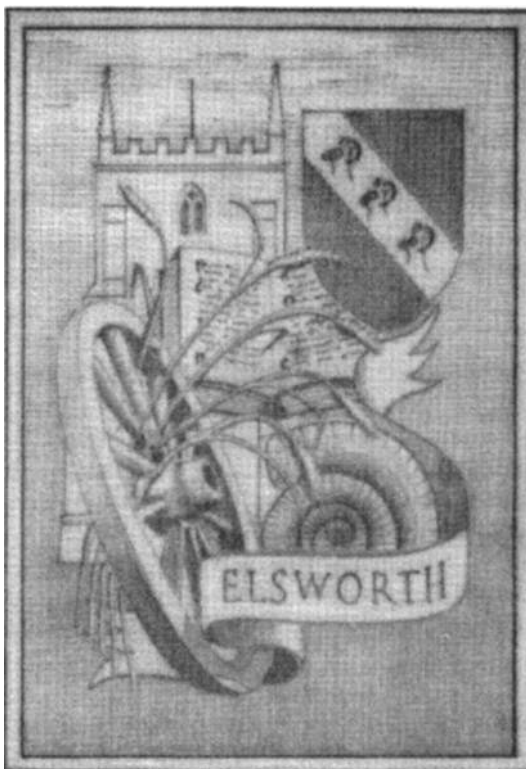


# The Elsworth Chronicle



**Issue No. 17**

**January 2004**

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This magazine was intended for December but unforeseen difficulties have resulted in delay. Contributions to the Elsworth Chronicle are always most welcome. Please send articles, letters and ideas to the editor at the address above. The magazine is held on file here and in the Cambridge Lion Yard Library and news items reflecting life in the village could well be of interest in the years to come.

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## Elsworth Post Office

Julie is now in office as our new sub-postmistress - we welcome her most warmly. At the same time we wish Ann every happiness for the future and our thanks for continuing at the post office in most difficult and sad circumstances.

It would seem very important to Elsworth that Julie's shop flourishes. Please give her all the support you can. Her introductory letter is noted below.

Dear All,

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself to you. My name is Julie Fieldhouse and I live in the neighbouring village of Hilton with my four children.

I am the newly appointed sub-postmistress of your post office - please support it; there are not many left.

Wishing you all a happy New Year,

Julie

## Fardell's Lane Reserve

The wood/scrub land between Fardell's Lane and the sports field is to be acquired by the parish. For some time [now into years] overtures have been made to conserve this land following the decision of the District Council not to proceed with a suggested scheme for bungalows on the site. It was felt that other sites would be more appropriate should housing needs be identified. To many Fardell's Lane is the most attractive lane in the village and the felling of the adjacent woodland would completely destroy its character. Further the area provides one of the few remaining vestiges of undeveloped land in the village where wildlife and people alike can enjoy a haven of tranquillity seemingly away from the bustle of everyday life.

A village meeting was called on the 29th April 2003 to discuss the project by the then chairman of the Parish Council, Alan Farrow. The gathering was addressed by the South Cambs Conservation Officer, Nick Grimshaw, following which villagers expressed their unanimous support for the land to be managed as a wild-life sanctuary of the form noted above.

An expressed intention to approve a scheme in principle is one matter; to enlist people prepared to give time and effort could well be another. Here in Elsworth, though, we are fortunate in having a group of highly motivated volunteers who have already given up much time to the tasks necessary to get the project underway. An agreed vision was vital as was the development of a management plan which would not only provide an internally agreed line of action but which also would meet the District Council's requirements which would enable the transfer of the land to occur. In particular special mention should be made of the prodigious work of Berry Kenny, the group Chairman, Paul Harding and Ian Penfold, the group secretary: within a few weeks they had covered matters which others might well have pondered over for months. We owe them our most sincere thanks. The supporting committee, too, is serving the village well and also deserves our praise and gratitude.

Constitutionally the group is a sub-committee of the parish council, to which it reports. Unlike other working parties or sub-committees of the parish council, however, it comprises members from outside the parish council, indeed non-members predominate. Outside the sub-committee a small group of keen and seemingly energetic men and women are prepared to assist on the land and will be called to action when the time is right. The project promises to be a most interesting venture. If after reading Berry Kenny's article which follows you are interested in joining us and have not yet given your name, please contact Ian Penfold [tel. 267321] at 12 Rogers Close or Berry Kenny [tel. 267504] at 8 Fardell's Lane.

AWF

# **Fardell's Lane Reserve**

## **Plan put to SCDC**

The area south of Fardell's Lane is planned to be handed over to the Parish Council by SCDC, to be improved and maintained as a local refuge for wildlife and an area of tranquillity for local residents.

Valuable reports were provided by SCDC on Habitat Assessment and a Tree Survey for the area. On the basis of these and local expertise and knowledge, the Management Plan required by SCDC was prepared.

Various proposals were considered and basically it was decided to follow the recommendations of the Habitat Assessment with some minor modifications. In other words to carry out as little "management" as possible, the main emphasis being on improving access through the area. The main proposals are the following:

- Restoration of the existing pond and providing some seating in the area;
- Re-establishment of paths;
- Management of bushed and wooded areas;
- Cutting of the existing open area which has become overgrown with weeds and maintaining paths through it;
- Improving the entrance(s) from Fardell's Lane;
- Carrying out tree surgery on the large trees along the Fardell's Lane boundary, to remove dead branches etc;
- Installing nesting boxes, labelling trees etc.

