

Stansted Mountfitchet

The Link



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EDITORIAL



In this issue, our not-so-old friend, Dick Pollard, gives his opinion that Stansted is "a pretty good place to live". Many would endorse this view because there is an up-side to being here - helpful shopkeepers, cheery pubs, three fine schools, active churches of different traditions, a healthy spread of voluntary organisations, a pervading willingness to help anyone in need, and excellent countryside on our doorstep. We could all make a list. Naturally, we also have ideas on the down-side (with traffic congestion high among the demons) but of course nowhere is perfect. What is so important is to hold on to what is good. Many of us still call Stansted a village and that is not just a term - it means it has a heart and, as our MP said, a quality of life.

There is, however, a price we have to pay for this quality. A large number of residents are acutely conscious of this, hence the strong reaction against the intended new development between Elsenham and Henham which would adversely affect us. And then there are the airport proposals. What is within our ability is to support our services and, insofar as our inclinations lead us, the numerous voluntary bodies. The annual Christmas shoebox effort for children in eastern Europe has just taken place, to which the village responded so well. This is a good sign - let it be one of many.

A happy Christmas to you all.

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DISCLAIMER

Opinions expressed in this magazine are given freely and do not necessarily represent those of the editorial committee

Thought for the Month

I love Christmas. For all the commercialisation and the fact that it seems to begin earlier each year, the magic remains. Perhaps it is the memories of childhood Christmases: the expectant waiting, the carols and nativity plays, the visits of present-bearing uncles and aunts, the pillowcase-cum-stockings bulging with presents, the family parties. And though the years have flown, I still look forward to Christmas with childlike anticipation. That's not to say that there were no disappointments. I still remember the heartache of one Christmas Day when I sat down on the settee to hear the crack of vinyl. Standing up, I found the shattered remnants of 'The Laughing Policeman'! Perhaps an early and necessary intrusion into my innocent Christmas optimism reminding me that our world is one that has to deal with brokenness, loss and tears.



I don't know whether you are one of those for whom the innocence of Christmas has waned over the years; the wonder broken like my record; childhood hopes shattered as they met with the cold realities of our times. There is so much that encourages cynicism, doubt and sometimes despair that the season of 'peace and goodwill' may seem like a fantasy. But the Jesus at the centre of the Christmas story is no fantasy figure belonging to some naïve childhood world where all is make believe. In Jesus we meet with a flesh and blood human being like you and me. He faced the harsh realities of our world – injustice, oppression, disease, suffering, and even death – and yet never gave way to them, lost heart or abandoned hope.

In the encounter with Jesus, people who had been bruised and broken by life's experiences found they were able to believe, trust, hope and love again. They found new strength to engage with the world and make a difference. Endeavouring to express what had taken place in the coming of Jesus, they echoed Matthew's words: 'God is with us'!



Even – and perhaps especially – when things seem dark and difficult, Christmas comes as an opportunity to hear again the quiet whisper of God and the invitation to trust again in the One who is with us in good times and in bad, and whose purposes of love, as we encounter them in Jesus, are at heart of all that exists. God is with us and so there is hope.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year,

Rev'd David Mullins



Churches Together in Stansted Christmas Services

St John's (Church of England)

Sunday 16th December (Advent 3)

3.00pm Christingle Service

Sunday 23rd December (Advent 4)

8.00am Said Communion

9.30am Parish Communion

Christmas Eve

3.00pm Crib Service

11.30pm First Communion of Christmas (Sung)

Christmas Day

9.30am Parish Communion (Sung)

Stansted Free Church (Methodist/URC)

Sunday 23rd December

10.30am Carol Service

Christmas Day

10.30am Family Worship

Quakers (Society of Friends)

Sunday 23rd December

10.30am Meeting for Worship

St Theresa's (Roman Catholic)

Sunday 16th December

2.00pm Children's Service

Tuesday 18th December

8.00pm Penitential Service

Wednesday 19th December

7.30pm Carol Service

Saturday 22nd December

6.00pm Mass

Sunday 23rd December

9.00am and Mass

10.30am

Christmas Eve

6.00pm Family Mass

Midnight Midnight Mass

Christmas Day

10.30am Mass

Wednesday 26th December (St Stephen)

9.30am Mass



STANSTED FREE CHURCH
Methodist / URC
Chapel Hill

www.stanstedfreechurch.org.uk



Minister Rev'd David Mullins
Tel: 654475
minister@stanstedfreechurch.org.uk

URC Interim Moderator
Rev'd Janet Tollington

Lettings Janet Townsend
58 Chapel Hill
Stansted CM24 8AQ
Tel: 812593
lettings@stanstedfreechurch.org.uk

Preachers for December

- 2nd 10.30am All Age Worship
2.30pm Rev'd Trevor Sands
- 9th 10.30am Rev'd David Mullins
Gift Service and Holy Communion
- 16th 10.30am John Banks
- 23rd 10.30am Carol Service
- 25th 10.30am Christmas Day Family Worship
Rev'd Stuart Veitch
- 30th 10.30am Rev'd Janet Tollington

Preachers for January

- 6th 10.30am Michael Dyer
2.30pm No service
- 13th 10.30am Ken Mark
- 20th 10.30am Rev'd David Mullins and Rev'd Paul Wilkin
Covenant Service and Holy Communion
- 27th 10.30am Rev'd John Buxton

Other Activities in December

- Sun 2nd 3.30pm Outreach tea in the foyer
- Mon 3rd 8.00 pm Shalom – 7 Blythwood Gardens
Slides of Istanbul
- Wed 5th 7.30 pm CTS Special Meeting in the Hall
- Mon 10th 6.00 pm Pilots
- Mon 17th 8.00 pm Shalom Party – 7 Blythwood
Gardens

Please note:

There is no Outreach Tea on Sunday 6th January.

All enquiries: The Church Office, St John's Hall,
St John's Road, Stansted CM24 8JP
Tel: 815243
Email: st.johns.church@btinternet.com
Office hours: 9.00am-12 noon, Monday,
Wednesday, Friday
Administrator: Mrs Elizabeth Jennings
Website: www.stansted.net/stjohns

Rector: Rev'd Paul Wilkin
Tel: 812203
Email: paulwilkin@iname.com

Assistant Curate: Rev'd Dr Caroline Currer
Tel: 815243
Email: curate@stansted.net

Director of Music: Lorraine Everett
Email: church.music@stansted.net

St John's Diary

Sunday

- 8.00am Said Holy Communion
 - 9.30am Choral Eucharist
 - 11.00am Open Door Service
(all age worship) 3rd Sunday
 - 9.45pm Night Prayer
- There are services of Holy Communion on the first Tuesdays and Wednesdays of the month in Norman Court, Hargrave House and Broome End Nursing Homes.

Wednesday

- 10.00am Said Holy Communion
 - 7.30pm Ecumenical Prayer Group
- Junior Church meets each Sunday at 9.30am. (Children return to church halfway through the service.)
The Lazer youth group meets on Sunday evenings at 7.30pm.

For details of Christmas services, please see page 2.

From the Registers

October

Funerals

- 4th Pamela Victoria Harris, age 77 - at St John's
- 10th Simon Philpott, age 41 - at St John's
- 18th Arthur Poynter, age 74 - at St Mary's

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

On 20th January at the 9.30am Parish Communion in St John's the Rector will preside, with Rev'd David Mullins giving the address. At the 11.00am Free Church Service Rev'd David will conduct the service, with the Rector giving the address. A good ecumenical day!



Special CTS Meeting

As former Chair of CTS, I am writing to invite members of all the Churches in Stansted to a special ecumenical forum at The Free Church Hall, Chapel Hill, on Wednesday, 5th December at 7.30pm. CTS is at an important and exciting crossroads in its ecumenical work. There are many new challenges in terms of the new housing community being established in the village, as well as environment imperatives.

At the recent CTS Annual General Meeting, we received enthusiastic support from our new clergy, but no-one came forward to take on the Chairman's role. As such, it was decided to adjourn proceedings in favour of this forum in order to best decide how we can move forward to meet the new challenges ahead. Please make every effort to support this important event, which could determine the future direction of CTS.



A Celebration of Christmas

This year the annual Village Carol Concert will take place at St Mary's Church at 4.00pm on Saturday 22nd December. We are very pleased that Andrew Bruce, who has kindly directed the past two services, is able to be with us again this year. There will be a **village choir**, and anyone who can sing is most welcome. Rehearsals are at St John's Church at 7.30pm on Friday 7th December and Wednesday 19th December.

There will be a retiring collection to be divided between the Churches Conservation Trust and Uttlesford MIND. Please bring your family and friends to this established village tradition.

David Morson



Village Carol Singing

Come and join in the fun! We meet each evening at 7.30pm - Saturday 22nd December in St John's Road by St John's Church and Sunday 23rd December at the junction of Croasdaile Road and Cambridge Road. We are particularly looking for more **singers** - there is no rehearsing, just come along! Flute and recorder players also welcome, but please telephone 814059 beforehand so that we can bring sufficient music. The singing is followed by warm refreshments at around 9.00pm. We will be collecting for Uttlesford MIND. Please support us - thank you!

