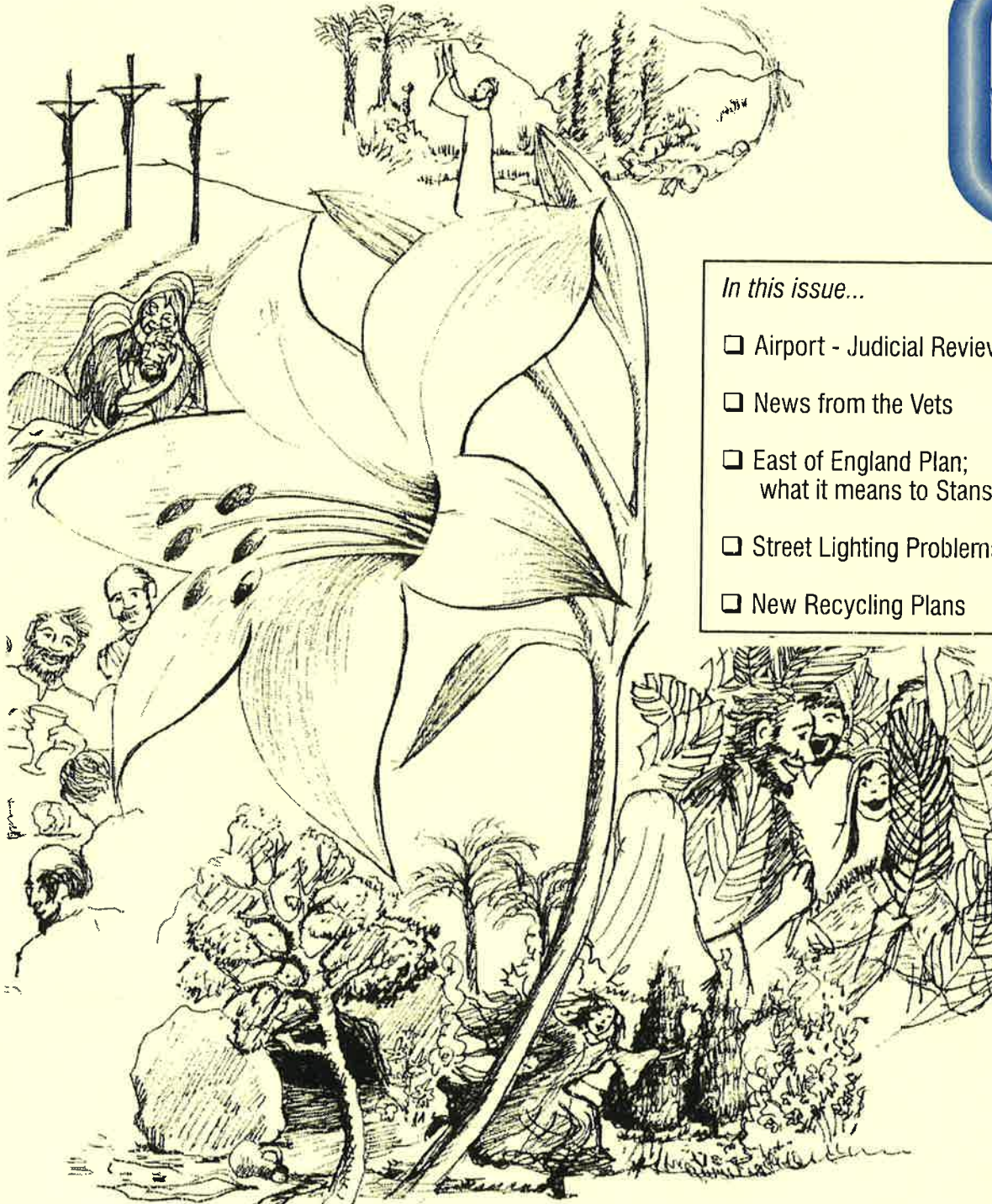


Stansted Mountfitchet

The Link

HOLY WEEK & EASTER



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Triumph and disaster

Listening to the news this morning as I drove to work, I was faced with the image of three women – one triumphant, another fearful, and a third mourning a dead husband. The first was Ellen MacArthur – welcomed home to enormous acclaim to enormous acclaim from her record setting voyage. The second, an asylum seeker speaking of her wait for a decision about staying in this country. And the third was the wife of one of ten service men killed in Iraq, greeting the return of her husband's body. Triumph and disaster, all in the space of five minutes. In our world of mass communications, these experiences are juxtaposed; we became a nation of spectators, watching others' lives. What does it mean for us?

I find myself recognising two possible responses. The first is to let it flow over me. To listen to the news but to feel little because I can't possibly do so. I have to get to work, turn my attention to other things. Although this tends to be what I do, I have concerns about this response. If practised on a regular basis, will it not lead to a blunting of my ability to see those in the news as real people, just like me? Over time, am I perhaps reducing my capacity to listen and to hear the joy and pain around me? The second response is to become caught up with certain stories and issues. A friend told me that in a radio phone-in programme later in the day, people from all walks of life were speaking of how Ellen MacArthur's achievement had encouraged them in their own struggles against impossible odds. My initial reaction to this was sceptical.

Yet the lives of people in the public eye (even of characters in soap operas) do have an

effect upon us and on the way we manage our own triumphs and disasters. For whatever reason, Ellen MacArthur's triumph moves me less than did Paula Radcliffe's collapse, or Gordon Wilson's response in 1987 following his daughter's killing by the IRA. However much we apparently ignore them and move on, some stories of success and failure 'touch a chord', and people's reactions to them become the backdrop or context for our own struggles. Those that touch us do influence our lives in an indirect way, becoming part of a store of collective memory upon which we draw in order to make sense of what happens to us and to shape our own responses.

Of course, our own experiences of triumph and disaster do not come at us in the same way as scenes in a single news bulletin. They are longer and deeper and cannot be shelved just because we need to get on with work. One of the lines from the poem 'If . . .' urges us to "meet with triumph and disaster, and treat those two impostors just the same". I think that Kipling is wrong to see the triumphs and disasters of our lives in this way. These experiences are not 'impostors', but the stuff of life. They are real, unique and important, and the joy or pain they bring must be lived through. In them, and our responses to them, character and empathy are formed. What's more, our responses - as much as those of the strangers we watch on the television news - have the power to influence others for good or ill. Like me, you can probably think of people who have impressed you by their courage - or fear - in face of personal tragedy or pain.

In the Biblical accounts of the death and resurrection of Jesus that we read in Church during this season of Passiontide and Easter, there are many characters with a variety of responses and reactions to what is going on. I hear something new in these stories every year, and they work - at one level - in much the same way as some of those other stories from the news or television. If I let them touch me, and shape my own responses, they have the power to change my life.

Caroline Currer

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

Holy Week and Easter at St John's

Stations of the Cross with Holy Communion
7:00pm Mon-Wed

♦
Maunder Thursday
Holy Communion and Vigil 8:00pm

♦
Good Friday
Children's Project
9:00am-3:00pm

—
Tenebrae Service at St Theresa's

♦
Holy Saturday
Vigil and Readings for Easter 6:30pm

♦
Easter Day
Holy Communion
8:00am, 9:30am

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

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

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

Director of Music
Mrs Glynis Morris
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
ioiv@stansted.net

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

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

Housegroups
The Rector
(01279) 812203

(continued)

Registers for January

Baptism

16th Thomas Hyde-Evetts

Funerals

6th	Susan Lorraine Carton	42 years
7th	Charles William (Joe) Watson	97 years
14th	Doris Mabel Shervington	96 years
17th	Charles Leslie Hudgell	82 years

ROMAN CATHOLIC

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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

Services for Holy Week and Easter

Palm Sunday 20th March	Palms blessed and distributed at all masses – 6.00pm Saturday, 9.00am and 10.30 am Sunday
Tues 22nd March	8.00pm Penitential service and confessions
Maundy Thursday 24th March	8.00pm Mass of the Lord's Last Supper and watching until 11.00pm
Good Friday 25th March	10.00am Children's service 3.00pm Passion of our Lord 6.00pm Walk of Witness
Holy Saturday 26th March	Easter vigil commencing at 8.00pm
Easter Sunday 27th March	Usual masses at 9.00am and 10.30 am

AN EASTER REFLECTION

In Jesus' time hundreds of Jewish families began the journey to Jerusalem, their capital city, to celebrate the feast of Passover. This was and still is, an important Jewish festival commemorating the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt and their safe flight across the Red Sea.