This work would be carried out using locally available resources and voluntary labour, except for the tree surgery, and it is hoped that the school would become involved in the preparation of a commemorative plaque and labelling of trees.

It is proposed that the pond restoration, improvement of paths and cutting of the open area, would be carried out early in 2004, before the breeding season, which would open up the area for local use quickly. The remainder of the work would be completed after the breeding season between October 2004 and March 2005.

There would be an on-going maintenance requirement which, again, would be carried out by local resources supported by voluntary assistance. This would involve cutting of the open area, maintenance of the paths and some woodland management.

Berry Kenny

## Chairman's Farewell

After ten years as Chairman of the Parish Council I [Alan Farrow] stood down from that office in the early part of last year. The decade has passed remarkably quickly. It has been a period full of interest - if interposed at times with the more humdrum matters which must receive attention. Council elections could add spice and introduce an element of a competitive game - indeed being placed first in the last poll contested was my only reward! Many thanks for your trust.

Much remains in mind. The Millennium Feast Week stands out in particular, when events were held each day for seven days and witnessed in the village a marked feeling of togetherness and belonging. It was so well supported. The Jubilee celebrations, too, were well worthwhile and brought enjoyment and fellowship. Coming so soon after the Millennium festivities, the celebrations were less extensive, but nevertheless very enjoyable. Well worth the effort demanded.

Still in memory mode, there were awards and accolades which came our way. In 1994 we won the 'Best Kept Village in Cambridgeshire' award. We had to collect and erect the Fairhaven Trophy ourselves - no mean feat considering it was almost the height of a small telegraph pole. At the ceremony we planted flowers at its base. I remember Lord Fairhaven remarking that he never knowingly before had been faced by so many pansies at an award ceremony! We were somewhat surprised to win the competition, and in view of the efforts necessarily involved in erecting our award, resolved to make a purposeful effort to retain it by endeavouring to improve the appearance of the village. This we did, only to find we didn't next year proceed beyond the First round! Recognition, too, came to the quality of life in the village. The Cambridge Evening News reported the results of a County wide competition in which villages were compared and designated in categories ranging from sleepy to vibrant with divisions in between noting semi active and active. To the surprise of some here, Elsworth was in the vibrant class!

Throughout the last ten years or so it was heartening that many parishioners were willing to put to me their problems or worries relating to our village or homes, whether of an individual nature or relating also to others, and I thank them for their confidence in so doing. In taking up these matters, I found a tenacious approach mostly brought success with those in authority, provided the case was sound and it was put at the appropriate level of influence. It would be wrong to note matters relating to individuals, but the collective issue of reinstatement of the St. Ives Monday bus service - popular for those wishing to visit the market - is an example that may be cited. Of course, matters were not always straight forward. On the occasion of the 2001 flood, I was horrified to see the flood water rising relentlessly towards the doors of houses in Brook Street. I dialled emergency services and was given a flood-help number. A most helpful person listened to my request for sandbags but when it came to discussing delivery points I discovered he was in Northern Ireland! He then gave me a number which he thought covered this area, but the subsequent trail led firstly to Peterborough, and then a private number in Cambridge which was continually engaged. Eventually the bags were procured from a different trail.

To be of service a parish council must not only be responsive, but innovative. Reverting to

our bus service as an example, its frequency -or lack of it - clearly had been a matter of discontent for many a year, and fresh ideas needed perhaps to be considered. The possibility of a shuttle service to Bar Hill from which links could be made to Cambridge and elsewhere came to mind. The idea was accepted by the County and was used to serve not only Elsworth but the nearby villages. I do hope it has proved worthwhile, but the buses I've seen do not seem to have many passengers. It would be tedious to embark on a catalogue of enterprises which come to mind - one though which provided particular satisfaction was the persuasion of the County to take ownership of the Brook Street bridges by virtue of public rights of way, the significance being that maintenance became the responsibility of the County.

Not all initiatives bore fruit, of course. - a scheme to provide mini-bus transport to Bar Hill for those wishing to enjoy skate board facilities didn't attract support from our young people or their families; a village tennis proposal with an offer of a court site similarly attracted too few supporters. Overtures designed to promote the burial of power and telephone cables looked promising but failed at the delivery stage. It is clearly vital though that we keep faith with the wishes of the village and take action accordingly. It was pleasing to see the involvement of parishioners in responding to two questionnaires in the 1990s, the first relating to priorities with regard to identified projects proved useful, and the second - the Millennium questionnaire - probably more so as it sought ideas for projects which were then put to the vote. Such involvement, whether formal or by more informal means, must surely be the power-house behind council deliberations and actions.

Parish Councils have but limited powers and many matters have to be argued through with higher authorities. Chairmanship is very time-consuming and what has kept me in post latterly was the desire to see three major projects implemented - the brook, traffic calming, Fardell's Lane wood. In local government, matters can take seemingly an age to mature from initial thoughts to completion and marked progress on these three was no exception.

To take these in order. Firstly the brook. Although improvement in terms of flood control and appearance had been a matter of debate over many years, the disastrous flood of September 2001 made it clear that a major comprehensive plan was urgently required in addition to localised de-silting and stream bed and bank improvement. The Environment Agency, the District Council and the County Council all responded without delay to a call for consorted strategy and action, resulting in the measures noted elsewhere in this magazine. The framework for flood control measures has now been identified and detailed work is in the hands of hydraulic surveyors. Hopefully the ravages of flash floods will be confined to the past.

