

The Elsworth Chronicle



Holy Trinity Church

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ELSWORTH CHRONICLE

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Cambridge CB23 4JQ Tel: 01954 267472

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A CRAFTSMAN OF ELSWORTH



Most of us live in Elsworth as we enjoy village life with its peace and sense of community that its small size brings. It is also most attractive, with its buildings in particular linking us with the past. The way of life has, of course, changed markedly - a cursory glance over census returns of the 19th century shows the presence of many craftsmen and tradesmen in a parish that was self-sufficient to a considerable degree. Wheelwrights, builders, joiners, bakers, butchers etc are listed among the many agricultural workers. Today most here would be seen as commuters, giving Elsworth the sense of a dormitory village.

Perhaps unknown to many recent newcomers to the village, the craft tradition is not extinct and furniture crafted in Fardell's Lane is known and respected over a great distance. Our church has recently become the proud possessor of an elegant side-table in English oak, the legs of which reflect the grace of the Gothic arches and windows of the building. Adrian Parfitt, its creator, has designed and produced over the years so many pieces of superb furniture that only a passing reference may be made here.

Pride of place must be given, though, to a magnificent round table created for Oxford University around which sixteen people may sit. However, his work is not confined to the grand scale and Adrian produces much for the domestic scene – coffee tables, cabinets, desks and the like.

Much of Adrian's work is characterised by majestic curves that may be created by means of lamination. The form of the design is a product of discussions between the customer and Adrian. A recent example of this was the recollection of a crescent moon influencing the design of a computer desk-top.

Adrian came to Elsworth in 1975 following an apprenticeship in London. Prior to setting up on his own account in 1983 he worked in Cambridge. In Elsworth his first workshop was in Brook Street behind No. 10 and in 1983 he moved to his present base in an interesting listed building in Fardell's Lane. The work undertaken here is fascinating, and an attempt to give readers an insight will be contained in the next edition of the Chronicle. The work is of such quality that in years to come owners will surely speak with pride of their example of the work of Parfitt of Elsworth.

AWF



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A VIEW FROM THE BACK BENCH – FLOODING DANGER

To most villagers a parish council meeting would probably conjure up a picture of serious-minded selected “good citizens” calmly and politely pursuing village matters so that after consideration of relevant facts and expert guidance where necessary, a satisfactory conclusion might be reached.

At times this is not the case and the observer might see characteristics of a school playground with its complicated interactions coming to the fore. The writer mused on this recently, particularly the scene where a playground dispute might give rise to a threat “You wait, I’ll get my big brother on to you!” or perhaps, as in the case in point, ‘Big Brother’ being brought along without notice.

This came to mind when, as on so many previous occasions, the parish council again refused to debate flood protection measures, particularly now as to why the advice of the Environment Agency was being ignored. And then without notice - but by invitation of the executive - there was present at a subsequent council meeting the person engaged to draw-up a weed screen scheme at the sluice.

Seemingly “Big Brother” would sort the matter out and silence this annoying councillor who keeps pressing for a debate. An interesting verbal inter-change occurred, something previously denied. I felt some sympathy for the visitor who had a very difficult brief. His answer as to why a weed screen should not be positioned where the stream enters the village was **that it could cause meadowland flooding upstream! But what of the houses immediately upstream of the proposed weed screen at the site of the sluice, now intended to be demolished? Surely this is more important?** A strongly worded written statement from the Environment Agency that a better site would be at the footbridge where the brook enters the village did not find favour with the council. Pursuing the matter further, a suggestion that a principal weed screen be erected where advised by the Environment Agency with a minor screen at the sluice - which therefore would not have to be demolished - based on an Environment Agency drawing plan also drew a blank. To this there seemed no answer; even the cost would be far less.

And that was that. The questions and concerns put had not been answered, but the proposed scheme was voted through. As in the playground, attention was turned to other matters

Although matters have been presented flippantly in part, in reality the case is one of great concern. As noted, the plan submitted by the parish

council is not favoured by the Environment Agency which has written in blunt terms stating preference for a weed screen where the stream enters the village, even asking for an explanation as to why this has not been proposed [unanswered by the parish council]. The concern of the Environment Agency is that a weed screen can in itself lead to water back-up and consequent flood aggravation, and should not therefore be installed in an area of housing.

