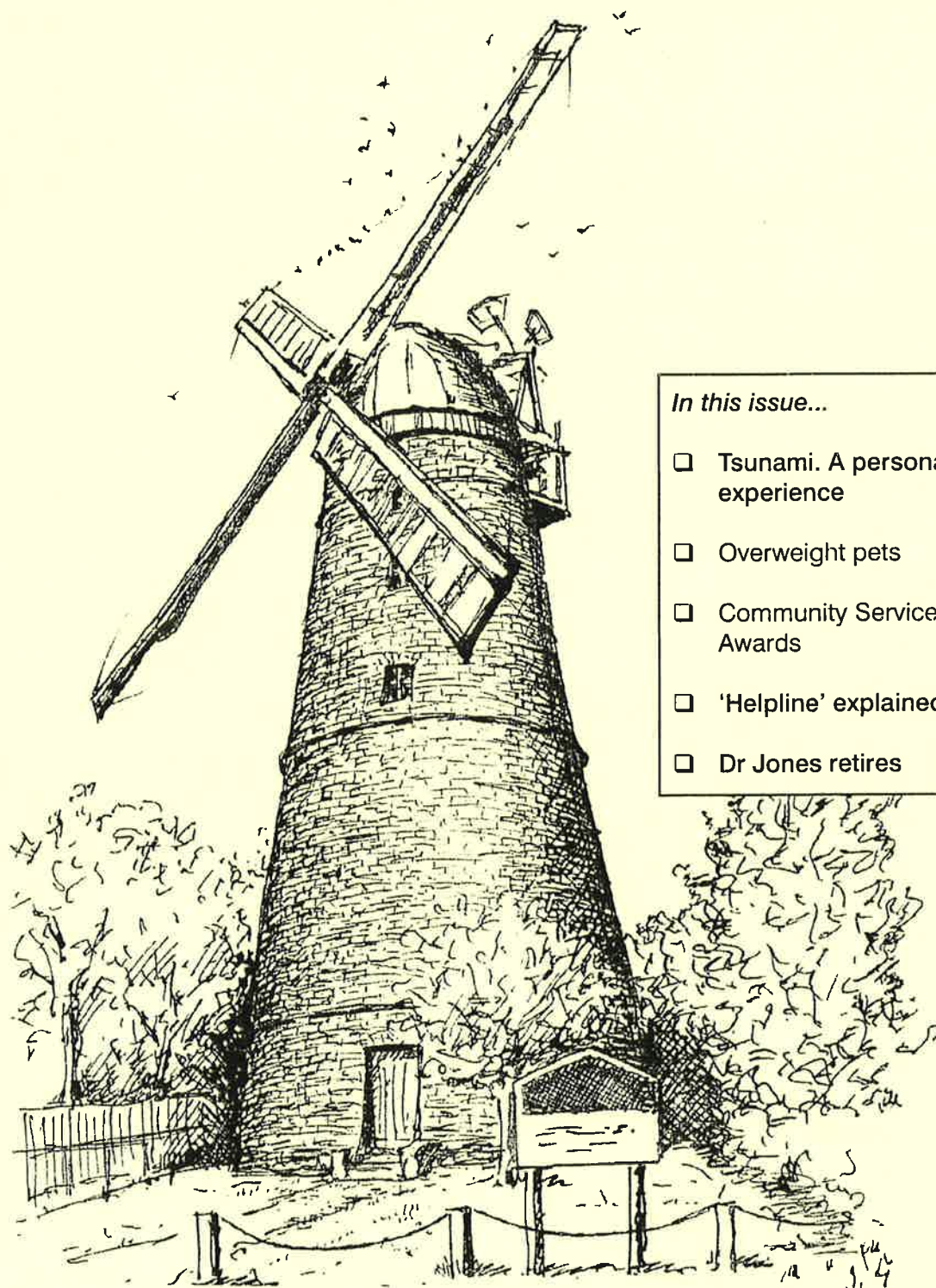


Stansted Mountfitchet

The Link



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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-
Friday	12:00noon

(01279) 815243
church.office@stansted.net
Administrator
Mrs Elizabeth Jennings

Living the Questions

In April we will be starting a second, daytime *Living the Questions* group on Wednesdays after lunch in Park Road.

Living the Questions is a twelve session course on contemporary Christian faith. Using interviews on DVD and background material, participants can engage with where faith connects contemporary life and the questions it raises.

Anyone interested in joining the group, please call Andrew on 812202 or Kathryn West on 816293.

www.stansted.net/ltq

Object lessons

While watching Bremner, Bird and Fortune on Channel 4, I suddenly realised what it was like to have them shoot at me; or at least shoot at something I care about.

I love the show, if for no other reason than it gives some of our MP's an object lesson in being an effective Opposition. Last week it turned to the subject of God speaking: Mr Blair finds it hard to hear what God says, so he asks Mr Bush who does hear God clearly. So we learn from Mr Bush that God says they should bomb Iraq, and Bremner wishes God would learn from the Archbishop of Canterbury whose practice, apparently, is to say nothing. I was on board until we got to the Archbishop.

It took me back to a *Daily Mail* article I was shown a year ago asking what the point was of an Archbishop who did not feel the need to speak on every subject in the public eye. Of course Dr Williams has and does speak on key issues in public life, it is just that he does not do so to order.

It's a strange feature of our national life that while so few of us attend Church of England services, and yet we expect its most senior figure to come out with a defining word from God to solve a particularly thorny public debate.

It happens personally as well. I was called to visit some old friends last autumn. They had lived perfectly contented lives without any need for dialogue with the Christian faith. They were now in crisis as the husband was dying a nasty and lingering death. They were clearly disappointed that I didn't come out with a tidy phrase which would have been a ready source of supernatural comfort in their distress.

I know colleagues who do have a stock of tidy phrases for these occasions, but I have never

believed you have to take people back to a world of Santa or the Tooth Fairy to be able to talk about God. Losing a lifetime's love to death is too serious for that. I didn't do a quick and easy sound bite, because you can't give a shallow, ready response to profound pain. (Neither can you leave them empty-handed.)

Newspapers are in business to boost their circulations, so that they can charge more for their advertising space. Demanding a comment from a prelate, then and there, is newsworthy. Whether the comment is worth hearing, or whether it is absurd, it makes no difference to the journalist as it will still sell papers. Tomorrow it will be someone and something else, which will be required to be just as instant.

To be expected to respond to complex national issues with deadline-driven instant insight is unreasonable. Just as no course in faith, which will do a dying man or his wife the slightest bit of good, can be delivered in one visit over afternoon tea. But both are possible, all they need is time, consideration, prayer, and silence.

Above all they each need an understanding that any insight about anything, national or personal, is about being committed to a journey of discovery, in which things about ourselves are revealed, some of which will be assuring, some of which will not. Journeys are not all of a fixed length, and the outcome is not always foreseen. Whatever else they are, they are not usually responsive to instant demands for pithy comment.

I'm sorry Mr Bremner, an Archbishop who doesn't always speak on demand is not a national liability. If anything, he is an object lesson to our representatives of how to manage grave and weighty issues. He does speak, however. As I write this, he is addressing a gathering in East London on the subject of who is raising our children. Whether I will agree with him or not, he will be worth hearing because what he says will be the fruits of a considered and prayerful journey, in a way that a lot of what is passing through Parliament is not.

Silence to a demand is not to say nothing, it may be that the question is the wrong one, or that silence may be an invitation to take a longer and more prayerful look.

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 Wednesdays at the Rectory '*Living the Questions*' beginning at 8pm. For information contact Andrew Spurr on 812203 www.livingthequestions.com

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

Assistant Curate
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The Church Office
(01279) 815243
curate@stansted.net

Director of Music
Mrs Glynis Morris
phone/fax
(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
ioy@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)

From the Registers

Funerals

4th February Thomas Dixon age 77 years
21st February Nelia Harvey age 68 years
(at Parndon Wood)

Sunday 10th April
9.30am
St John's Church
An ecumenical service to mark
Global Week of Action for Trade Justice
Speaker: Andy Thornton

St John's Church Sunday School

Except for the 3rd Sunday monthly our Children's Church is held in the Church Hall each Sunday during the 9.30am service, when all children (and their parents and carers) are welcome to join us. We all join the service at around 10.00am for a Blessing or to take Communion.

We have a small team of leaders and learn about the Bible and the Christian way of life. We use the same texts for the particular week as the adults in church but they are gauged for the age groups of the children. Discussions can often therefore be carried on at home. The children also enjoy making craft items to bring home as well as puzzles and pictures from the text. Sometimes we work towards a small presentation in church to show the congregation what WE do too, and they enjoy joining in with our songs.

If you would like to join us you are very welcome; we would love to see you, either as member of Sunday School or as a helper or leader.