A decade of personal lobbying brought little reward with regard to traffic calming. The campaign was focused on speed cameras, being the least conspicuous and probably most successful of preventive measures. As the response from the County was always that money was reserved for accident 'black spots' it seemed sensible to explore the possibility of sharing costs with a cluster of nearby villages rather than wait for a fatal accident to occur. Having potential partners to share a camera on rotation was however not

acceptable to the County on the grounds that manpower and finances were not available to keep the camera operative. Subsequent measures allowing speeding fine revenue to be processed back failed to elicit a different response, a stand now supported by H.M. Government. However, hopefully, our traffic calming worries are now also of the past as the County has embarked on a major scheme designed to slow the anticipated increased traffic passing through when the lengthy major work on the A14 commences.

The land off Fardell's Lane on its south side has promoted much thought and discussion over a lengthy period. An article appears on another page. Here I should like to note that now it has been given protective status it is safe from commercial development and the District Council has agreed it should be acquired by the parish. The project has received active support beyond expectation and its future would seem exciting and secure - two words not normally used in association!

All three major areas of concern now then seem secure. To turn briefly to the future, it would be good if greater interest was to be taken in parish council affairs. Not all elections are contested; indeed at the present nearly half of the parish councillors have been co-opted. It is good to see involvement through the Fardell's Lane committee. Perhaps this is the way forward - local expertise and enthusiasm enlisted for specific projects or purposes to augment the endeavours of the council itself. It is a way of bringing meaningful participation into village affairs.

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## Obituaries

### **John Shanks (24.06.25 - 18.11.03)**

John was a native of Kent, being born at Chiselhurst on June 1925. By profession he was a solicitor, having been trained with his brother in London. In 1960 he and Sheila moved to Elsworth, before which he was a solicitor at the Ministry of Pensions in London. While at Elsworth he was involved with the John Hilton Bureau, a legal advice column in the News of the World, before becoming a solicitor at Pye in Cambridge and then C.E.I. when that organisation was taken over by Philips.



John served the village well. He was a member of the parish council for many years as well as being clerk to the Elsworth Charities. In retirement he devoted energy to Dale Farm - time spent in tune with his early love of horticulture, which remained.

John leaves a widow, Sheila, and three children, Edward, Philippa and Rebecca, by whom he is sadly missed.

## **Margaret Warboys**

In April last, Margaret died aged 81 years. A native of Ayrshire, she moved with Rowley into Brockley Farm in 1946, where she was to make their home for some 57 years. Throughout this period she retained her warm Scottish accent.

Margaret was a wonderful homemaker, very hospitable, a superb cook and an accomplished needlewoman. She was also a talented flower arranger whose expertise is greatly missed by the church team. Her interests ranged even more widely. She was a member of the Huntingdon Caledonian Society, for whom she and Rowley hosted many barbeques, was an enthusiastic Scottish country dancer and a knowledgeable and enthusiastic gardener. But most of all she was a loving wife, mother and grandmother and is sorely missed by the family.

## **Margaret Wayman**

Margaret died at Hinchingsbrooke Hospital on 15.12.02, aged 68 years. An Elsworthian in every sense, Margaret was born in the village, worked and lived here throughout her life.

As a child she would set out from her home in Brockley Road to the school in Brook Street, where she remained until she reached school leaving age. The village school at that time was an all-age institution, the village college at Swavesey not then being in existence. After school years Margaret worked for her uncle, who owned The George & Dragon, assisting with his newspaper delivery agency which covered seven villages. Her base was what is now the main dining room of the George. Later she became a very popular assistant behind the bar. She was an excellent darts player and retained a keen interest in the game through later years.

Following her uncle's retirement, she and her cousin Edna took over paper deliveries in the village, work she combined in the 1970s with employment in the school kitchen. On her own retirement, Margaret was ever ready to be of assistance to other people. She was in great demand as a 'cat sitter', among whom she had many friends. Margaret was a delight to know, always calm and seemingly contented. She is sadly missed.



# Joe Braybrook

With the death of Joe Braybrook in September 2003, at the age of 87 years, the village has lost one of its older and most respected residents.

Joe was born in Elsworth and lived in the village all his life apart from a spell in the army during the Second World War where he saw action in Italy. Failing health over recent years had caused him to gradually reduce his involvement in some of the local activities in the village.

Always a very prominent member of the community, for many years Joe served on the Parish Council and was a churchwarden for over 45 years. He was also a chairman of the Elsworth branch of the Royal British Legion. Any activities in the village would find Joe involved in some way either planning or supporting. He was a particularly good servant of Holy Trinity Church, raising significant amounts annually for church funds over many years.

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He was a life long member of Elsworth Sports Club and chairman for a great many years. During his earlier years he played a very active part in cricket and although not a player was a keen follower of the football team. When he eventually gave up being a player he could then be seen in his white coat umpiring for cricket matches.

Even after his playing days were finished, he still remained a very keen member of the Sports Club and continued to take an active part on the executive committee up to the time of his death. He was a strong supporter of all sporting activities and during recent years encouraged the club to seek to improve the facilities for club members. One of Joe's ambitions was to replace the old and dilapidated pavilion with a new building with up to date facilities. Happily Joe was able to see the fulfilment of his wish and was able to attend and enjoy the official opening of the new pavilion. The sports club has lost its longest serving member who will be greatly missed.

