

The Elsworth Chronicle



Holy Trinity Church

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ELSWORTH CHRONICLE

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INDEX

Page 3	Community Car Scheme
Page 4	Heidi Allen's Maiden Speech
Page 3	Elsworth, Knapwell & Conington WI
Page 8	Elsworth's Population
Page 13	Jubilee Club
Page 15	Obituary - Gordon Thwaites
Page 18	Elsworth Sports Club

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AN ON-GOING MATTER

Community Car Scheme

With a favouring metaphorical wind, those in the parish without access to a car and of state pensionable age or disabled might soon receive support. Our dependence in Elsworth of a reliable car needs no underlining. To live here for most is a delight, but without adequate transport the quality of life may be impaired. Hence the article in the May edition of the Chronicle. Matters might now be inching forward in that the parish council is to circulate a questionnaire designed to assess need. Consideration is now being given to possibly subsidising the cost of travelling by means of community cars for those falling into the groups noted above. Such a scheme, if invoked, would seem to be well deserved - here in Elsworth free bus passes are of limited value as the service provided is so poor in contrast to urban areas where adequate public transport is available, is well used and taken for granted.

Assistance would seem deserved in another way too, namely the grant of a small slice from the funds raised from the Community Tax. The parish council has made good use of funds for other age groups. For example considerable sums have been provided for: [a] the young - play equipment at Grass Close; [b] older pupils - youth bus scheme; [c] physically active adults - grants to the Sports Club. But to date little, if anything, has been provided specifically for the more mature. The transport scheme seeks to spread the use of funds to those who in earlier years probably contributed much.

Making use of the scheme would be very simple - a person in the categories noted above requiring transport to a destination **not on a scheduled bus route** merely has to telephone the administrative telephone number which would be provided, giving three day's notice if possible. Further details will be forthcoming if the scheme is to be implemented.

As an aside, the community car service is dependent on volunteer drivers. If anyone in the village is interested in joining this happy group, you would be very welcome and well received. Payment to the driver is 40p a mile. Please contact Alan Farrow [tel.01954 267472] in the first instance.

HEIDI ALLEN'S MAIDEN SPEECH



Regardless of political affiliations or views, most in Elsworth would have been impressed by the prominent stand made by our new Member of Parliament, Heidi Allen, in the House of Commons on the occasion of her Maiden Speech. This first call to make a formal speech in the House is noted as being a nerve-racking ordeal by many who subsequently were to rise to prominent positions. Even Glenda Jackson, so used to performing on the stage to packed and expectant audiences, admitted to being terrified. What, then, were the feelings of our new M.P.? I put the following questions to her,

which in spite of a most demanding workload, she kindly found time to answer.

How did you feel when waiting to be called?

“I was just keen to ‘get on with it’. I was aware my speech would be considered rather less conventional than normal, but I felt so strongly about what I was about to say, my turn couldn’t come quickly enough. When you’ve had to talk to bunches of union reps on night shifts - as I did during my time at Royal Mail - this wasn’t particularly scary!”

Once on your feet having been called, was it then just like addressing a meeting anywhere?

“Better! It’s rare to get such immediate and vocal feedback when addressing a regular meeting. Admittedly I received more feedback from the opposite side of the House [!] but it’s a good feeling to know your words are hitting the right note.”

Was it a difficult decision to break from the convention of being uncontroversial in a Maiden Speech? Did you take advice?

“Not difficult to break from convention as I’ve always been a devil for challenging established processes. I’m constantly asking ‘why?’ and don’t believe you should follow others sheep-like just because that’s the way things have always been done. That said, I did speak to a more seasoned MP, Bernard Jenkin, who I knew was also unhappy with the tax credit reform programme. I spoke to him the afternoon before I made my speech following a backbench briefing meeting that I could see had left him as dissatisfied as me. I asked him generally for his advice about my plans to use my maiden speech.”

Did you find the information for the speech was readily available in, say, the House library?