The parish council's application was therefore rejected. However, a submission by the engineers appointed by the parish council that there was currently a poor weed screen at the sluice was then lodged and permission was granted, clearly reluctantly, as in a covering letter strong preference was again expressed for location upstream. When expressing its concern the Environment Agency placed the burden of stream maintenance on the parish council. [This has been lamentable, with cut vegetation left on the stream bank only to be swept down to impede seriously the water flow at the culverts].

That advice of the Environment Agency has then been ignored is clearly a matter for concern. But equally disturbing is that the parish council received back in 2004, but would not discuss, a similar proposal for an upstream weed screen from two local water engineers of high repute, one being a Fellow of the Institute of Civil Engineers and the other a Member. On the parish council there are no engineers. One would expect expert advice to be welcomed, but not so. Even earlier, in the summer of 2003 it was requested that water engineers should be consulted when a scheme to demolish the sluice was submitted by a parish councillor. Such expert advice was deemed unnecessary and therefore the writer commissioned and paid for a study by the County Council engineers, W.S. Atkins. Again, the receipt of the report was merely noted and its contents not discussed.

The Atkins report stressed that the sluice did not impair the flow of water and therefore there was no need for it to be demolished. It was made clear that its proposed replacement with a brick pier scheme was misguided and wrong. It should be noted that the Chief Conservation Officer of the District Council also wrote to the parish council requesting that the sluice should be retained, although he had no powers of enforcement.

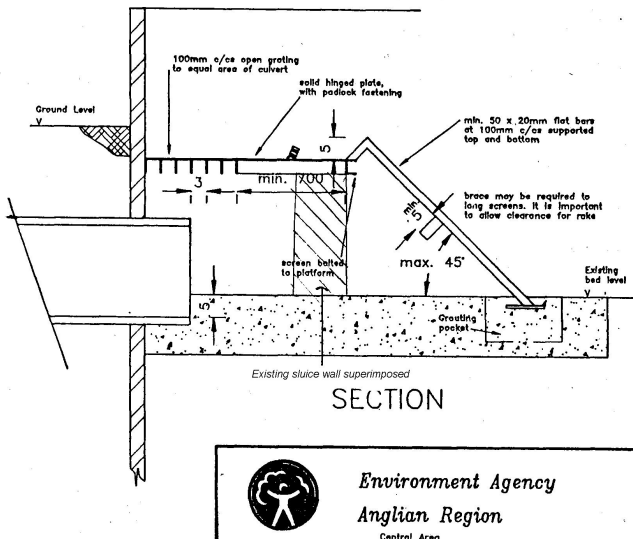
The parish council seems, then, determined to proceed, regardless of professional advice to the contrary. This being the case, where does

responsibility now reside? Having interfered with the drainage it would seem the parish council could be responsible for future possible outcomes. The possibility of increased flooding by virtue of the presence of a screen has been admitted. In contrast, a weed screen at the upstream footbridge advocated by the Environment Agency and water consultants could allow back-up upstream away from dwellings and in addition hold debris down-washed from the headwaters of the brook.

It is held by the parish council that Brook Street residents back the major scheme proposed for the sluice area. However, they have not been made aware of the Environment Agency's concern over this scheme. In fairness to residents a public meeting should be called so that they may ascertain why the views of experts are being ignored and consider the implications. If the council will not call such a meeting it is possible for members of the public to take the initiative. If the scheme goes ahead, residents with reservations should express them to the parish council in writing so as hopefully to absolve themselves from possible liability as riparian owners of the consequences of action to which they haven't concurred. Time is at an essence - work was planned for late summer this year but has apparently been brought forward and by the time this is read it may be too late for action, but hopefully not.

A clear way forward - but rejected by the parish council - would be to construct a weed screen where recommended upstream at the footbridge and to install a minor sloping screen if deemed necessary from the sluice wall to trap any material that could perhaps have unexpectedly originated nearby, which being unsubstantial would not be a hazard. A sketch, based on an Environment Agency drawing, will be found on the next page. Such a scheme would not only be in accordance with expert advice, it would preserve an interesting historical feature [as requested by South Cambs Conservation Officer], and would be far cheaper. Parishioners outside the area of potential flooding might well have concern at the financial aspects. The parish council has allocated up to £15,000 [estimate in the region of £12,000] for the proposed scheme - money to be spent to no purpose. The alternative scheme with a weed screen at the upstream footbridge with a back-up minor grill at the sluice was quoted in 2005 at an estimated cost of £2,090. Far less money for so much more! It would seem beyond credence that the parish council can ignore the impartial professional advice it has been given on a matter of such importance as flood risk.