Historically, the word – Passover – passing over or protection, is derived from the instructions given to Moses by God and referred to in the Old Testament book of Exodus. In order to encourage the Egyptians to leave Egypt, God intended to – “smite all the first born both man and beast in the land”. To protect themselves, the Israelites were told to mark their dwellings with lamb's blood so that God could identify and thus pass over them. This saved the Jewish family's first-born from death and allowed them to escape to the desert.

So at Passover time Jesus and his disciples set off for Jerusalem too and were soon joined by other groups of pilgrims along the way. There was a special reason why the crowds were so excited when Jesus rode the donkey into Jerusalem. Long before, God had promised, through the prophets, that he would send the Messiah to save and rule his people Israel. The Messiah would be descended from King David, as indeed Jesus was.

At that time Jesus had been preaching for three years, carrying out his public life of teaching goodness, forgiveness and mercy and healing and curing all ailments. He had become a revered public figure, feared by the Jewish hierarchy and Roman politicians alike. He taught a new belief of love and forgiveness. This was not acceptable to the Jewish rabbi who subscribed to a different kind of teaching, or the Romans, who had put the Jewish people down for years.

The significance of the donkey is interesting, as Jesus was unofficially recognised as the King who would lead the Jewish people to victory. It fulfilled the prophesy of Zechariah “Rejoice people of Zion! Shout for joy you people of Jerusalem! Look your king is coming to you! He comes triumphant and victorious but humble and riding on a donkey”. It was known that a king who went to battle rode a horse, whereas a king who came in peace, rode a donkey.

Pilgrims who were already in Jerusalem heard that Jesus was on his way. They streamed out of the city to meet him, waving palms, much as we would wave flags today if our Queen visited the city or town.

On the night before Passover, in an upper room in Jerusalem, Jesus took bread and wine and there performed the first Sacrament of the Eucharist. Judas and Peter, who were both to let him down that night, were there, showing that Jesus gives himself for everyone, but only those who really love him can share his life.

How could his followers know on that day that the shouts of “Hosanna” would be changed to “Crucify Him” a few days later? They suffered the torment of losing their Master, where today we know that Jesus rose in glory on Easter Sunday.

Mary Warnett

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

6th	2.30 pm	Rev'd David Simpson
13th	10.30 am	Karen Brady
20th	10.30 am	Rev'd David Simpson
24th	7.30 pm	Maundy Thursday : 'Tenebrae' Meditation Service at Bishop's Stortford URC
25th	10.30 am	Good Friday Meditation - Rev'd David Simpson
27th	10.30 am	Rev'd David Simpson – Easter Day Communion with Methodists

Women's world day of prayer

4th March 2.00 pm The meeting this year will be hosted by the URC. The service is prepared by the women of Poland. Our speaker will be Sue Bree, who works for Samaritan's Purse, the organisation who collect and distribute the shoe boxes that we make up in November. She will tell us about the people the shoe boxes are given to. It should be very interesting. Tea is served after the service. Everyone welcome, including men!

The Pilots

How it all began

John Williams was a missionary and with his wife Mary went out to the islands in the South Pacific to take the Christian message. They had a very interesting time but their mission was fraught with danger. John was eventually murdered.

In 1936, recognising the fascination that a nautical theme had for young people, a new organisation was formed by the London Missionary Society and called 'Pilots'. Though collecting money was an important aspect of the work, helped by the launch of the 'ship-halfpenny' in 1937, Pilots was about much more.

A week night programme of worship, education and fun was designed to complement and supplement what went on in church on Sundays. The organisation was and still is non-uniformed and flexible, catering for both boys and girls, aged from 4 to 18 years.

The Stansted URC 'crew' meet twice a month in the Lecture Hall on a Monday evening from 6.00pm to 7.30pm. Details from the captain: Valerie Trundle (01279) 813433.

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 March

6th	Julie Finbow
13th	Rev'd Keith Page – Holy Communion
20th	Joint Service at the URC – Rev'd David Simpson
27th	Joint Service at the URC – Rev'd David Simpson Holy Communion

Services at the Meeting House are at 9.30am. Those at the URC start at 10.30am. There will be no monthly fellowship meeting during March, as we shall be supporting the Lent Groups organised by Churches Together in Stansted.

On Sunday 13th February we said farewell to Anne King who is moving north to be nearer her family. Anne has been a loyal and active member of Stansted Methodist Church for many years; she is one of those people who works away quietly in the background, totally dependable, and never seeks thanks or praise for the things she does. Anne has often prepared the Meeting House for worship; setting out the chairs, putting out the bibles, hymnbooks and lectern etc. She has also been a conscientious and willing communion steward – always making sure that someone else carries out this very important role if she is unable to be there herself. Anne will be greatly missed, but we do wish her and her husband, Tony, well in their new life 'up north'.

WOMEN'S WORLD DAY OF PRAYER

2 pm Friday 4th March
United Reformed Church

'Let our light shine'
Prepared by the women of Poland

Do come and
join in this World-wide event



Details of Holy Week and Easter services at all the churches are included in a leaflet being distributed throughout Stansted

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

Meeting House Lettings

Bookings for the Meeting House lettings are now done by Virginia Marshall: Telephone 01279 812410 (weekends only).

MARGARET WHITELAW - A TRIBUTE

Margaret was a practical Quaker, a good organiser, prepared to take on many tasks and doing all in the spirit of love.

Everything she did was done with good grace and affection: however, she did want things to be done correctly and, to use a Quaker phrase, in 'right ordering'.

Stansted Meeting will miss her enormously for her support, her ministry and for her capability. Thaxted Monthly Meeting will miss her not only as an Overseer, but also for her willingness to attend conferences, courses and committees and then producing excellent reports. British Quakers will miss her as she attended many committees at Friends House in London and went to numerous Yearly Meetings.

Margaret trained as a geography teacher and one of her most rewarding times was the five years that she and her husband spent teaching in Malawi. Both their daughters were born there and Margaret retained a lifelong interest in, and links with, Malawi. It was very appropriate that all donations after her death went to one of the Malawi charities she supported. She held a number of teaching posts locally, but for some years before her retirement she was involved as a Care Advisor.



Stansted village will miss Margaret very much as she was fully engaged in village life. She was very involved in Churches Together in Stansted, with Helpline, the twinning with Chevetogne, Shalom, Amnesty and many musical activities. She also organised the Meeting House lettings.

Latterly Margaret was beginning to spread her wings. She went on trips abroad and to visit friends all over the UK. Her interest in geography stimulated her interest in travel, as well

as her desire to keep up with friends made during her life. She wanted to visit many places and would get very animated when speaking of her plans.

She was very proud of her two daughters, Bridgette and Ruth and her four grandchildren, and saw as much of them as her busy schedule allowed. Both daughters were a great comfort, support and strength to her during her final illness.

Margaret's funeral at Parndon Wood Crematorium and her memorial Meeting held at St John's Church on 28th January were followed by a lunch at the Meeting House. A very large number of people, from far and near, attended and many expressed their admiration of and their love for Margaret. Later in the afternoon Margaret's daughters and her sister planted a weeping cherry tree in the Meeting House garden in her memory. In due course this will have a plaque and Margaret's ashes will be scattered there.

Margaret will be greatly missed by all who knew her – a loving, intelligent and perceptive friend, a reliable colleague and a devoted mother and grandmother.