Helen Baker
Tel: 814865
and Mike Dyer
Tel: 814059

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2008

On Wednesday 23rd January at 7.30pm in St John's Church, Prayers for Christian unity will be led by the Rector, Rev'd Paul Wilkin. All are warmly welcome to come and join the Ecumenical Prayer Group on this special occasion.

Francis Mercer

ROMAN CATHOLIC

St Therese of Lisieux
High Lane

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

Masses Saturday 6.00pm
Sunday 9.00am and 10.30am
Holy Days of Obligation 8.00am and 8.00pm
Tuesday-Saturday 9.30am

Confessions
Saturday 10.00am
and by appointment

Baptisms By appointment

Carol Service

Our Carol Service is in St Theresa's Church on Wednesday 19th December at 7.30pm. There will be refreshments afterwards in the Parish Centre. Everyone is warmly invited - please join us.

St Theresa's Yoga Group

Whilst planning your Christmas feasts don't forget to put in your new diary: - January 2008: get along to Yoga. It will help with the "I really am going to get into shape in the New Year" panic!

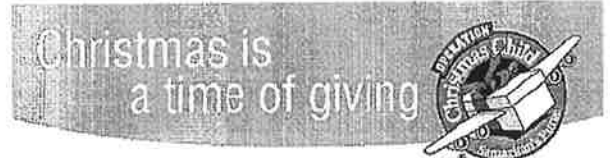
St Theresa's Yoga group meets on Thursday mornings during term time at 10.15am in the church centre in High Lane. We practise for an hour and focus on the meaning of yoga, which is union. Yoga asks us to unite our minds, bodies and spirits. This helps many people to re-discover a sense of peace and balance that is challenged by the pace of living today.

Yoga is an individual journey, but it's fun to have the encouragement and friendship that the group shares. Please come and try the St Theresa's Yoga group. It is open to anyone of any age who wants to enhance their spiritual, mental and physical well-being. Please ring me for more details.

Isobel Bradshaw
Tel: 315105



SHALOM



Moreton Romanian Orphans Fund

Recently we were given a talk by Jane Perkins about the Moreton Romanian Orphans Fund. The founders of this fund began their work 15 years ago, when people had become aware of the conditions in Romanian orphanages (which are now known as 'placement centres') and the Moreton group have involved themselves with just five of these centres. They arrange for some of the children, aged eight upwards, to holiday with host families in our area for two weeks each year. Not all the children are necessarily orphans – some are in care because their families are just too poor to look after them; but the centres now seek to maintain all of them in full time education until they are 18.

The Romanian authorities choose which children are to benefit from the holidays – strictly by merit of good school work. This left us feeling sorry for those children who are not academically gifted, and so never have the opportunity. A child's first visit to a new host family is financed by the funds, but subsequently the cost, including the flights, is met by the host family; quite a commitment, but one gladly accepted by those able to do so, and thereby building up wonderful relationships over the years. The number of host families has gradually risen from an initial 20 to over 40, with the latest visit accommodating 60 children from four Placement Centres. At first there are language difficulties, but this seems to become less of a problem as the children grow older and learn English at school, whilst it seems not to be a problem at all between the children themselves and the children of the host families.

The slides we saw showed very healthy-looking children, despite their diet of bread and gruel, with little or no provision of fruit or vegetables. When visiting England, they are introduced to a wider diet, and, not surprisingly, at first only slowly accept and adjust to the new tastes. It is hugely rewarding to have these young people become really 'part of the family', and any family interested in hosting a child would be welcomed with open arms by the fund. Please contact Pauline Davis on 323132.

Future Meetings

On 3rd December, Margaret Silvester will be showing her slides of Istanbul. Our Christmas party is on 17th December - please 'bring and share' food, drink and entertainment! Both meetings are 8.00pm at 7 Blythwood Gardens, and are open to all. Please join us – you will be warmly welcomed!

At the time of going to press, we have not yet planned our programme for January – please telephone for details.

Marion Dyer
Tel: 814059

Operation Christmas Child

What a fantastic evening! The hall was a hive of activity on 13th November, with everyone packing shoeboxes. At the end of the evening 185 boxes were filled with a large assortment of goodies that had been given by many generous people. Some items and boxes had been left anonymously in my porch, some from people who have been knitting hats, scarves and gloves throughout the year including members of the Ladies Group at Bishop's Stortford Methodist Church. Water Lane URC, Bishop's Stortford, brought their collection, Stansted Tennis Club again donated tennis balls for every box and Bentfield Primary School filled over 40 boxes this year.

I am also very grateful for the donations of money given to help with the transport costs. By the time the boxes were dispatched the number had risen to over 320, including 70 from the Catholic women's meeting.

This year, once the boxes have been checked at the Harlow centre, they will be packed straight into a container ready to be dispatched to Belarus. If anything is removed from the boxes at this stage as unsuitable (eg chocolate, talcum powder, clothing, plus cuddly toys too big to go in a box) it is sent to a central warehouse where it is either sold and the money used for transport costs, or packed into boxes to go directly to children's homes, orphanages or hospitals - **NOTHING IS THROWN AWAY!!**

On behalf of all the children who receive the boxes and the Operation Christmas Child team, I would like to say a very sincere thank you to everyone who contributed in any way to make this year's appeal so successful.

Janet Townsend
Tel: 812593



SOCIETY OF FRIENDS

Quaker Meeting House, Chapel Hill

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

Meeting Sunday, 10.30am

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with Hazel Williams Registered Osteopath



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*Please note the free 20 minute assessment is by appointment only. Only one free assessment per patient. You have no further obligation to return for follow up treatment or advice. Hazel Williams reserves the right to remove or change this offer at any time without prior notification.

Bentfield School PTA

Christmas Fair

2 - 4.30 pm Sat 8th Dec

Santa's Grotto ~ Raffle ~ Cakes

Tombolas ~ Plants ~ Crafts



Refreshments
Entertainment, games
& gifts galore!



The Guildhall Strings

directed by Robert Salter

3 pm Sun 9th December

St John's Church

includes music by Mozart, Dvorak,
Janacek, Strauss & Tchaikovsky

Tickets £10 adults, £3 children
from Nockolds, Bishop's Stortford;
Stansted Carpets: Sonia Levy 015282,
or at the door



CHRISTMAS CONCERT

7.30 pm

Friday 14th December

St Mary's School

Admission Free

All welcome - raffle & mince pies
Proceeds to the Huw Johnson Club

VILLAGE EVENTS

December

| | | | |
|----|-----|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 2 | Sun | Outreach Tea (after service) | Free Church 3.30 pm |
| 3 | Mon | Shalom | 7 Blythwood Gdns 8 pm |
| 5 | Wed | Garden Club Party | Day Centre 8 pm |
| 6 | Thu | Local History Society | Day Centre 8 pm |
| 8 | Sat | Skips | Lower St Car Park 9 am - 3 pm |
| | | Christmas Fair | Bentfield School 2 - 4.30 pm |
| 9 | Sun | Village Music Club | St John's Church 3 pm |
| 13 | Thu | WI | St John's Hall 7.45 pm |
| 14 | Fri | Huw Johnson Concert | St Mary's School 7.30 pm |
| 15 | Sat | Conservatives' Supper | Day Centre 7 for 7.30 pm |
| 17 | Mon | Shalom Party | 7 Blythwood Gdns 8 pm |
| 19 | Wed | Carol Service | St Teresa's Church 7.30 pm |
| 22 | Sat | Skips | Lower St Car Park 9 am - 3 pm |
| | | Celebration of Christmas | St Mary's Church 4 pm |
| | | Carol Singing | St John's Road 7.30 pm |
| 23 | Sun | Carol Singing | Croasdaile / Camb Rd 7.30 pm |

January

| | | | |
|----|-----|-----------------------|-------------------------------|
| 3 | Thu | Local History Society | Day Centre 8 pm |
| 5 | Sat | Skips | Lower St Car Park 9 am - 3 pm |
| 7 | Mon | WEA begins | Day Centre 7.30 pm |
| 10 | Thu | WI | St John's Hall 7.45 pm |
| 16 | Wed | Mountfitchet Seniors | Day Centre 2 - 4 pm |
| 19 | Sat | Skips | Lower St Car Park 9 am - 3 pm |
| 20 | Sun | Village Music Club | St John's Church 3 pm |
| 30 | Wed | Lunch Club | 1 pm |

February

| | | | |
|---|-----|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 2 | Sat | Skips | Lower St Car Park 9 am - 3 pm |
| 3 | Sun | Outreach Tea (after service) | Free Church 3.30 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 |

RECYCLE YOUR CHRISTMAS TREE

At the skip, Lower Street Car Park, Sat 19th January 9 am - 3 pm



Marie McLeod

Cello

Martin Sturfält

Piano

3pm Sunday 20th January

St John's Church

includes music by Mendelssohn, Schumann,
Chopin, & Gunnar Valkare

Tickets £10 adults, £3 children
from Nockolds, Bishop's Stortford;
Stansted Carpets: Sonia Levy 015282,
or at the door



Scandinavia

by

Rosemary Williams

Enrolment

Monday 7th Jan at 7.30 pm

thereafter at 8 pm

Fee £40 (some discounts)

Day Centre

Tel 813080 or 647213



Carol Service

7.30 pm Wed 19th Dec

St Teresa's Church

Followed by coffee and
mince pies

All are warmly invited



Celebration of
Christmas

Carols, Music, Readings, and Poetry

4 pm Saturday 22nd December

St Mary's Church

(parking at Mountfitchet College)

Retiring collection for Uttlesford Mind
& Churches Conservation Trust

All Welcome



Carol
Singing

You are warmly invited to join
in singing round the village

Meet at 7.30 pm

Saturday 22nd December

in St John's Road by St John's Church

Sunday 23rd December

corner of Cambridge Rd / Croasdaile Rd

Followed by refreshments

Singers & collectors

welcome

Hope to see you there!