Sandra, Pauline, Carole, Marnie, Julia and Rachel

ROMAN CATHOLIC

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Priest Father Joe White
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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

In St Theresa's reading group recently, we have been reading a book by Meic Pearse called 'Why the Rest hates the West'. The author, who is a lecturer in church history, analyses at considerable length why we have arrived at a point where the common values shared by Western societies are sharply at odds with those of non-Western societies. He emphasises the urgency of the need for the West to understand why the rest of the world considers them to be 'dangerously seductive but domineering barbarians'; at the same time he emphasises that understanding does not mean condoning acts of violence and terrorism - far from it, and also aims to provide some Christian insights into these issues.

The author contends that the main cause of the conflict between the West and non-West is not economic or religious but cultural, which includes religion but many other things as well. The values of the West are seen as a negation of traditional values. On the whole, the Western nations despise tradition and do not value the wisdom of their ancestors; deny religion, or treat it lightly; and lead lives of shallowness, triviality and immaturity, often within unstable families and relationships, and without meaning, faith or purpose. At the same time, many Western attributes, including personal freedom and independence, and material possessions are seen as desirable by non-Westerners. Their societies have the problem of wanting to modernise and take advantage of the many technological and scientific advances made in the West, without taking on their 'anti-values'.

The author's analysis is interesting, and without agreeing with all the assertions he puts forward, many of us would have sympathy with the broad sweep of his argument. When it comes to the way forward, he feels very strongly that the West needs to recover a moral and religious vision, and to be reconverted to traditional truths about morality, family and social relations. However, he is less specific on how this might be done.

While there are no easy answers; the starting point is personal transformation, which is at the heart of the Christian message, and which is the basis of virtually all other faiths. It was this transformation, through the power of the Holy Spirit, that enabled the followers of Jesus to spread the gospel throughout the known world. And it is through the same power of the Holy Spirit that the world can begin to rediscover a true moral and religious vision.

Ruth Rawlinson

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 April

3rd	2.30pm	Rev'd David Simpson
10th	10.30am	Rev'd Dr David Thompson
17th	10.30am	Rev'd David Simpson – Communion United with Methodist
24th	10.30am	Daphne Cornell United with Methodist

Dates for your Diary

3rd	3.30pm	Afternoon Tea. For lifts telephone 814850 or 812593
4th	6.00pm	Pilots for children 5-13 years. For information telephone 813433
18th	2.30pm	Monday Club, open to all. For information telephone 815137
25th	6.00pm	Pilots for children 5-13 years. For information telephone 813433

Women's World Day of Prayer

This year's Women's World Day of Prayer Service on 4th March was prepared by Christian Women from Poland and was entitled 'Let our light shine'. The Service in the United Reformed Church was led by Mrs Betty Francis who asked at the beginning if anyone could speak Polish to help us with the pronunciation of the welcome 'Szezese Boze' meaning 'May God Bless You'. Among the 30 ladies present was Mrs Dziejnie, a Polish lady who has lived in the village for many years, and with her help and several attempts 'Szezese Boze' soon echoed around the Church.

Our speaker was Mrs Sue Bree, the local co-ordinator for 'Operation Christmas Child', who has just returned from Mozambique where she had been distributing shoe boxes to the children there. She began her talk by telling us of the work of the charity 'Samaritans Purse international' and the relief work they do in many countries, including providing

water filters for families in the remote areas of Mozambique. Each filter costs £40 and over 200 had been supplied since October 2004. She then went on to speak about the work of 'Operation Christmas Child' and said how important the shoe boxes were. To see the children's faces light up as they take the lids off and gradually take out the items inside was a very moving experience.

7,500 boxes from the Harlow area helped to reach a staggering total of 1,141,317 boxes sent from the UK in 2004 to Central and Eastern Europe, as well as Kyrgystan and Mozambique.

After the Service Mrs Bree joined everyone for a cup of tea and showed photos of her trip.

November is a long way away but please when you buy shoes in the next few months, don't refuse the box as they are becoming more difficult to find as shops are not allowed to keep them on the shop premises because of Health and Safety regulations and also keep your eyes open for bargain packs of toiletries, pens, note books, etc and let's see if we can reach 250 boxes this year.

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 Recreation Ground
Stansted
Tel: 01279 813579

Email methodists@stansted.net

All services start at 9.30am unless otherwise stated

Services and preachers for April

3rd	9.30 am at Quaker Meeting House Rev'd Keith Page
10th	No service - at St John's
17th	10.30am joint service at United Reformed Church Rev'd David Simpson - Holy Communion
24th	10.30am joint service at United Reformed Church Daphne Cornell

Our church fellowship meeting is at 8.00pm on Thursday 21st April at 49 Recreation Ground.

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



SHALOM

April Meetings

On 11th April, we start our new term with a **Reflection on Spring** at 7 Blythwood Gardens.

25th April – **Shalom, the last twenty years** - led by Mary Warnett at the Friends Meeting House.

All meetings start at 8.00pm and all are welcome.

As this year is the twentieth anniversary of Shalom, we are planning a celebration in September. We hope that former Shalomies will join us. Watch this space for more details.

Catherine Dean

Shalom Retreat – 4th to 6th March 2005

A Very Personal View

This year we celebrate 20 years of ecumenical fellowship and among the 'Things we do' is an annual retreat. We have just returned from a weekend at Hengrave Hall with the Rev'd Andrew Spurr joining us as leader, although 'guide' is probably more descriptive as we covered much ground and followed many pathways.

Although we meet frequently throughout the year we see our time at Hengrave as a special 'togetherness'. We arrive knowing that we will leave refreshed, our delight in each other the guarantee. We seek and hope for this time to open us up to new belief perspectives, or even experiences, and perhaps, our guide's personal faith view.

Each of the five sessions from Friday evening to Sunday morning, with Andrew's talks, the ensuing questions, debates and differences of opinion, plus our worship time, give much

to be absorbed and understood, leaving each of us with our own images. These are some small gleanings from the whole.

The Church life with its permanence and security provides a form, a base, that we can and must build on to develop our own personal faith.

Can conformity hold us back, limiting our internal vision and preventing our looking outside ourselves? One of Andrew's headings spoke of 'Life on the margins'.

God in Creation is cause of delight, despite the faults that it can display. Our Creator God is in all of us.

Personal prayer in all its forms, intercessions, confession and supplication connects us with God and with each other.

In the last hour, within the Eucharist/Mass/Communion, that which gathers us up, that should bind us together, but widely throughout the Christian community ultimately divides, I heard one short line from one small prayer – 'Nowhere need I run to seek thee

It completed the whole two days for me, encapsulated the thousands of words shared, defined the message of the weekend. God is within us, always there to listen and respond.

Harry Goreing

Hengrave Hall – the House

I went as a newcomer, having never attended the Shalom group before.

The retreat, led by Andrew Spurr, was a fascinating ecumenical experience for me.

Hengrave Hall itself is a Tudor building now run as an ecumenical centre. It is a delightful place, not spoiled by excessive improvements. In the grounds, the woods were filled with snowdrops and on the lake the swans swam in the sheltered areas free from ice. Inside, the Shalom group meetings were held in the Long Gallery where there was a harpsichord (to be played only with permission) and two fireplaces with Latin inscriptions. With the aid of a Latin dictionary from the impressive library, I made these out to be:

'Dulce est Desipere Loco'
'It is sweet to play the fool'

and

'Deus nobis haec Otia fecit'
'God made this leisure time for us'

Virginia Marshall
(A Quaker)



**CHURCHES
TOGETHER
in STANSTED**

Lent Groups

The early March sessions were on the subjects of health and trade. Derek Honour led the session on health, and the group explored more deeply the various causes that lie at the root of HIV/Aids and other crippling diseases so much more prevalent in the 'South'. It was also humbling to realise that prevention is hindered by the excesses of the 'North'.

The session on trade, led by Katherine Hurford, was also a concern of the 'North' for, again, it is the rich countries that are leaning far too heavily on the poor. It was of some comfort to know, from discussion, that changes are occurring, albeit slowly, and that our 'action' can make a difference. The group were reminded that this year is a significant one for that 'action'. Britain will chair the G8 talks and there is an Action for Justice Week coming up in April. It is hoped to make this relevant in Stansted, so please be aware of publicity on this subject.

Our last session was led by David Morson on the subject of 'Empowerment'. To round off the Lenten meetings, there was an Agape, during which the leaders of each session gave a brief summary of that week's discussions. This was followed by a 'bring and share' supper.

The course reflected how the sufferings of our fellow brothers and sisters are shared in our Lenten meditations on the sufferings of Christ, but also the hope that is expressed by the 'Voices from the South' and the challenges that they pose also re-echo resurrection. These themes, seemingly, come up time and again and it appears as if nothing changes.

Chevetogne

Our friends from Belgium will be with us from Friday 1st July to Monday 4th July. More details later, but please put in your diary the Quiz on 9th April to raise funds for the event. See the 'What's on' page for details.

David Morson
Chair
Churches Together in Stansted

Christian Aid
We believe in life before death

Global Week of Action for Trade Justice 10th-16th April

The purpose of this week is to campaign in solidarity with people all over the world and to influence world leaders in this very important year. The G8 summit will meet in July under the chairmanship of the UK, but crucial decisions are made ahead of the summit.



How can we get involved?

On Sunday 10th April at 9.30am there will be a special service at St John's to mark this week. It is to be hoped that members of other Stansted churches will attend. The speaker will be Andy Thornton.