Lent Groups

This year's course comes from Churches Together in Scotland, Churches Together in Britain and Ireland in association with Christian Aid. It is entitled 'Voices from the South', and is a five week course. The main emphasis of the course is a challenge to do good, to understand the lives of others and to share in God's command for just action. Voices from the South contain stories of ordinary people, selected because they portray the struggle between life and death, injustice and justice, selfishness and fairness. There will be a concluding service (Agape) on Sunday 20th March, at 6.00pm in the URC Church Hall, followed by a bring and share supper. Please note that all sessions take place at 8.00pm in the foyer of the United Reformed Church. Topics for discussion are:

Session 3	Tues	1st March	Health
Session 4	Wed	9th March	Trade
Session 5	Tues	15th March	Empowerment

Everyone is very welcome to attend all or any of the above.

Chevetogne

It is the turn of our friends from Belgium to visit us this year. These exchange visits have been taking place for the past 18 years and have always expressed generosity, friendship and hospitality which are so valuable in our present world.

The visit will take place in July, dates to be confirmed. In order to raise funds for the expenses of the visit, there will be a Quiz at St John's Hall, on Saturday 9th April, 7.00pm for 7.30pm start. Please put this date in your diary as your support is very valuable. Tickets are £5 which includes light refreshments. Please bring your own drink, and there will be a raffle. For more details, please telephone David Morson 01279 850209.



SHALOM

Retreat

The Shalom Annual Retreat is being held on the weekend of 4th-6th March at Hengrave Hall. Rev'd Andrew Spurr is the leader.

Meetings

Monday 14th March at 7 Blythwood Gardens, Marion Dyer will lead a session entitled 'How we speak about God.'

Monday 21st March at 7 Blythwood Gardens there will be a Palm Sunday Meditation led by Mary Warnett.

Meetings start at 8.00pm. All meetings are open to everyone and you can be sure of a warm welcome.

Catherine Dean
813579

A tribute to Margaret Whitelaw

I don't know when Margaret first came to a meeting because I can't remember her not being part of Shalom. In the early days Margaret was instrumental in establishing our link with the Corymeela community in Northern Ireland, visiting there with some of the Shalom group and helping to organise the annual Irish evening - an event which continues to this day and for which Margaret was the main organiser last year.

The word organise will be a key theme of this tribute, because Margaret was very good at it. Every year at the retreat at Hengrave Hall she persuaded a group of us to accompany her on a walk in the Suffolk countryside, earning our afternoon tea on our return. She also led a walk around Stansted every August for those who were not on holiday and who were missing the fellowship of Shalom friends.

A few years ago Margaret stopped working for Uttlesford Carers, and having more time on her hands got involved in even more organising - the tea for the Cherubim and Seraphim visit, a concert to raise money for Malawi, the Corymeela event mentioned earlier, the itinerary for the visit of our Chevetogne friends to name a few (pheew!).

Margaret did all these things in an unassuming way, never blowing her own trumpet.

But we won't just miss Margaret for her superb organisational skills, we will miss her for who she was - someone who was concerned for others, particularly the disadvantaged, a loyal friend always ready to help others and someone who would always give you an honest opinion. You knew where you were with Margaret and she was always utterly reliable.

Margaret's illness and death were so sudden, it is still difficult to come to terms with the fact that we will not see her again in this life. I know that in the next few months we will constantly be saying "who's going to do that. Margaret always used to do it."

Catherine Dean

Christian Aid

We believe in life before death

Make Poverty History

Christian Aid is giving its support to this campaign along with the Trade Justice Movement and a host of other charities and celebrities. What's it about?

- **Trade Justice**
- **Drop the Debt**
- **More and better aid**

This year the UK government has an amazing opportunity to influence the international agenda. In July it hosts the G8 summit and starts its six-month presidency of the European Union. So it has the chance to make poverty history.

Tony Blair has already set up the Africa Commission to look at ways to resolve Africa's problems by increasing aid and cancelling more debt. This is good news, but countries must also be able to decide their own trade policies. So the 2005 message is "**Trade justice not free trade!**"

To show support for the Make Poverty History campaign people will be wearing white arm bands (though they can be worn wherever you like). These bands are available from Christian Aid in either cotton or silicone at a cost of £1, and I am happy to place orders.

Global Week of Action - 10th-16th April

Activities are being planned for this event all over the world. Here in Stansted we can join in by doing the following

- **Fast on Monday 11th April** to show solidarity with the millions of people who live on less than 60p per day.
- **Vote for Trade Justice** - fill in a card for trade justice (available in March in the churches).
- **Join the Vigil** overnight on 15th and 16th April (more details next month or phone me for details).

This could be a very exciting year for all those concerned about world poverty and trade justice. Let's do our bit in Stansted.

Catherine Dean
813579



Stansted Evening WI

FLOG - IT SALE

7.30 pm Fri 4th March
St John's Church Hall

An auction of home-baked goodies
& many other attractive items.
Bring your own 'surplus & saleable'

A FUN EVENING

BENTFIELD SCHOOL PTA

CASINO NIGHT

8 pm Saturday 5th March



A night of gambling just for fun!
Roulette • Blackjack • Food • Bar

TICKETS AVAILABLE NOW!

Ring 647650



**THE VILLAGE
MUSIC CLUB**

Carducci String Quartet
play Haydn, Ravel & Smetana

7.30 pm Sat 5th March

St John's Church

Tickets from:

Stansted Carpets; Nockolds; Options;
Sonia Levy tel 815282 or at the door
£9 adults, £7 concessions, £3 children

VILLAGE EVENTS

March

1	Tue	Lent Group	United Reformed Church 8 pm
2	Wed	Mountfitchet Seniors	Day Centre 2 - 4 pm
		Mountfitchet Garden Club	Day Centre 8 pm
3	Thu	Bookstart	Library 2.15 - 2.45 pm
		Local History Society	Day Centre 8 pm
4	Fri	Women's World Day of Prayer	United Reformed Church 2 pm
		W I Flog It Sale	St John's Hall 7.30 pm
5	Sat	Green waste, metal & wood	Lower Street car park 9 am - 3 pm
		Casino Night	Bentfield School 8 pm
		Village Music Club	St John's Church 7.30 pm
6	Sun	Green waste, metal & wood	Lower Street car park 9 am - 3 pm
		Afternoon Tea (after service)	U R Church 3.30 - 5 pm
9	Wed	Lent Group	United Reformed Church 8 pm
10	Thu	W I	St John's Hall 7.45 pm
12	Sat	Lib Dem Ploughman's	Day Centre noon - 2 pm
		Jazz Night	St John's Church 8 - 11 pm
14	Mon	Shalom Group	7 Blythwood Gardens 8 pm
15	Tue	Millers' AGM	Day Centre 7.45 pm
		Lent Group	United Reformed Church 8 pm
16	Wed	Mountfitchet Seniors	Day Centre 2 - 4 pm
		Annual Parish Council Meeting	United Reformed Church 8 pm
19	Sat	Green waste, metal & wood	Lower Street car park 9 am - 3 pm
		Chinese Auction	St John's Hall 7.30 pm
20	Sun	Green waste, metal & wood	Lower Street car park 9 am - 3 pm
21	Mon	Shalom Group	7 Blythwood Gardens 8 pm
25	Fri	Good Friday project	St John's Church 9.30 am
27	Sun /28	Mon Windmill Open	2 - 6 pm

April

1	Fri	Music Quiz	St Mary's School 7.30 pm
2	Sat	Garden Club Spring Show	United Reformed Church 2.30 pm
3	Sun	Windmill Open	2 - 6 pm
		Afternoon Tea (after service)	UR Church 3.30 - 5 pm
5	Tue	Fashion Show	Bentfield School 6.30 pm
6	Wed	Mountfitchet Seniors	Day Centre 2 - 4 pm
		Mountfitchet Garden Club	Day Centre 8 pm
7	Thu	Local History Society	Day Centre 8 pm
8	Fri	RBL Fish & Chip Supper	Day Centre 7.30 pm
9	Sat	Chevetogne Quiz	St John's Hall 7.30 pm

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Nature Notes

The series has languished since Rosina Kirkwood retired after several years as our nature writer. We miss her delightful sketches and comments on our wildlife. We would welcome a renewal of contributions, regular or occasional, from anyone who has feelings for the countryside and would be willing to share them. Contributions could be seasonal observations or specific to any particular flora or fauna.

