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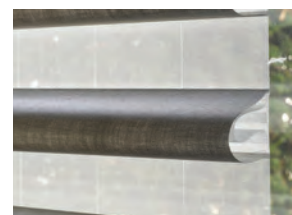
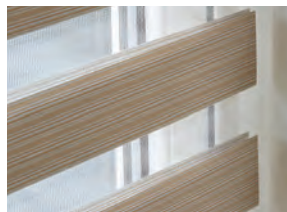
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Front cover
Old Station Lamp
 by Ralph Phillips
 Enhanced by Paul Burt Photography

Stansted Mountfitchet Village Magazine
The Link
www.stanstedlink.org.uk

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If you do not receive your copy please email: distribution@stanstedlink.org.uk or telephone 813680

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CONTENTS

Churches	Friends of St Mary's Church	15	Advertising and Business	Calling New Advertisers	27
	Stansted Free Church	15		Index to Advertisers	32
	Stansted Quaker Meeting	14			
	St John's Church	15	Fun and Games	Caption Competition	19
	St Theresa's Catholic Church	14		Guess the Object Answer	13
	Thought for the Month	14			
Children, Youth and Families	Birchanger Primary School	9	Health, Wellbeing and Environment	Brain Training	9
	Fun Place on the Hill	2		Human Roots	13
	Rainbow Pre-school	28		Making the Most of your Money	17
	Stansted Scouts	25		Recycling	29
	St Mary's School	28		Sustainable Stansted	17
Clubs and Community	Directory of Clubs and Organisations	31	Fundraising	Grove Cottage	17
	Huw Johnson Club	3		RBL Poppy Appeal	13
	Newport Flower Club	4		Shoeboxes	13
	RSPB	3		St John's 300 club	11
	Saffron Walden Trefoil Guild	3	Village Events	What's On in February	5
	Social Club	4			
	Stansted Evening W I	25	Features	Caribbean Adventure	7
	Stansted is Well Read	4		Eating and drinking in Stansted	6
	Stansted Local History Society	2		Editorial	2
	Stansted Mountfitchet U3A	27		Hundred Parishes	25
	Stansted Sings Together	3		In Opposition to the Slipper Sock	11
	The Arts Society Bishop's Stortford	27		Joan Grose 101st Birthday	6
	The Place on the Hill	6		Random Jottings	11
	Ugley W I	27		Why Switch to Full Fibre Broadband?	19
Local Roundup	Aubrey Buxton Nature Reserve	28	Sports	Stansted Bowls Club	30
	Gardens of Easton Lodge	29		Stansted Hall Cricket Club	29
	Hatfield Forest	4		Stansted Football Club	30
	Stansted Windmill	19		Stansted Tennis Club	30
	Thank you	9	The Arts	S Walden Symphony Film Music	9
	War Memorial Flowers	6			
Local Council	Stansted Network	20-23			

CONTRIBUTIONS FOR THE MARCH ISSUE

Please email editor@stanstedlink.org.uk by noon on **9th Feb.** Submissions should be in Word or typed into an email, maximum 300 words, and may be subject to editing. Please send photographs (**preferably landscape**) as separate jpg.

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EDITORIAL



Our somewhat unusual front cover photograph was taken by Ralph Phillips, a railway man for 50 years; his final posting before retirement was at Stansted station. The picture was taken many years ago, but it is still very beautiful: quite moody and atmospheric. Thank you so much Ralph. As I write, we are in the midst of a very cold few days, but Marion and Mike Dyer escaped from our winter and took off for the Caribbean in late November; see p7 for a page to cheer and warm you. Another way of getting warm is to eat in one of our local hostelrys. Daphne Lunnon, our proofreader, enjoyed visiting all 26 of our local eateries and has written an informative and very positive article on p6 about them. I find it amazing that there are so many thriving eating establishments in the village! If you are looking for something to amuse you, how about sending your suggestions for our latest caption competition on p19?