On Monday 11th April show solidarity with the millions of people who live on less than 60p per day by joining in a **Fast**. You can sign up to this in the churches and why not donate the money saved on food to Christian Aid?

Fill in a card, available in the churches, to **Vote for Trade Justice**.

Protest on 15th and 16th April by joining the overnight vigil in London.

Please contact me for further details.

A few hours in May



I am once again appealing for envelope collectors for Christian Aid Week, 15th-21st May. Please let me know if you can help. It really isn't too much of an ordeal as most people give very readily to Christian Aid. I await your phone calls!

Catherine Dean
813579

St Mary's School



MUSIC QUIZ

Friday 1st April
7.30pm



Tickets £7 (incl fish & chip supper)
from school office

Bring your own drink



**MOUNTFITCHET
GARDEN CLUB**

SPRING SHOW

2.30 pm Sat 2nd April

United Reformed Church Hall

Exhibits welcome from any
Stansted residents

Tel 815100 for details

Bentfield Primary
School PTA

Fashion Show

6.30 pm Tue 5th April

Tickets £2.50

(includes a glass of wine)
from the school or tel 815765

VILLAGE EVENTS

April

- 1 Fri Music Quiz
- 2 Sat Garden Club Spring Show
- 2 Sat / 3 Sun Green waste, metal & wood
- 3 Sun Windmill Open
Afternoon Tea (after service)
- 5 Tue Fashion Show
- 6 Wed Mountfitchet Seniors
Mountfitchet Garden Club
- 7 Thu Local History Society
- 8 Fri RBL Fish & Chip Supper
- 9 Sat Cricket Club Jumble sale
Lib Dem Ploughman's
Chevetogne Quiz
- 11 Mon RBL Women's Section
Shalom Group
- 14 Thu WI
- 15 Fri WI Flog It Sale
- 16 Sat / 17 Sun Green waste, metal & wood
- 20 Wed Mountfitchet Seniors
- 24 Sat Manuden Singers Concert
- 25 Mon Shalom Group
- 30 Sat Sale & Tea

- St Mary's School 7.30 pm
- United Reformed Church 2.30 pm
- Lower Street car park 9 am - 3 pm
2 - 6 pm
- UR Church 3.30 - 5 pm
- Bentfield School 6.30 pm
- Day Centre 2 - 4 pm
- Day Centre 8 pm
- Day Centre 8 pm
- Day Centre 7.30 pm
- Hargrave Park 2 pm
- Day Centre noon - 2 pm
- St John's Hall 7.30 pm
- 105 Cambridge Rd 2.15 pm
- 7 Blythwood Gardens 8 pm
- St John's Hall 7.45 pm
- St John's Hall 7.30 pm
- Lower Street car park 9 am - 3 pm
- Day Centre 2 - 4 pm
- St Mary's manuden 7 pm
- Quaker Meeting Hse 8 pm
- St John's Hall 2 - 4 pm

May

- 1 Sun Afternoon Tea (after service)
- 1 Sun / 2 Mon Sun Windmill Open
- 4 Wed Mountfitchet Seniors
Mountfitchet Garden Club
- 5 Thu Local History Society
- 6 Fri Red Cross Coffee Morning
- 7 Sat / 8 Sun Windmill Open & teas
- 9 Mon Shalom Group
- 12 Thu WI
- 14 Sat May Fair

- U R Church 3.30 - 5 pm
2 - 6 pm
- Day Centre 2 - 4 pm
- Day Centre 8 pm
- Day Centre 8 pm
- Old Lane Hse 10.30 am - 12.30 pm
2 - 6 pm
- 7 Blythwood Gardens 8 pm
- St John's Hall 7.45 pm
- Bentfield School 2 - 5 pm



Stansted Windmill Open Days 2 - 6 pm

Sunday 3rd April
Sun 1st & Mon 2nd May

Sat 7th & Sun 8th May
Sun 29th & Mon 30th May

St John's, Stansted Grand Sale and Afternoon Tea

2 - 4 pm Sat 30th April
St John's Church Hall

Nearly New ~ Bric-à-brac ~ Books
Videos ~ Cakes & Produce etc
Lots of Bargains!

Admission £1 Adults, 50p Children incl refreshments

Proceeds to Mission / local needs

Manuden Singers

7 pm Sun 24th April

St Mary's Church, Manuden

Includes Bruckner Motets
Vaughan Williams Mystical Songs
Handel Coronation Anthems

Tickets £8 adults, £5 conc
Tel Fiona 812157 or at the door

Proceeds to Motability



Fish & Chip Supper

8pm Fri 8th April
Day Centre

George Foster

will recount his experiences of the 2004
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DR PHILIP JONES

Dr Jones retired from the Redlands practice in March. His many patients will surely endorse the following appreciation of his service to Stansted people by his well-known former colleague. The Link's readers will also join in wishing Dr Jones a long and happy retirement.

It was on a sunny afternoon in 1978 that I drove Dr Philip Jones on a tour of Stansted and the surrounding villages, which on that day were looking their best. I hoped their rural charm would confirm Dr Jones's decision to join the Stansted partnership and, luckily for me and the patients of the practice, he decided to stay.

The professional and human characteristics that make up a truly outstanding medical generalist are very rarely assembled in one person. The ideal primary care physician must, of course, be widely educated in all aspects of medical science, and continuously updated. In addition a proper sense of priorities is required, with a motivation and disposition to act in the best interests of patients night and day, being accessible in person for long hours and at unsocial times. Such an ideal practitioner should have highly developed diagnostic powers, which need to go beyond ordinary scientific analysis if life-threatening conditions are to be caught early, but also invariable friendliness and good humour when working with patients, and honesty and reliability in relations with colleagues.

Most important is to use kindness and compassion in the presence of human distress, from the most trivial to the most terrible.

Those of us who worked in company with Phil Jones, or were his patients (as I once was), were continuously astonished and grateful to find him demonstrating all of these fine qualities all of the time, to an extent that I never saw in anyone else.



Photo: Mike Dyer

Being conscious of my own organisational inadequacies, in the early nineties I handed over the executive leadership of the practice to Phil Jones. It was his leadership and initiative, with the indispensable help of the devoted Sally Head, that navigated us through a long era of recurrent crisis and political interference in such a way that our service to patients was not only undisturbed, but improved.

After 21 years of working closely alongside Phil Jones I am left with an enduring recollection of his good humour, his calm and effective response to emergencies and crises, his willingness to bear difficult burdens, his wry, unsurprised Welsh commentary on the often bizarre succession of daily events, but above all his kindness, friendliness and profound compassion.

Because of his reticence and disinclination to seek prominence or public recognition, it is only his patients and close colleagues who are aware of the extraordinary degree of distinction with which Phil Jones has conducted his practice and professional career. His contribution to general practice, both in concrete achievement and as a virtuous example, has been impressive, and his reassuring presence will be irreplaceable.

Anthony Hazzard

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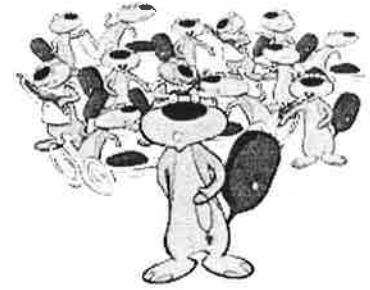
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1st Stansted Scout Group



Thank you to all parents who came to the recent open morning. A very successful event, which has resulted in Stansted again having a thriving Beaver Scouts Colony (full). Therefore, if you would like to add your son's name to the waiting list, please contact Howard on 01799 542324 or David on 01279 814371



COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARDS

Two Stansted residents received well-deserved acclaim for their service to the community at the Annual Presentation in the Uttlesford Council Chamber on 17th February.

Brenda Ryan's 40 years with Stansted WI was recognised as an exceptional achievement, especially as she has been President for three terms of four years each and a committee member for 39 years! Her cycling record, much of it for social causes as an instructor at the Primary Schools was also cited. Although not specifically referred to, she has been a long-term Parish Councillor, and her chairmanship of the Art and Craft Committee was instrumental in pulling back this worthy event from the brink of extinction in 2004.

David Challis has been a loyal fund-raiser and standard-bearer for the Royal British Legion for as long as most of us can remember, particularly when we recall those wet November days selling poppies in shop doorways. He has been Chairman of the Essex County RBL Committee and is Chairman of Stansted Branch. David is a regular driver for the Day Centre and a steadfast behind-the-scenes worker on behalf of disabled RBL members. A good Essex man, born and bred!



Photo: Pat Ryan

Congratulations, Brenda and David.

Editor



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STANSTED HALL CRICKET CLUB JUNIOR SECTION

Even though (or perhaps especially because!), as I write, it is snowing on a cold March afternoon my thoughts are already turning to this coming year's summer cricket season.

As can be seen from the list of junior coaches below, we have a very impressive team of qualified cricket coaches to support the Stansted Hall junior teams. We hope to have an exciting set of fixtures for the season and we are very keen to expand the membership of all the junior teams. The club's ground is beautifully sited in the grounds of Stansted House just off the B1051 between Stansted and Elsenham.