To fill a gap, the following are a few random notes made during February.

Woodpeckers both green, and greater spotted, are making an encouraging resurgence. It may not be possible to attribute this to an increase in old and dying trees after the clearances of 1987 and 1991 but there is a perceptible rise in branch falls in the new century. When they arrive the strident calls of fledglings from the nest are unmistakable. Conversely, owls are a diminished if not endangered species around Stansted, even though there have been sightings of barn owls. The warbler family are mainly summer visitors but there is a local pair of blackcaps which have decided to brave the winter. Also redwings made a brief appearance in

January. Bats are less numerous nationally and even pipistrelles are seen in smaller numbers in the village but we can take comfort that natterers, short- and long-eared, are in the parish.

Our native Daphne (*D. laureola*) is classed as common which means widespread, but it is localised. We are fortunate to have at least one private woodland where it grows. Our indigenous snowdrop is having a good year but what of its associate the wood anemone? The impression is of a decline but this may not be reflected in a wider survey. Watch for them in March.

A curious phenomenon is that while there is growing urbanisation, the numbers of deer, foxes and badgers seem to be increasing. Roadside badger casualties are seen most weeks, while foxes are as much urban as rural. The alien muntjac continues to be the scourge of garden crops and shrubs as many residents can testify.

Please let 'Link' know of any observations you may have made. Without a natural history society our magazine can become your forum.

Derek Honour

Good Friday Project 2005

"Dead Man Walking" (You can't keep a good man down)

Would you like to be involved in a day long project of art, music and performance arts leading to a concert?

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Friday 25th March 9am - 3pm in St Mary's School followed by a celebration in St John's Church at 2:30pm to which parents are welcome

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Stansted Evening Women's Institute

A damp February evening but WI members and several visitors, came out in force to hear local speaker Keith McDowell talk on 'Family History'. The last few years have brought an increased interest in this subject although Keith, now retired, told us he started to research his family from the age of 16. Once retired, and finding that people would actually pay him to do something he really loved doing, he spends a lot of his time searching records. The furthest he has gone back for a family is 1635, the records for this were criminal ones, so maybe they found out something they would rather not have known! In his own family he traced a great grandfather who was a ship's captain and was able to discover the voyages he had been on and the surprising fact that his wife accompanied him on two trips, leaving young children behind. Keith gave us many tips on how to start and where best to look, the internet of course being one of the most helpful aids to begin with.

Our competition for 'An Old Family Photograph' echoed the theme of the evening and brought forth some lovely examples of days gone by. There were wedding groups with ladies attired in splendid hats, small children dressed in white broderie anglais dresses - and that included the little boys - several generations in one group and one which looked like a family group taken before father set off to the war. How difficult to choose a winner, but Marion Pretty's picture of her grandfather Jordan's wedding taken outside St Mary's church in 1898 won the day.

It has been decided to support our county's appeal fund for victims of the tsunami disaster. Together with ACWW (Associated Country Women of the World) with whom we are affiliated, we are looking into projects to help maybe with schools in Sri Lanka, clean water plants in Indonesia or any other long term project needed in the years ahead. To do this we are giving the proceeds of our WI homebake and produce stall at the charity coffee morning on Wednesday 27th April at the Day Centre.

A trip is being arranged to Windsor Castle on Wednesday, 15th June leaving at 9.00am. The cost including entrance to the Castle is £19.50, coach only £10. Too late alas for The Wedding, but we may get a look at the wedding photographs!

A coffee evening is being arranged for all new members that have joined in the last few years or potential members, for an evening in May, the date to be announced later. We are hoping to get someone from the County Executive Committee to come along and speak as well as show our scrapbooks and chat. A new tablecloth, made by Liz Hedge was displayed, this incorporated an embroidered sampler which was worked by a founder member Olive Bunting, who sadly died last year and is a lovely reminder of her. We

said goodbye to two members who are moving away from the area, Anne King and Janet Hild and wish them well in their new homes and new WIs!

Judy Colliver
812470

Stansted Tennis Club



Annual General Meeting

This will take place on Monday 14th March at 8.00pm at 105 Cambridge Road, Stansted. All members are welcome to attend, especially if you have any ideas or comments regarding the running of the club.

Social Evening in aid of The Floodlight Appeal

This will take place at 49 St. John's Road, Stansted on Saturday 5th March at 7.30pm. Tickets cost £5 each, which includes soup, a ploughman's supper and a free glass of mulled wine. Everyone is welcome - bring your friends along (sorry no children)! For tickets, please call Sandra Ayres on 814471.

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 1.30pm (please note the new time for the winter months)

Friday mornings from 9.30am

Coaching

Martyn Taplin is currently holding adult coaching sessions for club members who wish to improve their game. Two classes take place between 2.00pm-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 is currently arranging his junior coaching groups for the spring and summer season, so if you would be interested in going on his waiting list, please call him on 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 - it's a fun way of getting fit in the new year!

If you would like to join the tennis club, please get in touch with Kate Rutter on 813053.

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

Chris Hollis



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STANSTED EXPANSION PLANS THROWN INTO CONFUSION

Historic High Court Decision

In an historic decision announced by the High Court (Friday 18th February 2005) the Government's proposal, as set out in its Air Transport White Paper, for a new runway at Stansted Airport has been declared unlawful as a consequence of the Government's failure to conduct a proper consultation on alternative options.

This is the first time ever that the High Court has allowed a Judicial Review challenge to a Government White Paper and although today's judgement by Mr Justice Sullivan stops short of overturning the Government's controversial airports policy, it has delivered a major setback to BAA's ambition to build a second runway at Stansted by 2011/12.

It is uncertain what will happen next but it is clear that alternative options for a second runway at Stansted – all of which are on a smaller scale than the option proposed in the White Paper and were rejected by the Government three years ago – must now be put back into play.

Peter Sanders, Chairman of Stop Stansted Expansion (SSE) described the decision as "a vindication of what we have said all along about the White Paper being fundamentally flawed and an important milestone in our battle to prevent BAA from ever building a second runway at Stansted."

"However," continued Mr Sanders, "the High Court decision has the perverse effect of creating even more uncertainty for the local community in the foreseeable future. Fairness demands that the Government should now completely withdraw its support for major expansion at Stansted and that BAA should also do the decent thing and publicly announce that it will not be proceeding with its plans for a second runway. We will be exploring every avenue for taking today's judgement even further, including examining the scope for appeal against certain aspects of the Court decision which still leave the threat of a second runway, in some shape or form, hanging over us."

Today's 109 page High Court judgement throws up a host of anomalies, for example:

• Not even a preliminary environmental assessment has been carried out on the other four options which have now been put back into play. This may be a breach of EU environmental legislation.

• Mr Justice Sullivan did not uphold the challenge on commercial viability because, in his view, the Government dealt with this in respect of the option put forward in the White Paper (but see Notes 1 and 2 below). However, none of the other four options which have now been put back into play has been assessed for commercial viability.

• BAA is currently operating a home purchase scheme for about 100 householders whose homes would be bulldozed if a second runway were to be built 2.5 kilometres to the east of the existing runway, as proposed in the White Paper, and another (lesser) compensation scheme to assist the owners of about 500 very severely blighted properties in the immediate vicinity of the runway that was originally proposed. However, with four other runway options now back in play, including options to the north west and to the south west of the existing runway, there is now a real risk that blight and uncertainty will affect a far wider area.

"It's complete muddle and confusion," said Peter Sanders "and all because the Government and BAA believed they could railroad through these half-baked proposals without proper regard for the legal procedure and without proper regard for the local community. Once again they have learned that the communities around Bishop's Stortford, Dunmow, Saffron Walden, Stansted and Thaxted have had enough; we are not the soft touch that they expected."