Joe is survived by his sister Win and the sports club extends their deepest sympathy to her.

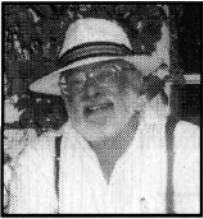
*Maureen Stevens*  
Elsworth Sports Club

## Henry Rose 2.11.33 - 22.11.03

Henry was born in the East End of London of parents of Jewish origin who had emigrated from Russia. Quite early in life he developed asthma and was not expected to live to adulthood. Approximately half of his childhood was spent in hospitals,

children's homes and open air schools. Henry had not been taught to read until his insistence at 9 years of age, after which this great new joy brought him an ever increasing knowledge of many disciplines.

During the war Henry was evacuated to Suffolk, which he loved and which gave him a desire to live in the country. Farming and countryside issues became permanently of great interest. He eventually trained as a teacher, and worked at St. Neots. Later he became a Home Tutor for Huntingdonshire, working with handicapped or difficult children.



Henry was an imaginative, supportive and loving husband and father. His family were his bedrocks from which he could follow his varied interests - he was an active member of the Society of Friends [Quakers] and several self-help disability groups and loved music and art. He bore ill health with much courage and good humour. He would always happily share the time of day with people he met on fitness walks in the village, and the affection he evoked was manifest on the occasion of his funeral.

Sony a and the family thank very warmly all who supported Henry during his lifetime and supported them at the burial service.

*Last Summer Henry wrote:*

"I want to be buried in Elsworth because I had my home and garden here - I grew some roots. I want a headstone as a lasting record that here a wandering Jew found a home."

## **Len Bosworth**

Len was born in Great Gransden on the 3rd January 1923 and died in Over on 2nd September 2003, although the greater part of his life was spent in Elsworth where his funeral service was held. He was one of ten children, three of whom were boys and seven girls. In the 1930s on the death of his father, he and his brothers were brought up in Spurgeon's Orphanage, but the family, including the boys, moved to Elsworth towards the end of that decade, living at Mercia's Cottage in Brockley Road. Later he was to set up his home with his wife Phyllis and their son Gerald and he was to remain with us until approximately three years back when a move was made to Over.

During his working years in Elsworth, Len worked on the land at Pitt Dene Farm and in retirement served the village well by regularly cutting the grass areas for which the parish council assumed responsibility. He is a great loss to the family.

## Jotting from your County Councillor

Well, the government gave us an interesting challenge when they announced the financial settlement for local authorities at the end of last year. You may recall that in 2002 they overhauled the way that they funded local authorities. The result was that Cambridgeshire was finally given the Area Cost Adjustment - the extra allowance to cover the high costs of living near to London; but at the same time they announced a system of floors and ceilings. This was designed - they claimed - to protect local authorities who lost out financially as a result of the new funding mechanism. Fair enough, but the losers were those authorities who technically had gained from the new system. So Cambridgeshire saw nearly £10m of its grant withheld. Funding that deficit accounted for almost all of the council tax increase last year. The promise was that the ceiling would be phased out over a few years. Now call me cynical, but I have to confess that I was never convinced by this. I don't like to say "I told you so", but this year we have seen the problem become even worse. The headlines claimed that Cambridgeshire had the best settlement of any local authority in the country. True - but the small print told a different story - the government have seen fit to withhold over £11m for the next financial year. This has presented us with a very interesting dilemma. The Department for Education has decreed that every pupil should receive a 4% increase in cash terms and that every penny given to us (before the £11m ceiling was imposed) should be passed on to schools. If we do not do so, Charles Clarke, the Education Secretary has threatened - if not promised - to call in our budget and make us fund the increase. Fine, but in the red corner stands Nick Raynesford, the local government minister. He has decreed that no local authority should increase its council tax by more than a reasonable amount and if they do, he will call in their budget, so as to ensure that the council tax increase is reasonable. He hasn't, of course, defined what he means by reasonable, although figures of 4% and 6% have been bandied around. So we are stuck between the proverbial rock and the hard place. Keep one minister happy and we upset the other and vice versa. We said last year that we intended to try to keep council tax for this year at 6% and we are therefore consulting on that option. But it is only fair to point out that a 6% increase will only be achieved with a level of pain - there will be cuts to services; for example significant cuts in day care services for the most vulnerable, long waiting times for social services, cuts to subsidized rural bus service. On the other hand, we could avoid these cuts and increase the council tax by 8% or even 10%. But that would cause pain to those on fixed incomes and of course, would almost certainly incur the wrath of Nick Raynesford. So, if you have any bright ideas as to how we can square an impossible circle, please let me know!

In the meantime I hope you all have a very prosperous New Year!

I am always available for consultation, either in person or by phone, letter or e-mail. I can be reached at the address or telephone number below.

*Shona Johnstone*  
Highfield

5 Lowburyholme Road, Over

Tel: 230565 E-mail: [Shona-Johnstone@council.camcnty.gov.uk](mailto:Shona-Johnstone@council.camcnty.gov.uk)

# Parish Council News

## **Flood Issues**

A number of initiatives have been and continue to be taken to alleviate re-occurrence of the October 2001 floods.

## **Downstream**

A number of working parties have continued to clear the brook as it goes downstream out of the village. This has been quite an adventure not just because of the amount of debris but also the difficulty of access and depth of water in places. It has also revealed some narrowing of the channel by tree growth. The exercise is by no means finished but good progress has been made and the EPC would like to thank all those that have given their time and energy.

