

# The Elsworth Chronicle



*Holy Trinity Church*

**Issue No. 24**

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## **ELSWORTH CHRONICLE**

**Editor:** Alan Farrow. The Old Rectory, Elsworth,  
Cambridge CB3 8JQ Tel: 01954 267472

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## **OBITUARY**

### **ROY LAMBERT 1921 - 2008**

Roy was a staff sergeant in the Second World War serving in the 8<sup>th</sup> Army in Africa and Italy. He fell in love with Italy, learning the language and later spending many holidays there. He was invalided out of the army in 1944 and later sent to Papworth. He married Edna and moved to Elsworth in 1950, buying and restoring Rectory Cottage.

In 1951 he became Sub-Postmaster and started building up a radio and television business, moving to Fenstanton in 1955. In 1974 the family moved back to Elsworth, which he loved. He enjoyed his trips to The Poacher until ill health made that impossible.

Roy ran the post office in Elsworth until 1986, also managing post delivery and running his business at Fenstanton. He is greatly missed by his family and his friends. His evening stroll to The Poacher was for so long part of the village scene.

## ELSWORTH BETWEEN THE WARS PART 2



Francis Allgood's recollections of Elsworth between the two world wars would seem encyclopaedic. In the last edition of the Chronicle memories of his childhood years were recalled and are continued overleaf.

As a lad he would visit his grandfather at his house in Brook Street which was later to be demolished by a bomb in the Second World War. Before retirement, Grandfather dwelt in his workshop in the rear part of what is now called Grove Cottage in Smith Street near the junction with Broad End. He was the village shoe-maker, a family tradition which went back many generations, although he was the last to pursue this craft.

Although the village was in many respects more self-sufficient than now, it was in no way divorced from the outside world. Although cars were few in number in the village, a relatively comfortable method of transport was provided during these inter-war years by means of a village bus. This was owned and driven by a Mr. Watts who lived at No.8 Brook Street. The bus was housed in his yard to the rear, being entered by the gap which still exists at the side of the house. Regular transport was provided between St.Ives and Elsworth on certain days, and to Cambridge on one other. Mr. Watts, who had had his right hand amputated at some time, perhaps in the Great War, and had instead a hook, moved to London just before the Second World War and the bus service was taken over by Frank Brand. Frank lived in what is now named Turner's Cottage, keeping his bus in an outhouse on the land of the present No.36 Smith Street.

For those in need of new clothes, the bus was a boon, particularly for those without a car or horse – the majority – as the alternatives were to travel by cart, or perhaps by bicycle or even walk. Daily needs in the main part could be met in the village. The bakery in the 1930s was on the Causeway; there was a grocery shop in Boxworth Road next to The George & Dragon; another grocery shop owned and run by the Throssel family was in Brook Street [now No.10]; and milk was delivered to the door from Ivyfold in Broad End out of churns, by means of a horse drawn cart. Horses, of course, were still of vital importance and blacksmith Tom Throssel provided for their needs. The Throssel skill as wheelwrights is well known and is commemorated in the village sign as a tribute in particular to John Throssel who was Village Clerk for 50 years. Joinery and other constructional skills were also available in the village. Social life, it seems, was healthy. There were three public houses – The George & Dragon, The Fox & Hounds [now The Poacher], and The Plough in Brook Street. The last named was popular with the children as from it sweets could be purchased. And once a year the Village Feast Week provided much merriment and good cheer.

As to occupations, working on the land was by far the most important, followed by those providing for the everyday needs such as those noted above. In the days of Francis's childhood the place of women was essentially in the home not in outside employment, but at the times when vegetables on the farms had to be cut or lifted women provided the necessary labour.

What is now the Old School building in Brook Street was vibrant with the voices of the children of the parish. Most pupils were on the school role from the infant stage until they left for the world of employment at 14 years of age. Francis was at the school in his early years, but at ten he was transferred to St.Ives Grammar School, to which he travelled by cycle.

In the Elsworth school there were only three classes. The infants occupied the northernmost room [on the left as you look at the building], with the higher gabled section providing two classes for the remainder. At one time boys and girls were educated separately post the infant years, with sliding doors between the other two classrooms, but in Francis's time the classes were mixed, with a curtain separating the two classes. With such a meagre divide, the children were from time to time unintentionally made aware of activities in the other room, often to their amusement and interest. Cookery and woodwork were not neglected in those days and a separate building for this purpose was located off the Causeway, on the site of No.8. As with many of us, Francis has clear memories of his teachers. Mr.Darcy Addy was the Head, and taught the senior class. His wife, Amy took the middle class and Mrs Hale was responsible for the infants. Mr.Darcy supervised the boys for football - memories of chasing the ball on the present sports field come clearly to mind. In those days before the Second World War it was not kept as now, but was grazed by cattle. Longish grass characterised the land on which cow pats were not uncommon. No showers were available to remove coatings of those pats after falling or heading the dirty ball! Should the Head fall in such conditions, as once he did, the boys were of course delighted.