Collecting for Uttlesford Mind

Recorder & flute players
welcome but please tel 814059
in advance to arrange music

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Caring, Sharing, Preparing For Life

It is difficult to write a newsletter about the events in school when some of them are yet to happen! However, there is no shortage of things going on or being planned so there is plenty to include in this bulletin. Throughout this term pupils in Year 6 have been working towards their Cycling Proficiency certificates. Well done to those children – everyone who took the course passed. We are very grateful to Brenda Ryan and Lindsey Green who have worked with the children on this. It was very pleasing to see a good number of our pupils attending the Remembrance Day Parade, whether in school uniform or as part of the Beavers, Cubs or Scouts. Thank you to Ruben and Lois for laying the wreath on behalf of the school.

The whole school, as part of our work with the Saffron Walden Federation of schools, is planning a project on different aspects of care for the environment. The project got off to a fun start with a visit from the Quantum Science Theatre who staged a production of 'Bin Raider' on the theme of recycling. Still on this theme, the School Council have arranged for a shoe and textiles recycling container to be delivered. The aim is to collect clothes, shoes and household textiles that are still in good condition and can be reused. We would be glad for all members of the Stansted community to make use of this facility, which will be sited on the school car park.

Also to do with the environment, we have had some maintenance work done on the trees in the grounds. Two dead trees and one that was leaning too much have been removed. Also, the very beautiful willow tree alongside the playground has been pollarded because it had become very large and its branches very twisted. It does look a bit stark at the moment, but it will grow back and be healthier and safer into the bargain.

The school choir have been practising hard over the last ten weeks - with two rehearsals each week – on 16th November we were at the Royal Albert Hall singing in a concert in aid of Doctor Barnado's. Lots of other choirs also took part; it was a very long day of rehearsals followed by an evening concert but a wonderful experience for the children to sing at such an occasion. I hope this will be the first of many such exciting events for music at our school!

For Christmas this year it will be the Key Stage 2 pupils who will be staging a Nativity story; the younger children have a production based on 'The 12 days of Christmas'. Dates of the productions are:

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Tuesday 11th December | Key Stage 1 performance for grandmas and granddads |
| Wednesday 12th December | Key Stage 1 performance for parents and siblings |
| Thursday 13th December | Key Stage 2 performances, afternoon and evening. |

We are also having a Carol Service in church at 2.00pm on Friday 14th December. Everyone is welcome to join us.

Christine Tonkins,
Headteacher



Huw Johnson Club

Once again we enjoyed our firework party which took place at Great Easton. Our hosts, Hannah and Chris, provided us with some delicious hot food which was very welcome as the evening was very cold. Hannah told us that a stag had jumped over her fence into her garden. He looked at her for a few moments then turned and jumped back into the field. A real Bill Oddie moment.

14th December at 7.30pm is our concert in St Mary's School. Last year the hall was full so come early to get a good seat. We will start with our Nativity Play followed by our interpretation of the twelve days of Christmas. Entrance is free but there will be a raffle. Mince pies and a glass of wine or fruit juice will be served at the interval.

Marion Johnson



Stansted's Community Care Scheme

As we embark on the build-up to Christmas, there will, of course, be various seasonal events taking place around the area. If any of our older or less able bodied parishioners would like to attend any of these activities but require assistance with transport to do so, please ring the Helpline telephone number – 07704 553727 – and we will do our best to make sure you can join in the festivities!

Francine Cope,
Chairman

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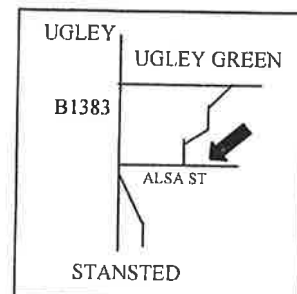
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MOUNTFITCHET GARDEN CLUB

Quiz Evening

On Saturday 26th October the Mountfitchet Garden Club held its second General Knowledge Quiz Evening. Eight teams took part and every round was hotly contested. At half-time there were only a few points between all the teams, but well-played jokers in the second half gradually widened the gap between the teams.



The Winners - The Train-ees

Maralyn Harris

November Meeting

Our last speaker for 2007 was Mrs Nimmo-Smith, who was warmly welcomed by over 32 members. Mrs Nimmo-Smith began her talk on 'Hardy Ferns' by explaining how she became interested in them over 30 years ago. Her north-facing garden in Cambridge was a particular problem and she tried, unsuccessfully, to grow other plants, but it was the ferns that grew best and from that moment on she was hooked. She joined the Fern Society and ran the Spore Exchange for ten years, corresponding with people from all over the world. Her involvement at Monk Silver Nursery in Cottenham, Cambridge saw the development of a new fern section.

Mrs Nimmo-Smith gave us an enjoyable and informative slide show, the Latin names of each species tripping off her tongue as she spoke. The common species names included some gems; 'mouse ear', 'parsley', 'black spleen' and 'brittle bladder'. The club was advised on the easiest species to grow in different conditions; for example the 'polypods' thrive in dry conditions, one to remember in our ever-changing climate. We were then treated to a spore-sewing demonstration and were shown how to make botanical envelopes - easy for origami experts! Following Blue Peter convention there were some that were 'made earlier' and we were able to observe the development of spores at differing intervals. Finally a variety of ferns were eagerly bought at the end of a 'ferntastic' evening!

In December members are asked to bring and share food for the Christmas meeting. Like gardens, the club is having a rest in January; however we look forward to February's meeting when we welcome Mr K Akers who will give a talk on 'Sink, Trough and Container Gardening'.

Christine Hope



Stansted Evening

Women's Institute

We livened up our November AGM by setting out the hall with tables for members to sit around, supplying them with a glass of wine and crisps - and then managed to get a word in now again between the chat! Art Classes mentioned last month will commence on 28th January in the Stansted Free Church Hall from 2.00pm-4.00pm, for six weeks. Our annual Christmas Dinner has been arranged and we are again going to *The Ash* at Burton End - more sitting around tables with a glass of wine as well as really good food!

At the end of October six of us attended the Autumn County Meeting in Clacton, where we were lucky enough to hear the Poet Laureate, Andrew Motion, as well as former television cook, Zena Skinner. Andrew Motion was the winner of the Book Award, which the Essex Federation made for the winning book about Essex, chosen from a long list of contenders sent in by members. His book 'In the Blood' is a memoir of his childhood. He was brought up in Stisted near Braintree. He came along unexpectedly to receive the award in person and spoke a little of his life and his appointment as Poet Laureate, as well as reading an extract to us in his very beautiful voice! He has three years left in the position of Laureate, having said at the outset he would do it for only ten years. Zena Skinner, who must now be in her eighties, gave us a wonderful description of the early days of television and the trials of trying to cook surrounded by camera equipment. She is a very gifted and humorous lady.

Members were also given notice of a proposed Table Top Sale in St John's Hall next year on Saturday 5th April. We are inviting people to book a table and come along and raise funds for their particular cause - or just themselves. The WI will serve teas, and a raffle of course! Further details will be given later. The prize for the most points in the competitions throughout the year went to Kath Johnson, who now has to keep the cup clean until next November. Kath Poole and Chris Hope joined the Committee and Brenda Ryan agreed to serve for the next year as our president, with Sue Holland as treasurer and myself as secretary. Sue gave us a very comprehensive report on our finances and we start off with money in the bank but always a need to raise more! Our raffle raised £29 for the British Legion and the wreath, which was laid at the Memorial Service on 11th November by our President.

Our next meeting is on 13th December and is a talk on Essex churches. Anyone is welcome to come along.

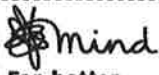
Judy Colliver,
Secretary

STANSTED CONSERVATIVES



Stansted Conservatives will be holding their popular Christmas Supper on Saturday 15th December, 7.00pm for 7.30pm at the Day Centre. Tickets are £12.50, available from Bridget on 814440 or Joan on 814854. After supper there will be an entertaining guest speaker. Early booking is strongly recommended!

Bill Stiles



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WHO WE ARE, WHAT WE DO

What an impressive new format of the 'Link'! We all loved the colour and layout. The staff say that I should introduce our practice again for those of you that don't know us or who haven't read about us in the 'Link' before. Mercer and Hughes have been part of life in Stansted for over 12 years now. We bought the surgery on Cambridge Road from Captain Davies when he retired and have extensively modernised, extended and refurbished the building. As well as the waiting room and consulting room there is a modern extension on the back housing x-ray and ultrasound facilities, an operating theatre and kennel area - in fact it's a bit like the Tardis! We are able to carry out most procedures at the practice but any animal requiring more specialist medical or surgical treatment or hospitalisation is transferred to our main practice at Saffron Walden where we have a nurse on site 24 hours a day to care for the in-patients.