Notes:

1) The judgement includes some scathing criticism of the Government for its lack of candour during the proceedings, including a warning from Mr Justice Sullivan that the Government "should remember that the obligation to tell the truth 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 Judge's criticism referred in particular to the fact that the Government withheld evidence of very serious Treasury concerns over the commercial viability of a second Stansted runway and the fact that "to put it mildly" the CAA was "not encouraged, to say the least" about the prospects of a second Stansted runway being viable.

2) SSE will be considering the scope for appeal on the commercial viability issue as a means of building on the success achieved in other aspects of the Court judgement and based on SSE's public commitment to leave no stone unturned in opposing BAA's plans for a second Stansted runway.

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STANSTED MOUNTFITCHET
LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Although not a large village, we all know that Stansted has had prominent historical connections from at least the days of the Normans. At our February meeting we heard from Rosalind and Roger Peck about more recent events when the village was involved in helping to relieve a scourge which had been causing death and suffering for at least four thousand years – tuberculosis.

Ros explained that by the late 19th century the disease had reached its most dangerous, and between 1850 and 1950 half a million people had died of it in this country alone. A German scientist, Dr Robert Koch, stated at a congress in Berlin in 1890 that he had discovered a means of studying the organism, which appeared in two basic strains, one affecting animals and the other humans. At a further congress in Berlin in 1899, Dr Koch said that a test had been established to determine which herds of cattle were affected. Worldwide activity followed, and in this country the Medical Officers of Health urged the government into action. Means of eliminating the infected meat from human consumption were sought, but even more dangerous was the risk from milk. However, pandemonium followed a further statement by Dr Koch that, contrary to general belief, humans could not catch the animal form of TB. Another congress was then held in London in 1901 from which it was determined to set up a Royal Commission to oversee laboratories near the sources of disease, to give detailed and prolonged study into the problem of discovering just how much of a risk bovine TB was to humans.

As a result, Sir James Blyth offered two of his farms in Stansted where the laboratories could be set up – Blythwood Farm and Walpole Farm. Ros gave us fascinating detail of their establishment, the personalities involved and all the trials and tribulations they experienced in their work, which involved not only cattle and sheep but also more exotic animals such as monkeys. The work progressed for six and a half years, and in its second report in 1907 the Royal Commission was able to refute the assertion by Dr Koch and prove that infected milk did cause TB, particularly in young children. A final report was made in 1911 winding up the work but the farms had been handed back to Lord Blyth in 1909 and laboratory equipment redistributed for other use.

Roger then explained what happened in the world following the publishing of the Report. Governments tried to exercise control of the distribution of unpasteurised milk with greater or lesser degrees of success – it was not until 1964 that treatment of all milk was made compulsory in this country! Included in Lloyd George's National Health Insurance Act of 1911 was the establishment of the Medical Research Council - the first government-funded organisation to pursue research into health matters. Since then, many important discoveries have been made through the MRC, and 12 scientists working for it have received Nobel Prizes – and it all started in Stansted! It was in the US, however, that the discovery of streptomycin brought the first cure for the disease.

Our meeting on 3rd March will take us to the seat of Government, when Peter Lawrence will be telling us of 'The Hidden Treasures of Whitehall – part 1'. We do hope you will be able to join us.

Ian Seavers



Essex County Council

ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL REPORT

February 2005

Following the report of January, the county has now decided on its Council Tax charge for the coming year which is set at an increase of only 2.9%. This is a considerable reduction from the previous year's charge [2004/05] which was 4.7%. The decision means that the increase in the tax will only be about 50p per week on the Band D rate and there will be no reduction in services. The actual charges for the coming year are shown below:

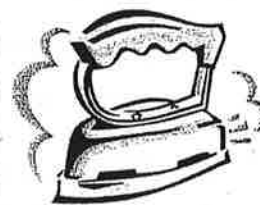
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Band C £52,001 to £68,000	£815.76
Band D £68,001 to £88,000	£917.73
Band E £88,001 to £120,000	£1,121.67
Band F £120,001 to £160,000	£1,325.61
Band G £160,001 to £320,000	£1,529.55
Band H more than £320,000	£1,835.46

Some will say that this small increase is due to the increased Government grant for this year but this is not the case. The grant has not been sufficient to meet the target set (which was an increase in tax of 5%). The reduction is due to careful management and sensible disposal of under used or unwanted assets over the past year; a practice which will be applied and followed in 2006/07.

In spite of the low tax figure set as mentioned above, the county intends to spend in the coming year some £70 million – of which £20 million is 'new money' – on road and transport systems, to catch up on what has been a much neglected area over the last few years. In addition an increase of 5.5% in cash will be allotted to schools. Thus there will be more funds available in this crucial area. Readers will, it is hoped, take note of these figures and look forward to noting many improvements in services in the coming year.

Should anyone wish to discuss these figures further they should contact the undersigned on 01279 812588.

Richard Wallace, County Councillor
Stansted Division



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Keeping a Sense of Proportion

Dear Editor

I have just come back from a walk through St Mary's Churchyard and the Cemetery and I am horrified at the way in which the 'Health and Safety fanatics' have destroyed the atmosphere of the cemetery by banging in huge wooden posts and strapping them to the headstones - this is sheer madness. I have no doubt that Memsafe, or whatever their name is, are, to quote Arthur Daley "on a nice little earner", but the action is out of all proportion to the 'supposed hazard'.

Perhaps somebody responsible could answer the following questions:

1. When was the last time that somebody locally was seriously injured by a falling headstone?
2. The headstones in the churchyard are much older and decayed than those in the cemetery. If the concern is for public safety why is it acceptable that they should remain unassaulted by the said 'Health and Safety fanatics'?
3. Wherever I travel I make a point of walking around churchyards and I am yet to see this type of official vandalism elsewhere. Why is this so?

People are very reluctant to query Health and Safety issues and Disabled access matters in the same way that they are cagey about human rights issues but we must have a sense of proportion otherwise they will destroy our quality of life, apart from being progressively more costly.

Regards

DAVID HARRISON



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COMPUTING IN SAFFRON WALDEN

Our new computer suite at our centre Fairycroft House in Saffron Walden was recently officially opened by Cllr Chris Bayley, Lady Mayor of Saffron Walden.



SIDEWAYS PRE-SCHOOL NURSERY

Hello again!

Into February already and looking forward to Easter, this half term has been really busy. We are still collecting pennies for our Sideways collage; the jar is really heavy and well over half full!

The topic for this term is 'The Seasons – Winter into Spring'. The children have been looking at the trees and shrubs to see if any new growth can be seen and we are talking about birds and animals in winter, where they live, what they eat and how they keep warm. They have experimented with ice, watching it melt and they have brought in items of warm clothing for the Interest Table.

On Pancake Day the children tried various different toppings and had a pancake race.

The children have also celebrated Chinese New Year by making a multi-coloured dragon with lots of legs and breathing fire. Fantastic imagination! They then tasted a variety of Chinese food at snack time.

All Hall users will by now have seen our fabulous Hatfield Forest collage made for us by the Art Club at St Mary's school. It looks great and is a real talking point for all visitors.

We are busy learning our songs and rhymes for our Easter Concert, which will be on 23rd March. Everyone is welcome to come and watch.

We have T-shirts to decorate from our Persil Stars collected over the last term and tea towels with the 'Sideways' logo on. These will be sold to parents and friends at the Easter Concert. All this will help to boost our fundraising efforts!

The children will again be making their cards for Mothering Sunday and each mum will receive a small posy of flowers.

During the next half term we will be taking part in the Pedal Push for Childline. All the children will take part in this fun activity to raise money for this very worthy charity. They will be rewarded with stickers, balloons and a certificate to take home afterwards.

Our Toddler Time on Tuesdays and Thursday mornings (9.15am-10.45am) is going very well, lots of new young faces enjoying painting, glueing etc, the wooden railway also seems to be a favourite!