# David Howard

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## **ELSWORTH PARISH COUNCIL A VIEW FROM THE BACK BENCH**

As it is a rarity for parishioners to observe parish council meetings as they are entitled to do, it would seem of some value to give insight to events as they might be seen and heard through this column. Just as the Westminster Parliament has to take note of public awareness of its activities through the medium of the press, we on the parish council should also be held accountable for what we do or fail to do.

### Flood Control

In September the Parish Council's plan to construct a major weedscreen at the sluice – which was to be dismantled – was submitted for official approval and was rejected as the scheme could lead to increased flooding. This is hardly surprising for the reasons given were in line with the findings of a joint consultant water engineers' report to the Parish Council way back in 2004, a report which was dismissed without discussion.

It is difficult to understand why the Council acted as it did - pleas for consideration were made not only in Council but also through the pages of this magazine. I am reminded of Hans Christian Anderson's story of "The King's New Clothes" – you remember, the courtiers and crowds refused to accept the evidence before them [that the king was in the 'never-never']. Similarly with regard to the sluice the evidence was starkly clear, but only one councillor [like the boy in the story] was prepared to speak out. But now reality must be faced by the Council.

Reasons for the unsuitability of a major weedscreen at the sluice area have been presented both by independent consultants and the Environment Agency, all of whom identify the site where the stream enters Book Street to be more suitable, indeed the Agency asks for an explanation as to why this had been ignored. It is possible that the

draughtsman of the rejected scheme could be an exception, but his brief was only to design for the sluice area without consideration for a location near the kissing gate bridge. For ease of reading the relevant factors may be summarised as below.

1. The accumulation of debris and weed at a screen can act as an additional barrier to the passage of water, causing back-up. If the screen is in a built-up location – as in the sluice area of Brook Street – the likelihood of hazardous flooding is increased.
2. A weedscreen located at the concrete bridge near the kissing gate in Brook Street would overcome this problem, as any water backing-up would be away from houses and on meadow land.
3. A weedscreen at the upstream concrete bridge would also hold back from the village – and the sluice culverts in particular - vegetation and debris from upstream headwaters.
4. Flood protection experts are emphatic over the need to rake off weed and debris at screens to prevent an additional barrier forming. In the case of a sluice area weedscreen this would not be possible at times of flash floods as the screen would be surrounded by flood water. **Thus a weedscreen here could increase even more the likelihood of flooding.**
5. In the recent past, water back-up has been exacerbated by vegetation being allowed to clog the stream between the culverts and the kissing gate. Even when cut, the vegetation has often then been left on the bank side, to be swept down to the culverts in Autumn at a time of heavy rainfall, thus promoting flooding. It would seem vital that the Parish Council should assume responsibility for the regular maintenance of the stream bank and bed in this section upstream of the culverts. At the present time the bed is a mass



of vegetation, presenting a potential impediment should a flash flood occur.

All consultants confirm that the basic cause of water back-up at the sluice area is the small size of the culverts. These are adequate for normal flow but at times of flash floods the sudden mass of water is far beyond their capacity and consequently water backs-up and flooding results. The presence of weeds at the aperture can add to the problem but this is not the essential cause. As noted above, we are advised that to reduce the weed and debris factor a weedscreen should be located at the kissing gate bridge, with attention given to stream maintenance in upper Brook Street. In contrast, the rejected Parish Council scheme could increase the build-up of weed and debris at the sluice, thereby increasing flooding possibilities. If the scheme had gone ahead, where then would responsibility lie?

### The Post Office

Unlike the above, unity of purpose has characterised a resolve to address the issue of the proposed closure of our post office and an active course designed to retain the post office facility and the shop is being pursued. This vital matter is dealt with at greater length in a separate section of this magazine where it will be seen that the Chairman, Councillors and Andrew Lansley have been – and are – active out of the headlines.

AWF

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## ELSWORTH POST OFFICE

Following the well-supported Church meeting, representatives of the Parish Council met with Andrew Lansley and representative of Post Office Ltd. at Hardwick. Although attention was drawn to the fact that the government guidelines, if followed, supported retention of our post office, it soon became apparent that the quantity of post office business was the only factor with which Post Office Ltd was concerned. Requirements that there should be an alternative post office within three miles and that there should be public transport accessibility was ignored, as was the consideration that closure would endanger our last shop. These would seem to have been used merely as a smokescreen which we had penetrated. Post Office Ltd were clearly of a mind to close our post office – flexibility was not on its agenda.