We are very lucky to have wonderful staff at the surgery. Angela, our receptionist, seems to know just about everybody in Stansted as she has lived and worked here for many years and she's always happy to have a chat. In fact I think a lot of people come in to see her not the vets! Jackie is the practice nurse and as well as assisting the vets she runs her own clinics in the afternoon. You can make appointments to have your pet's nails clipped or your cat wormed (not an easy task), or get advice about behaviour or diet problems. Jackie also runs our practice puppy parties. They are held several times a year and aim at giving puppies a chance to socialise at an early age in a safe environment, while at the same time giving new puppy owners lots of advice and support. I have to say they are one of the most enjoyable things we do. It was such fun at the last one to see the timid little Yorkshire terrier puppy chasing the Labrador puppy round the chairs by the end of the session. Jackie says they can be hard work; I think she secretly loves them!

We also have a team of three evening receptionists, Jan, Lisa and Olivia, who do sterling work and our three evening helpers who come in from school to help the vet during evening surgery and to clean the kennels. We would be lost without them all. I shouldn't forget the vets, of course. I can often be found doing morning surgery and Stephen Flood, the other senior partner, does many of the evening surgeries. Gemma and Claire, two of our assistants, do the rest. We also have two other vets, Monika and Seamus, who work mainly at the other surgeries.

We are a traditional mixed practice in that we treat farm animals and horses as well as all smaller pets, although the farm animal side is declining all the time. As well as conventional medicine, we also offer a referral service for homeopathy, acupuncture and chiropractic, and have close links with the local vet schools for more specialist treatment. I think we can pretty much cater for most animals' and clients' needs.

I think what I love about being a vet is that no two days are the same. Today, in morning surgery. I treated a tortoise with a chest infection, a bearded dragon with a chewed off tail (it's a type of lizard, I knew you were wondering!), a guinea pig with mange, a 70kg Great Dane with cystitis, and a rat with a cyst, as well as all the other cats and dogs. I then went off to trim a pot bellied pig's toenails. It wasn't very impressed or very co-operative I have to say, but it certainly added variety to the day.

I hope that you all have a happy Christmas; remember dogs don't need Christmas cake, but if you did want to buy them a present we have some Christmas toys on sale at the surgery!

Ilse Pedler,
Partner,
Mercer and Hughes,
Veterinary Surgeons



Rainbow children have been out and about again this month with a visit to the library to introduce some of them to the joys of choosing their own books. They also enjoyed a fascinating trip to the windmill where Ted and Peggy gave them lots of interesting information about how the windmill worked and how to make flour. The day also included plenty of climbing up the steps towards the top of the windmill. Our story this month is *The Gingerbread Man* which continues our theme of bread and baking. The children will be visiting Sainsbury's bakery to see bread (and perhaps a gingerbread man or two!) being baked. In addition, as part of their daily snack the children have enjoyed making their own toast, adding a variety of toppings.

We have had our outside area overhauled over the last few weeks. This has involved repainting the bicycle area, repainting the playhouse both inside and out, resealing the roof and replacing the outdoor chimes. The total cost came to £450 and these ongoing repairs have to be funded by the fruits of our fundraising activities. Money raised by the committee's recent events have also allowed us to buy more dressing-up clothes for the boys in our group to enhance their imaginative play - a spiderman costume, a fireman outfit and pirate outfit. Thank you to all who have contributed recently.

If you are interested in a place at Rainbow Tots (age 18 months to two and a half years) please contact Tina South on 814371. If you are interested in a place at the pre-school please contact Gill Pursglove on 814701 for further information.

Isabelle Page
Rainbow Committee



STANSTED MOUNTFITCHET WINDMILL

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We will not be having a Christmas stall this year but are you looking for an easy-to-send present? Our favourite line is **Windmill Tea Towels £2.50**. We also have small items for 'stocking fillers', **eg models to make, pens, pencils, notebooks, badges**, all popular with children, **key rings, cross stitch kits**. All proceeds towards the upkeep of the Mill, so please give me a ring.

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A "FLAMING" SUCCESS

We are delighted to report that the Bonfire and Firework Event at Elms Farm, held on 3 November, was a great success.

Hundreds of villagers turned out to toast themselves by the fabulous bonfire which was built by the Scouts, and to enjoy the burgers and hot-dogs dished up by the Skatepark Working Group. The ATC cadets were on hand to marshall pedestrians.

The highlight of the evening is always the firework display and judging by the "oohs" and "aahs" which were heard, it maintained its usual high standard.

The Parish Council is very grateful to all concerned with the organisation of this event. It is no mean feat, and requires many hours of hard work on the day, not to mention time spent in advance collecting wood for the bonfire and building it, attending training courses for the fireworks, setting up the generators, lighting and barbeques.

It is likely that the Skatepark Group will not be taking on the catering next year, so if any other village group would like to consider it, please contact the Clerk, Ruth Clifford, for further details (contact details on page 18).

RECYCLING CONTAINERS

24 & 25 November
8 December
22 December

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

December 12 - Finance
December 19 - Full Council
January 9 - Open Spaces
January 23 - Full Council
January 30 - Finance

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LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

You may be aware from local press coverage that Uttlesford District Council has to allocate sites for housing in the district – if the Council does not state where the houses are to be built, then the Government will.

To this end, Uttlesford will launch a public consultation to canvass opinion on where these 4,200 homes should be sited. The consultation period is due to start at the end of November, so watch out for a questionnaire coming through your door. It may come in the Uttlesford Life magazine, and should also be available on the Uttlesford website www.uttlesford.gov.uk. There will be four options to choose from, two at least of which could have serious implications for our village.

This Council is supporting in principle the views of Elsenham and Henham Parish Councils which are very concerned at the lack of infrastructure improvements associated with the proposals. It may be that we are asked to make a financial contribution towards their "Fighting Fund", as we did last year to the SSE Airport Inquiry Fund. If you have a view on this, please let us know.

Please take the time to consider this document and RESPOND TO IT. If you do not, it is likely you will be considered to be in support of the preferred option.

REVIEW OF LICENSING POLICY

Uttlesford has recently undertaken a review of its Licensing Policy. The Parish Council has submitted its comments, which include a wish to see the cumulative effect of licences being granted in one area considered, along with greater responsibility for landlords to exercise control over drinkers from their establishments who stand out on the public highway – this has increased noise in residential areas quite significantly since the introduction of the non-smoking ban. Noise is clearly an issue for some, and we believe that music (live or recorded) should finish at a fixed time, and that all doors and windows should remain shut whilst it is playing. Our full response can be seen under Publications on the Council's website www.stansted.net.

PARISH COUNCIL BUDGETS 2008/09

It is that time of year again already and we are preparing our budgets for the new financial year. One of the projects we have been asked to consider is part-funding of the cost of employing a Police Community Support Officer. This would be in addition to the two officers currently based in Stansted.

We have had discussions with the Officer in Charge of PCSO's for Essex. It would cost the Parish Council £14,500 to meet 50% of the total employment cost for one year. This would mean that an additional PCSO would be recruited for our village and would work here all the time. (cont on page 16)

**PARISH COUNCIL
CONTACT INFORMATION**

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| Janice Loughlin | 812346 |
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| Ruth Rawlinson** | 814222 |
| Jonathan Rich | 813112 |
| John Salmon | 814789 |
| Geoffrey Sell * | 815925 |
| Valerie Trundle | 813433 |
| Richard Wallace | 812588 |

* Chairman, ** Vice Chairman

**DISTRICT COUNCILLOR
JOHN SALMON**

You may have read the headlines in the local press – “School Facing Closure”. This relates to the Mountfitchet Maths and Computing College. The facts, as I understand them, are as follows. Essex County Council is looking to the future with a programme called BSFF (Building Schools For the Future). This is a 25-year on-going programme.

If the scheme for Elsenham and Henham is approved some time in the distant future (probably a minimum of 10 years), the District Council has to find sites to accommodate Government targets by the years 2022/23. As you can see, it will not happen overnight.

All the hard work that the College has done in the last five years to bring it up to being the most improved, should not be brought to its knees in one article which may mislead.

Only in extreme emergency cases could the officer be posted elsewhere.

The role of the PCSO is to be the “bobby on the beat” albeit they do not have full police powers. They are out and about in the community and act as the eyes and ears of the Police. This Council would have some input in the recruitment process and would have regular meetings with the officer who was appointed. Members are currently weighing up the pros and cons for parishioners, but are aware that the fear of crime is one of the concerns regularly raised with us.

The Full Council will meet on 19 December to finalise the budget and set the precept for next year, so if you have any thoughts on this particular subject, we would be pleased to receive letters or e-mails prior to that date.