Stansted Hall club is currently applying to the England and Wales Cricket Board for the Club Charter Mark. This requires the club to have an approved constitution and procedures for the coaching, health and safety and welfare of all members of the club, especially the juniors, so we take these aspects very seriously.

The club runs four squads for the under 9s, under 11s, under 13s and under 15s. The three older teams compete in the West Essex Junior Cricket League as well as in cup knockout competitions. We are also planning a number of club events involving both junior and senior members later in the season. Full details will be circulated to club members in due course.

All potential players are very welcome, regardless of whether they are novices who have never held a cricket bat or are merely temporarily resting between call ups for the Test Team!

So, if readers of the Stansted 'Link' know of anyone (both boys and girls) who would like to join us, then please do not hesitate to pass on their details to me at the contact number below.

Management team

David Marsh
Nigel Witherden
David Sowter
Mark Keefe
Peter Humphreys
Jamie Halls
Andrew Kesingland
Mike Johnstone
David Brown (Chairman)
Rak Vasani

Junior Section

Youth Dev officer
Director of Coaching
Coach U15
Coach U15
Coach U13
Coach U13
Coach U13
Coach U13
Coach U11
Coach U9
Coach U9

David Marsh (Youth Development Officer)
The Durrells, Grove Hill, Stansted CM24 8SS
Tel: 01279 816394; Mobile: 07768 886891
Email: djmarsh@netcomuk.co.uk



Stansted Tennis Club



Floodlight Appeal - Social Evening

About 30 people attended a social evening, hosted by Sandra Ayres on Saturday 5th March. Guests enjoyed a range of delicious soups, cheeses and desserts, as well as several games and quizzes. Money raised will go towards the floodlight fund.

Committee Lunch

Away from the monthly burden of planning and decision-making, committee members decided to initiate an annual Sunday lunch together. The venue for the first of these was 'The Cock' on 20th February, where a filling and very satisfying lunch was enjoyed by all.

Club Playing 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 4.00pm (please note the later time, now that the evenings are lighter)
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 has now started the spring and summer coaching timetable for junior coaching, which includes most week-day afternoons, as well as Saturday mornings. The vast majority of those who had been on the waiting list have now been accommodated. There are still several places for juniors aged between 6 and 15, so if you are keen to take up tennis now that the spring is here, please call Chris on 01279 319155. Chris is also available for mid-week adult coaching on Mondays, Thursdays and Fridays. If you are keen to play, but feel a little nervous about taking the plunge, why not get together with a group of friends and arrange a session!

Forthcoming Tournaments

Adult/Child tournament - Sunday 10th April
Girls' Singles (for the Clower Cup) - Sunday 24th April
Entry forms for the above tournaments can be found in the clubhouse.

Leaves

After the autumn collection of leaves from the area surrounding the courts, there are now a lot of bagged-up black sacks full of leaves. Please help yourself if you would like to take some away for composting.

If you would like to join the tennis club, please get in touch with Kate Rutter on 01279 813053. 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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As the snow finally clears, and warm sun bathes the ground, our Spring term begins to come to a close. This year our holiday is not at Easter, as it traditionally has been, but will come two weeks later, in April. As you will see this term has been a busy one.

This year we were again pleased to send a team of four pupils to the Public Speaking Competition held at Mountfitchet High School. A large band of their classmates walked up to the school to support them and to watch an excellent contest.

We were lucky to have a visit from Quantum Theatre for Science. Their theme was Recycling and the Environment and the vibrant and dramatic presentation delighted the whole school with the message being put across in a most entertaining way.

The story of the Pied Piper was given a modern twist in Classes 3 and 4's excellent Easter production. The lively musical included jazz, pop and rap and was greatly enjoyed by both their fellow pupils and proud parents. Well done to all concerned!!

Class 6 spent a morning at Mountfitchet High School working on an exciting Drama project. They took part in a workshop, working alongside year 10, which was followed by Mountfitchet's drama teacher coming to us to conclude the exercise.

Our brilliant cooks prepared a special Easter Lunch for the children, including an exceptional mini-egg sponge! Very yummy!

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

Our Nursery Section runs Messy Play; this is great fun and runs in the Nursery on Mondays (during term time) from 1.45pm to 3.00pm. It is open to all children 18 months or older. There is a small charge of £1 per session to cover materials. If you are interested contact the school or just turn up!

The PTFA has also had a busy run up to Easter.

The Casino Night was once again a big hit with everyone who attended and it can very safely be said that a good time was had by all!!

This month we have our second-hand uniform sale and cake bake on 1st April closely followed by our Spring Fashion Show on Tuesday 5th April. This promises to be a great evening, with pupils, parents and staff strutting their stuff on the catwalk! The clothes (ex Marks and Spencer, Gap, Next etc) will then be available to buy at a fraction of the High Street price. Doors open at 6.00pm with the show starting at 6.30pm and clothes available for sale until 9.00pm. Tickets are just £2.50, which includes a glass of wine and are availa-

ble from the school office, a PTA member, by ringing 815765 or just turn up on the night!

Looking ahead to next month we have our OUTER SPACE MAY FAIR on 14th May. We've been having loads of fun coming up with fun (and some educational!) activities to go with our space theme. We have a Space Fun Run, Gravity Wall, Space Workshop and Planetarium to name a few, plus many old favourites such as raffle, tombolas, plants, refreshments, entertainment and games galore! Do come along and join in the fun.

Looking further ahead to the Summer, we have our annual Music in the Park on Saturday 16th July. This event has now established itself as a major village feature and we are busy ensuring that this year's afternoon will be even better (if that's possible!) than last year's. We already have a fantastic line up of bands, so make a note of the date now.

Marnie Tait

Bentfield School PTA

OUTER SPACE MAY FAIR



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UGLEY WOMEN'S INSTITUTE

On Wednesday 16th February we were expecting to hear what Mrs Brenda Harley had to say about being 'a Reel Old Sew and Sew'. Unfortunately she was ill and not able to come. However our own members saved the day and Mrs Dorothy Wallace produced a quiz guaranteed to prove us ignorant 'sew and sews', after which we were entertained by slides of their recent holiday in the west country by Mr and Mrs Wright.

The next meeting at Ugley Village Hall is on 20th April when we look forward to hearing about the Air Ambulance.

Frances Spalding

**FROM STANSTED MOUNTFITCHET
PARISH COUNCIL**

The Editor
The Link

March 2005

Sir

**KEEPING A SENSE OF PROPORTION
MR HARRISON'S LETTER TO THE LINK,
MARCH 2005**

I have read Mr Harrison's letter published in the March Link regarding the recent inspection of memorials at the Parish Cemetery, and thought I would answer the points raised.

1 I am not aware that anybody locally has been seriously injured by a falling headstone – that is not to say it can't or won't happen. We are aware of an incident in Norfolk about two years ago now where a child was killed, and as a result of which legislation has been tightened.

2 The headstones in the Churchyard are not the responsibility of the Parish Council whereas those in the Cemetery are. The Parish Council has a legal responsibility to adhere to Health and Safety guidelines to protect not only its employees and contractors who may be working at the Cemetery, but also to protect members of the public.

It is a legal requirement upon the Parish Council that we undertake regular risk assessments and this is reviewed annually and part of this involved a test of the memorials in the Cemetery. Whilst on a personal level I agree that the world is going slightly mad with regard to Health and Safety requirements, it is nonetheless our duty to comply with the law and this is why the test was undertaken.

It may interest readers to know that similar tests have recently been undertaken in Bishop's Stortford and at Parndon Wood, Harlow.

I appreciate that some readers may still not agree with what has been done, but hopefully they will now understand why.

Ruth A Clifford
Clerk to the Parish Council



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Street Lighting

We have obtained three quotations for a new maintenance contract. Our present contract is due to end shortly following dissatisfaction with the service provided. The Council will be considering the quotes received in the near future, so we hope that an improved maintenance service will be in place soon. In the meantime, please continue to report to the Clerk or her assistant any lights which are not working, or which are on during the day. Precise locations are required please, ie outside house number, or quote the column number which is painted on it.

Rochford Nursery Development

The Highways Department has informed us that, although discussions with the developers are continuing, it is unlikely that work will start on the Pesterford Bridge improvements before the end of the year.

Response to the East of England Plan

As we draft this article, the Parish Council's response is in draft form. However, it includes concerns at the proposed numbers of additional houses proposed for both Uttlesford and East Herts: lack of infrastructure provision and lack of information with regard to jobs. We shall stress the need to avoid coalescence with neighbouring villages in order that each retains its special identity. We are pleased to see that the East of England Regional Assembly will NOT support a second runway at Stansted, and that they wish to see stringent criteria enforced with regard to environmental issues.

Memorial Gardens

The next stage of improvements is to clear the remains of the front boundary hedge and to re-shape the land at the top of the Gardens, on either side, and to turf it. This work is imminent, and will be followed by the re-building of the brick piers and replacement of the railings and gates. Quotations have been invited for the professional cleaning of the War Memorial, and the cleaning of the Coronation Stone adjacent to the shelter on Chapel Hill.

