainly be impassable very quickly: as a firm rule, always close all downstairs doors at night. A standard internal domestic door will hold back extreme heat and fire for up to 30 minutes, but only if it is shut! Do not leave equipment on, such as tumble driers, dishwashers, or even televisions on standby. Alternative exits should be discussed and agreed upon, for instance, from a window onto an adjoining flat roof. Double glazed windows, if locked, should always have a key to hand: they are unbreakable in an emergency.

Hopefully, we can cover this subject a little more next time. Meanwhile, keep safe!

Philip Hastings

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or 07778 049063



life of Brian

Last December Dr Brian Hamilton looks back on over thirty years in



It was in 1972 that I first visited a tall, young casualty officer in the attempt to lure him into a partnership vacancy at Stansted.

He was somebody we already knew about from telephone contact as a cheerful, accommodating and hard-working doctor, always tolerant of our patients when they drifted into Casualty with trivial complaints that they should have brought to us!

As soon as he started to work with us I knew that I, at least, had made the right decision.

Brian Hamilton was as dedicated and talented as he was hard working and reliable. At that time being on call for emergencies was even more of a responsibility that it is now, because ordinary GPs were in the front line for all accidents and medical disasters. There were no paramedics in those days.

Brian's Casualty experience as well as his determination to deliver the very best for his patients meant that when he was on call the whole Practice was in safe hands.

In his everyday work, Brian showed a warmth and openness as well as a special freshness and honesty in his relationships with patients. It was he who taught me that it is permissible to admit to a patient when one was ignorant of something.

As a colleague, Brian never let people down. Indeed, it was usually Brian who filled the gap if there was any unexpected problem with work cover. On the other hand Brian revealed himself as a natural clown and mimic, especially in the presence of pomposity or officialdom. He has the power to reduce me to tears of helpless laughter at his dry comments on the many bizarre events that punctuate everyday life in the Health Service.

Over the years Brian was remarkable for his concentration on the welfare of patients. To him the patient was always welcome. At the end of a long surgery it was Brian who would uncomplainingly accept extra patients, latecomers and unexpected emergencies.

He would always see the patient's point of view and always argued for a patient's needs to be given priority over all other considerations. Of course, over the decades, such dedication was bound to take its toll, especially since the NHS became the target of politics.

Brian had a particular talent for saving lives. It might be by staying with a patient until he had spotted the obscure sign of a dangerous condition, or by swift courageous actions, such as injecting a vital drug directly into someone's failing heart to restore its activity, all within the space of a minute.

As a cheery, welcoming and sociable character, Brian was popular with the patients and friends alike – and many a patient was also a friend.

conducted his last surgery before retiring to France. Anthony Hazzard the company of his affable colleague. Photos: Andrew Spurr

Not everyone, however, received the privilege of access to his very tender professional conscience; to watch him agonise over decisions and over the inevitable tragedies that accompany a life in medicine. He never gave himself an easy time, but was ruthlessly self-critical.

It was tempting to take Brian for granted and to assume that this stately, genial and trusted figure would always be there for us. It is hard to relinquish the ready availability of such a talented, concerned and experienced doctor, but it is time now for Brian to embark upon a more restful time of his life which is so well-earned and deserved.

And may I be permitted to remark that, in an age which no longer values such Stoic and Hippocratic virtues, we shall not see his like again.

Brian, his wife Martine and Anthony Hazzard in France.

The Hamiltons have retired to the Loire Valley.



Dear Andrew,

We would be most grateful if we could use the pages of the Parish Magazine to let everyone know how deeply touched we were by the demonstration of kindness shown to me upon my retirement from Stansted Surgery.

We have had so many letters, cards and beautiful gifts. It was just amazing. We will treasure them all and we wish to thank everyone so much.

I have many happy memories of my time in Stansted made the more pleasant by so many wonderful, kind people.

The bureaucracy that is now overwhelming the NHS has finally become too much and I have had to leave so that someone younger and more computer-driven can join the practice.

However, the dear friends at the surgery, and lovely patients from the area will always be in my heart. So, from us both, we wish everyone the best of health and prosperity, and once again, thank you all so very much.

Yours sincerely,

Martine and Brian Hamilton

UTTLESFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL

Aviation White Paper

The Council has decided to join with East Herts district and Essex and Herts county councils to challenge the legality of the Government's White Paper on the future of aviation.

The Government is considered to have gone into too much detail in December's White Paper by specifying the precise location of a second airport runway. This is the sort of detail that would normally be determined during a planning application and not as part of a Government policy statement, which is all that a White Paper is.

The Council's lawyers also say that European Law has been broken because a detailed proposal should be accompanied by what is known as an environmental impact assessment. The Government has not carried out such an assessment. In effect, the Government may have abused its lawful powers by trying to bypass the proper planning process. The White Paper may have to be put through a judicial review in front of judges.