In response to my request for a gardening expert to take over from Susan Sedgebeer and her team, we did receive a couple of replies, and we hope to start this feature up again in March. We are so delighted, as it is a much-loved topic to many of our readers. We were also pleased to hear from the now 11-year-old Funky Chicken, taking exception to various modern objects in a most amusing and strong manner; the boy has all the makings of a first-class grumpy old man in several decades! I have to confess that I had not heard of any of these things but they really do exist; see p11 for his article. Finally, it is wonderful to hear from Shirley Greenall on p6 about her Mum Joan living to 101, and enjoying her life to the full; what a great thing to be able to say.

Ed



FUN PLACE ON THE HILL

www.stanstedfreechurch.org.uk

Our Christmas Event was well attended and appreciated by all. The children enjoyed making Christingles, racing Santas, singing carols and Christmas songs, and of course the visit from Santa and a gift from his sack. When it was time to go home the children all delved into the Lucky Dip for a small Christmas themed present.



The Fun Place on the Hill is open every **Friday, including school holidays**, from 9.15am-11.30am in the Free Church Hall and all are welcome. Free squash and healthy snacks are available for children, and tea, coffee and biscuits for the adults. Parents, carers, children and adults of all ages drop in; adults relax with a hot drink and chat, while the children enjoy plenty of space to run around and play with the toys, and join in with a Sing-Along at around 10.30am. Now colder weather has returned, why not come along for a couple of hours on a Friday morning and help save on home energy cost? There is limited free parking in the church car park. Looking forward to welcoming you on Friday mornings.



Sue Parker and Fran Richards
Tel: 657116

Email: funplace@stanstedfreechurch.org.uk



STANSTED MOUNTFITCHET
LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

www.stanstedhistorysociety.org.uk

For our January meeting, three of our long-standing members gave a short talk on one of their favourite topics. Our Chairman Dave Perry thanked the large audience for attending and introduced our first speaker Tony Crosby, who spoke about the *Jaywick Miniature Railway*. Jaywick is a small town on the Essex Coast fairly close to Clacton, and today has the reputation for being rather run down and unwelcoming. However in the mid-1930s, a family called Stedman built a development of holiday lodges; by all accounts these were pretty basic in every respect. The miniature railway was constructed as a means for prospective purchasers to get to and from this development. Eventually the railway fell into disuse and was broken up and sold to various museums and collectors.

Our second speaker was Roger Barrett who discussed the men and women in the famous photographs at the opening of the Blythwood Model Dairy, attended by King Edward VII in the early 1900s. Stansted Mountfitchet and the surrounding area was the home of many rich and famous people and the photographs showed these men, their wives and various offspring invited to this event; amongst them were Lord Warwick and Walter Gilbey of the famous distilling company. Our third and final speaker was Tony Wellings who brought with him a fascinating and varied collection of toys and games of bygone eras. These items were not only for playing with but served a useful purpose in education and in some cases helped with hand-eye co-ordination in various sporting activities. The meeting finished with the usual question and answer section. Our next meeting is on **Thursday 6th February** at 7.30pm in Touchpoint and our speaker will be Ken McDonald.

Edward Taub
Email: taub8jr@icloud.com



RSPB

www.group.rspb.org.uk/stortvalley

For our meeting on **Tuesday 11th February** at 7.30pm in Bishop's Park Community Centre, Bishop's Stortford CM23 4DA, we welcome Gavin Vicary who is the founder of the *North-East Herts Swift Group*. For many the return of the swift is the sign that summer is here and a moment for celebration. However, all is not well with our swifts and since 1995 we have lost over half of the UK breeding population, leading them to be on the red list of threatened species. Gavin will introduce the vital work that he and others have been doing to address the dramatic decline and go through how we can all help.



Our midweek birding walk is early in the month on **Wednesday 5th February** and takes a route of five miles starting from Stocking Pelham. Using quiet lanes and foot-paths it includes Deer's Green, Ford End and Washall Green. On **Saturday 22nd February** we plan to visit Woodwalton Fen near Huntingdon, which is part of the Great Fen project. The fen is one of only four remaining fragments of the ancient wild fens and is internationally important for wildlife, providing a refuge for thousands of species of fen animals and plants. There are three great trails to help visitors discover the best of this historic nature reserve. At the time of writing the arrangements for both the walk and the visit have yet to be finalised. Please contact me for full details nearer the time, or see our website.