Sideways has a few places left for 2½ year olds to rising 5's. We meet every weekday morning from 9.00am – 12.15pm. We provide lots of activities in a warm and friendly environment with kind and caring staff. The emphasis is on learning through play. Call in at St John's Hall any morning, you will be very welcome to stay and play.

Auntie Helen and the Team



February has been an extremely enjoyable month at Rainbow. The children celebrated Pancake Day on the 8th in traditional style; mixing up and cooking their own pancakes and participating in hotly contested pancake races. The children also tasted their own pancakes – but not the ones that had been tossed on to the floor!

In addition to our own customs, the children enjoyed learning about the Chinese New Year. A range of Chinese food was sampled at snack time over the course of the week with prawn crackers proving to be the most popular item! The children helped to decorate a traditional Chinese dragon and participated enthusiastically in the Dragon Dance.

Our usual visits continued. The older group visited the airport to look at how often we see different shapes in the world around us and have been focussing on using shapes in their various craft activities.

Our fund-raising has been going well. Christmas activities raised around £200 and the children have just taken part in their annual Sponsored Cake Bake with children in every group making their own chocolate crispy cakes.

We are holding a Chinese Auction on Saturday 19th March. This is guaranteed to be an extremely entertaining evening. This auction with a difference involves bidding for boxed items without knowing what is inside the box. Whoever is the last to bid when the gong sounds is the winner – much hilarity ensues as the box is opened to reveal what's inside. We are absolutely delighted that our Master of Ceremonies is once again Peter Thomson. We hope that you will all join us.

Tickets are priced at £6.00 which includes a basket meal. They are available from the pre-school or Julia North on 01279 814979.

Vicki Brice

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NEWS FROM MERCER AND HUGHES

Mercer and Hughes has now been part of Stansted life for nearly 10 years. We took over the surgery on the Cambridge Road from Captain Davies when he retired and have extensively modernised, extended and refurbished the entire building. Although it may look like an ordinary house from the outside, inside, as well as the consulting room, reception and waiting areas, we have a large prep room, operating theatre, radiography room and kennel area. In fact one visitor remarked that it was a bit like a tardis! All this space allows us to do all the routine operations and x-rays on the premises, so although we are a branch surgery of our main hospital practice at Saffron Walden, we are pretty self-sufficient. If an animal did need a major operation or intensive care, we can always transfer them to Saffron Walden to be cared for by the team of veterinary surgeons and nurses there. This happened recently when a labrador escaped from his owner, ran out into the road and was hit by a car. The unlucky dog then got up and ran on, only to be hit by a motorbike that had swerved to avoid the car! Despite a dislocated hip and extensive lacerations requiring over 200 stitches, I'm pleased to say he made a full recovery. There is a nurse on the premises at Saffron Walden 24 hours a day to look after the in-patients and a vet on duty 24 hours a day, 365 days a year to cope with any emergencies that may arise out of hours.

We are extremely lucky to have wonderful staff at Stansted. I'm sure some of you will have met Sally our daytime receptionist and Jan our evening receptionist, who has lived in Stansted for many years. Many people don't realize that we are actually open all day from 8.30am to 7.00pm Monday to Friday and Saturday mornings, and Sally and Jan will always be happy to see you if you need to drop by and pick up pet food or worm and flea preparations. During the day we also have a member of our nursing team at the surgery who will be happy to give general advice free of charge. Nurse clinics are held in the afternoons, where routine procedures such as worming your cat (not always an easy task!), claw clipping and micro-chipping can be carried out. We even have a dog and cat version of weight watchers for the plumper pet! As well as conventional medicine I am also a holder of a diploma in homeopathy so can offer a range of holistic treatments and advice for your pets.

Stansted people have made us feel very welcome over the last 10 years and we have a number of regular and loyal clients who have helped us settle in. Sometimes, even when elderly pets have been put to sleep, their owners still drop by for a chat now and then, which is wonderful. Veterinary medicine is certainly a challenging and interesting job. We are a mixed practice, which means we treat farm animals and horses as well as small animals. The proportion of farm work is declining but is more than made up for by the increase in keeping small pets such as rabbits, guinea pigs, lizards, snakes and even spiders! It presented quite a diagnostic challenge when I was asked to identify what was wrong with a poorly tarantula recently! You can't always be sure what you are taking on; one lady came in with a shoebox with what she thought was a hamster that she had found by the side of the road. Thinking it had escaped from somewhere, she took it home and raised it, but started getting a little concerned when it grew bigger and bigger and the hairless tail grew longer and longer! Needless to say the baby rat that she had

found was quite tame by that stage and made a wonderful pet for several years! It is certainly true that as a vet no two days are ever the same and you can never be sure what will walk, hop or even slither through the door in the morning.

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

MOUNTFITCHET SENIORS' CLUB

Secretary: John Robinson
98 Cambridge Road, Stansted. Tel: 01279 812755

We invite all Stansted seniors to become members of our Mountfitchet Seniors' Club.


We meet at the Day Centre on the 1st and 3rd Wednesday of each month. Our programme varies from gossip days/games to guest speakers and entertainment. We also have half-day and full day outings.

We are especially looking out for committee members to join us to make our club a success. We are wanting a Treasurer, so if there is anyone interested please contact me.


We have a membership of approximately 40 people so have a real serious think about our invitation. If you require transport we have use of the Uttlesford Community Bus and private drivers.

Thanking you.

John Robinson



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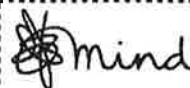
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Lighting Columns

We are aware of several problems with street lights at the moment - not least some of those on Chapel Hill which appear to go off as you walk past them, and come on again a few seconds later! The electricity board is investigating this particular problem.

We have encountered difficulties once again with our lighting maintenance contractors who have not been responding to our fault reports within the agreed timeframe. We are currently obtaining quotations from alternative contractors and hope that it will not be too long before a new contract is agreed. In the meantime, the old contractor is meant to be attending to our faults, but this is not done as quickly as we would like.

If you notice a street light which is not working, or alternatively which is alight during the day, please let us know by calling or e-mailing with the column number and street name. If you cannot clearly read the column number, please give us additional information such as "outside house number ...". If we do not have specific information, we cannot process the fault report. Thank you for your help.

Annual Parish Meeting

A reminder that this meeting, to be held at the United Reformed Church on Wednesday 16th March at 8.00pm, is your opportunity to come and voice your pleasures/concerns/complaints about the village. In early March you will receive, through your door, the paperwork for the meeting to include the agenda, minutes from last year, Chairman's report, accounts and budget report. We are hoping that a member of the Regional Assembly will be present to talk about the East of England Plan which is currently out for consultation. The Parish Council will have submitted its comments before the Parish Meeting, but it is an opportunity for parishioners to be informed about the proposals and to ask questions.

Resolutions can be proposed at the meeting, and it is helpful if we are made aware of these beforehand in order that answers can also be provided on the night. If any resolution cannot be answered on the night, the proposer will receive a written response after the meeting. Resolutions passed at the meeting are not binding upon the Council, and are usually discussed the following week at a full Council meeting.

Rochford Nursery Development

You will no doubt be aware that significant work has been undertaken on trees and scrub at the junction of Forest Hall Road and the B1383 - Pesterford Bridge. We have asked the Highways Department for further information regarding a start date for the bridge works, but as we go to print this has not been received.

The developers have lodged an appeal with the Secretary of State following Uttlesford's refusal of their planning application for the layout of the houses. There are concerns primarily, we believe, over the way in which car parking has been allocated in private courtyard areas behind the houses - the police have commented that they do not support this design as it can lead to hotspots for criminal activities.

Lower Street Car Park

The resurfacing of the coach park has now been completed at the expense of Uttlesford District Council. In time, the recycling containers will be moved into this area, and the Parish Council has agreed to erect some form of screening, hopefully with planting, to improve the visual aspect.