Thirdly, the White Paper does not provide answers to how a second runway at Stansted can be funded. BAA has said it could not pay for the development without subsidy from Heathrow. But subsidy is not allowed. The Government has been accused of causing unnecessary blight on this area by proposing a detailed scheme without showing how the airport and the associated infrastructure such as road and railway access would be funded.

February brought further interference from central government. Westminster ministers told the East of England Regional Assembly (EERA) that they have to plan for 18,000 new homes about one week before the end of a two-year, major planning exercise. The EERA agreed to 8,000 extra homes in Uttlesford between now and 2021 and will have to carry out more work on whether it is possible to find acceptable locations for the extra 18,000 (about two Bishop's Stortfords) in what is known as the M11 corridor growth area. The corridor now includes Stevenage and Peterborough. Maybe Stansted isn't the only place that the Government is eyeing for major growth, but I am still not convinced.

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

Budgets 2003/04

This is the time of the year that councils set their budgets for the coming financial year. It is Uttlesford's responsibility to collect Council Tax from some 30,000 dwellings. Each dwelling is allocated to one of eight valuation bands according to its open market value as at 1st April 1991. The valuation band for your property can be found on the Council Tax bill. From each pound collected 78p will go to the Essex County Council to pay for services such as

social services, care in the community, schools, libraries, highways and fire services. Another 8p in the pound goes to the Essex Police Authority. The remaining 14p in the pound collected from taxpayers will stay in the district to pay for services provided by Uttlesford and town/parish councils. The services provided include refuse collection, concessionary travel, day centres for the elderly, care for the environment, health and safety, planning, leisure and recreation.

The full Council Tax bill assumes that there are two adults living in a dwelling. If only one adult lives in a dwelling the bill will be reduced by a quarter (25%) If you think that you are entitled to a discount, please call the Council Tax section on 01799 510335.

At our last full Council meeting, a 7.48% increase in the district portion of Council Tax was approved. This will result in the average band D property payment increasing from £108.69 to £116.82 up £8.13 – or an average 14p per week for each taxpayer. This compares with a fractionally higher 7.5% increase last year.

For a dwelling in band D the overall Council Tax payment for 2004/05 breaks down as:

	£	% of Total
Essex County Council	*891.54	(73.7)
Essex Police Authority	99.27	(8.2)
Essex Fire Authority	56.43	(4.7)
Uttlesford District Council	116.82	(9.6)
Stansted Parish Council	46.29	(3.8)
Total	<u>1210.35</u>	

*This figure is the one recommended for its meeting on 17th February and may therefore be changed.

Although council tax continues to go up ahead of inflation, the overall picture is better than last year.

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

Jessica Pearce

Commissioned Paintings



Contemporary canvases for your home or workplace

Children's murals for the bedroom or playroom

Please contact Jessica on 01279 817205 / 07818 644 621

Or e-mail: jessica_mermaid@yahoo.com

Stansted Tennis Club



All members are encouraged to attend the Annual General Meeting, which will take place on Monday 15th March at 8.00 pm at 105 Cambridge Road, Stansted. This is your chance to come along and meet the Committee and other members and to air any views or concerns you may have.

Due to popular demand an adult/junior doubles tournament will take place at the club on Sunday 28th March 2004 at 12.45pm. We already have a lot of entries, but if you are a member and would like to join in, please call Chris Hollis on 01279 319155.

All current adult members are welcome to come along and join in our Sunday morning sessions, which start at 9.30am.

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 continues to coach the juniors on Saturday mornings.

If you would like to join Stansted Tennis Club, please contact Kate Rutter (Membership Secretary) on 01279 813053.



The National Childbirth Trust
Education for Parenthood
Stansted and District

The National Childbirth Trust or NCT is a charity which offers information and support in pregnancy, childbirth and early parenthood. It achieves this through running antenatal classes, having enquiry/advice lines and organising activities for mums and children. The Stansted branch currently has around 70 members and we are always looking out for new people to join us.

One of our main events of the spring will be the Nearly New Sale to be held on Saturday 24th April in St John's Hall, Stansted. The sale is open to non-members and provides a good opportunity to stock up on clothes, toys, books and videos for the under 5s. It is always very well-attended so please come early to avoid disappointment and, if it is possible to leave your children at home, you will find it far easier to browse and shop on your own.

Other events and activities that we have lined up for the spring include playground visits, a walk at Hatfield Forest, an obstacle course, pub lunches, swimming trips, music time, an Easter egg hunt and a girls' night out. Unlike many children's activities which close down for the school holidays, the NCT is one of the few where everything carries on as normal.

Our three coffee groups continue to meet regularly: tiddlers and tums for pregnant mums and those with babies or children who are not yet walking; toddlers for mums with children who are walking confidently, and pre-school for

the older children. We ask for donations of 50p per family for these coffee events and many of the other activities are only £1 per child.