Fountain

A local carpenter is currently making three new posts to replace the broken and rotten ones on the Fountain junction. I am told that these should be installed in the next few weeks, and we can then replace the railings. The daffodils are starting to bloom, so Spring may be on its way!

Police

We are delighted to welcome PC Tom Munro to replace Richard Williams who retired before Christmas. Tom's move to Stansted means that the Community Policing Team is now at full strength, and ably supported by our two Support Officers. We are still in correspondence with the Chief Superintendent over police numbers generally in this area.

Health Centre/GP Surgery

Readers may be aware that the search for a new site to accommodate a health centre/GP surgery has been a long and tortuous process, with several sites having been rejected for a variety of reasons - mainly because they are too small.

Having weighed up the pros and cons, and after some soul-searching on the part of members, the Parish Council has agreed to support, in principle, the development of a new centre on land adjacent to Elms Farm, Church Road. This is subject to the provision of a suitable access, and on the understanding that no precedent is set for development on the remainder of the land. The site is in the Green Belt, outside the Village Development Limit, so this sanction is unusual for the Parish Council. However, it cannot be denied that such a facility is required for the present population of Stansted and surrounding villages, let alone for those who will come to this area in the future.

Recycling Containers

An apology from Uttlesford District Council. The fortnightly service for green waste, metal and wood was due to recommence on 5th and 6th March, with containers being available on Saturdays and Sundays. Due to an administrative error this did not happen, and will not now start until the weekend of 2nd/3rd April. Despite what we said previously about this service becoming weekly, it seems that Uttlesford has not agreed to this so for the time being it will continue on a fortnightly basis.

Mrs Ruth Clifford
Parish Clerk

NEWS FROM COUNTY HALL March 2005

Since the last report was published, the Courts have decided on the proposition for a second runway at the Airport. This is, as many will have noted, that the Government must start again and go through the planning process anew. As a result we will not see a second runway for some time yet, if at all, because as can be deduced, the actual need for the runway remains in doubt at this time. On the other hand the Airport Authority have said they intend to proceed with the case to obtain permission to increase the usage of the present runway to its maximum over the coming year or so. This being the case, the fight for the environment is not over, and readers can expect to be invited to support this action for sometime yet. What the outcome will be remains to be seen. The advent of the Airbus 380 very probably will have an effect. Can we expect fewer but larger aircraft? What will the effect be? No doubt these issues will be explored at length in the coming months. So far as the County and its allies are concerned, the fight is still on. The result is therefore likely to be long delayed.

A similar subject in relation to housing still remains under discussion and has been mentioned in previous articles, and is unlikely to be resolved for some time yet. The County case rests on the lack of infrastructure to support the builds (both human and material). How Mr. Prescott proposes to solve the problem remains in doubt. Perhaps the Election decision on 5th May may put this in other hands. We shall see.

Richard Wallace County Councillor
Stansted Division 01279 - 812588



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The long road back

Last September, Victoria Coke and her friends joined Project Trust for a gap-year project which took them to Sri Lanka and to the centre of the devastations wreaked by the Boxing Day tsunami.

In the weeks that followed, they signed up to work with a Sri Lankan charity, and have been helping to provide relief in local communities.

Vicki will be back in August. She took all the photographs but sadly does not appear on any of them.

I am spending my gap year, before going to university, living in a village in Sri Lanka, teaching basic English language to children of all ages.

For my Christmas holidays, I travelled to the south coast, along with 17 other volunteers, to enjoy Christmas on the beach. We were staying in a coastal village Mirissa, to the south east of Galle. On Boxing morning I woke up and had a shower. As I came out of the shower, the sun was shining but I could hear this whooshing, running water sound, similar to that of a heavy rain storm. Brown water was gushing through the gate of the hostel, obviously much higher outside and coming in fast. We jumped onto our beds and watched in horror as the water rose to our waists. Then all the sewerage came out of the bathroom and joined the rising water. I remember thinking "all our stuff will be ruined", but it all seems so trivial now. The landlady of our guesthouse opened the gates, risking her own life, to see if we were safe, but everything started floating away as the water was subsiding.

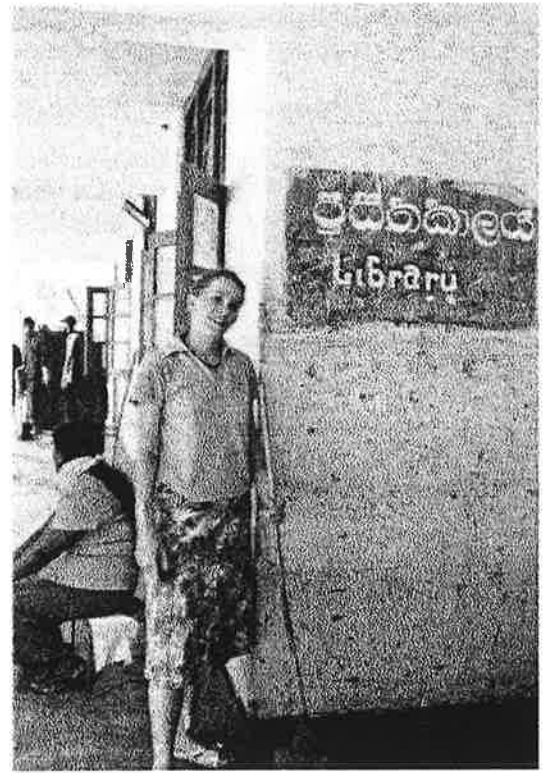
The local people were so caring, calling and directing everyone to higher ground. We ran barefooted, dressed only in a sheet, towards shelter in a temple. We had no idea what was going on, we tried desperately to contact home, but with only one mobile with any reception, it seemed to take a life time.

We realised how extremely lucky we were, once we saw the absolute devastation everywhere, when we were being driven to safety. There were bodies everywhere. boats piled up on top of each other, buildings and walls collapsed, It was indescribable.

There was no question of us returning to the UK. We are fit, healthy and so lucky to be alive and our first thoughts were to find an organisation who could use our help. We registered with Sarvodaya (a Sri Lankan charity) and spent the following 2 weeks loading and unloading, lifting, carrying, sorting clothes and family packs of essential provisions, then visiting welfare camps to help with distribution.

The work is exhausting but at last I feel able to smile again, at last I have done something to help these people, who helped us so much. We all push ourselves, the harder we work, the better we feel and the easier our conscience. Helping at Sarvodaya was part of a healing process for us, as well as helping the local people.

A great big thank you to everyone who made a donation to help the Tsunami victims, they are so amazingly kind, nobody deserves to suffer like this.



One of the team stands next to a wall to show the scale of the height of the floods as shown by the tide mark next to her head.



One of the first tasks was to distribute essential aid to remote communities



The Christmas tree which Vicki and her friends decorated the day before the waves struck.



There are many scenes of devastation in Vicky's photo album. Much of their work at the moment is to begin to clear local wells which were contaminated by salt water and sewerage during the flood.

Victoria was a former pupil of Bentfield School

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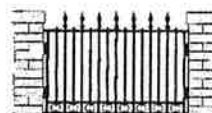
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Stansted Evening Women's Institute

Spring was definitely in the air for our March meeting, though only the week before our proposed 'Flog It' evening had had to be postponed due to the Arctic conditions. Our speaker for this evening was Christine Middleton who arrived with boxes of spring flowers to create flower arrangements using 'our containers and her ideas' - the title of her talk.

Whilst the business was being dealt with she appraised the various pots, vases and dishes with which she had been challenged and then proceeded to amaze us with the results.

Many had brought vases that they have never known how to use; well now we do - but it is debatable whether we can produce the same high standard!

All the arrangements were put into the raffle, the proceeds of which were to go to funds for the Fairtrade Fortnight Appeal. The lucky winners were able to take home the vases complete with arrangements, with the promise to return them intact next month!

The revised date for the 'Flog It' evening is Friday 15th April in St John's Hall at 7.30pm and it is hoped that many people will support this. I am told there are many bargains to be had.

Our Spring Group Meeting is being held at Elsenham this year, when several local WIs join together, each being responsible for part of the evening's arrangements. We are rather aptly in charge of the flower arrangements, always an important part of a WI event. The speaker this year is Derek Thornbery whose talk is 'Through Europe by Canoe' which promises to be interesting.

Several members attended the County AGM on the day before our meeting, which this year was held at the Cliffs Pavilion, Southend. Over 1400 women attended and it was a wonderful venue overlooking the sea, which although rather grey, is always nice to see. The meeting was attended by one or two men, notably the Mayor of Southend, who seemed to be quite happy to be facing such a 'monstrous regiment of women' and hoped we would come back another time.

Our morning speaker was David Shepherd, the artist and conservationist. He told us how he started off painting purely by chance, his real ambition having been to be a game warden in Africa. He said he only did painting at school to avoid playing rugby! He never went to art school - they turned him down - but his subsequent career has been an inspiration to all and his work in founding the David Shepherd Wildlife Foundation, is his great legacy.