“The only library I used was that housed in my own head!”

.....
To have as our Member of Parliament a person with the strength of mind to express views which might not accord with the thinking passed down from above is a delight. If only the House of Commons had more willing to speak from conviction.

AWF

ELSWORTH, KNAPWELL AND CONINGTON W.I.

Those new to the village may like to know that our W.I. meets on the second Wednesday of each month [except August] in Elsworth School at 7.30 pm. Visitors are most welcome. We have about half an hour of business followed by a visiting speaker.

Amanda Sutherland was our speaker in June. She is a custom designer who amazed us with her original creations - tiaras and jewellery made from tin cans, coloured tights and even Velcro hair rollers. She designs wedding dresses and accessories and has a stall in the Cambridge market.

In July we celebrated the W.I.'s 100th anniversary with wine and a delicious cake baked by Sylvia Moore. Some members dressed in period costume and our President, Margaret Stevenson, trawled the archives of old Elsworth and showed a short film of our W.I. in days of yore. The evening ended with a sing-song of period melodies and an energetic Hokey Cokey.

If out and about and accidents happen, then the reassuring presence of Bob Harding, our September speaker, would be welcome - a paramedic but also a poet with many amusing stories of life with the ambulance service. In October Honor Ridout talked about Corners of Old Cambridge - interesting facts about Cambridge places and people. We heard about Thomas Hobson who had a yard with horses for hire in King's Parade - the origin of the saying 'Hobson's Choice' as you had to take whichever horse he offered you.

"Oriental Knotting" was the subject at the November meeting - a practical 'hands on' session! We end the year in December with our usual Christmas Party.

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ELSWORTH'S POPULATION SOME NOTEWORTHY TRENDS

The population of Elsworth has shown a marked increase since the end of World War II, although within this rise there have been minor fluctuations. Some might argue that it has seemingly reached its maximum in terms of house numbers without its present boundaries being extended, which would result in the village losing its character and charm.

But surprisingly the present population figures are smaller than they were in the mid 19th century, peaking in 1841 when recorded as being 915, as compared with 728 at the last census in 2011 [National Office for Statistics figure, which differs slightly from that noted by S.Cambs.] From that nineteenth century high it dropped to 441 in 1931, but from this nadir it has generally shown an upward trend.

Such variations in our parish reflect differences in life and conditions, and correlations with national trends tell us much about the past in Elsworth. Thus in the early 19th century much labour was needed on the farms in this area of successful grain cultivation, but following the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846, which abolished protection from cheaper wheat from overseas, agricultural depression resulted, leading to an exodus from the land. Some 50 people emigrated to Australia and the United States in the 1850s. The economic depressions of the 1930s is clearly reflected.

Records for Elsworth go far back into time. During medieval times it was one of the most populous villages in the neighbourhood. In 1086 the number of peasant households was noted as being 44, and 209 were listed at the time of the poll tax in 1377. Numbers declined over the next two centuries, but were to rise to around 500 in the 17th century, surging again - after fluctuations - from the 1760s

At one time in the post-World War II years [even in the 1970s]

a view was being expressed by some that the village would decline and become for a time the refuge of unemployed agricultural workers as the need for farm labourers decreased with increasing mechanisation of farming methods. Buildings would deteriorate and become unsightly blots on the landscape.