If you would like to receive a free listing of events being held in the future or if you want any further information about the NCT or our branch, please email Stansted-nct@lineone.net or phone the branch enquiry line on 07020 936552. If you would like to book for our popular antenatal classes, call Rachel (early in your pregnancy) on 08707 656284.

Vanessa Gibbons

STANSTED CONSERVATIVES



SAFFRON WALDEN
CONSERVATIVE ASSOCIATION

Next surgeries are as follows:

Friday 12th March

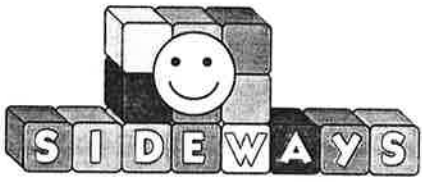
Foakes House
Town Council Office
47 Stortford Road
Dunmow 5.45-6.30pm

Friday 23rd April

The Guildhall,
Town Street
Thaxted 5.45-6.30pm

The Old Armoury
3 Museum Street
Saffron Walden 7.00-7.45pm

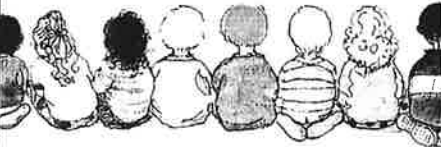
(No appointment necessary)



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BENTFIELD PRIMARY SCHOOL

January brings the snow!!

Did it affect us - NO it did not! Most of our children and staff braved the weather and the school remained open. All the children had a wonderful time playing with their friends and discovering the properties of snow!

The past few weeks have seen several events in the school.

Classes 3 and 4 enjoyed a visit from the 'Rock Man' who gave a very enjoyable hands-on talk on geology. The whole school took part in a Writing Workshop - exploring words in an exciting way and later in the month watched a production of the 'Trojan Horse'.

Classes 1 and 2 have visited Saffron Walden Museum to support their work on the Senses and Class 5 took the train into Bishop's Stortford to visit Pizza Express and enhance their learning of food and diet.

Our clubs are also busy this term with both football and netball teams having regular matches and the hockey league just beginning. Our thriving chess club had a match against Rodings School, which produced some very good games.

The Nursery still has some places available for this coming September. If you are interested and your child will be four in the next academic year, please contact the school office. Also, Messy Play; this is great fun and runs in the Nursery every Monday from 1.30pm to 3.00pm. It is open to children 18 months and older. If you are interested contact the school or just turn up!

The PTA has also been busy planning lots of fundraising activities to keep both the children and their parents happy. We've changed the date of our Casino Night to avoid a clash with another village event and it will now be held on Saturday 13th March. Come along for a night of gambling (just for fun!) and glamour. Whether you pit your wits against the Roulette Wheel, or try your luck against the cards in Blackjack, a fun night is guaranteed. The 'punter' with the most chips left at the end of the evening will win a prize, so there's no chance of losing your life savings. If you fancy trying out your skill and luck in the Casino do come along, it's sure to be great fun. Tickets are just £6 (which includes a light buffet) and are available from the school or by ringing 647650.

On Wednesday 10th March from 3.00pm we are holding a second-hand uniform sale and cake bake. This event is always popular, as the parents get to pick up uniform at a bargain, while the children are happily amused at the cake stall.

The children are already looking forward to the Spring Disco on Friday 26th March. Starting at 6.00 pm with the infants and nursery children and continuing at 7.15pm for the juniors, I'm sure everyone will have a great time as always.

Looking a little ahead, our Big Top May Fair will be held on 8th May 2004 and this year, as the title suggests, we are planning a circus theme. We are already having lots of fun planning the activities and attractions, so make a note of the date now!

Marnie Tait



From a parent's letter...

Congratulations to the staff and committee of Birchanger Nursery Unit, who have, in January, completed their first Ofsted inspection since the change of ownership in 2001, and have been rewarded with a report that is a credit to them.

Carol Bullock, her team and the Nursery Committee have worked extremely hard to keep standards high, and this has been acknowledged and praised in the inspector's report, in which she highlighted the attending children's confidence, motivation and independence due to very high standards of communication between staff and children.

The nursery, which is in the grounds of Birchanger Primary School, is a registered charity run by a team of five full and part-time staff, supported by a committee of volunteers. There are currently 35 local children in attendance, aged from 21/2 to 5 years.

Telephone 01279 814037 for information



**STANSTED &
DISTRICT LIBERAL
DEMOCRATS.**

Our next ploughman's lunches are on Saturday 13th March and Saturday 10th April at the Stansted Day Centre, 12 noon to 2.00pm. All are welcome.

The Supper Club will be meeting on Friday 12th March at the Stansted Day Centre, 7.30pm for 8.00pm. The speaker will be Chris White, who is second on the Liberal Democrat candidate list for the East of England in the European elections on 10th June. Cost of the evening, to include supper, is £8, and there will be a bar. For further details and tickets, please ring 814222 or 813432.