He was a wonderful speaker both serious and humorous and we felt privileged to be able to hear him.

The afternoon speaker was Gyles Brandreth, former MP and well-known television personality and after-dinner speaker - holding the record for the longest after dinner speech, he is well known to WI audiences. He managed to entertain us for an hour by working his way through the alphabet and bringing in as many names and funny incidents as possible. There were plenty of WI matters in the meeting too and of course a striking flower arrangement on the stage!

We have outings and visits and evening events in the pipeline and are keen in this, the 90th anniversary of the WI Movement, to have new members, so if you haven't been before come along now. We meet on the second Thursday of the month in St John's Hall starting at 7.45pm.

Judy Colliver

RESEARCHING THE STANSTED WAR MEMORIAL

I am currently researching the names of all those who are commemorated on our local Stansted War Memorial and quite a few that aren't but maybe should have been. The purpose of this research is to eventually write a book in their memory.

I already have some information on most of them but would really like to hear from anyone who can provide additional information (no matter how little).

Were any of these people related (closely or distant) to you? Maybe you have photos, newspaper cuttings or other related items tucked away, which could be copied and added to the book.

Please feel free to contact me by phone, post or email and I will be more than happy to meet and discuss this with you. I also have access to some extensive WWI information and if I can help you research someone I will.

Many thanks.

Glyn Warwick
5 Mary McArthur Place, Stansted CM24 8EB
Tel: 01279 815851
Email: glyn_warwick@yahoo.co.uk

!!!WARNING!!!

Various factors will combine to allow **NO LATE COPY** in our next issue, for which the closing date is **14th APRIL**. This situation could recur so please help us and yourselves by meeting the date at the top of p.1 each month.

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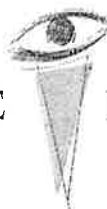
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BAA SPIN LAMBASTED BY COUNCIL LEADER AT SSE MEETING ON 1ST MARCH

Uttlesford District Council Leader, Cllr Alan Dean has lambasted BAA for the spin it has put on the outcome of the recent Judicial Review into the Government's Air Transport White Paper.

Speaking at a public meeting held at Mountfitchet High School organised by Stop Stansted Expansion (SSE) to review the High Court ruling, Cllr Dean made clear his view of the behaviour of the airport developer towards the local community: "Instead of hiding behind the Government's White Paper, BAA will now have to evaluate other options for a second runway at Stansted. They will also need to assess these options for their potential environmental impact."

The Uttlesford Leader also had harsh words for BAA claims that the High Court had ruled that the second runway project was commercially viable. "The Judge did no such thing," he said "We really do need to take much of what BAA says with a pinch of salt."

Pointing to the cosy conspiracy between the Government and BAA which was exposed in the High Court, Cllr Dean told an audience of more than 300 people how the Judge had chastised the Government for attempting to hide the whole truth on the commercial viability issue, by saying "Government Departments should remember that their obligation to tell the truth to the Court does not mean that the Court need only be told so much of the truth as suits the Department's case, and that inconvenient parts of the truth may be omitted from their evidence."

The core presentation was by Peter Sanders, Chairman of SSE, who provided a detailed account of the High Court proceedings and concluded by saying "We haven't blown the White Paper out of the water, but we have certainly blasted a few holes in it. And we shall go on blasting holes in it until it sinks or grinds to a halt."

Mr Sanders presented the five different options for a second runway, taken from a confidential document which BAA submitted to the Government in March 2001. These options now need to be reconsidered following the High Court ruling. Maps showing these runway options can be accessed on the SSE website:

<http://www.stopstanstedexpansion.com/maps.html>

Mr Sanders continued: "Despite the High Court ruling, BAA continues to insist that it is on track to deliver a

second runway at Stansted by 2010/11 in accordance with the White Paper timetable, but it cannot tell us where that runway will be, what the development will consist of, how it can meet the environmental criteria or even whether, as an investment, it will be able to achieve a commercial return on its own merits."

Mr Sanders challenged BAA to remove the veil of secrecy surrounding its new expansion plans for Stansted – a call echoed by Cllr Dean, who called upon BAA to "tell us what's happening, tell us soon please, and put this in writing because this community has learned that verbal assurances cannot be relied upon."

SSE pledged to continue its relentless campaign with further legal and planning challenges in the pipeline – underpinned by the growing momentum of its City campaign, where SSE is involved in in-depth financial briefings for BAA shareholders, analysts and investors.

During a lively question and answer session following the main presentations, questions were put to a five-strong panel including SSE's Norman Mead, Carol Barbone and Brian Ross across a range of subjects. There was particular interest in Uttlesford District Council's commitment to ensure proper representation of community interests during consideration of any planning application made for an expansion of capacity on the existing runway, expected in November.

Councillor Dean reassured the audience that Uttlesford District Council would be both rigorous and vigorous in scrutinising the application, not least with regard to the environmental impacts of any proposals. This would be considerably more robust than had been the case in the past, Uttlesford having 'learned the lessons' from the 2002 Stansted planning approval.

Sir Alan Haselhurst MP, unable to be present due to a long-standing Parliamentary commitment, sent a message of support to the meeting: "I am sure that we are all aware that the battle is far from over. However, we have demonstrated to the Government and BAA that we cannot just be pushed aside. Our arguments grow as theirs diminish. Supporters and sympathisers should take heart. With their continued determination and help behind us we can see off this second runway proposal. You can count on my voice and my energetic commitment to this cause."

Peter Sanders, SSE Chairman 01799 540273
Carol Barbone, SSE Campaign Director 0777 552 3091
cbarbone@mxco.uk

STOP PRESS ; TRADE & JUSTICE

At short notice the United Reformed Church has secured a visit by their advocate on Trade & Justice, Mr. Peter Richards. He will speak with particular reference to the G8 summit in July. Everyone is invited to this meeting at 3 pm on Sunday 17th April at Stansted United Reformed Church.

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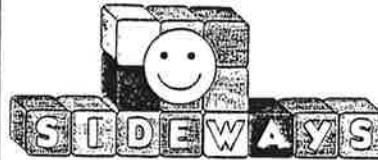
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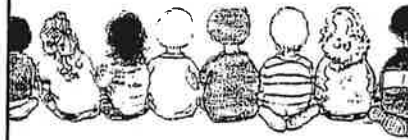
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BENTFIELD'S ANCIENT TRACKWAY

This photograph illustrates the sunken road which flanks the approach to Hole Farm. Its date is not known but is certainly mediaeval. It is believed to be the road from which chalk was taken from what remains as a clay lined pond located south-east of the farm. The spoil from the road, presumably dug out to ease the incline to the present road junction, was deposited on the east side which is visible to the left in the photograph and was later planted as an orchard. The topography suggests that it could also have served to allow storm water from higher land to be diverted from the farm buildings and absorbed into the chalk pit. The pit gave its name to the farm, which was known earlier maps as just 'The Hole', later The Hole Farm and now Hole Farm. The first possible reference to this name appears to be in 1327 when Rogero in Le Hale was assessed to the Manor of Bentfield Bury's second highest Lay Subsidy (an earlier form of poll tax). We would be pleased to hear from anyone who could shed further light on this piece of our history.

Toby Lyons and Derek Honour



Photo: Mandy Honour

UTTLESFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL - POST OFFICE UP-DATE

Some of us met Mr. David Picking from the Post Office in February to press the case for reopening a counter service in Stansted. He accepted a petition signed by hundreds of residents. It is fair to say that discussions are continuing on new premises. You may have read in the press that one possible location is the Sworders' saleroom in Cambridge Road. They want to move to a new site near Alsa Street to expand their antiques business. We aren't there yet, but there are still positive signs that a permanent solution can be found eventually. Once that becomes firm, we might be able to press the PO to bring in temporary facilities to bridge the gap, but they are reluctant to provide a temporary counter if there is no clear way to making it permanent.

Councillor Alan Dean

25 Email: cflrdean@uttlesford.gov.uk



MOUNTFITCHET GARDEN CLUB

Seventeen members and visitors braved the elements to attend the March meeting to be entertained by Mr Tony Powell who gave an illustrated talk entitled 'Autumn Colour'.

Mr Powell explained that in deciduous trees as the temperature drops the oils and starches in the leaves are extracted back into the branches and conserved. At the same time the production of chlorophyll slows down and therefore any greenish colours fade. Leaves that contain anthocyanin will begin to turn red. For the best autumn leaf colours there needs to be warm days, cool nights and a bit of moisture. In some conifers oils in the leaves change to starches as the temperature drops and this can cause a colour change.

However, autumn colour is not just about leaf colour, and Mr Powell went on to show slides of plants, flowers and trees that can brighten up a garden in the Autumn.

Shrubs and trees included Sorbus; Pyracantha; Cotoneaster; Berberis; Ilex (holly) such as 'Golden King', which despite its name, is a female form and thus bears berries; Symphoricarpos; Clerodendrum; Rhus (Sumachs); Euonymus; Cercidiphyllum japonicum (bright green leaves turn smoky-pink or yellow and give off an aroma of burnt sugar); Cornus kousa (turns bronze and crimson); Liquidambar (varying shades of pink, crimson and purple depending on the species); Crataegus 'Thorns' including 'Common Hawthorn') and of course many of the Acers.