## **Surveys**

Two surveys have now been commissioned. The first relates to water flowing from the west eventually coming down Fardell's Lane and the second to the headwaters. The EPC should have the results of this work in the New Year.

## **Sluice Area**

The EPC is keen to move ahead with the installation of a much needed weed screen at the sluice. The intention is at the same time to replace the sluice brick work with a configuration that will optimise the flow at this point.

## **Future Works**

The re-directing of the Fardell's Lane culvert was put on hold pending adequate funding by the Cambridgeshire County Council. It is understood that the money has now been found and we look forward with anticipation that this will be done in the first half of 2004. On completion of this work the Fardell's Lane bridge area will be landscaped.

Further de-silting is intended. It had been hoped that this would have been done this year but contractors appear to have more enticing opportunities elsewhere.

## **Fardell's Lane Reserve**

Following an open meeting in April 2003 the District Council has decided that it would like to see the development of a 'pocket park' (nature reserve - village amenity) on the land to the south of Fardell's Lane. At the time of writing plans are at an advanced stage and will be submitted to the District Council before Christmas. This should trigger transfer of ownership (for a nominal sum); provide technical assistance and some funding toward initial costs.

In broad outline the draft plan envisages little change to the general nature of the site but it would be managed and looked after.

**The proposals include:**

- Re-creating the small pond behind the Broad End bungalows
- Levelling and cutting the meadow
- Removal of some of the blackthorn scrub
- Some limited tree planting
- Improving access

Most of the work will be done on a voluntary basis so if you would like to get involved with this please contact Liz Sim on 01954 267664.

**Traffic Calming**

Whilst the traffic calming proposals have been met with mixed feelings the responses, following the September exhibition, indicate a strong body of support for the general intent. The traffic census at the beginning of October highlighted some high speeds. As an indication, on the Boxworth Road just to the Cambridge side of the George & Dragon the average speed was 33 mph, with two thirds of the traffic over the speed limit. The top 15% were travelling in excess of 40 mph!!

The scheme has not been fully agreed by the EPC but all being well work will commence in the first half of 2004.

**Wheelie Bins**

The wheelie bins have arrived. There have certainly been mixed views on this and it generated a lot of debate at the AGM and follow up meeting with the District Council. In light of this the EPC wrote to the District Council expressing concern over the apparent lack or limited consultation that had taken place and the way the scheme would be operated (albeit the EPC applauded the recycling of more household waste). The response from the District Council did not add much to the debate other than to say that they were not required to consult and that it is not currently economical to collect plastics.

In the hope of avoiding wheelie bin graffiti the EPC has acquired a set of stencils, paint, marker pen etc - please contact Liz Sim if you would like to use the kit.

**Web Site**

If you have not already done so then please visit the village website at [www.elsworthvillage.org.uk](http://www.elsworthvillage.org.uk). Particular thanks go to Dave Holland who has set it up and has done the lions share if not all of the inputting. It is early days and there is a lot more that can go on. If you would like to get involved or have ideas of what you might like to see in the web site then please contact Liz Sim on 01954 267664.

## **Anglia in Bloom**

The Anglia in Bloom judges gave Elsworth an encouraging review this year and a merit award. A recurring theme was that the village has a lot to offer and much potential. The EPC would like to place emphasis on the general appearance of the village over the next two years or so. If anyone has input or wants to get involved then please let us know.

## **Seats and Doggy Bins**

A new seat has been bought (at some expense) in the year and is securely fixed by the swings. Dog litter bins have been put in Fardell's Lane and Broad End and it is proposed that a third will go near the church.

Will dog owners please use these bins. A recent complaint has been received through the school that a number of parents have commented on the amount of dog poo on the Broad End verges - although it is apparent that this is not the only place that this occurs!

## **Broadband**

Tired of waiting on the web - then vote for the big pipe! 116 people have now registered for Broadband which comfortably exceeds the 100 registrations needed to trigger upgrading of the exchange. To secure the case and if you want Broadband but have not registered then please do so on [www.btopenworld.com/votebroadband](http://www.btopenworld.com/votebroadband).

## **Parish Council Changes**

The May 2003 Parish Council election was uncontested, there being nine candidates for nine places. There were however some changes.

Maureen Stevens, Terry Stevens and David Nuttycombe decided not to stand on this occasion. The Parish Council thanks each of them for their efforts and contribution over a number of years. New members comprise David Holland, Ian Macgregor and James Witherow.

Last but not least Alan Farrow, after some ten or so years, decided to step down from the Chair. A special thank you to Alan for those years of uninterrupted dedication and service.

*The Parish Council now comprises:*

Ian Maddison	Chairman
Annie Howell	Vice Chair
Alan Farrow	
Robin Grange	
David Holland	
Ian Macgregor	
Anthony Taylor	
Michael Taylor	
James Witherow.	

## RSPB Hope Farm, Knapwell

Spring and Summer 2003 has been our fourth breeding season for birds at Hope Farm. We have a three-year crop rotation, so this year we had the same crops in the fields as we did when we arrived on the farm. This has given us a great opportunity to take stock of how breeding bird numbers have changed, as they shouldn't have been affected by different crops being in particular fields.

Our most significant increase has been with skylarks (see below). Linnets have also increased over the last three years from six to 16 territories, and yellowhammers have risen from 14 to 18 territories. Sedge warblers bred in the oilseed rape this year, a new breeding species for the farm.