Advance notice - we will be holding an afternoon Treasure Hunt and Tea at Henham on Sunday 18th April. Further details in next month's 'Link'.

Ruth Rawlinson



Stansted Evening Women's Institute

Lottery Grants for Local Groups – 'Awards for All'

Last year Stansted Mountfitchet WI decided to apply for a Grant through the above scheme for as many members as wished to attend our WI College in Oxfordshire for a two-night educational course. We had heard that several other WI's in the country had been successful in doing so and to give many of our members, who would otherwise not have, the chance to experience the pleasure of short residential learning and the opportunity to meet like-minded women from other parts of the British Isles, we made enquiries from County Headquarters on how to apply. Several meetings and letters later we sent in our application and were delighted to be granted £3,140 at the end of October, which is enough money for 20 people to take a two-night course paying for their own travel expenses and with the Institute contributing the £200 we normally put aside for 2 bursaries each year. The Grant has to be used within one year and we are expected to send in an end of award report giving details of how it was spent and the benefits derived from it.



Marion Pretty holds the £3,140 grant certificate

A Short History of Denman College

Denman College is situated in the village of Marcham, near Abingdon in Oxfordshire, Oxford itself being a few miles away. In mediaeval times the land surrounding the College belonged to the Abbey of Abingdon, but after the dissolution of the monasteries by Henry VIII, the estate was sold and by 1705 it was in the possession of the Elwes family. One hundred years later the old farmhouse was burnt down and the present house built. The house, Marcham Park, came into the Duffield family through the female line but in 1938 it was sold to a Mr Berners who modernised it and also added the beautiful 19th century staircase. During the war it was requisitioned by the Air

Ministry who fortunately looked after it very well, but Mr Berners decided not to live in it after the war and in 1947 it was up for sale.

In 1943 the first residential NFWI Summer School had been held at Radbrook College, Shrewsbury and Sir Richard Livingstone, an enthusiastic advocate of adult education, told members then that their Federation ought to endow and possess their own College. So it was in 1945 that a Resolution was passed at the AGM in the Albert Hall to fulfil that dream, and Marcham Park with its 100 acres of land was bought for £16,000 by the NFWI for use as its own College. It was named Denman College after Lady Denman the first Chairman of the WI Movement and who had just retired after 30 years in office.

In 1947, £16,000 was a lot of money and it was raised by every WI promising to give £10 over a period of three years. In this way £70,000 was given and another £20,000 gifted by the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust. Some of this money was used to buy the actual house and estate, to make the necessary alterations and to buy furniture and equipment. The rest was used to produce an Endowment fund. Several Federations made themselves responsible for the furnishings of the bedrooms; the East Anglian Federation furnished the Entrance Hall, others supplied china, blankets and kitchen equipment. Federations still maintain the bedrooms when redecoration and refurbishment is required, so each room is unique and supplied with hand-made and hand-painted items. Many bedrooms have been added during the last 20 years and now many of them are single rooms with en-suite facilities, but it is wonderful to sleep in the original house in a shared bedroom and to draw back the curtains and look out over the beautiful grounds and listen to the dawn chorus!

A New Teaching Centre was opened in 1970 by the Queen Mother and a Home Economics Centre added in 1979 and opened by the Queen. It was at this time that about five acres of the estate was sold off to help finance this. There are about 500 courses every year, varied to suit all tastes and interests. The majority are open to all WI members and WI associates and some are open to family members or prospective members. It is also

possible if there are rooms vacant to stay there as a non-student and to explore Oxford and the surrounding countryside. There are two rooms available for disabled members and their carers. During the course of a year some 6,000 students come to the College with a maximum of 72 attending one of five or six courses at one time. Denman also welcomes about 3,000 WI members on Day visits during the year. We are very lucky to have this College as part of our WI movement and those who go return eager to go again. The Awards Scheme is making it possible for many to go who would not have done so, as well as giving great benefit to our College which needs to be full all the year round to make it viable.

Judy Colliver



**STANSTED MOUNTFITCHET
LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY**

Once again we drew on home-grown talent at our meeting on 5th February when Derek Honour talked to us about Humphry Repton in Essex – Then and Now.

The concept of gardening was brought to us – like so many things – by the Romans. However, their domestic plots centred on the growth of vegetables and later the monasteries developed herb gardens. It was not until the Renaissance that the idea of a garden as a place for leisure and relaxation took hold. These gardens were intensely formal and became very fashionable in English country houses where some have been re-created in recent years.