Regretfully it was clear where the power lay. Perhaps the guidelines from an old English parable should have been agreed at the start:

*“Let us agree not to tread on each others feet”, said the cock to the horse.*

The meeting wasn't a waste of time though. P.O. Ltd agreed that if the shop remained open the Outreach Service could be located there; at first for only 5 hours a week, but if transactions could be increased the service would be upgraded to a Partner Outreach Service, whereby the post office facility would be available throughout the period the shop was open. This, then, would mark a great improvement.

If we all made a marked effort to use the post office very much more than we have – certainly over the next six months or year – it is possible that our post office could be back to its present hours. It follows from this our village shop must remain to house the post office. Edna Lambert and family have been most supportive at this difficult time for them, and have given the village first refusal on a lease, limited, of course, on time. Such a venture requires expertise and experience and the parish council is fortunate in being advised by a consult-

ant from the Village Retail Shops Association. **All is not lost** but success demands a concerted effort by us all. A village meeting is proposed for January 11<sup>th</sup>, at which the way – or ways – forward will be discussed. A village shop is clearly a matter for us all. When you are notified of the time and location date, please make every effort to attend. Unless proposals have a clear and strong backing from parishioners, the venture cannot proceed.

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### **ELSWORTH, KNAPWELL & CONINGTON W.I.**

All members look forward to our December meeting when we have our Christmas Party. The food is delicious, the wine plentiful and the entertainment enjoyable.

In January our visiting speaker will have us looking back at the second World War from an American viewpoint, and in February the topic is “A Year In My Garden”. After our Annual Meeting in March our new programme begins.

We should be delighted to welcome visitors and there is no obligation to become a member. Meetings are held in Elsworth School, usually on the second Wednesday of the month at 7.30 pm.

Throughout the U.K. the W.I. continues to thrive – some 8,000 women became members between January and June this year. New W.I.s have been opening each week - some in work places, notably in Sainsburys in the City of London!

For more information contact Isobel Farrow on 267472.

Isobel Farrow

## THE EMPSONS OF ELSWORTH

Many people have been enthralled over the last two years by watching Lewis Hamilton on the car racing circuits. Perhaps not many know that he has local connections in that he was at one time a student at an independent Sixth Form College in Cambridge.

If Hamilton's local connection might seem a little tenuous, there are strong motor racing links in Elsworth through the Empson family going back over several generations. At the present time, young Andrew Empson of Roger's Close is carrying the family's reputation to its highest level yet, having established himself as one of the leading junior grass track drivers in the country.

Last year Andrew qualified as one of two drivers in his car category from the East Anglian region eligible to compete in the national championships, the criterion being placed 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> in the regional league. His consistent success in the league took him to Tenby in Pembrokeshire for the National, where he placed 11<sup>th</sup> - magnificent performance. Although only 17 years of age, this year Andrew has taken on senior drivers and is already a St.Neots club champion.

Andrew commenced car racing at 12 years of age, although he was not allowed behind the steering wheel on the public highway. Undoubtedly he was inspired by father, Mark, who was a St.Neots club champion in the early 1990s. Unfortunately a serious accident on the track when Mark's car and another were forced off course and into obstacles resulted in Mark sustaining injury to his neck, bringing to a close his personal racing career. However, he is still very much involved not only as Andrew's mentor and trailer driver, but as league car scrutineer. In the latter role Mark has the responsibility of checking that vehicles have conformed with the authorised specifications.

Just as Andrew was inspired by his father, so too was Mark years before by his father, Bob, who was a club and East Anglian cham-

pion in the 1970s. The same must have been the case with Bob's other son, Paul, who in the early 1990s was runner-up in the club and league for four years before becoming a senior champion in both in 1995.

Grass track car racing is not a preserve of the Empson males, however, with the ladies confined to looking on admiringly from the side. Paul's wife, Denise, was this year a club Ladies' Champion, and Linda, Mark's wife has also taken part in previous years. And now Haley – Linda and Mark's daughter – commenced racing this year, as did Paul and Denise's daughter Emily. It would seem the Empson name will continue to be prominent in grass-racing racing circles for many years – and perhaps generations – to come.

How, then, did this family tradition start? Those of the village who have been resident for some years will recall Bob's father – also Bob – at the garage in Brockley Road. Bob senior was involved in motor cycle scrambling competitions, into which sport son Bob [Elsworth's present Bob] followed in the 1960s. His interest then transferred to car hill climbing, and then to car grass track racing, with the success noted above. Thus this fine record of achievement began, about which the family and Elsworth may be justly proud.



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## **JUBILEE CLUB**

The club is open to everyone in Elsworth and surrounding villages. Most meetings take place on the first Thursday in the month in Elsworth School Hall from 2.30 pm to 4.30 pm. We have a speaker or entertainment, afternoon tea and a raffle.