Alan Farrow



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OBITUARY



ERIC BRAND [1930 – 2008]

No one could more justly claim to be a true Elsworthian than Eric. Not only was he born and bred here, but so too was his father – at Low Farm, which at that time was divided into three homes. And apart from National Service, Eric lived in Elsworth throughout his life.

Elsworth was more than just a place of residence for him, and village activities formed an integral part of his life. Always a keen sportsman, he played both cricket and football for the village, testimony to which may be seen in team photographs in the pavilion.

Eric was born in what was then No. 2 [now 13] Brockley Road in 1930 and was to attend the village school in Brook Street, where Bessie [now Woolf] and Dorothy [now Richards] were contemporaries. On leaving school he worked for Dorothy's father in a garage along the St. Neots – Cambridge road, and later after 2 years National Service he worked in the village at Papworth's Garage [now Bob Empson and Sons] along with Bernard Woolf. Subsequently he worked as a lorry driver and then as a print operator in a factory at St. Neots.

Retirement brought marked success at bowls. It also enabled him to pursue interests with nature and animals. For many years he assisted with the hounds of the Cambridgeshire Hunt at Caxton. Paradoxically he had warmth for a family of foxes that inhabited the woodland at the rear of his garden.

Very much a family man, Eric had married Mavis in 1954. Together they had four children – Susan, David, Julie and Jayne; subsequently there were four grandchildren, two boys and two girls. There have been many tributes to Eric, but none could be warmer or better than the words of Mavis – “A lovely, lovely man”.

OBITUARY



JOHN WILLIAM DESBOROUGH

A well loved character of the Elsworth scene passed away in February. For many years John delivered vegetables to village homes and at leisure he and Hilda, his wife, provided entertainment at the yearly Harvest Supper, John playing the drums and Hilda the accordion. They were popular in the neighbourhood also, and on Saturday evenings provided entertainment at other venues outside the village. One of John's favourite songs was "Two little boys".

John was born in Elsworth on the 27th September 1913 and lived locally all his life, mainly in Elsworth. He attended Elsworth School in Brook Street, leaving at the age of 14 years to work on the land, initially leading horses taking water to the farm steam engines. It was a time when working on the land was labour intensive – so different from the present scene. During his lifetime he saw many changes – horses and steam driven machinery giving way to internal combustion engines; the way of life was also to change with the invention of telephones and televisions coming into the home. And so much more.

A few years before the Second World War John met his future wife, Hilda, at a dance at Waterbeach and they married in 1940. In 1950 John had a serious farm accident and lost his left leg. This never held him back and he continued to ride a bicycle and drive a car. Hilda pre-deceased John, and he leaves their two children, Mary and Graham, six grandchildren and four great- grandchildren. A sociable and cheerful man, his family have so many memories to cherish.

ELSWORTH COMMUNITY SHOP

I, [AWF] am confident that before long Elsworth will have its community shop. This is due in no small measure to the marked sense of identity with the village that residents feel and show. That Elsworth is more than a postal address but a vibrant community has been demonstrated yet again by the support publicly demonstrated for the continuance of a village shop/post office in spite of contrary outside bureaucratic endeavours of Post Office Ltd.

At the birth of 2009 optimism was not perhaps the feeling in the village, when most were reluctantly prepared to accept what appeared the inevitable closure and the permanent loss of our last shop. However elsewhere community shops had been established, and even in those black days it seemed that this was a possibility that should be explored. A breakthrough came when the writer made contact with Ian Toye, a consultant who had been active in establishing community shops elsewhere. His experience and knowledge and willingness to help were heartening; the all-important foundation stone had thus been emplaced. A village meeting was required and the parish council agreed to this request, which enabled the support for the project to be demonstrated. A surge of hopefulness could be felt and volunteers came forward to offer their services as members of a steering group and to assist in other ways. A second foundation stone was now in place.