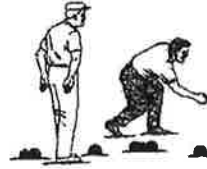
Early in the 19th century there was a reaction to this formality, largely through the single-minded efforts of Capability Brown. His preference was to make the surroundings look more natural, even though he was prepared to change everything on an estate to achieve this – hills were levelled or re-sited, lakes dug and views provided, all aimed at taming nature in an informal way. Such were his personality and beliefs that his influence spread to the highest in the land.

He died in 1783 and it was four years later that Humphry Repton appeared on the scene. Born in Norfolk but Essex by adoption, he was an artist, a playwright and a furniture designer before he turned his hand to gardens. His approach differed from Capability Brown's in several ways: instead of changing everything he was prepared to incorporate existing good features into his design; his work was employed more by the lower aristocracy and nouveau riche; he presented his designs and recommendations, whereas Brown also acted as contractor in the execution of his own plans. Repton never acquired Brown's confidence and was inclined to be hurt by criticism. He died in 1818, leaving examples of his influence across the land.

Repton had worked extensively in Essex and although many of his gardens have disappeared, Derek had visited seven of his designs to show us from old Ordnance Survey maps and pictures how they differed from the photographs he had taken over the last few months. These included Marks Hall, Harlow; Highams Park, Walthamstow; Claybury near Woodford; Hill Hall, Theydon Mount; Hylands, Chelmsford; Rivenhall Place near Braintree; and finally, Stansted Hall. In all this he was magnificently supported by his wife, Peggy, who managed the epidiastrophe with considerable energy and efficiency.

Next meeting, on 4th March, Jennifer Ward will be telling us of 'The Normans in Essex' – we hope you will be able to be there.

Ian Seavers



**STANSTED
BOWLING
CLUB**

We are all looking forward to 24th April when the outdoor season starts for us once again. The green keepers have been very busy over the winter period making sure that the green is kept in top class order, which means a lot of hard work for them.

Although the winter has been very mild it does cause problems with the grass in terms of moss growing and various types of disease creeping in, which frost normally helps to keep at bay.

We once again hope to attract new bowlers to the club this year and would also welcome competent bowlers who feel they might like to try Stansted instead.

We are holding an instructional morning at the club during the morning of Saturday 1st May from 10.00am to 1.00pm and our coach and qualified instructors will be on hand to teach you the basics of the game, which are quite simple.

If you would like to come along just make sure you bring a pair of flat-soled shoes with you to wear on the green, everything else will be provided as well as tea/coffee. The bar will be open for those of you who feel you would benefit from a drink after the pressures of learning the game!!

All age groups are welcome but we ask that youngsters be accompanied by a parent/parents who in turn may like to try the game while they are there.

If you are unable to make that day our coach is prepared to offer individuals one to one instruction during the week of 10th-15th May at most times of the day to suit. Please contact him on 01279 813584.

If anyone feels they would like to initially become a social member before embarking on the game then you are welcome to come along any Friday evening throughout the year or any time during the season.

We really do hope that you will come along and join us this year.

For those interested in the history of Stansted the Bowls Club will be celebrating its Centenary year in 2006.

Rex Turner

SNIPPETS 1

The February concert in St. John's Church by Pete Baker's Crusty Jazzers and the Charity group raised around £800 for Water Aid. It was a great evening.

Editor

**St Mary's Primary School
Parents, Teachers and
Friends Association**



For the shortest month of the year, St Mary's school has certainly packed a lot into its time. And with spring just around the corner, sport has featured heavily.

The Year 5/6 Football team had an impressive score in a friendly match against Great Easton, winning 6-2, and the Year 5/6 Netball Team played Howe Green and also won. This is a great start to the year, and a big 'Well Done' goes out to all those involved. The after school golf lessons have proved so popular that another course is being run for those who are keen to take up the sport, along with a Football Club for the children in Years 1 and 2. With all the recent press coverage about childhood obesity, St Mary's is keen to encourage all its children to get involved in sport, as part of its ethos of being a 'Healthy School'.

During the recent Parents Evening, we were welcomed into the school to discuss our children's progress with their Class Teacher. I always enjoy looking at the high standard of work on display around the school and in the classroom, and am amazed at what our children have worked so hard to achieve. No wonder they come home exhausted! Whilst some of the work triggers dim and distant memories of my own school days, I do wonder whether we had quite so much fun and variety as they do today!

The annual Education Sunday service held at St John's Church for the Year 3 pupils celebrated the School's link with the Church and its community. Every child in the class had a part in the service, and spoke with great confidence, clarity and enthusiasm. To stand, aged 6 and 7, in front of a congregation of familiar and unknown faces takes a lot of courage. Congratulations to all of you. As the recent OFSTED report noted, 'St Mary's helps pupils to develop confidence and gain self-esteem.' In today's world, this is an all-important life-skill to learn.

The PTFA ran a very successful and enjoyable Valentine's Disco and raised £200 for the school. There was an excellent turnout, and the children had a fantastic time singing, dancing and learning the latest moves! Our thanks go to those parents and staff who supervised and helped set up and clear away afterwards, and of course to Martin, the DJ, and the children for making it such a successful event.