On the subject of recycling, we are pleased to report that from April this year, we are to be given a weekly service for the three recycling containers at the weekends. Last year the service was fortnightly, but thanks to regular use by parishioners, and Uttlesford's need to meet recycling targets, this will be weekly from the start of the new financial year.

Ruth Clifford
Parish Clerk
Stansted Mountfitchet Parish Council
ruth.clifford@stansted.net
(01279) 813214



Following the highly successful January recital given by the harpist Catrin Finch, our final concert this season will be given by one of Britain's top young string quartets on Saturday 5th March at 7.30pm. The Carducci String Quartet will be coming to Stansted to perform Haydn's String Quartet Op 20 in D, the Ravel String Quartet in F and Smetana's String Quartet in Eb - 'From My Life'.

The Carducci String Quartet was formed in 1993. As prize-winning graduates of the Royal College and the Royal Academy of Music, they are well known for their performances throughout the UK. They were major prize-winners at the Osaka International Chamber Music Competition in Japan in 2003 and at the 'Charles Hennen' International Competition in Holland.

The concert, in St John's Church, will start at 7.30pm and tickets are £9, concessions £7, children £3, and children of members £1, available from:

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Alan Corbishley

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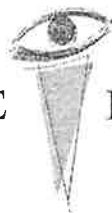
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MOUNTFITCHET GARDEN CLUB

Our Spring Show will be held on Saturday 2nd April and for the first time residents of Stansted Mountfitchet other than Club members have been invited to exhibit. This show gives members and residents of Stansted Mountfitchet the opportunity to exhibit their horticultural skills to other members, external judges and the local community. There are a large number of classes and it is highly likely that most people will find that they will have suitable entries already growing in their house or garden.

Show schedules (25p each) are available from: Cyril Stoneham – Chairman – 47 Bentfield Green, Stansted Janet Townsend – Show Secretary – 58 Chapel Hill, Stansted The show opens to the public at 2.30 pm. and will be at the United Reformed Church Hall, Chapel Hill. Refreshments will be available and there will also be a raffle and a sale of produce. No charge is made for admission.

Thirty-four members and visitors attended the January meeting and were entertained by Mrs Christine Middleton who gave an illustrated talk entitled 'Some European Gardens'. Mrs Middleton explained the slides she would be showing were taken during family holidays and were mainly of French gardens. The gardens shown included the following:

Villandry, which is on a tributary of the River Loire, is a large chateau with gardens originally laid out in the 16th century and recreated by the current owner last year. One of the main features is the potager in which were grown newly introduced (and therefore highly prized) vegetables.

The chateau at **Angers** dates back to the 17th century and is famed for its carpet bedding, which is planted in what was originally a moat. An unusual feature was the use of pink and white ornamental cabbages in the carpet bedding.

Canon is an 18th century house with the gardens being a mix of formal French and landscaped English.

Parc Floral de la Court d'Aron, near La Rochelle, enjoys a temperate climate and this allows both Mediterranean and northern European plants to be grown.

Most people know of **Giverny**, as this is Monet's garden. The public park in **Avranches** is a 20th century creation and this also is famed for its carpet bedding.

Between Nice and Monaco is the early 20th century **Villa Ephrussi de Rothschild** that is noted for its fountains, which are synchronised with music.

Mrs Middleton also showed slides of Holland - Keukenhof, which is mainly a magnificent showcase for Dutch bulb growers and is therefore at its best in spring, and of Floriade 1992. A Floriade is held every 10 years and includes exhibits by the major Dutch horticultural firms as well as many foreign countries. The Floriade are open all summer and therefore many of the beds containing massed annuals have to be replanted several times during this period.

The Chairman, Cyril Stoneham, then thanked Mrs. Middleton for her talk and excellent photographs.

The next meeting, on Wednesday 2nd March at the Day Centre at 8.00pm will include a talk by Mr. Tony Powell entitled 'Autumn Colour'. You are invited to join us. For non-members the admission fee is 75p.

Finally – please enter our Spring Show – we need you!

David Loynds



Huw Johnson Club

Steve Runs London to Help Local Club

Former Stansted Mountfitchet resident Steve Cantle is gearing up to run the London Marathon on Sunday 17th April. In this, his third marathon, Steve will be running in aid of the Huw Johnson Club.

The Club was formed in December 1974 by Marion and Tom Johnson, following the death of their 14 year old son, Huw, from muscular dystrophy. The Club is a great way for many handicapped people to broaden their horizons and to meet new friends.

The Club meets every Thursday evening and the members take part in diverse activities such as carpet bowls, quizzes, bingo, short tennis and line dancing, not forgetting the annual barbecues, sports days, village walks and Christmas and New Year parties. The highlight of the year is the annual holiday and this year they will be travelling to Porthcawl, South Wales. A modified coach with a ramp is required for the journey so that all the members can have the opportunity to go away on a much deserved break. Steve is aiming to raise a substantial amount of money which will go towards the cost of hiring the coach for the holiday.

Steve, now aged 31, lived in Stansted for 27 years and went to St Mary's Primary School where he was a pupil of Marion Johnson's. Steve now lives in Bishop's Stortford and hopes you will be able to support him in his effort to help the members of the Huw Johnson Club enjoy their holiday.

If you would be interested in sponsoring Steve and supporting this worthy cause please contact him on 01279 656212.

(Huw Johnson Club registered charity number 283235)



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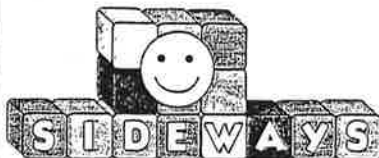
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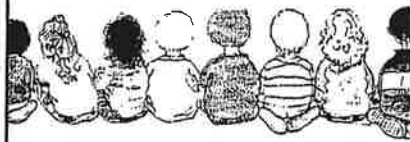
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As the New Year progresses you may have noticed building work going on at the front of our school. We are having a new reception area and changes to the existing office and Head teacher's room. When completed the front entrance will be fully accessible to wheelchair users and much easier for push-chairs. The work is expected to last 18 weeks and the finished product will see another octagonal area giving yet more interest to the shape of our school! During this period the school office is open as usual. If you wish to visit us just follow the arrows!

Classes One and Two have been looking at buildings and building materials this term. Both classes have been for a walk around the village looking at the very varied styles and ages of local buildings. They have also visited Saffron Walden Museum for a very enjoyable all day session on the same subject.

Class Three have also been out locally, walking down to the fire station for a very informative and exciting visit.

Like many other schools, our children were very concerned about the devastating effects of the Asian tsunami. We held a non-uniform day, at the request of the children, to raise money for the disaster appeal fund.

Our cooks have been busy this month. Chinese New Year was celebrated by a special Chinese lunch, which the children were encouraged to eat with the free chopsticks provided. As you may imagine, some were better at it than others! And, of course, we had pancakes on Pancake Day!!

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

Essex County Council MUST receive applications for this year's Reception Class by 31st March at the latest.

Finally a reminder from the PTA about a couple of events.

Firstly, we're holding our CASINO NIGHT on Saturday 5th March. Last year this was a fantastic evening and this year it promises to be just as much fun, if not more! No experience is needed as we have croupiers on hand to explain all the rules and lend you a helping hand. We play just for fun, with the punter with the most chips at the end of the evening taking home a prize. Tickets are £7.50 which includes play money for gambling and a light supper and are available from the school office, a PTA member or by ringing 647650.

Our final event of the term is our Spring Fashion Show on Tuesday 5th April. Pupils, parents and staff will have the opportunity of modelling some of the latest fashions and then of course they'll be plenty of time to buy lots of fantastic clothes at bargain prices. The show takes place in the school hall at 6.30pm with clothes available for sale afterwards. Tickets are just £2.50 which includes a glass of wine.

Marnie Tait

We are having a Charity Coffee Morning on 27th April, 10.00am-12 noon. Admission and coffee 50p.