Climbing shrubs included Parthenocissus quinquefolia ('Virginia Creeper' which turns brilliant orange and scarlet); Parthenocissus tricuspidata ('Boston Ivy' which turns rich crimson and scarlet) and Hydrangea petiolaris ('Climbing Hydrangea'). Other plants included Colchicum (usually called autumn crocus even though it is not related to the crocus); autumn flowering crocuses such as sativus from which saffron is obtained; ornamental cabbages; dahlias and chrysanthemums.

The next meeting, on Wednesday 6th April at the Day Centre at 8.00pm, features Mr Tony Westwood who will give a talk entitled 'Building and maintaining a water garden'. This will be followed by the AGM. You are welcome to join us - for non-members the admission fee is 75p.

However before that there is the Spring Show on Saturday 2nd April at the United Reformed Church Hall, Chapel Hill at 2.30 pm. Admission is free!

David Loynds



Hello again,

The Mother's Day Cards were a great success and so were the little posies the children made. I am sure the mums appreciated them. Easter cards have been made and an Easter Egg Hunt around the church grounds was, as always, great fun. The children practised hard for their Easter Songs and Rhymes in preparation for their concert on 23rd March.

After the snowy weather we are looking out for signs of Spring as we are continuing with our topic of 'The Seasons'. I wonder who will see the first ladybird, frog spawn or sticky buds on the trees?

The pennies jar is due to be emptied any time now. We will be making the Sideways 'smiley face' logo with them before counting the total which is going towards funds for Sideways. There should be quite a grand total since the jar is extremely heavy! As the children are about to take part in a pedal push for Childline, to raise money for less fortunate children in this country, we decided that Red Nose Day would pass us by this year!

Sideways Pre-school will be holding a Quiz Night on 20th May in St John's Church Hall. Past quizzes have been very successful fun affairs, so with plenty of support we should be able to purchase plenty of new equipment and supplies for the children. Look out for more details in next month's 'Link'.

If you would like to join the Sideways team, please call in any weekday morning in St John's Church Hall to register your child/ren. There are a few places remaining for next term. We look forward to seeing you; you are very welcome to stay and play!

Auntie Helen

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OBESITY IN PET ANIMALS

There's been a lot in the media recently about the rise in obesity especially in young people. Unfortunately obesity is also a common problem in pet animals. We have always seen a fair number of overweight cats and dogs but unfortunately we are now seeing overweight rabbits as well.

Just as in humans, there can be serious health implications for overweight individuals. Overweight pets are more likely to suffer from heart problems, arthritis and diabetes, just to name a few.

One such case I treated recently was Ollie the ginger tom. I should have realised it was going to be hard work when Mr and Mrs Peters struggled through the consulting room door, rather out of breath, each straining to lift the ends of a large cat basket. The bottom of the cat basket was sagging ominously. When I went to open the basket I could see that it was filled entirely with a huge ginger cat. When we finally managed to prise Ollie out of the basket, I could admire the true extent of his size. He was, in fact, larger than a small dog. Ollie had come in for his yearly vaccination, and after a general health check, which we always do, I felt I had to tackle the subject of diet. We put Ollie on the scales and found him to weigh in at 11.2kg, about twice the normal weight of an average cat. When I said that Ollie was in fact classed as obese, Mrs Peters said in a shocked tone "Oh no, Ollie's not fat he's just long!" Thinking I must remember that excuse for the future, I went through what the Peters fed Ollie; it turned out he was fed better than me. Cod for breakfast, prawns and pate for lunch, roast chicken for dinner with potatoes and gravy and a pork pie as a special treat!

It took quite an effort to convince Mrs Peters that 'long' was in fact overweight, but we did get Ollie on to a proper weight reducing diet and he is now down to the weight of one and a half cats rather than two, and has much more energy.

Mr and Mrs Peters love Ollie very much, and they were only feeding him the unusual diet because they wanted him to have the best. However, dogs and cats really should be fed on dog and cat food not human food. Two important tips to remember are that pet food manufacturers always want to sell their food, so when it gives a range of what you should feed for the weight of your pet, always go to the lower end of the range or even a bit below it. The other tip is, feed your pet for the weight it should be, not the weight it is. Treats should be saved for special occasions, not given every day.

Hill's pet food company has recently published some information on what some treats are in human terms. For example, giving a dog a plain biscuit is the equivalent of a human eating a hamburger and giving a cat 30g of cheese is the equivalent of a human eating two 100g chocolate bars. A lot of animal treats such as biscuits and chews are full of salt, sugar and additives, so they are best avoided. If you want to give your dog a treat, during training for example, take a few pieces of its dry food or mixer biscuit out of the daily allowance and use that.

There are a lot of different foods available for pets these days and it can often be quite confusing to know which to choose. You can always ring us at the surgery for advice and can pop in any time to use our large weighing scales free of charge.

If you think that your cat, dog or rabbit has a weight problem, make an appointment with our nurse and she can weigh your pet and work out a weight reducing plan for it. We have even had a finalist in the Hill's Pet Slimmer of the Year competition!

(All names have been changed, to save embarrassment!)

Ilse Pedler MA Vet MB Vet MFHom MRCVS
Partner with Mercer and Hughes


SNIPPETS

The Health Centre

It is of interest to all of us that the Parish Council has, with some reservations, given its approval to the siting of the Health Centre at Elms Farm. With the coming of the Rochford development (albeit that most of it will be in Birchanger parish), Stansted's 'centre of gravity' will move eastwards, so the location is probably as central as we can hope for. It seems that a housing package is not being made conditional, which is good news, but the incursion into Green Belt land must be carefully weighed in a balance which includes Stansted's finest view across the valley. The Elms farmhouse is presently seen as the lowest building in the 'picture' and there is a mighty strong case for ensuring that it remains so. Raising the low ground to a level suitable for all-weather parking should present little difficulty in these days and the costs need not be outrageous.


As soon as plans are prepared and submitted we can and should give our views.

The Editor



S. PERRY

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STANSTED MOUNTFITCHET LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

3rd March was a very cold day with occasional flurries of snow and the weather did not improve as the evening drew on. Nevertheless, a large number of members turned out that night to hear Peter Lawrence speak about 'The Hidden Treasures of Whitehall – Part I', no doubt intrigued by the title of his talk. Until his retirement 12 years ago, Peter had been a member of the section of the police engaged in the protection of royalty and important persons in London and had been involved in surveying many of the buildings in the administrative centre for security reasons. As a result, he had come across many unexpected aspects, which he proceeded to explain and to illustrate, with some excellent slides of places inaccessible to ordinary members of the public.

Edward the Confessor chose to build his palace on Thornea Island by the Thames at Westminster, where the Houses of Parliament now stand and this was both a royal administrative and ecclesiastical centre. In early Tudor times the island was enlarged and developed and Peter showed us several buildings from that time and earlier, still remaining in use, including Westminster Hall, scene of many historic events, and the Chapter House, used after the Reformation for the first meetings of the House of Commons.

However, Henry VIII decided to build a new Palace next door in Whitehall, which was to be grander than Westminster, although there was a complication as a public road went through its middle as access was necessary for Westminster, which still retained great importance. Whitehall Palace also incorporated York House, the London home of the Archbishop of York, but of this new development only the Horse Guards and the Banqueting House – famous as the site of Charles I's beheading – remain. Still more development followed over the years but Peter showed that many remains of the old Tudor buildings had recently been discovered to have been incorporated in many instances.

Part of the 17th Century development included Downing Street and a house there – Number 10 – was offered to Lord Walpole, the first Prime Minister, adjacent to the then Treasury as his official title was First Lord of the Treasury. From his personal involvement, Peter was able to tell us about and show us many fascinating details of the interior, which had been completely restyled by Baroness Thatcher while Prime Minister. He finished by telling us of a recent development in Whitehall, the Ministry of Defence building. Planned since 1910, work clearing the site commenced in 1939 when it was discovered that an undercroft from the palace of the Archbishop of York's Palace still remained. This was resited with great difficulty and is still in existence under the new building. We are all now looking forward to

an occasion when we can invite Peter back to hear Part II of his talk.

When we meet on 7th April some of our own members, led by Margaret Silvester, will be telling us about 'The Tennant Family', a name which will be familiar to many in the village. Do try to join us.

Ian Seavers



We have been very busy at Rainbow Pre-school during March. Our main theme this half-term has been spring. We have looked at the life cycle of frogs, watching them develop from tadpoles into adults. We have studied the story of Danny's duck using it for class stories and as a stimulus for creative activities. The children have learnt about the natural habitat of both frogs and ducks and particularly enjoyed their trip to Saffron Walden on the bus to look at where the ducks live.

Our Sponsored Cake Bake at the end of February was a resounding success and raised over £400. Every child was involved in the baking of chocolate crispy cakes and the finished cakes were absolutely delicious. We would like to thank all the Mums who helped out, particularly Pen Hopkinson who co-ordinated the cake baking. We are also very grateful to Barclays Bank PLC who will double the total amount raised through their pound for pound scheme.