CHRISTMAS WASTE COLLECTIONS

Usual Collection Day Revised Collection Day

| | |
|-------------|-------------------------------|
| 24 December | Normal Collection (both bins) |
| 25 December | 27/28 December |
| 26 December | 27/28 December |
| 27 December | Normal Day (black bin only) |
| 28 December | Normal Day (black bin only) |

NO COLLECTION OF KITCHEN WASTE 27 AND 28 DECEMBER

| | |
|-------------|------------------------------|
| 31 December | Normal Day (green and brown) |
| 1 January | 2 January (green and brown) |
| 2 January | 3 January (green and brown) |
| 3 January | 4 January (green and brown) |
| 4 January | 5 January (green and brown) |

NORMAL COLLECTIONS RESUME FROM MONDAY 7 JANUARY 2008

On December 10th at 7.30 p.m. in Stansted Day Centre there will be a consultation meeting by people from Princess Alexandra Hospital about their plans to turn the hospital into what is known as a Foundation Trust. This is an opportunity to find out what will be planned for our local hospital and how residents can play a part in ensuring we get the service that this part of Uttlesford needs.

(Cont on page 17)

DISTRICT COUNCILLOR GEOFFREY SELL

Local Development Framework

Like my colleague Alan Dean, I have been very concerned with the whole process surrounding this important policy. I would urge all residents to respond to the consultation document. We must be mindful that although Option 4 would be detrimental to the infrastructure of the village, Option 1 would also have serious implications for us with development proposed to the north of the village.

Stansted Airport update

The enquiry into Uttlesford's decision not to approve full use of the existing runway (G1) has finished. BAA has stated that they will be seeking costs from the Council. They argue that the Council acted unreasonably in turning down the application. They also contend that the Council showed bias as a number of councillors were or are members of SSE. The Council will of course defend itself against these accusations. It will be for the Secretary of State to decide ultimately as to whether BAA have a case. If costs were awarded against the Council it would be a very substantial settlement.

We are expecting the planning application for the second runway (G2) in February 2008. This application will be complex as it will also include demolition of listed buildings. The Government we believe will call in this application and it will be subject to a public inquiry. This would probably be in the Autumn of 2008 and would last for a minimum of 12 months.

Cllr Geoffrey Sell, Email:
cllrsell@uttlesford.gov.uk, Tel: 01279
815925

I am sure that most readers will know from local newspapers that UDC is pressing ahead with its preferred Option 4 – a new settlement between Elsenham and Henham starting at 3,000 homes (slightly bigger than Stansted Mountfitchet after the Forest Hall Road development is finished). You may also remember earlier comments that I was concerned that this proposal had not been thought through and that there had been no analysis of its impact on the immediate and surrounding area. This has now resulted in several parish councils and individuals starting to prepare legal challenges against the way UDC has conducted itself over the local development framework and demanding to know what went on behind the scenes by using Freedom of Information legislation to seek out documentation. This has recently brought out into the open Essex County Council's thoughts on how secondary education might be provided were the new settlement to proceed.

Back in September the idea of a so-called eco-town was verbally put forward by the leader of the council as having the least impact on existing communities. The likelihood of a new secondary school was held up as a virtue more than any other factor for justifying the proposal. It was said that existing secondary schools could not accommodate the number of children.

County council officers consider that 3,000 homes for Elsenham could require two 420 place primary schools. Only in November we heard that their initial thought on secondary education is to ask Mountfitchet Mathematics and Computing College to move to the new town to expand there rather than on the existing campus in Stansted. Expansion on an enlarged Forest Hall Road site may also be possible, but I suspect that the planners like the idea of starting from scratch, especially if that would bring in more grants from central government. None of this is certain. The so-called eco-town may be knocked on the head.

Uttlesford is intending to consult the public on its preferred Option 4 - the new town - and other options for 6 weeks starting on 30 November until 11 January. (Yes, it's over the Christmas and New Year period, I am sorry to say.) Please respond to what will be a special edition of the 'Uttlesford Life' magazine. Last time fewer than 200 people from the 70,000 who live in Uttlesford took part. At the time of writing it is unclear what the consultation document will contain. There ought to be exhibitions, public meetings and other ways to inform the public about the impact of the alternative schemes, but such events are being resisted.

Cllr Alan Dean, Tel: 01279 813579/ 07710 105824,
Email:cllrdean@uttlesford.gov.uk

County Council News

We read the details of the Queen's Speech and this year the measures, which the Government intend to enact, will have a profound impact on the people of Essex.

The first is the stated intention to increase the number of houses to be built by 2020 by a further 3 million. Essex is already earmarked to accommodate 6,500 new homes a year to meet its target of 127,000 in the next fifteen years and, whatever the share of that further 3 million that is imposed on Essex it means that all of the years of discussion which have gone on to date will have been a waste of time. This part of Essex is already suffering from the expansion of Stansted Airport and the imposition of housing developments that will have an undesirable effect on its rural nature and when you couple this with the development of the "Independent Infrastructure Project Commission" which was also announced in the Queen's Speech we should be doubly concerned that those decisions which affect the health and well being of this community will, potentially, be removed from local control and handled by a centralised quango.

In the recent past the Government have made much of the need to devolve decision making to the local level and to that end Essex County Council have been at the forefront and had much success in enabling this to happen with the appointment of a Cabinet Member specifically charged with the development of "Localism". However, the centralising nature of many of the measures which this Queen's Speech has indicated does not square with the progress which has been made in this County and it will be necessary to ensure that ground is not lost and control of our communities passed back to Central Government.

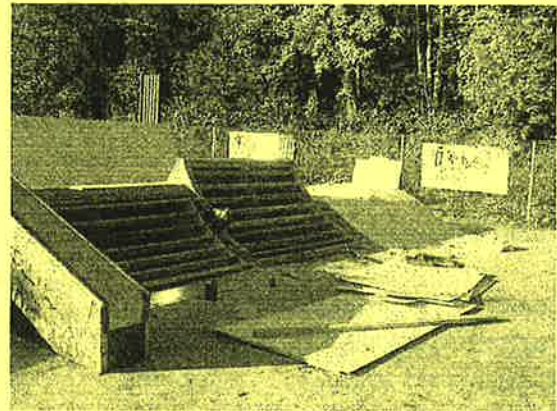
Of the other items mentioned, the development of Crossrail will offer a much-needed boost to the difficulties of travelling within Essex, albeit not for the commuters from Stansted, but there are a number of challenges that will need to be faced if the programme, which has been suggested for this major project is to be achieved. Not least of which is the fact that 8% of the UK Construction workforce will be needed to carry out the works involved and all centred on Stratford from 2010. Not sure if the Government have thought about it but there may be a clash with another fairly large project in that area at that time!

*Ray Gooding, County Councillor,
Stansted Division, 01279 813103,
crr.ray.gooding@essexcc.gov.uk*

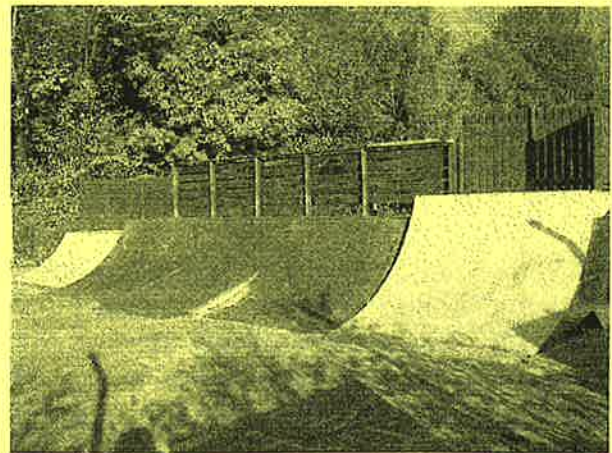
AND FINALLY

The Parish Council is delighted to announce that work to construct the phase 2 ramps at the Skatepark is progressing very well.

Ten Eighty Skateparks have been on site since 29 October and have been extremely fortunate with the weather. As we go to print, they are awaiting delivery of the Skatelite Pro, the top layer of the riding surface.



The addition of the extra ramps has filled the park and it now looks much more professional and enjoyable, as can be seen from these pictures.



Again, we offer our thanks to all those who have been so patient throughout this exercise, and to those who have raised funds to enable the park to be completed.

**ON BEHALF OF THE PARISH COUNCIL, MAY
WE WISH YOU ALL A VERY HAPPY CHRIST-
MAS AND PEACEFUL NEW YEAR**



REMEMBRANCE 2007



The national concern for the dead of two World Wars and those which have followed was reflected in the good turnout at Stansted's war memorial on 11th November. The parade, masterminded by the local branch of the Royal British Legion, included a strong contingent from the ATC, together with Scouts, Cubs, Beavers and Rainbows. Wreaths were laid by those youth organisations, the Royal British Legion, district and parish councillors, police, WI and schools. The names of the fallen were read by the Rector, Rev'd Paul Wilkin. The wreath-laying was followed by a service in St John's Church at which the address was given by the Methodist Minister, Rev'd David Mullins.



HIPS

Like it or not HIPS are here and for the time being at least are here to stay. The Government pressed on with its scheme to introduce compulsory Home Information Packs for all properties having three or more bedrooms being offered for sale since 10th September of this year, despite opposition from various areas. Successive governments have striven to introduce schemes to streamline the conveyancing process, eliminate gazumping, the rogue buyers and sellers, and to pass some of the initial costs of the procedure from the buyer to the seller. The latest of these is the introduction of HIPS. The concept is fine but the practicalities have yet to be realised and initial teething problems overcome. This is inevitable as is the fact that most sellers do not usually want to incur any costs or fees when selling their home or, more importantly now, in advertising their property for sale.