Do come and help various charities, including Cancer Research, Water for 3rd World, Saffron Sight and the WI's Tsunami Appeal. Stalls will include cakes, home-bake, bric-à-brac, honey and others. A raffle will be held.

On a domestic note, we do need volunteers for two hours a week or a fortnight as the Day Centre is busy and popular. Our present volunteers are very friendly and enjoy their work. We also need drivers to bring our members in on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays.

Our lunches are home cooked and cost £3.70 for two courses (you need to book in advance). The Day Centre number is 01279 815091. You will be very welcome.



UGLEY WOMEN'S INSTITUTE

Ugley WI had an excellent New Year party at The Chequers Public House on Wednesday 19th January with a most enjoyable presentation of Gilbert and Sullivan by Mr Martyn Harrison.

At our February meeting we had a talk by Mrs Brenda Harley entitled 'How I became a Reel Old Sew and Sew'.

On 16th March the meeting at Ugley Village Hall starts at 2.30pm when Mr David Miller will tell us about Tai Ji Quan.

Frances Spalding

Bentfield Primary School PTA

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Tuesday 5th April

6.30pm


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Present and even past parents will remember primary school parents' evenings as significant events in the school year, when they have the opportunity to hear about their child's progress. These are essential and valuable to both parents and teachers, but often happen in a busy, rushed environment, at the end of a long day of teaching. This term in St Mary's we are trialling a different approach, to try to provide a more professional consultation with our parents: each class teacher is having a reasonable working day in which to discuss the children's progress with their parents. Of course, their class still needs teaching – which is where I come in! Parents' evaluations will tell us how well it has worked for them, but so far teachers are finding the new arrangements a great improvement. To give privacy and status to parent consultations, the discussions have been taking place in my office. So this gives me an extra excuse for not tackling the ever-increasing mountain of paperwork. (Yes, the media is right about this!) But the real bonus for me is a chance to spend the planned day with each of our classes, in order of age from the youngest to the oldest.

I have started with the biggest challenge for me, as a junior-trained teacher: a day with Willow class (Reception and Year 1 children). But I had a fantastic day with the children and gained a great deal of insight into the learning of our 4 and 5 year olds – and it highlighted for me how hard teachers of younger children have to work to make it meaningful. I was relieved that our own skilled practitioner was going to follow my efforts on teaching subtraction!

As I have worked with progressively older children in the last couple of weeks, I have felt more within my comfort zone – and had more sleep on the preceding night! However, the experiences have not been so different:

§ Children of all ages love learning and are becoming better at thinking about their learning and becoming reflective learners. As a school, we have worked very hard on developing everyone's perception of learning and it has been exciting to see that really happening.

§ Our excellent adult support makes a huge difference. Children of widely differing abilities are all catered for and encouraged to learn at the appropriate rate for them.

As a headteacher, I think it's important to know all our children and I like to spend lots of time with them, but find that isn't always possible with other demands, so this has been a great opportunity to remind myself about what an exciting journey it is being a teacher and experiencing children's learning at first hand.

Wendy Wood,
Headteacher

Breakfast Club, St Mary's School

Children are now able to have breakfast at school, meet friends and play before lessons start. My son who is a pupil at the school has attended and was enthusiastic. The District Council, through its Community Safety Action Team, has assisted this project by providing £1493 for capital items to assist with the purchase of safety equipment. This is predominately road safety/crime prevention/anti-bullying information etc.

Councillor Geoffrey Sell
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UTTLESFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL



East of England Plan

Readers will recall that both Alan Dean and myself have written previously on this important topic. At our full council meeting on 15th February the Council will be considering our response to its proposals. The plan sets out a draft strategy to guide the planning and development of the region to 2021. Key features are plans for 421,500 new jobs and provision for 478,000 new homes. Nearly 60,000 of these have already been built since 2001 and, of the balance, more than half already have planning permission or are allocated in existing development plans.

For Uttlesford, the plan is proposing 8,000 houses. Plans are already going ahead for 5,350 new homes in the district such as the Rochfords development. This leaves a balance of 2,650 new homes. My colleagues in Dunmow are concerned about the way that their town has been targeted for extra housing growth. Suzanne Walker of the Council for the Protection of Rural England has urged everyone to become involved in the consultation. She warned that "if we are not careful we could wake up and find ourselves living in the suburbs of London".

It is not just what is being proposed for Uttlesford that should concern us. In East Hertfordshire 20,800 new homes are being proposed. Ten thousand homes to be built on greenfields north of Harlow and 2,000 homes on the outskirts of Bishop's Stortford. Such proposals would have significant effects on the infrastructure which we and they share; for example schools in Bishop's Stortford, increased pressure on our roads and train service and also upon Princess Alexandra Hospital in Harlow. East Herts Council Leader states that the "proposals are flawed, based on flawed thinking and have been pushed through a deeply flawed and undemocratic process. The options are both unsustainable and illogical". They have published a leaflet 'speakup east-herts'. More information is available on their website www.eastherts.gov.uk.

Some councils such as Harlow have come out in favour of the Regional Plan. Their joint leader mentions a recently published Halifax bank survey. This states that first-time buyers can't afford a home in 92% of UK towns. Combine that, she says, with the growing waiting list for a council home and it "becomes obvious that we can't go on as we are, and that we need to provide affordable homes to meet the needs of our community".

A copy of the regional plan is available for consultation at Stansted Library. If you wish to comment on the Plan you have up until 16th March to do so. You can comment on-line at www.eera.gov.uk. Alternatively, you can write to East of England Regional Assembly at Flempton House, Flempton, Bury St Edmunds IP28 6EG.

Council Budgets

Provisionally, the Council is considering a 4.5% increase in the council tax for the coming financial year. The council has taken on new responsibilities placed upon us by the Government, but with no extra funding to deal with them. When readers receive their council tax bills next month, it is important to remember that although the District is the billing authority most of what it collects goes to other bodies, e.g. County Council, Police Authority and Parish Councils.

Pensioners Guide

The council tax can hit those on fixed incomes particularly hard. There may be help available. The Government estimates that four out of ten pensioners are still failing to apply for council tax benefit, which could on average cut their bills by £426. This is in spite of the fact that since the introduction of the Pension Credit many more pensioners have become eligible. The Pensioners' Guide provides valuable advice on all the help and entitlements available to pensioners. The publication is free and can be obtained at the District Council offices or by contacting the order line on 0845 6065065. If you think you are eligible for a reduction in council tax or possibly some assistance with housing benefit for rent payments you should contact Sue Ellis at the Council on 01799 510340. A home visiting service can also be provided to assist with completion of the claim forms.

Remembering the Holocaust

Alan Dean as Leader of the Council planted a yew tree in the Maze of Bridge End Gardens, Saffron Walden. The setting is perfect for quiet and thoughtful contemplation of that awful event. I visited Poland last year on a European Young Entrepreneurs visit, and took the opportunity of taking students from Italy, Poland, Slovakia and the UK to Auschwitz. I thought it was important that young people should be aware of what happened 60 years ago.

Councillor Geoffrey Sell

Tel: 01279 815925

Email: cllrSELL@uttlesford.gov.uk



Royal British Legion Stansted & District Branch

Poppy Appeal

We are to hold a Fish and Chip Supper in aid of the Appeal on Friday 8th April at the Crafton Green Day Centre, Stansted at 7.30pm. We are delighted that George Foster has agreed to recall his memories of the 'D' Day celebrations in Normandy on its 60th Anniversary last year. The evening is open to all. Please join us, the cost is £6.00. Tickets from Harold Thistle tel. 813250, David Challis 815183, and Bob Stoddart 814015.

Looking Forward – The 2005 Appeal

Having been the Honorary Poppy Appeal Organiser since 1994, supported throughout by the Branch Committee and all the collectors, the task of organising has increased enormously, as has the total sum raised. I now have some 150 collectors and 400 collecting boxes each year spread over the district.

It has now reached the stage when I need some help with the workload particularly during October and November and a little time in September and December. If you could give some time to this deserving cause please contact me.

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