Our Chinese Auction on 19th March was also a great success. Many people attended the evening in St John's Hall and put in bids for a range of goods from bottles of wine to an evening's babysitting. It proved to be an hilarious evening; participants only knew what they had bid for after the gong had sounded. It's hard to keep a straight face when you win a pair of underpants.

The goal of our current fund-raising efforts is to buy a replacement climbing frame for our outdoor area. This is a badly needed piece of equipment and we are keen to purchase a new one as soon as possible. We hope you will all continue to support our fund-raising in the future.

As usual we talked about Easter traditions with the children. They made Easter cards for their parents and little Easter baskets of mini eggs. On Maundy Thursday the children entertained parents and carers in their Easter concerts before taking part in an eagerly contested Easter egg hunt.

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

Vicki Brice



I was very pleased to be asked to become a governor at St Mary's School. Having taught at the school for 11 years, six of them as Deputy Headteacher and also as a member of St John's Church, I have remained interested in the life of the school and its community.

I have just completed my first official visit to the school and I had a very enjoyable morning. There were many familiar faces and I was made to feel very welcome by everyone. There have obviously been many changes in the last few years and the hard work and dedication of the staff was very apparent.

Walking around the school one couldn't help but observe the calm atmosphere; the behaviour was very good and the children were on task and engaged. I observed literacy lessons where the latest technology was being used to full advantage by staff and pupils; and maths lessons where children were working both individually and co-operatively with others. The youngest members were not only learning new skills but were being given the opportunity to develop social skills and language. Talking to the children was a joy. They like their school and their teachers. They like the fact that their teachers listen to their ideas and that they feel safe.

The school has moved on considerably and as a Headteacher I know that this does not happen easily or quickly. The good practice in the school means that the children can be assured of a sound education and I hope that the school will get the support and recognition from its local community which it deserves and needs so that it can continue to flourish and grow.

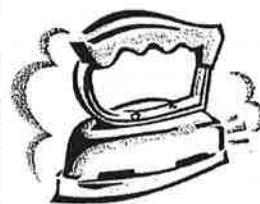
Lyn Hillier (formerly Lyn Inston)
Governor

Last year we decided, reluctantly, that as we had lost so many members through death, illness and the inevitable advancing years, we could no longer meet in the Day Centre once a month. We did agree, however, to meet at two-monthly intervals in different homes.

The experiment proved to be a huge success and throughout last year our members came back steadily – mainly, we think, because we held our meetings in the afternoons instead of the evenings.

We are going to continue meeting in the afternoons during 2005 and our first 'get together' will be at Janet Hollis', 105 Cambridge Road, on Monday 11th April, at 2.15 pm.

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STANSTED'S COMMUNITY CARE SCHEME

The year 2004 proved to be yet again record breaking in terms of the number of calls for assistance received by Helpline – a total of 263 (38 more than our record 2003 year of 225). Of these, 217 related to requests for transport, and the increase of 54 transport requests this past year appears to relate almost entirely to the closure of the Stansted Post Office (Royal Mail please note!!).

After the very sad loss of our Secretary, Margaret Whitelaw, in January, we have been very pleased to welcome on to our committee, Christine Stiles as our new Secretary, and Frances Spalding. As they have both been actively involved in Helpline as Listeners-In for some years, their addition to our ranks will be of great benefit.

We have experienced a series of problems with our pager over the last few months which has meant that some messages have not been getting through to us. We have taken issue with the paging company on this matter and have, at the time of writing, recently taken possession of our third pager in as many months. We will continue to monitor the situation and, if the problems continue, we will explore other means to ensure that we can provide a satisfactory service. We hope our callers will understand that these technical difficulties are, to a large extent, beyond our control. The best advice that can be offered, is that if a call to the paging service is not returned by one of our Listeners-In within an hour, please call again, as it would appear that the message has not reached us.

As previously reported, we are now well underway with all the necessary paperwork which we have had to produce in order to comply with the new requirements imposed upon us by our insurance company. As a result, all volunteers will have to complete registration forms and these will be issued to everyone shortly. We have endeavoured to make these as simple as possible within the constraints placed upon us and hope that none of our volunteers will be deterred from continuing with their very valuable work as a result.

Finally, many thanks to our very trusty band of 'good neighbours' (currently over 70!) who work so tirelessly to assist those of our community who are in need of help.

Francine Cope, Chairman

The Save the Children Fund was started in the early 1920s by two sisters who were moved by the plight of starving Russian children. Their organisation grew over the years and many children, poor and distressed, have been given support – here they initiated the supply of school milk! Child poverty all over the world, especially in developing nations - has been the primary concern of the Fund, as well as the aid provided in emergencies and disasters.

When the Indian Ocean tsunami struck on Boxing Day the first call came through to the SCF at 8.30am that morning and immediately the warehouses were opened and three days later the first plane load of emergency supplies, including tarpaulins, water purification tablets and all the organisational needs, left Stansted Airport for Sri Lanka – except the very necessary 4x4 truck left behind because the Sri Lankan authorities wanted 200% import duty! (I believe it got there in the end.) Read all about it on the display poster in St John's Church.

There has been a lot to do – heaving bags of rice off the back of lorries is not a very efficient way of distributing aid – so feeding centres have been set up, rudimentary schools opened to provide some semblance of normality to orphaned children and footballs for small boys to kick about and once again dream of playing for Manchester United.

Re-uniting families has always been an SCF speciality but it is very carefully carried out; the uncle who comes along to claim a pretty little girl, traumatised by here experiences and unable to speak, may or may not be a relative at all!

Meanwhile, the 'normal' work has gone on, in Africa, South America, tackling poverty in this country, rescuing child soldiers and restoring them to their childhood. Sadly the work in Dafur was withdrawn after four aid workers were murdered.

Save the Children Fund week – 24th–30th April – is vital to keeping the aid rolling, for ability to buy necessities locally and for keeping the warehouses stocked. Natural emergencies do not send a picture postcard to say that they

are coming and the first plane loads of relief supplies come from all our donations and are on their way by the time the great waves of sympathy and generosity are generated.

There will be opportunities to support the Save the Children Fund during April. There will be, as usual, posters and envelopes in all the churches. Thank you for your support.

Joan and Francis Mercer



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You will no doubt have read that the District Council won most of its legal battle with the Government over the Aviation White Paper. The judge rules that the specific and detailed proposal for a runway over at Little Easton was unlawful. This means that BAA now have to produce their own proposals and have to justify them in terms of the environmental and other impacts. It also means they have to demonstrate that there are no better solutions. Unfortunately it means more uncertainty and probable delay but that was, in my opinion, entirely the Government's fault for trying to bypass the proper planning process that councils carry out by forcing through one particular solution. The court case also cast doubt over how any second runway could be paid for and exposed some underhand ways of working by government. The Department for Transport was told to tell the whole truth and not try to mislead everyone by telling only part of the truth on financial viability. It was a stinging rebuke. The Council remains opposed to a second runway so this story will run and run for several years yet.

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



**STANSTED & DISTRICT
 LIBERAL DEMOCRATS**

Our next ploughman's lunch will be on Saturday 9th April, 12 noon to 2.00pm at the Stansted Day Centre, where all are welcome.

On Saturday 14th May we will be holding a special lunch event at the Stansted Day Centre to thank all our helpers and supporters.

Ruth Rawlinson

THOUGHT ABOUT PLAYING CROQUET?

NEWPORT CROQUET CLUB in Frambury Lane is easily accessible and has good clubhouse facilities with three excellent lawns where Association and Golf croquet are played.

We should be very pleased to see you if you would like to come along and have a game. The season starts on 3rd April and there are 'open days' on 7th and 8th May from 2.00pm onwards for anyone who would like to have a go.

Croquet is a game for all ages and abilities. All equipment is supplied including, for newcomers, mallets and tuition.

Contacts: Jim Potter 01223 891211, John Gordon 01799 542090, Ann Gates 01279 812419

Issues of the 'Link' last year contained items on the months. This year consideration is being given to the days of the week (Old English 'wice' probably from a Germanic word meaning sequence).

The astrological or planetary week of seven days is thought to have started in Persian theology and by the end of the first century AD was in common usage throughout the Mediterranean area. "The custom, however, of referring the days to the seven stars called planets was instituted by the Egyptians but is now found among all mankind." (Cassius Dio, 'History of Rome'). So, it appears that the seven day week was in operation long before it was written as the 4th commandment "Six days you shall labour and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God."

The Romans divided each day into 24 hours, 12 for the day and 12 at night, but these were not counted from midnight to midnight as ours are. This meant that during summer the daylight hours were over an hour in length by our reckoning, and the night hours were less than one hour, while conversely during the winter, dark hours were longer and light ones shorter. The Romans adopted the ancient Etruscan Market Week of seven working days and one market day. This carried on alongside the new planetary week for some years, until AD321 during the time of Emperor Constantine when the seven day week became law.

The ancient world believed that each day of the week was ruled by a specific god or goddess and we will look at these in future issues. (Editor permitting!)

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