The first steering group meeting was quickly convened. Available to it were examples of questionnaires and business plans used in establishing community shops elsewhere; arithmetical formulae to predict trading profitability; details of overhead and running costs which could be amended to suit our situation. Without these, the task of establishing a community shop would indeed have been daunting and prolonged; with their aid the committee was able diligently and confidently to focus on the framework of a business plan, essential to the procurement of funding. Apart from pursuing further funding, my work as a facilitator has been done and the group now has its own chairman and secretary. Members of the steering group are positive and energetic and I am confident they will take the project to a successful conclusion [or rather 'opening']. It would now seem unlikely that the original projected opening date of September this year will be met, but nevertheless in a short while we all, hopefully, shall celebrate by purchasing from the range of products then available in our shop, and the chance to socialise in a friendly, welcoming environment. Further, we have been promised that post office facilities will return to the shop, at first of limited hours but with the possibility of a return to the hours the shop will be open. The spirit of Elsworth will have prevailed - by means of it an important facet of village life will have been preserved.

Alan Farrow

JUBILEE CLUB

This club is open to everybody in the villages. We meet once a month on a Tuesday afternoon [2.30pm], usually on the first Thursday in Elsworth School Hall. We have a speaker or entertainment, refreshments and a raffle. It is a good time for people to meet and have a chat.

Already this year we have had slides and a great talk on the Falklands, two films about the Chelsea Pensioners and Janet and Christopher South giving an up-date on their work in Sri Lanka helping a small number of people who suffered in the tsunami.

Further subjects include: July 2nd – ‘Life in the Big House’; September 3rd – ‘The Pathfinder Force’; October 8th – ‘Basic First Aid’; 5th November – ‘Land of Contrast – America’.

You have an invitation to drop in on any of our meetings – and maybe enjoy the experience! For further information please contact Betty on 01954 267470.

Betty Simcock

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EVERY DAY IS AN OPEN DAY

LINKS WITH THE PAST

It is a privilege to live in a village which retains a basic configuration dating back over 100 years and more. The way of life and occupations have, of course, changed markedly - from a one-time agriculturally based community, almost self-sufficient, to one predominately a dormitory for those who work in Cambridge and beyond - but the street scene and village size have so little altered over a considerable period it is easy to imagine previous generations at work and at leisure here. Perhaps because of this, many in the village savour our past and join with family tree devotees in prizing open segments of by-gone years.

The two sections which follow probe the past. **Dorothy Bienek** has written about 'Soldier William', and this is followed by a request for information of a family formerly of Elsworth. It would seem articles on the Allgood family in recent editions stirred interest in Hertfordshire, prompting Elizabeth Debenham to enquire if anything was know of the Murden family. In like manner Dorothy's account of Soldier William might also reveal connections with the past and kindle associations only now vaguely in mind.

SOLDIER WILLAM

William Parnwell, son of William and Ellen of Elsworth joined the 11th Dragoons at Huntingdon in 1810 at the age of 20. Wellesley [later Lord Wellington and victor over Napoleon] was quite sure why young men enlisted and did not consider it was for fine military feeling. "Some of our men" he said "enlist from having got bastard children - some for minor offences - many more for drink." Perhaps William merely wished to see something of the world beyond Cambridgeshire.

This he did a year or so later when his regiment was despatched to reinforce Wellesley's army on the border between Portugal and Spain. The light cavalry was often used in small detachments for reconnaissance and to guard convoys and messengers. The first major campaign William would have seen was that of Salamanca when the British and French armies marched and countermarched within sight of each other in the summer heat and dust of the plains of Leon until Wellesley pounced. Twenty years later the bones of the dead still lay where they had fallen.

A Short-lived occupation of Madrid was followed by withdrawal to

Portugal through a ravaged countryside where the troops subsisted on acorns and berries and the horses ate leaves from the trees. Winter in Portugal was spent organising hospitals and the military police, and equipping the army with tents and blankets thereby improving moral to such an extent that when spring came they burst out over the border and drove the French army back as far as Vitoria, covering 300 miles in less than thirty days. The battle of Vitoria was the turning point, and then began the long hard chase over the Pyrenees only to be met by a fresh French army, the fighting continuing until news reached Toulouse of Napoleon's surrender. By the end of May 1814 the troops sailed home from Bordeaux with six months' pay in their pockets.

Much of the army was then hastily disbanded, and William found himself discharged from the Dragoons in late July 1814. He may have made his way back to Elsworth then, or spent his money in riotous living elsewhere - but in November of that year he re-enlisted in the 48th Foot, a regiment that had suffered heavy losses and was now stationed in Ireland.