### **Skylarks Soaring**

In early Spring, before nesting began, our counts of singing male skylarks varied between 15 and 19 birds across the farm. Numbers rose into April and our final count over the whole nesting season was 27 territories. This is a continuing year-on-year increase based on a consistent survey each year - previous three years' territory counts were 10, 18 and 24 territories.

Most significantly, this year the crops were distributed in the same fields as they were in 2000, when there were only 10 territories. The first nests found this year were in the oilseed rape fields while the crop was still short. As the oilseed rape grew too tall for the birds, the wheat became more suitable and we found nests in this crop. Later nesting attempts were mostly in the fields with undrilled patches and widely spaced rows, as we had hoped. Detailed monitoring this year again confirmed that the undrilled patches provided the greatest benefit to skylarks because they provided both access in to the tall, thick crop and provided an area where food for the chicks could be easily found.



Skylark breeding territories have increased from 10 to 27 over the last four summers.

# The Sluice

Residents in house in Elsworth when Millennium projects were being considered will recall that the restoration of the sluice received considerable support in the ensuing poll. Although there was to be only one winning project, it was anticipated that village feeling thus expressed could be used as a guide for future projects as and when seemed propitious when our precept allowed [the money available to the parish council through the council tax].

The horrific flood of 2001 could well have altered that perspective - all would surely have given flood prevention top priority. But are the two notions in conflict? To answer this, only professional expert advice can be trusted when dealing with the dynamics and intricacies of surface drainage, particularly when flash water is inserted into the equation.

To focus only on isolated sections of a stream where floodwater transgresses could lead to misconceptions, of course. Clearly the water at any point is related to many interacting factors upstream and down. To address this point, directly following the flood of 2001 the Environment Agency, the District Council and the County Council were contacted and involved so as to share expertise and, where appropriate, plant and labour. South Cambs then focused on clearing the brook course north of the village while the County engaged the engineering consultants, W.S. Atkins, and improved the stream in the village. Subsequently hydraulic and topographic surveys were commissioned by the Parish Council so as to identify possibilities of upstream temporary diversion of floodwater which could markedly reduce the surge of flash flood water passing through the village.

Now the necessary overall approach is in danger of being disregarded with respect to the sluice area, where upstream considerations are being ignored, as also is the advice of consultants. Concern is noted in the section below, where also is a probable answer to the question posed in the second paragraph. In fairness the contrary view must also be presented, and this will be found in an article on another page.

## Concern at Demolition Proposal

1 At issue is a plan promoted through the Parish Council to demolish the sluice wall and replace it with piers facing upstream on the expectation that thereby flood water would be reduced. However, **consultant engineers to the County, W.S. Atkins, find this to be fallacious.** They point out in written reports **it is the smallness of the nearby culverts which cause the back-up not the sluice wall**, a view endorsed by consultant water engineers in the village.

2 The compiler of the sluice demolition scheme intimates that an officer of the Environment Agency has stated that piers could promote water flow to the culverts. But, of course, **this is of no consequence if the culverts beyond are too small to receive it.**

3 The Environment Officer also suggested an engineer's report be obtained; this is to hand with the findings noted above, under '1'

4 In favour of demolition it is argued that a small lip where the sluice gates are positioned is of consequence, a view not shared by water engineers. However, the lip could be lowered easily and de-silting of the area immediately upstream would completely negate this.



5 W.S. Atkins point out that the existing sluice wall brickwork could act as a **base for a weedscreen**, which could also act as a safety factor.

### **Need for an Overall Perspective**

1 The need for an overall perspective rather than a piecemeal approach is strongly advocated by engineers.

2.The proposal for sluice demolition is being considered in isolation without regard to possible upstream measures now being investigated by surveyors which could control the flow through the village of flash-flood water.

### **Does it Matter if the Sluice Wall is Demolished?**

1.Those favouring restoration favour re-capturing the beauty of the not so distant past. Extrapolating from this, the old style sluice gates could be left in the open position being supplemented from the late Spring and Summer by small water pressure-operated gates which could hold back a little water to allow for the restoration of a small Summer pond - perhaps with ducks. At other seasons the gates would either be locked open or removed, thus allowing for the free flow of water.

2.If such a scheme is favoured it would seem most foolish to embark on demolition, eradicating part of our heritage with which we have been entrusted, when expert opinion states this would be to no purpose. There has been a sluice in the village at least since Victorian times and it is marked on the OS map of 1886. Demolitionists claim our present sluice wall dates only from the 1950s. This would not seem to be the case - investigations reveal that earlier modifications have only essentially involved the incorporation of the two western culverts and a slight lowering of the wall at an earlier date.

In writing the above, it should be emphasised that the writer wouldn't hesitate to endorse proposals for the removal of the sluice wall if its presence was a factor increasing the likelihood of flooding. Flood control and prevention are of prime concern and personally have necessitated countless hours of discussions and correspondence leading to the multi-council involvement noted. The proposals for demolition would seem in need of further consideration. The purpose of these words, and an invitation for the contrary view contained in Ian Maddison's article on another page, is to appraise readers of the matter so that when it is put to the village at the **special meeting promised**, parishioners will have a background of knowledge regarding the positions held. A closed meeting held recently at which only the demolition of the sluice wall was promoted by its author without an invitation either to expert engineers or those known to hold alternative views, would hardly seem to meet the case.