Peter Allen

Tel: 07876 295456

Email: peter2349@sky.com



HUW JOHNSON CLUB

We had a great start to 2025 with a trip to the panto in early January. The Cambridge Arts Theatre's production of *Cinderella* was greatly enjoyed by members and volunteers alike. Our next get together will be at the end of February when we are planning a meal out. As always, anyone interested in joining as a member or volunteering, please do get in touch.

Ellen Brooks

Tel: 07800 896516

Email: ellenbrooks@hotmail.co.uk

STANSTED SINGS TOGETHER

Some of you may have been wondering what has happened to *Stansted Sings Together* since our wonderful get together in song last spring. The project brought together singers from all across our community and beyond: adults who fancied having a go on a Saturday afternoon, singers from local choirs, young people and children. We know, as much research confirms, that singing together improves mental, physical and social health and self-confidence. Well I am delighted to say we will be running the project again under the new name of *Festival of Voices* for all comers, with a new set of songs for us to enjoy. We are aiming for Saturday afternoons from the end of April and into May, so watch this space for details and how to sign up.

Jane Wheeler

Email: janievox@mac.com

SAFFRON WALDEN TREFOIL GUILD

www.trefoilguild.co.uk

Trefoil is Guiding for adults, so is open to anyone aged 18 and over. Guiding experience is not essential, but following the Guiding ethos would be expected. Join Trefoil for fun, friendship, adventure and challenges. You will have opportunities to learn new skills, get involved with your local community and support Girlguiding.



Our group is called the *Saffron Walden Trefoil Guild*, but we meet at different venues between Saffron Walden and Bishop's Stortford, depending on the activity we are doing. We usually meet on the third Tuesday of the month 10.30am-noon. Recent activities have included making a meal in a mug, visiting Scotsdales Garden Centre, lighting fires to cook on with some campfire singing, walking in Hatfield Forest, kurling, Christmas crafts and a Christmas meal. For more information, please see our website; or contact our Chairman Lesley Ingham on 07706 559662, Secretary Angela Lench email: angelalench@hotmail.com or me.



Glynis Prothero

Tel: 814145

NEWPORT FLOWER CLUB

Friendship, Fun and Flowers

Our next Club night is on **Wednesday 19th February** at 7.00pm in Ugley Village Hall. Our demonstrator is Rachael Borenkova whose topic will be *Let's go to the Flower shop*. Rachael is a newly qualified demonstrator and we welcome her to our Club. Please come and support her as she embarks on her demonstrating journey.



We meet on the third Wednesday of the month except January, August and December, and visitors are always very welcome.

Patricia Sanz

Email: flowersanzp2020@gmail.com



STANSTED SOCIAL CLUB

www.smsc.com

Christmas now seems ages ago, but we would like to thank all our members and staff who made it a memorable time. As you may have seen on social media, we retained our *Entertainment Club of the Year* award in November at a fantastic awards ceremony where we provided the entertainment. We will be going for four-in-a-row this year. There is essential maintenance being carried out on the flat roof, fascias and windows at the rear of the Club which hopefully is not causing too much disruption.

Entertainment for February starts on **Saturday 1st** with a *Whitney Houston* tribute. On **Saturday 8th** we welcome a new band to the Club, *BeBounce Ska*. Head down and give them a warm Social Club welcome. **Sunday 9th** sees an *Adele* tribute act returning to the Club and with the meat raffle and members' draw, what better way to spend a Sunday afternoon? On **Saturday 15th** we will enjoy the return of the fantastic *Time Warps* and on **Saturday 22nd** we welcome back *Brit Invasion*. We round off February on **Sunday 23rd** with another new act to the Club, *Marc and Julia*. All in all, it promises to be an amazing month. If you are struggling for Valentine's Day ideas, why not buy your loved one a Club membership?



Andrew Sharpe

Email: stanstedclub@gmail.com

STANSTED IS WELL READ

The next meeting of our book club will be on **Tuesday 4th February** at 8.00pm in the Dog and Duck where we will be discussing last month's book choice *Ariadne* by Jennifer Saint. In this rewriting of the story Jennifer Saint's Ariadne gives a voice to the forgotten women of one of the most famous Greek myths, and speaks of their strength in the face of angry, petulant Gods. She brings a fresh take on the Theseus and the Minotaur myth where Theseus' heroics are somewhat diminished beneath Ariadne's naive understanding of the world. Have you read any good books you can recommend? Please do get in touch if you would like to join us. A warm welcome awaits.