They did not fight a Waterloo, but in 1817 sailed for Australia where they were to police the settlements in New South Wales. This comparatively quiet posting came to an end when the regiment was sent to India in 1824. India during the early nineteenth century was still under the influence of the East India Company, aided by government troops in campaigns against large bands of armed robbers, known as pindarries, as well as ensuring that the local rulers remained compliant

William survived and having been shipped home at the end of the campaign, was discharged to pension after 29 years' and 188 days' service. On his return to Elsworth, William, a tall sallow man with hazel eyes and brown hair, married Catherine Maskell, the daughter of the Boxworth blacksmith and they settled in Brook Street where his pension was no doubt a useful addition to his wages as a labourer. They had six children of whom three survived. William died in September 1866 and early the following year Catherine married William Elwood, a native of Boxworth.

THE MURDENS OF ELSWORTH

Not so many years back Bessie Woolf recalls Bill Murden living

in Church Lane at what is now number eleven. Bill, like most in the village at that time - in the 1930s - worked on the land. He is particularly remembered for being also a village grave-digger and church bell ringer. At the end of the 19th century there were seven Murdens living at Common Farm. This is interesting in itself for although Common Farm no longer exists the cottages associated with it remain. This is the answer for those who have wondered at the presence of four isolated cottages on Brockley Road near where it joined the A428 until the dual carriage-way skirting Cambourne was built.

It is hoped that some of the more senior residents of Elsworth might have information or perhaps know of a link through marriage. If so, please let the editor know [tel.267472]. The Elsworth and Knapwell Chronicle booklet throws but little light although in 1899 it is noted that three young farm bands named Murden, Childerley and Woolf were unhurt when lightening struck Samuel Witherow's windmill in which they were sheltering. Some familiar names there!

Elizabeth Debenham [a relative of Professor Frank Debenham the eminent Cambridge geographer of a few years back] would welcome information. She has sent some photographs of the 1920s, shown below and on the following page. Can anyone throw light on them? Further information on the Parnwells would also be appreciated by Dorothy Bienek; some in the village might be related and be able to throw light on this one-time numerically prominent family.



Elsworth Flood c1910. Does anyone recognise the man?

WHO ARE THEY?

Elsworth Cricket Team 1920s



August 1926. Who are they?



Elsworth War Memorial c1922

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ELSWORTH SPORTS CLUB

Within the last few weeks the season has been completed for the two Elsworth football teams and three table tennis teams and has seen the commencement of a new season for the two cricket teams.

The first eleven football team, playing in the Cambs County BIS league Division 2A, has earned hearty congratulations. After a terrific start, which saw Elsworth top of the division after ten matches and finally finishing third in the division of fourteen clubs, the team gained promotion to the first division. The second team, in their first season together as a team, playing in the Cambs County BIS league, Division 5B, finished ninth in a division of thirteen teams. Training continues through the summer with friendly matches in August leading to the new season, which starts in September. Interested parties should contact Mark Brading on 01480 383303.

The table tennis teams have completed an enjoyable season, but with rather limited success. In an ever strengthening Ely League the first team finished ninth and the second team twelfth of twelve teams in Division 1. For the second team this was their first season in the first division and will surely benefit from the experience. The third team, again consisting mainly of young players, finished eighth of ten teams in Division 2. Potential players should contact Bill Knibbs on 267266.

After a few sessions in the nets, jointly funded by the Parish Council and the Sports Club, the cricket got under way at the beginning of May. The two teams, both playing in the Cambs Junior League – the first in Division 2 and the second in Division 4 – have at present both played two matches. The first having lost both while the second have won one and lost one. Potential players should contact Bill Knibbs on the number above.

On Wednesday afternoons from 2.30pm, carpet bowls is played in the pavilion. New players will be made welcome. There is a charge of £2 per session. On Friday evenings Whist Drives are held at 7.30pm in the pavilion, alternating on a fortnightly basis with the recently formed Bridge sessions. Posters advertising Carpet Bowls, Whist Drives and Bridge are displayed in the village.

Roger Fensom

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ELSWORTH, KNAPWELL AND CONINGTON W.I.

Thank you to everyone who took time to complete our questionnaire. The winner of the M & S Token was Mavis Brand of Brockley Road. Some interest has been shown and we are looking forward to welcoming some visitors over the next few months.