Our Year 6 pupils took part in a Public Speaking Competition held at Mountfitchet High School, sponsored by the Stansted and Stortford Valley Rotary Club. Six schools in the local area took part, each submitting a team of four pupils. Two read from a choice of pre-set passages, another spoke for two minutes on a topic of their choice and the fourth pupil introduced the team. Once again, we are very proud of their performance, and congratulate them on what must have been a nerve-racking experience!

I was fortunate to have been in school during a brilliant performance of The History of Rock 'n' Roll. This was a fully interactive show involving a live band, aimed at broadening their musical experience. Whilst the staff were taken on a trip down memory lane (!), the children were encouraged to sing along, dance, and join in the actions! Judging by the laughter and smiles on their faces, and the enthusiastic dancing, they all had a wonderful afternoon. Whilst sessions like this are somewhat unconventional and not a specific part of the curriculum, they allow children to broaden their knowledge in an atmosphere of fun, and experience something in a first hand way. I wish I were back at school!

Whilst we were all enjoying our half-term break, the builders were in replacing windows, as part of an on-going improvement programme. A school, it seems, is seldom quiet!

With so much to look back on and celebrate, we have much to look forward to and anticipate. Lancelot and the Knights of the Round Table are coming to St Mary's for another visual spectacular! And a new Recorder Club begins for those children with musical aspirations. More next month!

And finally, the PTFA would like to welcome you to a Music Quiz during the evening of Friday 26th March. Last year this was a great evening's entertainment and a night to remember. If you would like to join us, and all are very welcome, tickets, priced £6.50 (including light supper, bring your own refreshments) are available from the school office. Why not get together with a few friends and test your musical knowledge?

Who said school isn't fun!

Jane Granger
PTFA Member

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Nature Notes

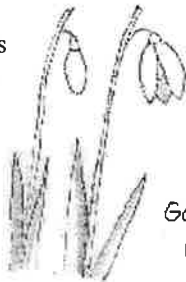
*Chaste Snowdrop, venturesome harbinger of spring
And pensive monitor of fleeting years!*

So wrote Wordsworth in his poem 'To a Snowdrop' and the snowdrop is indeed a sign that spring is on its way. With the relatively mild winter we have been enjoying, snowdrops were already flowering in some gardens in January, but the large drifts of snowdrops in the woods appeared in their traditional month of February. (In fact, an alternative name for the snowdrop is February fairmaid.)

It is difficult to tell whether snowdrops in the countryside are garden escapes or a native wild flower. There is no trace of snowdrop pollen in prehistoric peatbogs, although bluebell and stitchwort *are* present. The first mention of the snowdrop as a garden plant was in 1633 in a revised edition of Gerard's *Herbal* and it was only in the 1770s that it was recorded as growing wild in Gloucestershire and Worcestershire. However, it is generally believed that snowdrops were around much earlier as they are often found on sites associated with monasteries and churches. In these situations they may have originally been planted as a symbol of purity for gathering on 2nd February, the feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin (Candlemas).

Snowdrops can also indicate the site of a former dwelling or garden.

Locally they grow extensively in Durrell's Wood, near the airport railway spur on the western side of the motorway. (There was a derelict house there in the '80s.) They usually increase by division of the bulbs, rather than by seed, and can form massive colonies.



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A final reminder that the last concert this season will be on Saturday 20th March at 8.00pm, when one of the country's best young pianists, Damien Girvin, will be coming to Stansted to perform a programme of music which includes items that will appeal to all tastes.

Damien was born in Cheshire and was awarded a scholarship in 1991 in order to pursue studies at the Royal Northern College of Music, where he was taught by Bernard Roberts and Renna Kellaway and was the recipient of many awards and prizes. After graduation, he continued studying at the RNCM with support from The Countess of Munster Musical Trust and the Hattori Foundation. Further studies took him to Amsterdam – working with John Perry – and to the Royal Irish Academy in Dublin under Professor John O'Connor.

Damien has had numerous competition successes including the first prize in the European Beethoven Competition and he is now enjoying an increasingly demanding concert schedule, with recital and concerto appearances at home and abroad. Venues have included St Martin-in-the-Fields, Manchester's Bridgewater Hall, the Palau de la Musica (Valencia) and the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam.

His programme will include

Beethoven's Pathétique Sonata Opus 13
 Brahms' Original Variations Op 21 No 1
 Chopin's Prelude in D flat, Nocturne in F sharp, and Waltz in D flat
 Schumann's Kinderzenen Op 15
 Poulenc's Three Novelettes
 Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsodie No 2

The concert, in St John's Church, Stansted, will start at 8.00pm and tickets are £9, concessions £7, children £3, and children of members £1.