Diana Griffin

Tel: 813056

Email: stanstediswellread@gmail.com

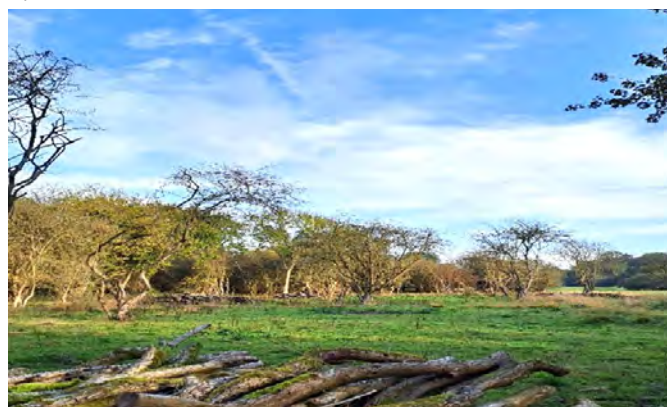


HATFIELD FOREST

www.nationaltrust.org.uk/hatfield-forest

Winter Opening Hours

During the winter, we close the forest and car parks on Mondays and Tuesdays because the ground conditions are very poor during the wetter months and can be badly impacted by large footfall. We are open Wednesdays-Sundays 9.00am-2.30pm. At the time of writing, this has also been the warmest winter on record with few winter frosts to harden the soil. The change in season is also causing erosion of the historic woodland rides, so if you come across a diversion, please follow it and discover a new route. Please be mindful that car parking spaces are limited at this time of year as they are restricted to the hard-standing car parks at the entrance and lake area; we have closed our grass park because the ground conditions have deteriorated due to changes in the weather. Please check our website for further updates.



If you are feeling chilly and have a wood burning stove or fire, please email: hatfieldforest@nationaltrust.org.uk to place your log or sawn timber orders and support our ongoing conservation work. To find out more about what to expect if you come to the forest, please look at our website. Enjoy your visit.

Hannah Underwood

Assistant Business Services Co-ordinator

Tel: 870678

Email: hannah.underwood@nationaltrust.org.uk

STANSTED IS WELL READ

8 pm Tue 4th Feb

Dog and Duck, Lower Street

Ariadne

by Jennifer Saintby

Gives a voice to the forgotten women of one of the most famous Greek myths

All Welcome Tel 813056



SUSTAINABLE STANSTED

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www.sustainablestansted.org



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Sun 9th & Sun 16th Feb

Tickets £7 on the gate or £6 in advance from www.trybooking.com

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WHAT'S ON IN FEBRUARY

4	Tue	Stansted is Well Read	Dog and Duck 8 pm
6	Thu	Sustainable Stansted	Quaker Meeting House 6.30 pm
		History Society	Touchpoint 7.30 pm
9	Sun	Link copy due in today	before noon
9/16	Sun	Snowdrop Sundays	Easton Lodge 11.00 am
11	Tue	The Arts Society B S RSPB	South Mill Arts, B S 10.40 am
			Bishop's Pk Comm Centre 7.30 pm
13/20	Thu	Snowdrop Thursdays	Easton Lodge 11.00 am
13	Thu	W I	Touchpoint 7.30 pm
15	Sat	Ugley Farmers' Market	Ugley Village Hall 10 am - noon
16	Sun	S W Symphony Film Music	Saffron Hall 3 pm
19	Wed	Ugley W I	Ugley Village Hall 2 pm
		Newport Flower Club	Ugley Village Hall 7 pm
20	Thu	U3A Monthly Meeting	St Theresa's Parish Centre 2 pm
22	Sat	Elsenham Farmers' Market	Village Hall 12.30 - 2.30 pm