Sellers of residential properties having three or more bedrooms have to, at the very least, commission the preparation of a HIP before the property can be offered for sale on the market. You do not actually need to have the pack right away; the rules made so far simply provide that the seller must have commissioned a pack. If this has been done the property can be marketed in the usual way. The rules will, however, change in December, after which time the pack must have been prepared and be available to prospective buyers before the property goes on the market.

So what is a HIP?

Quite simply it is a pack of information comprising 'required' and 'authorised' documents a buyer is entitled to see before deciding whether or not to make an offer for the

property. All Required Documents (except the Energy Performance Certificate) must be no more than three months old at the time the pack is compiled.

Who prepares the HIP?

It is the seller's responsibility to prepare these documents but in reality it is envisaged that the task will fall either to specialist HIP providers, estate agents and, of course, solicitors for the legal components of the packs. This might also mean that the solicitor is the first port of call for a property seller rather than the last, as is frequently the case at present. The Sale Statement contains basic information about the property and seller represented in the pack. A home inspector usually produces the Energy Performance Certificate (EPC). This will tell you about the energy performance of the home, and suggest any improvements to reduce its environmental impact, eg installation of double glazing, improved insulation etc. It will also provide the home with an energy rating.

What will it cost?

This varies depending upon the type of service being offered by the estate agent or solicitor. An average cost of around £400 or thereabouts seems to be the norm for a standard pack. The seller must bear the cost but it is probably the case that most estate agents will have taken this into account when agreeing a commission rate with the seller at the outset and will build the cost of the pack into the fee structure.

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**Stansted Airport public inquiry:
*refusal is the only logical outcome***

Five months of forensic examination of the arguments for and against BAA's expansion proposals for Stansted have left the Spanish-owned airport company's case in tatters. BAA is now expected to announce yet another postponement to its timetable for submitting a planning application for a second runway at Stansted. The airport operator had demonstrated a spectacular lack of rigour in its assessment of the impacts of its proposals. BAA has been wholly unconvincing in its efforts to persuade the inquiry that its proposed development would have no material effects on the community or the environment. This should not be a surprise because, if approved, it would be the equivalent, in terms of scale of operation, to adding Birmingham Airport on top of the Stansted Airport that we have today. Nor has BAA been able to provide a shred of evidence to the inquiry that expanding Stansted beyond its present limit of 25 million passengers a year (mppa) would deliver any net economic benefits. The airport operator did not even deign to call a single witness to argue the economic case for its proposal. SSE presented detailed economic evidence to the inquiry which showed that BAA's plans were predominantly based on catering for more low-cost short haul leisure flights and would have a negative impact on the UK economy.

This is understood to be the first time that a planning application for airport expansion has been challenged on economic as well as environmental grounds. It reflects the dramatic change that has taken place over the past ten years as a result of the boom in cheap flights. In the past, increasing airport capacity enabled Britain to benefit from more inbound foreign tourism but now it has the main effect of encouraging more outbound departures.

This is also the first time that climate change has featured as a major issue at a public inquiry into airport expansion, bringing sharply into focus the Government's contradictory policies for reducing carbon emissions while at the same time supporting massive expansion of the UK's airports.

The inquiry, which began on 30th May, was held following an appeal by BAA against Uttlesford District Council whose Development Control Committee had unanimously turned down BAA's original planning application for unlimited passenger use of the runway and a significant increase in the number of permitted flights in a vote at the end of November 2006. The airport operator is currently limited to handling 25 million passengers a year. The Inspector is due to submit his report on proceedings and make his recommendations to the Secretaries of State for Communities and Local Government (Hazel Blears) and for Transport (Ruth Kelly) by Christmas. However, the contents of this report and its recommendations will not be made public until the Government has made a decision on the recommendations, probably several months into 2008. The application for a second runway at Stansted is also now expected in the New Year and this will be the subject of a further inquiry, irrespective of the decision which is ultimately made on the single runway application.

Carol Barbone,
Campaign Director,
Tel: 07775 523091
Email: cbarbone@mxco.uk



A ten-week course on Scandinavia with Rosemary Williams starts on Monday 7th January at the Day Centre. Enrolment on the first evening is at 7.30pm and subsequent sessions are at 8.00pm. There is no meeting on 11th February which is half-term and our AGM. The aim of this course is to introduce you to the history of the three fascinating countries that constitute Scandinavia: Norway, Denmark and Sweden.

Come and discover two thousand years of history with a cast of thousands including Eric Bloodaxe, Harold Bluetooth, King Canute, Hamlet, Gustavus Adolphus and Alfred Nobel, not forgetting King Henry VIII, Napoleon and the Tsar of all the Russias!

This course is for everyone. It needs no particular study skills but any knowledge or experience you have of things Scandinavian will certainly be valuable. Fee £40 (some discounts applicable). For further details please contact Brenda on 813080 or Peggy on 647213.

Peggy Honour

MOUNTFITCHET SENIORS

Another year has passed and we are all now thinking and preparing for Christmas and the New Year. Our Seniors Club has had a very successful year with meetings every 1st and 3rd Wednesday in the month, from 2.00pm- 4.00pm at the Day Centre in Crafton Green. We have had several full and half-day outings to the seaside and garden centres, which our members really enjoy. We are fortunate to have a very hard-working and efficient committee at the present time, but we are always on the lookout for new committee members, and indeed just new members! To see what it's all about, just pop in to one of our meetings or do not hesitate to give me a ring.

Our first meeting for 2008 will be on Wednesday 16th January – why not come along and see what an enjoyable afternoon you can have, with tea and biscuits, various games, a guest speaker, and a raffle?

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the Committee and members of the club for their loyal support over the past year, and I wish everyone a very happy Christmas and a good new year.

John Robinson,
Chairman
Tel: 812755

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Happy Days Part 1

Welcome to the new look 'Link'. Previous subscribers will be used to my nostalgic ramblings. If I repeat myself in this article please forgive me.

Stansted was a good place to grow up in. My recollections are post-1940 which is rather a long time ago. My early recollections are of coupons and a rationing of the good things, of shopkeepers who were friends, such as Eric Poole of the newsagents on Chapel Hill who always called me Dicky Tarpot! Life certainly went on at a slower pace. We did not have the distractions of computers, mobile phones, multi-channel HD television, etc, and we tended to make our own amusement. For a lot of us youngsters the friendships made then very often still endure today. We tended to be members of a particular gang and we had our favourable haunts in the village such as Alley Fields, the Mill pit and the pit off Stoney Common, all of which have since been built on. A favourite place was Castle Hills where we used to jump off the remaining bit of wall of the castle. It seemed quite a drop as I recall.

We certainly got up to many tricks but nothing malicious. Generally we had respect for our elders. I remember our stout custodians of the law, PC Birmingham, who sometimes would give us a good ticking off but we wouldn't dream of complaining, PCs Fred Ayres and Harry Griggs, who were well known to us and us to them as they constantly patrolled the village, on foot or bike. What a day when Stansted had its first Noddy bike, a water cooled Velocette, entrusted to Fred Ayres who never really seemed too safe on it. I heard tell that on occasion he actually fell off it. Probably a scurrilous rumour!

How different it is today with 'elf and safety, political correctness and the "I know my rights" culture. We certainly didn't suffer the restrictions that the modern generation do. There was a wonderful community spirit and everybody seemed to know each other.

The elders of the village used to relax on the seats at the fountain, passing the time of day and very often enjoying the entertainment of the constabulary on point duty at the cross-roads. Often a lone cyclist would be let out of Chapel Hill whilst a long line of traffic would be held up on the main road. Newmarket race days were very traumatic as the volume of traffic was greatly increased and sometimes total chaos reigned. These were the golden periods for the audience on the fountain seats. There were lots of local characters then, often given nicknames, such as Ditcher Griggs and Giant Turner, so named because of his diminutive stature. Although quite short, I believe Giant was a very good goal-keeper for Stansted. He was also a very good cricket umpire. There is the tale of the batsman who queried his dismissal. Giant said, "Look in the Observer and you will find out."

On the subject of cricket I was scorer for the 2nd XI graduating to a regular member of the side. I played under two captains, Ken Little and Billy Hampton. Billy was a stylish left hander (he will love that description if he reads this). He was always tickled by my impression of Harold Wilson and to this day always calls me Prime Minister when we meet.

A great character in the village was Bill Vincent. I remember him being persuaded to play for the 1st XI I believe,

when they were a man short. Bill only came to watch the match but I remember him striding onto the field in his ordinary non-cricketing clothes and proceeding to wallop the ball to all parts of Hargrave Park. Great stuff! I have previously recalled that wonderful character Bill (Coogan) Morton who loved his cricket. He used to take guard, shut his eyes and give a mighty swing sometimes connecting and very often not. We used to travel to away matches in the back of his pick-up which was a hair-raising experience as we hurtled round the country lanes hanging on for grim death.

Dick Pollard



Congratulations

Both families are so pleased to hear of the engagement of Darran Chopping and Helen Gould on Darran's 40th birthday. We wish them all the best in the world and much happiness.

Jean Chopping



If you have a special occasion to announce, please send us details (see page 32).