Our W.I. may be small in number but it is encouraging to know that more than 7,000 new members have joined in England this year and last month the first ever campus based W.I. opened at Goldsmith's College, University of London. It doesn't appear that the phrase 'Jam and Jerusalem' has been a deterrent. The title, though, does seem to haunt the W.I. It is often used in a disparaging way, but the link with 'Jam' is an honourable one going back to the First and Second World Wars when the government enlisted the help of the W.I. as more food had to be produced in the U.K. More than 5,000 preservation centres were established under the Fruit Preservation Scheme. So jam is a symbol of the W.I.'s public service and Jerusalem reflects the history of the W.I.'s campaign to improve 'England's Green and Pleasant Land'.

At our meeting on the 10th June our speaker's subject was The American Cemetery at Madingley. The PowerPoint presentation about the early construction of the cemetery in 1944 and the subsequent development of the site was fascinating. The land was donated by Cambridge University. Guided tours can be arranged - there is much to see and learn. In July our speaker will be a representative from Scotsdale Garden Centre. For further information please contact 01954 267472.

Isobel Farrow

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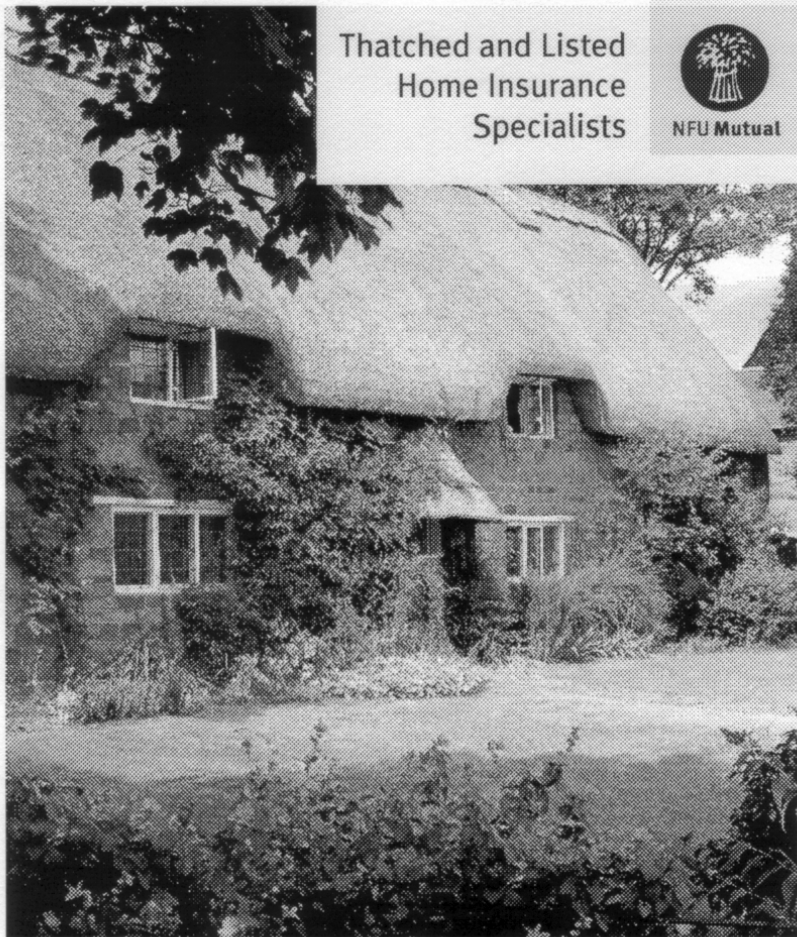
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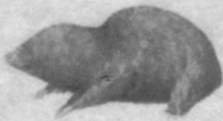


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- volunteer event co-ordinators
- volunteer event helpers
- volunteer ambassadors [people willing to talk to groups outlining the vital work of Headway Cambridgeshire leading to raised awareness and funding]
- volunteer admin helpers

With increased volunteer support it is hoped to increase funds to enable Headway to work with many more people across the region whom we know would benefit from the help and support which could be provided.

If you would like to know more about the above or require more information on fundraising with Headway Cambridgeshire, the website is <http://www.headway-cambs.org.uk>. Alternatively telephone the Fundraising Officer, Tracey Tingey, on 01223 576550 or e-mail on ttheadwaycambs@btconnect.com.