In a nutshell, a better solution would seem possible than the seemingly inappropriate sluice demolition scheme and **a plea is being made for recognition of the expert opinion available**. Personally I am happy to be so guided. Not only should we seriously give heed to reports in hand and to those commissioned, but must take notice of two consultant water engineers resident in the village. Both have offered the writer the benefit of their knowledge and are only too willing to guide the village in its deliberations.

Alan Farrow

## Sluice or not to Sluice

After lengthy discussions the Parish Council has decided to push forward with plans for the removal of the existing sluice structure and to replace it with guide walls that funnel the water into the three culverts. A properly constructed self clearing weed screen(s) would then be installed between the guide walls in front of the culverts.

The history behind this is that the need for a weed screen was identified in the 1990's. The flood of October 2001 however refocused attention on the inadequacy of the current weed screens that are pressed up hard against the culvert mouths. The Environment Agency and Atkins (Consulting Engineers) concur with this need.

The existing structure (the sluice) is not effective from a water flow perspective. The Environment Agency has intimated that there could be up to a 20% increase in flow and Atkins has said that there are 'significant losses' at low flows.

The general condition of the sluice is deteriorating, bricks are breaking up and are at the point of needing some attention. The sluices themselves do not work and if they did there would be a concern that they may be closed when it rained. They were last rebuilt/refurbished in the 1950s.

In concluding the Parish Council has reached its view (and called a meeting of Brook Street residents at which those present supported the scheme) on the basis that:

- The brook is first and foremost a waterway/storm drain.
- There is a need for a properly constructed weed screen.
- There is no point in erecting a weed screen around and over an inefficient structure.
- The three culverts are the first and only means through the village before the water spills on to the road. Their ability to pass water should be optimised not restricted.
- If more water can be got through earlier then there is less to back up when it does.

Ian Maddison

## **Elsworth, Knapwell & Conington W.I.**

Elsworth, Knapwell & Conington WI celebrated their 80th birthday in June 03 this year. Members were given sparkling wine or fruit juice as the Committee gathered together for photographs, as the cake was cut and Gill Skillings, the President, proposed the toast. Following this a lively "Beetle Drive" was held, the winner was Isobel Farrow who scored the most points over eight games. Afterwards, everyone helped themselves to a delicious savoury buffet supplied by members. This was followed by strawberries and cream and birthday cake made by Ester Bates. Jean Thomas thanked the Committee for making a lovely evening for everyone.

In July, our speaker for the evening was Mr Coppock, who gave a talk on the Letter Post.

At our September meeting, Mrs Audrey Pelley gave a fascinating talk on the "World of Miniatures".

The October meeting's speaker was Mr Barrie Stevenson on "Antiques Roadshow". He gave the members a fascinating and informative description of every item brought by members.

Miss Harman gave us a talk with slides on her holiday in New Zealand at our November meeting.

Our December meeting is our Christmas Party and we always have an enjoyable evening with a buffet of turkey and ham with various salads, delicious sweets together with mince pies, coffee and mints.

If you are interested in joining our WI, please contact Lyn Hogan, the Secretary, on 01954 267254. Why not come as a visitor, just contact her or just turn up? We meet on the second Wednesday of each month at the School Hall. Remember WI is not all "Jam and Jerusalem" - just look at the film "The Calendar Girls"!!!!

## **Jubilee Club**

We meet on the first Thursday in each of ten months of the year at 2.30pm in Elsworth School Hall, and welcome anyone from all surrounding villages.

In June of each year we visit somewhere of interest; 2003 it was The Caithness Crystal Glass Company in King's Lynn. January is our New Year Dinner at the George and Dragon.

At our December meeting this year we were lucky to be entertained by Rosemary Wheeler, an accomplished Pianist, and three excellent singers.

Each month we have an interesting speaker, afternoon tea, a raffle and a bring and buy stall, not forgetting a good old chat with people we have not seen for a while.

Why not come along - you will be made very welcome.

For any further information give Betty Simcock a call on 267470.

# Elsworth Village Website

Did you know Elsworth now has its very own website, [www.elsworthvillage.org.uk](http://www.elsworthvillage.org.uk), full of interesting and useful information?

Items of local interest are listed on our news page, and upcoming events in and around the village can be found in the village diary.

You can also browse the following areas from the comfort of your home or office:

- 2001 Census
- Editor's Postbag
- Holy Trinity Church
- Papworth Surgery
- Swavesey Village College
- The Poacher
- Train Times
- Village News
- Bus Times
- Elsworth Parish Council
- Images of Elsworth, past and present
- Patients' Link Newsletter
- The George & Dragon
- Traffic Calming
- Village Diary
- Wheelie Bins

Elsworth Parish Council welcomes your views on local issues. Matters for the attention of the council should be addressed to the Clerk, who may be contacted at [clerk@elsworthvillage.org.uk](mailto:clerk@elsworthvillage.org.uk) or by phone/fax on (01954) 267664.

Editor's Postbag. Letters may be sent to the Editor for publication on the website by e-mailing them to [webmaster@elsworthvillage.org.uk](mailto:webmaster@elsworthvillage.org.uk). Please keep your letter to a maximum of 250 words and ensure you include your full name, address and daytime telephone number. The Editor reserves the right to edit material and does not publish anonymous letters.

If you have an item of local news or your organisation has an upcoming event, please send details to the Editor or to me for inclusion. If you would like a page designed for your organisation, please contact me.