The main purpose of the club is for people to come along for a chat, meet others from the villages, enjoy a talk or entertainment and leave looking forward to the next time.

On Thursday the 4<sup>th</sup> December we are having Christmas Readings by Geoff Halls. We then look forward to the 8<sup>th</sup> January when we all enjoy a New Year lunch at the George and Dragon – a great atmosphere.

Please come along. You will be most welcome and, who knows, you may want to come again! For more details contact Betty Simcock – telephone 01954 267 470

Betty Simcock

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## **ELSWORTH SPORTS CLUB**

The two cricket teams enjoyed average success last season in the Cambs. Junior League, both finishing mid-table in their respective divisions. The first team finished fourth in Division Two and the second team fifth in Division Four. Regrettably, owing to poor weather, both experienced the disappointment of four cancelled games. Potential players should contact Bill Knibbs on 267266

The football season started for Elsworth with some ‘friendly’



matches in August, with the league season starting at the beginning of September. After a lapse of several years the club is fielding a second team again, made up mainly of the younger element but guided by a few older experienced players. If you have free time on a Saturday afternoon, please come along to Grass Close and give your support. The first team play in the BIS league, Division 2A and **are currently top of the division, having played 10 matches, won 9 and lost 1.** The second team also play in the BIS league, but in Division 5B and are currently in 9<sup>th</sup> place out of 13 teams. Potential players should contact Mark Brading on 01480 383303

The table tennis season started in September for Elsworth with the club again fielding three teams in the Ely League. After their good season last year, the second team have joined the first in Division One, with the third team of youngsters playing in Division Two. Currently the first and second teams are tenth and eleventh respectively out of twelve teams in Division One, and the third team is ninth out of ten in Division Two. Potential players should contact Bill Knibbs on 267266.

On Tuesday afternoons throughout the year, carpet bowls is played in the pavilion. Anyone interested in playing will be made welcome. There is a charge of £2 per session.

In early November, Ken Woodham and Clive Baker represented the Club at Fulbourn offices of the Cambridge Water Company when a cheque for £250 was presented. This was the result of an application to the company for one of their 'Village Awards'. The club is hoping to put this money towards the purchase of a piece of equipment which will enable the bowls mats to be rolled up and stored.

Whist Drives are held monthly in the pavilion on a Friday evening – see posters displayed in the village for details.

Roger Fensom

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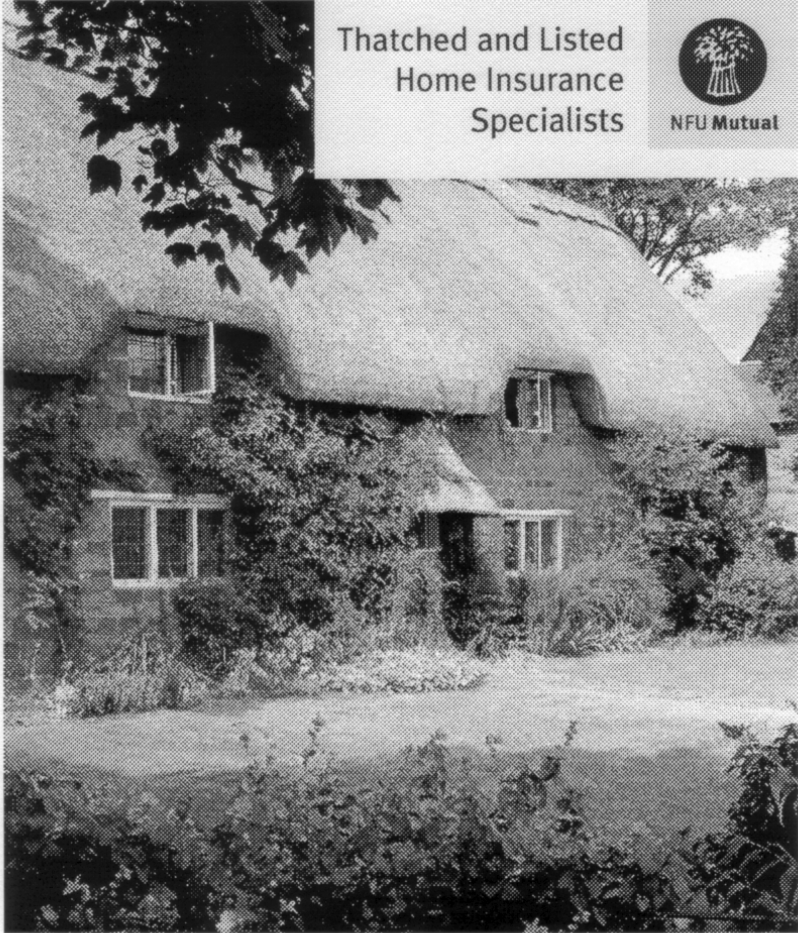
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