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We feel sure that many will want to take the opportunity to hear this highly talented and acclaimed young man. 'The Times' described Damien's playing as "poetic", and, with this wonderful programme of music to look forward to, we should be in for quite an evening!

Alan Corbishley

ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL



**Huw Johnson
Club**

Many readers will have read the recent correspondence and articles in the national press on the subject of local taxation, which clearly is now in such a state that it is time for reform.

As matters stand, the present system, based on a grant from Central Government (the largest part) together with local taxation on houses, no longer meets the circumstances; especially so when Central Government is either 'ring-fencing' particular elements of the central grant for particular purposes, or directing local government to carry out new and specific tasks without providing new funding to meet the cost.

It is obvious to all that this situation cannot go on and the Government says it will begin the process of review with the intention of providing something better. What this will be will appear in due course, but many will agree that a system must be set up which places responsibility on local government both to raise taxes to meet local needs, and to spend the sums raised responsibly so local administrations can be called to account at election time. Unless this action is taken, interest in local government will fall to even lower levels than at present, to the detriment of political life and efficient local services.

Whilst on this subject, readers will be interested to know that the local Council Tax raise increase for Essex for 2004/5 is proposed at 4.7%, a contrast with the rate set for 2003/4 of 16.7%.

The Council Tax split is as follows:

- County rate 77% of total
- District rate 11% of total
- Policy Authority 8% of total
- Fire Authority 4% of total (a new charge this year)

This means that a charge for a Band D property will change from £851.19 to £891.54. Readers can expect and welcome a smaller overall figure. Let us hope this trend will continue until a new system is introduced.

Should any reader wish to discuss this subject further they should contact the undersigned on 01279 812588.

Richard Wallace
County Councillor Stansted Division

SNIPPETS 2

Multiple congratulations are due to several local people for earning Community Service Awards. Gladys Miller helps the Cannons Mead residents in so many ways, while Frances Spalding, Pamela Seavers and Cath Whall are long standing volunteers at the Day Centre. Sandra Embleton and Hannah Ropkin (from Gt. Easton) are stalwart workers for the Huw Johnson Club. Nigel Holland, also a Huw Johnson supporter, is a key member of the Art and Craft committee. Stansted would be a much poorer place without folk like these.

We hear that this year marks the 25th anniversary of Bentfield Primary School and that former pupils and staff from the first five years will be gathering for celebrations on May 1st and 2nd. If you think you may be eligible, ring 813734.

Editor

Congratulations to Sandra Embleton and Hannah Ropkins on receiving Community Awards for their work at the Huw Johnson Club. We are so pleased that all they do for our members has been publicly recognised. Both ladies, apart from being at Club helping to organise the evening week by week, also drive on a regular basis and frequently step in to fill the gaps when other drivers are unavailable. (**A news flash. We need more drivers.**) On the Club's annual holiday they are towers of strength tackling any crisis with common sense and plenty of humour. Both Sandra and Hannah have children with a learning disability and all our members benefit from the understanding this brings. Most important of all however is that everyone at Club loves them and the cheers which greeted them when they arrived at Club after the award ceremony shows how much we all appreciate them.

Now a belated thank you to everyone who came to our Christmas Concert. The highlight of the evening was our version of Stars in their Eyes. I have never heard so much laughter or laughed so much myself as Tom, Derek, Hannah and Sandra transformed themselves into Elvis Presley, Tom Jones, Dolly Parton and Shirley Bassey. It's amazing how not only did they look the part when they were dressed for the competition, they also looked suspiciously like Simon, Gavin, Emma and Jenny, four of our members. Of course we must not forget the compere of this event, Matthew Kelly, who not only gave his time free of charge but looked very much like Garry King. If you missed this event make sure you are in the audience in December 2004.

On Friday 7th May we are holding a Service of Thanksgiving at St John's Church for the Huw Johnson Club. It is 30 years since Huw died and the Club will be celebrating its 30th birthday this year. Everyone is invited to join us and enjoy an evening of fun and celebration.

I do hope you saw the news flash in paragraph one.

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MOUNTFITCHET GARDEN CLUB

There was consternation a week prior to the February meeting when it was discovered that the speaker who had been booked for the meeting had moved several hundred miles away and would not be attending! However the last-minute replacement speaker, John Weston, gave an excellent and interesting illustrated talk entitled 'The Beauty of Flowers'.

The intent of the talk was to show the audience what they miss when looking at flowers. Although there were conventional photographs of plants, John Weston concentrated on showing highly magnified photographs of parts of plants, such as stigmata, anthers, and petals. Most of the photographs were of plants from his garden, and included spring bulbs, cyclamen, polyanthus, azaleas, alyssum, delphinium and many more. So buy yourself a small magnifying glass and start looking more closely at the flowers – you will be amazed at what you have been missing!

At the end of the talk David Harrison (Vice Chairman) thanked Mr. Weston for his talk which was much appreciated by the audience.