Uttlesford Community Travel

This year, 2007, marks the 10th anniversary of Uttlesford Community Travel. This vital service, which gives eligible residents of Uttlesford the ability to travel around the district at an affordable cost, came into being in March 1997. In those ten years it has allowed residents of Uttlesford, who are over 60, disabled, or rurally isolated to become members, giving them the mobility to make medical appointments, go shopping or visit friends.

It seems timely to remind readers of the 'Link' that whilst we are always open to new members for our Book-A-Ride service, we are especially looking for new groups to make use of our buses. Groups can hire a bus with a UCT driver, or with their own driver, once trained by our UCT Driving Instructor. To find out more details of our services please ring David Rose, Transport Manager, on 01371 875787.

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School News

Christmas is nearly upon us; where does the year go?! This is always a really busy and exciting time for the school with so much to do and to look forward to. This year Classes 5 and 6 are going to Duxford to look at how we celebrated Christmas during the Second World War. With the difficulties of rationing did the children still enjoy the festive season? We have also been thinking of other children, and have taken part in Operation Christmas Child, filling shoeboxes to be given to children not as fortunate as ourselves in other countries.

Christmas at Bentfield starts with Glitter Mornings for the younger children. We have Christmas productions from both Foundation and Key Stage 1 to look forward to. The amazing Christmas Lunch is prepared by our kitchen. All the children sit in the hall together with decorated tables, hats and crackers; they are then served the meal by members of staff. Next comes the amazing Staff Panto, for children only, and for many, the highlight of the year, followed by Christmas parties for all classes. The term finishes with our Carol Celebration and children and staff retire exhausted. It's a great time of year!!

Just a reminder that applications to start Reception Class next September have to reach Essex County Council by the beginning of December. Applications can be made online.

At Bentfield we welcome visits from parents and children who might be thinking of coming to our school. We can give you an individual tour of the school together with a chance to speak with the Head Teacher and the Nursery or Reception Teacher. The Special Needs Co-ordinator is usually available as well. If you are interested in either a Reception or Nursery place, and would like to visit the school, please give us a ring and we will be very pleased to arrange for you to visit us. We are also able to offer both a Breakfast Club (from 7.45am), and an After School Kids' Club (until 6.00pm). Both clubs are available to children who attend the school.

Do you feel like being MESSY?! Our Messy Play is great fun, and runs in the Nursery on Mondays from 1.45pm to 3.00pm during term time. It is open to children 18 months upwards. If you would like to come, contact the school or just turn up! Sessions cost £1.00 and children must be accompanied.

PTA News

Our recent sparkler party went with a bang (though not, I am glad to report, literally!!). We would like to thank everyone who turned up to support this event and help us to raise a fantastic £600 for the school. It was a mild evening and we were delighted to draw a great crowd of families from Bentfield and elsewhere. There was a really lovely atmosphere, which was undoubtedly assisted by Olly's delicious soup and proper sausages – and not least by Sue's mulled wine!! We would also like to say a very special thank you to all those who helped with the donkeywork behind the scenes – without them, none of our events would be possible.

We will be kicking off the festive season with our traditional Christmas Fair from 2.00pm– 4.30pm on Saturday 8th

December. You will find all the old favourites including home made cakes, plants, raffle, bottle tombola, sweet tombola, gifts, crafts, cards, and the ever popular second-hand stalls selling toys, books, DVDs and videos. As in previous years, each class will also be running their own stall - there will be lots of great games and prizes for the children, as well as the chance to make an early visit to Santa in his lovely outdoor grotto! Refreshments will be available in the hall if you fancy taking a break over a cup of tea and a hot mince pie. We look forward to seeing you there!

Thank you so much to everyone who has supported our events during 2007. Have a lovely Christmas and best wishes for a peaceful, happy and healthy New Year.

Alison Thompson
Bentfield PTA Co-Chairman



UGLEY WOMEN'S INSTITUTE

If you go down to the woods today ... or any time, think about Hatfield Forest. If you've never been: GO! If you've been dozens of times: go with eyes and ears wider open. Hatfield Forest has the oldest trees in Europe (never mind the 20th century cafeteria!).

Thus inspired by a talk (with sadly ill-projected slides) by Stuart Banks, who calls himself a trainee warden (or verderer), our members began to value anew this treasure of our local countryside. Here was more of an expert in wildlife and ecology than he admitted, with his intimate knowledge of insect, bird and plant life in the forest. Grazing cattle and sheep rights are still observed – yes, of course, you can still picnic!!

Writer's note: I once brought a party of Ranger Guides from London to walk from Harlow and stay in Forest Lodge at a Youth Hostel in the 1960s – and find that is now part of 'history' – barely remembered!

Phyllis Harrison

ADULT COMMUNITY LEARNING - ESSEX



Essex County Council

World War I

Sat 26th Jan 9.30 am - 3 pm, Peter Kirk

A one-day course (due to be led by David Morson) on the causes, events and consequences of the Great War, focusing on the Western Front. There will be an optional follow-up visit in March to Flanders Field, for a guided trip to the cemeteries and war museums, and to witness the Last Post at the Ypres Menin Gate. Cost £16 (Benefits £10) Lunch not included.

Language classes starting January at Newport
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The season continues on **Sunday 9th December** when **The Guildhall Strings**, directed by Robert Salter, will be performing a pre-Christmas concert in St John's at 3.00pm. Returning to the Village Music Club for the third time, the programme for this popular string ensemble will include music by Mozart, Dvorak, Janacek, Strauss and Tchaikovsky.



Sunday 20th January at 3.00pm is our third concert. This will feature the **McLeod/Sturfalt Duo**, comprising the well-known cellist, Marie McLeod, and pianist Martin Sturfalt. Marie and Martin started working together as a duo in 2003 when they were both students at the Guildhall School of Music and Dance in London. Playing regularly together has enabled them to build up a very extensive repertoire. Each year, the duo commissions and premieres one new work and presents it to new audiences. One such piece, a new work composed by Swedish composer, Gunnar Valkare, will be performed in their concert for us.



Both artistes also have solo careers and have performed in most of the major concert halls – the Royal Festival Hall, the Barbican, Wigmore Hall, Purcell Room and St John's, Smith Square – and with several well known UK and European orchestras. Marie is a past winner in the string section of the BBC Young Musician of the Year competition. Their programme will be Mendelssohn's Variations Concertantes; the new work by Gunnar Valkare; Five pieces in Folk Style by Schumann; and Chopin's great Sonata for 'cello and piano in G minor, op 65. Tickets for either concert are £10 each, children £3, available from Stansted Carpets, Nockolds Solicitors, Bishop's Stortford, Sonia Levy tel: 815282 or at the door.

Date for your 2008 Diary!

Our final concert this season will be on Saturday 8th March at 7.30pm – Thomas Barber (oboe), James Southall (piano).

Alan Corbishley



STANSTED MOUNTFITCHET
LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

We enjoyed an excellent piece of local history at our last meeting, when Stephen Ruff came to tell us of the Buntingford to St Margaret's Railway. Stephen had lived in Much Hadham all his life, his father coming to the village in 1935, and he had gathered a collection of slides and of stories, which had to be the envy of any local historian. His tales were gathered from across the years, all recorded in a card index system which he used as an *aide memoire*, but which also ensured that the details would be retained for posterity. Although the focus of his talk was the branch line and its history, through the pictures (some of them slides of 19th century photographs) he told us stories of the villages and people (many of whom he knew by name) served by the line.

The branch line opened in 1863 and conveyed passengers between Buntingford, Much Hadham, Widford, St Margaret's (for Stanstead Abbots) and Ware. The trains were originally driven by steam (as Stephen put it "The trains ran on coal, the drivers on tea") but the line was modernised in June 1959. It was closed to passengers in November 1964, and to goods finally in September 1965. The railway authorities did not seem to waste much time in removing the track and other signs of its existence and Stephen showed some interesting shots of the 'before and after'. Although there was a formula for disposing of the land involved, it seems that the bridges, in spite of having no present use, are still retained by the Railway Board.

Stephen's father formed the building firm of R C Ruff shortly after coming to Much Hadham, and when he was old enough, Stephen joined it - this gave him access to much information concerning the area. Very little is left of Widford station, which served Hunsdon, but during the War it was busy as there was an RAF airfield nearby. Some places were chosen by film-makers, and episodes of 'Foyle's War', 'Lovejoy' and 'St Trinian's' were made in the area. In Much Hadham, Richard Hunt raised, in 1892, the last windmill to be built in England - the second tallest and with eight sails - but it did not appear to be a commercial success and it was removed eventually. Much else was told us in which I became so interested that my notes were neglected; but when he stopped, Stephen promised to return to give us Part II - we are looking forward to that!

In December, we shall be hosting a Christmas Quiz, run by Paul Embleton, with Manuden History Society but on 3rd January, we shall be returning to hear John Drury tell us of 'Essex Workhouses'. May I take this opportunity to wish you all a very merry Christmas and a happy new year!

Ian Seavers

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STANSTED LUNCH CLUB

Our origins ...