*Ian Penfold*  
12 Roger's Close  
[ian\\_penfold@btinternet.com](mailto:ian_penfold@btinternet.com)

## **Countryside Events Jan - Jun 2004 leaflet now available**

Fulfil some New Year's resolutions this year with the help of Cambridgeshire County Council's Countryside 'Events' leaflet.

Get more exercise, fresh air and enjoy the Cambridgeshire countryside in 2004, using this useful guide to what's on offer in the county.

The leaflet contains monthly listings of activities taking place from January through to June 2004. As the ultimate guide to what's on in Cambridgeshire it helps people get out and enjoy their environment throughout the seasons, whatever the weather.

Countryside Services Team Leader, Kate Day, said: "The Events leaflet is proving to be a popular publication and the amount of events increases with each edition. With over two hundred and fifty events in this recent leaflet we are able to cover an extensive range of topics such as walking, wildlife, archaeology, outdoors, arts and crafts and much more."

Contributions are made to the leaflet from local groups such as the Wildlife Trust, RSPB and the Ramblers, plus village and community groups. It also includes a wide range of events that reflect the changing countryside and local improvements in biodiversity and local access.

The leaflet is produced every six months by the Countryside Services Team and is free of charge. The newest edition covering January - June 2004 is available from libraries, Tourist Information Centres, selected shops, museums and can also be obtained through the post by contacting the Countryside Team on (01223) 717445 or online [www.camcnty.gov.uk/sub/cntryside](http://www.camcnty.gov.uk/sub/cntryside)

People will be able to keep their resolution throughout the year with the knowledge that the next edition of the 'Events' leaflet for activities between July and December will be available at the end of June.

### **Phil Brannigan Groundworks**

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# Do You Enjoy Working with Children?

Interested in doing some voluntary work?

**'Good Night' is a voluntary organisation offering a sitting service for children with a disability.**

Parents in most families enjoy an occasional evening out on their own and obtaining a sitter to enable them to do so poses no great problem. However, when a child has special needs, making arrangements is not always quite so straight-forward. Parents of a disabled child might be worried about asking someone to take responsibility and feel that sitters might not be able to cope with their child's particular requirements

It is our wish to make this service available to any parents of a child with a learning and/or physical disability aged 0 to 19 years in the city and the rural areas around Cambridge and Ely - parents who would like a night out and be able to relax in the knowledge that their child is being well cared for at home.

Anyone over sixteen can apply to become a sitter. Their suitability will be assessed and references taken up. After appropriate preparation they are carefully matched with a family in their own vicinity. On-going support and training is available to volunteers and expenses are reimbursed.

If you feel that you can offer at least one evening a month and commit to building up a trusting relationship we would be delighted to hear from you. Please telephone the office on 01223 519220 or email [office@goodnight.org.uk](mailto:office@goodnight.org.uk). Registered Charity No. 1056263



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# CAMTAD



## **Cambridge Campaign for Tackling Acquired Deafness**

### **Free Volunteering Training Course**

A six-week training course for volunteers to help the hearing impaired starts on Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2004. It will run one morning a week on various mornings.

CAMTAD, Cambridge Campaign for tackling acquired deafness, runs hearing help sessions where volunteers clean, check and re-tube NHS hearing aids and advise on regular maintenance and best listening conditions. They also loan out equipment. They can help with hearing doorbells, telephone, television and household alarms. Training courses cover such subjects as the ear, types and causes of deafness, NHS hearing aids, procedures for assessment, communication methods and so on. If you are interested in the training course or would like to discuss it further please phone or fax Sue Hempstead on 01223 416141 or write to her at 8A Romsey Terrace, Cambridge CB1 3NH. We welcome hearing impaired volunteers on the course and a loop system is provided.

Training is compulsory for our volunteers but there is no obligation to volunteer at the end of the course. Most of our volunteers help at monthly sessions but many help in other ways.

We are most grateful for your co-operation. We are a small charity with limited means and depend on our volunteers to exist.

# Springboarding a Sense of Community Spirit

**Parties, feasts and dances could be coming to your village soon thanks to the launch of Springboard - Cambridgeshire's Toolkit for the Arts.**

Historically villages and towns celebrated and commemorated together with street parties, festivals, feasts and dances. Traditions were made, kept and continued. Councillor Deborah Roberts, portfolio holder for community development at South Cambridgeshire District Council explained, "Cambridgeshire is famed for rural communities that were once self-sufficient, divided by watery stretches of fenland. There was a real sense of identity and community spirit - something easily lost in our busy times, but something easily regained."

**Springboard** aims to give villages and towns the opportunity to build community spirit and confidence through the arts. It provides everything a village needs to use the arts to bring a community together. Packed with useful information about involving local people and professional artists, it helps celebrate local identity, deal with the press and find sources of **advice and funding**. It's also full of event ideas and examples of successful projects that have happened in parishes across the county and further afield.

Councillor Deborah Roberts continued, "**Springboard** is the ultimate resource to help villages regain and celebrate that sense of identity and pride in their community, making the arts work for you."

**Springboard** has been funded by Cambridgeshire County Council, the five district councils - Fenland, East Cambridgeshire, Cambridge City, Huntingdonshire, South Cambridgeshire - and the Arts Forum for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

For a free copy of **Springboard** - Cambridgeshire's Toolkit for the Arts, contact Stephanie Hogger, arts development officer at South Cambridgeshire District Council on (01223) 724142.

Stephanie.hogger@scambs .gov.uk