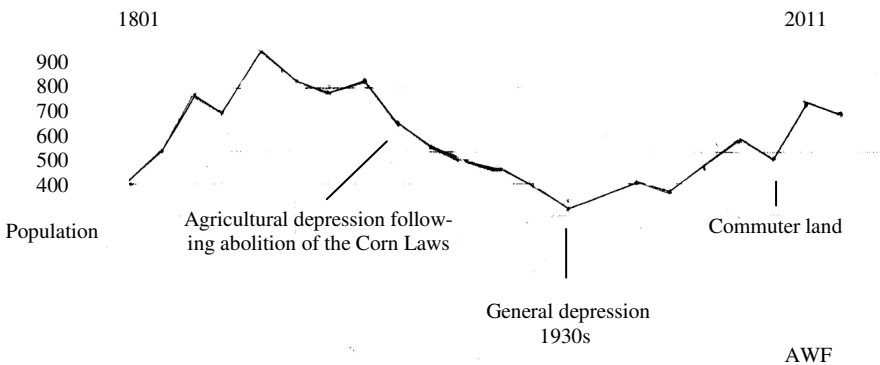
However, such decline was not to be the case. As noted in the opening paragraph, the years since the first two decades after the World War II show population numbers having risen, although there are variations between censuses. This is a period which has seen a transformation from an agricultural based settlement to one catering in the main for people employed outside the parish, with some retired - a dormitory village has emerged. Now according to figures from the Office for National Statistics, the parish has 20% more higher and intermediate managerial, administrative or professional personnel than the national average. There is a higher rate of home ownership than the national average which would seem to classify Elsworth as being a relatively affluent parish.

Information on age-group variations within the parish was sought by the writer [AWF] when compiling a case to oppose the closure of our post office some few years back and when seeking to establish our community shop. A trend to an increasing number of the elderly would mean a stronger case could be made in both cases. An increasing number of those in the 65+ group would seem to have continued, being 17.1% in 2001 and 22.3% in 2011.

Contrary to the general post World War II upward trend of the population of Elsworth, the figures for 2011 showed a slight decrease. An analysis of age-bands shows that the most marked decrease was in that vital group of workers from 25 to 64 years of age, falling from 413 in 2001 to 391 at the last census. Over the same period, those over 65 years of age increased from 135 to 163. It can be argued that this is line with the national trend, but even so, statistics show that the average age of our parish population is older than the national average and also that of Cambridgeshire.

Continued

What of the future? With the Government's demands for yet more houses in South Cambridgeshire, it could be that in due course the village could be subsumed in an urban mass around Cambridge similar to the sprawl of houses in the Home Counties in the 1930s. Unless we are vigilant and active in resisting such demands the individuality of Elsworth could be lost forever. In this age of electronic communication such clustering of people would seem less necessary than in earlier decades.



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JUBILEE CLUB

We have had some very interesting speakers again this year as well as two outings to the coast. Two of the talks took us well outside our range of everyday experiences - one being on ghosts and another on witchcraft. The topics covered at our meetings vary enormously, ranging from light entertainment to the slightly serious. The excursions were, as usual a great success. In May a coach took us to Southend, and in July our destination was Aldeburgh.

The Club is open to everyone in our village. We meet on the first Thursday of most months in Elsworth School. The scheduled talk or entertainment is followed by refreshments, with time for a chat with friends and neighbours. If you haven't been to our meetings or excursions an open invitation is offered - you will be made most welcome. For further information please contact Betty on 01954 267470.

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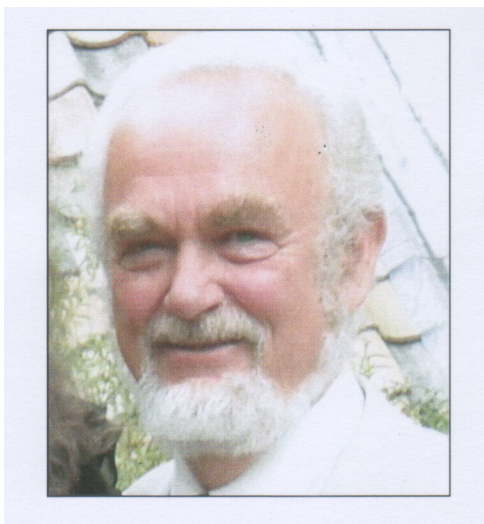
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Obituary



Gordon Thwaites

Gordon Thwaites of Brown's Farmhouse, Elsworth, passed away on 11th May 2015 at the age of 72. He was buried at Holy Trinity, Elsworth.