The Stansted Lunch Club has survived for a whole decade and seems to be in pretty reasonable shape. Back in November 1997 the Stansted Mountfitchet & District Lunch Club arrived on the scene as a surrogate for a chamber of trade or commerce to succeed two failed village chambers. With some trepidation, 26 of us met for lunch to see if a lunch club might be an alternative, creating a channel of communication between the Parish Council and the local business community; providing a relaxed forum in which to engender networking opportunities and to offer a bi-monthly interlude spent in convivial and stimulating company. Since that time the format of lunches has changed but the essential ambience and atmosphere have remained. We have seen members come and members go but membership has steadily risen to around 280.

Around 30 people attended one or other of the first two lunches in 1997/8 and of those, 10 are still on the list; a survival rate of one third, which displays considerable endurance. Six of these crusty survivors booked in for the November 2007 lunch, and all ten, plus three subsequent joiners, are veterans of over half of the sixty-one lunches that we have now held. Such gluttony is glorious to behold and I am truly grateful for such stoicism. Indeed, I am profoundly grateful to all who have attended the Club's lunches and contributed so much to its reputation for providing an enjoyable interlude in stimulating, good humoured and relaxed company.

... and now

As we enter our second decade, November 2007 has seen a wonderful day at Newmarket races, which we shall unquestionably repeat in 2008. Sixteen of us assembled under the banner of Barry Root of The Essex Racing Club, at Swinford Paddocks, a hotel in Six Mile Bottom, for a coffee before visiting a trainer's stables and learning a little about the fascinating process of training racehorses. This was followed by an excellent lunch back at Swinburn Paddocks, after which we repaired to Newmarket Racecourse for an afternoon's racing. As luck would have it, the Tattersalls auctions were in progress that evening and we adjourned from the Racecourse to Tattersalls for a staggeringly sumptuous cream tea. With tea under our belts and a generally warm feeling of bonhomie, we stepped out of the tearoom into the auction arena to watch some horses being auctioned. One of those experiences of pure theatre, which one feels privileged to witness. Altogether, an excellent day, which was bathed in good weather and good company.

What gave me particular pleasure, however, was that our lunch sponsor and host on 7th November was Guy Schooling, who attended the first lunch, and that he hosted it in Sworders' Auction Rooms where we have enjoyed ourselves on no less than five occasions over the last ten years. Over 80 members attended the lunch and apologies from over 50 members, suggesting in excess of 130 actively interested members.

Future Lunches

30th January Nockolds
26th March Copyzone Archiving

Sponsor a Lunch in 2008

In May I am looking for a number of sponsors for The Lords Taverners Charity of which Barry Root is an East Anglia Region Committee member. As most will be aware, the Taverners do an enormous amount of good work such as providing incentives to play cricket in schools and clubs; enabling young people with special needs to participate in sporting activities; supplying mini-buses to special needs organisations; and

creating recreational facilities in conjunction with the National Playing Fields' Association. Barry is anxious to help the Taverners to raise their profile and to improve public awareness of their work in the region by enabling the Taverners to address groups like the Lunch Club.

The cost of sponsoring this particular lunch is in the order of £500. We are therefore proposing that five members of the Lunch Club each contribute £100. This kind of charitable sponsorship is a new departure for the Lunch Club and I shall be very interested to see how it works. I have two sponsors already and now only require three more. Don't miss your chance, contact me now. Please support us.

Alastair Richardson

Tel: 07850 295109

Email: Alastair@abr-ltd.com



MOUNTFITCHET MATHEMATICS AND COMPUTING COLLEGE



On 18th October, the seventh Annual Dinner organised by the Trust Fund of The Mountfitchet Mathematics and Computing College took place at Weston Homes Business Centre, Takeley. One hundred and forty people from the business community enjoyed a dinner, an auction and being entertained by after-dinner speaker, Andy Nicol, former captain of Scotland's Rugby Team and now a BBC Rugby Union correspondent.

Auction items included two tickets to New York with American Airlines, golf for four at Hanbury Manor with lunch, a box at the Oval, a meal at the Radisson SAS Hotel and the opportunity to drive a combine harvester. More than £4,000 was raised for the college to be spent on extra provision for individual students, such as more individual sport or music provision and accessing facilities not otherwise available.



We are uniquely privileged to have Trustees from the business community working to support us and raise funds for the college. It was a tremendous evening and Andy Nicol was not the bruiser I expected an international rugby player to be. He was modest, intelligent and charming and his after-dinner speech was highly entertaining and hilarious.

Jo Mullis
Headteacher

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Nature Notes

A few years ago buzzards were regarded as birds of the western counties with only occasional sightings from the eastern. Recently, however, they have become widespread if not common in the Herts/Essex border country. In the past year I have seen them over farmland near Enfield, near Much Hadham and in October over Hazel End. They are not favourite of the month with smaller birds and are frequently mobbed by crows; but for us they are a joy to behold as they circle, almost motionless, in the thermals, occasionally diving on an unsuspecting vole or rat. It can only be a matter of time before the red kite is seen in Stansted!

November and December are the principal times for the rut among our native deer. The bucks become mindful of nothing else when seeking a mate, hence their headlong dashes across roads in the darkness. Many a motorist, myself included, has experienced an impact - usually fatal for the deer, and the cause of a substantial insurance claim, even a write-off, for the driver. A notorious stretch is the B1383 between Ugley and Newport. The only precautions are to drive slowly and avoid the deer black-spots, if you know them.

Although November and December are not noted for wayside floral displays, there is invariably a length of rural roadside which does yield interest. One of our better examples is Pennington Lane which is blessed with some wide verges and banks of imported subsoil that bring variety. At the time of writing (early November) there were five plant species in bloom noted on a 50m length, and I would expect some of them still to be evident in December. The most obvious was hogweed, normally a rather coarse plant but being of late-germinations, these were of modest height and not yet invasive. Bellbine or convolvulus, usually a gardener's scourge, was at home here and producing its white flower. Also present was a small colony of bristly oxtongue, a less frequently seen member of that large family of yellow composites. This one is of southern European origin but has been naturalised here for many years. A near relative, a solitary dandelion, which had obviously mislaid its calendar, was also flowering. Common mallow was there giving a late show of blue/mauve colour.

At the northern end of the lane, bracken is creeping in. In small batches this fern can be attractive but it is notoriously invasive and of limited ecological merit. Frequent cutting is one of the few controls so we shall have to be vigilant and possibly reactive. Lanes such as this are essential corridors for wildlife. Urbanisation of the few flower-rich lanes which Stansted has must be resisted as their contribution is much more important than is usually appreciated.

A walk down and back in Pennington Lane, especially if accompanied by the goldfinch and jay which frequent the area at this time, is a truly recreational experience and one that can take less than an hour. Try it!

Derek Honour



494 (Stansted Airport) Squadron Air Training Corps

Panthers Together!

RAF Lakenheath visit 26th October

Cadets and staff from 494 Squadron ATC enjoyed a terrific day as guests of 494th Fighter Squadron US Air Force based at RAF Lakenheath.

The Squadrons enjoy close links and both share a panther as their unit emblem. The Stansted Airport based cadet unit were welcomed by Capt Martinez, who gave a briefing on the unit and the capabilities of their aircraft, the impressive F-15E Strike Eagle. The cadets were then given a tour by officers of 494th including the Strike Eagle Complex, Control Tower, Air Traffic Control, Equipment Section and the Bird Scaring Unit.



Cadets had the opportunity to 'fly' the F-15E in the simulator



and act as Weapon Systems Officers by dropping simulated bombs! The youngsters enjoyed a delicious lunch of fried chicken in the 'Panther Pub', the place where 494th meets to relax when off duty. The highlight of the day proved to be a visit to

the flight line where the cadets were shown around the Squadron Commander's Strike Eagle and were allowed to view the cockpit where they were given a talk by the aircrew. At the end of the tour the staff expressed their deep gratitude to the officers and NCOs of 494th, especially Capt Martinez and his fellow officers, call signs, Opus, Rolex, Stryker, SP Rock and SP Deja, who had pulled out all the stops to ensure that the day would be one to remember.

Simon Stacey,
Civilian Instructor

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If you would like to mark any occasion that is special to you or someone you know, by announcing it in the Link, please email a short message together with your name address and telephone number to: announcements@stanstedlink.org.uk or send the form below to 58 Chapel Hill, Stansted CM24 8AQ. Details must be submitted by the 11th of the month for publication the following month.

Message _____

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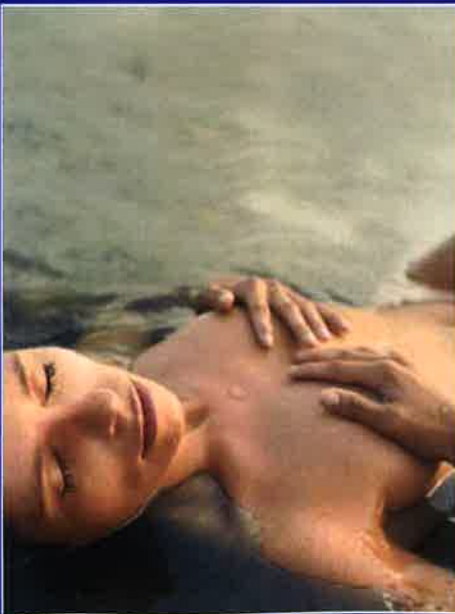
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