The next meeting, on Wednesday 3rd March at the Day Centre at 8.00pm will include a talk 'Woven cane items to use with plants' by Mrs. Olivia Elton-Barrett. For non-members the admission fee is 75p; please join us - you will be most welcome.

David Loynds



The month of February has proved to be action-packed for Rainbow Pre-school. Children in the older group have been doing work on the theme of 'Our Village' and as part of the topic they visited Stansted Windmill to see how flour used to be produced. Later in the term they will visit a bakery to watch how flour becomes bread.

They have also been able to use flour themselves; mixing up a batter for pancakes on Shrove Tuesday. Children in the older group and a few enthusiastic parents took part in our annual pancake races which were fiercely contended by young and old alike!

The children have also shown their culinary talents in our Sponsored Cake Bake at the beginning of the month. Every child made five chocolate crispy cakes for which they were sponsored by friends and family. Parents then paid 50p to take the plate of cakes home for tea. And very tasty they were too!

We are looking forward to our Easter events. Children in all groups will be performing concerts on the last day of term and we are holding an Easter Party on the afternoon of

Sunday 4th April in St John's Church Hall. There will be fun and games and a party tea plus the opportunity to take part in our Annual Easter Bonnet Competition. Tickets for this event will be available after half term but don't leave it too late as numbers are strictly limited.

If you are interested in a place at the Pre-school from September please contact Gill Pursglove on 814701 for further information.

MARCH

This month is named after Mars the Roman god of war, second only to Jupiter. From various annual ceremonies that were held in Rome, it appears that he was originally an agricultural deity who guarded the fields.

"Beware the Ides of March" was the warning in Shakespeare's Julius Caesar. The Ides (not plural) is mentioned several times in the play. It was one of three dates each month by which the Roman calendar was calculated, originally based on the phases of the moon. The Ides were the time of the full moon, Nones when the moon reached its first quarter and Kalends spanned the last two lunar phases.

Later the calendar became fixed as:

The Kalends, always on the 1st of the month

The Nones, 5th or 7th

The Ides, 15th in March, July, October and May (months with 31 days) and 13th in the other months.

Nones always occurred nine days before the Ides. All other dates were calculated by counting backwards inclusively from these days. So, 22nd March is '10 days before the Kalends of April', 10th October would be 'six days before the Ides of October' and 2nd January is 'four days before the Nones of January'.

All clear now?!!!

A march in music was designed to keep soldiers marching in step, hence a procession or demonstration.

A march can also be a boundary or frontier (e.g. between England and Scotland or Wales) or disputed land between two countries.

New Year's Day was once the 25th March.

"The month in which the world began,
That highte March, when god first maked man"
(from The Nonne Preestes Tale - Chaucer)

Don't forget that towards the end of March our clocks 'spring' forward.

March is considered a windy month. "March winds and April showers bring forth May flowers."

Shakespeare in 'The Winter's Tale' wrote:
".... daffodils, that come before the swallow dares,
and take the winds of March with beauty"

A lovely thought to end on.

Peggy Honour



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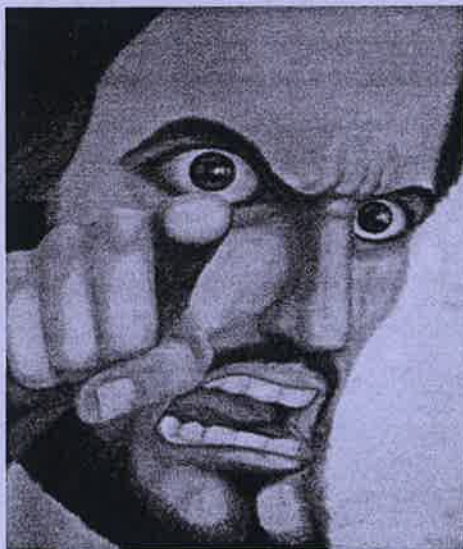
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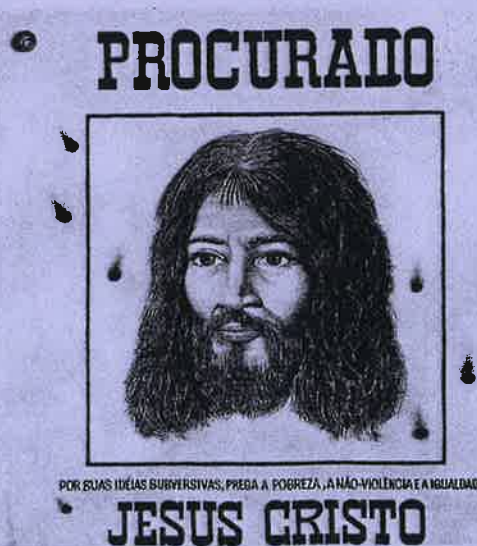
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