Gordon was born to the late Edward and Marjorie May, 5th April 1943 in Brough, Lancashire. He was married for nearly 47 years to Ann Thwaites. In the early days of their marriage, they lived in Lincolnshire, but after their third child was born they spent a few years on the island of St Helena before eventually relocating to Elsworth.

He received a BSc (Hons) in Agriculture from Leeds University and went on to develop a career in the civil service as an animal husbandry expert, visiting farms and advising fanners, particularly about beef production. He was interested in helping new farmers. He was a champion of anyone willing to

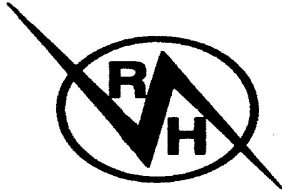
make a go of it, both in the UK and in St Helena. Later on in his career, he spent ten years on foreign aid projects, helping farmers in Eastern Europe. He also set up agricultural courses in universities including St Petersburg, repopulated the cattle herds of the Balkans after their war and provided advice in various countries from Poland to Kyrgyzstan.

In 2006, Gordon was diagnosed with Early Onset Alzheimers. He managed to keep it at bay in the early years and true to form, helped researchers in Cambridge to understand the effects of the disease. Later he was well cared for at the Woodlands care home in Cambridge.

He was an entrepreneur in the true sense, taking on Brown's Farmhouse after the front had fallen off it, always active in the garden, raising animals, growing flowers and vegetables and digging a swimming pool! When the days were short he enjoyed woodworking and could often be seen cycling down to John Throssell's workshop in the evening to make new furniture or windows.

He was very gregarious and would use his cycle rides around the village to keep up with village news, lending a hand on the Parish council or the Elsworth show committee.

His main passion was his family and he strove to create a loving environment for his children to grown up in. Gordon is survived by his wife, Ann Thwaites, his children, Simon, Adam, Fiona and Sophie, and his grandchildren Oriana, Ismene, Evie, Diana, Clio, Torsten and Galatea.



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ELSWORTH SPORTS CLUB

I would normally begin my report in The Chronicle with news of the current football season, but as stated in the last issue, Elsworth no longer has a football team playing regular league matches. If anyone is interested in playing and/or organising a team please contact Bill Knibbs [Chairman], Anthony Taylor [Secretary] or myself. Residents will however have noticed the game being played on Grass Close, usually on a Saturday morning as girls' teams from Swavesey Spartans are using our facilities during this season.

The cricket season finished early in September with Elsworth having competed in the Cambs Junior League, Division 4 South. Although the season was enjoyed by those playing, the results were poor as the team finished in eighth position out of nine and expect to be relegated. Of the matches played, only one was won, and one tied and the remainder either lost or cancelled. Some evening matches were played in the Business Houses League with better results as more players were available for the mid-week matches. A few friendly matches were also played. Net practice will be available before the start of next season and anyone interested should contact either Bill Knibbs on 01954 267266 or Anthony Taylor on 01954 268042

The table tennis season started towards the end of September and this term Elsworth has three teams in both the Cambridge and Ely leagues. In the Cambridge League Elsworth I are third of ten teams in Division 2B at the present time, Elsworth 2 are tenth of ten teams in Division 2A and Elsworth 3 are sixth of ten teams in Division 3B. In the Ely League, Elsworth I are currently second of nine teams in Division I, Elsworth 2 are eighth of nine teams in Division 2 and Elsworth 3 are first of nine in Division 3. Club evenings provide for table tennis practice when matches are not being held and anyone interested should contact Bill Knibbs.

It is still hoped that Carpet Bowls on Wednesday afternoons will resume - suspended due to lack of support. Snooker is played on Monday mornings and whist drives held monthly on Friday evenings

commencing at 7.30 pm.

The Club has recently purchased a shipping container for storage purposes and acknowledges with thanks the receipt of financial grants from South Cambs District Council and Elsworth Parish Council.

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