THE ARTS SOCIETY BISHOP'S STORTFORD

10.40 am Tue 11th Feb

South Mill Arts

The Grand Tour: Travel and Collecting in the 18th Century
by Caroline Knight

Guests welcome Entry £7

Coffee served from 10 am

Tel 656065 for more information



Monthly Meeting

7.30 pm Tue 11th Feb

Bishop's Park Community Centre CM23 4DA

We welcome Gavin Vicary who is the founder of the North-East Herts Swift Group

Visitors welcome, entry £5

Tel: Peter 07876 295456

www.group.rspb.org.uk/stortvalley



Ugley W I

2 pm Wed 19th Feb

Ugley Village Hall

Audley End House

by Tim Turner

Visitors Welcome

Plenty of free parking

NEWPORT FLOWER CLUB

7 pm Wed 19th Feb

Ugley Village Hall

Let's go to the Flower Shop

Demonstrator

Rachael Borenkova

Visitors welcome for a small charge

Plenty of free parking



SNOWDROP THURSDAYS

11 am - 3 pm

Thu 13th & Thu 20th Feb

Tickets £5.50 on the gate or £5 in advance from www.trybooking.com

Hot drinks and snacks

Snowdrop merchandise on sale



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Stansted Evening W I

7.30 pm Thu 13th Feb

Touchpoint

The Joys of the English Language

by Tim Morley

Visitors Welcome

Bring and Buy Stall

IN MEMORIAM

JOAN MARGARET GROSE

19th September 1923 – 6th January 2025



Joan sadly died on Monday 6th January. She was a long-time resident of Croasdaile Road and latterly of Mountfitchet House Care Home. Mum was very active in the village, the local societies and especially in the WI. She died peacefully after a very short illness, and had enjoyed her life to the full.

Her family would like to thank all those in the village, including the school pupils and playgroups, who sent her a card for her 101st birthday in September. The target was to get 101; she actually received 320! She was interviewed on BBC Essex and just loved it all.

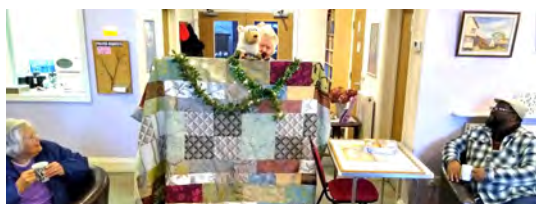
Shirley Greenall
Joan's daughter



THE PLACE ON THE HILL

www.stanstedfreechurch.org.uk

Visitors to *The Place* in late November had an unexpected surprise when Babs, a church member and one of our helpers treated them to a fun Christmas puppet show.



If you would like to get out and meet people, *The Place on the Hill* offers a warm, safe and friendly environment for adults. We are open every **Wednesday 10.00am-noon** and everyone is welcome. Join us for free coffee, cakes and biscuits and save on your heating bills. We also have a jigsaw you can work on. There is no need to book, just come along to the Free Church at the bottom of Chapel Hill. There is limited parking behind the church. If you have children, please come along to *Fun Place on the Hill* which opens on Fridays; see separate article for more information.



Mike and Marion Dyer
Tel: 814059

Email: theplace@stanstedfreechurch.org.uk

MY YEAR OF EATING AND DRINKING IN STANSTED

When *Uppers* opened on Lower Street in 2023, I thought it sounded lovely and vowed to visit. It also got me thinking of all the other places in Stansted I had either never been to or had not been to in a while. So I resolved to eat and/or drink in every café, bar, pub, restaurant and takeaway in Stansted during 2024. Probably one every six weeks or so, I thought. How hard can that be? Then I listed them and there are 26 eateries or drinkeries in Stansted: at least two per month to keep on target. I thought I might compare and contrast and maybe even rate them somehow, but it did not seem right to compare a pub or bar that did not serve food, with a café that only did breakfast or lunch, with a restaurant that served food and drink. So, I just enjoyed the challenge for what it was and accomplished the project mid-December. For the record, all were lovely; I did not have one bad meal or poor service. To parody the late Bruce Forsyth, they are all my favourites. The bonus was that all were within walking distance, so no need to worry about who is driving home ...

Bombay Butler	Brohmon
Churchills	Crimson 8
Dominos	Flames
Folies	Gunyah Vineyard
Lams	Lower Street Brasserie
Mayflower	Mix
Nolaki at The Cock	Paola's
Stansted Social Club	Station Pizza
The Cork House	The Dog and Duck
The Kings Arms	The Linden
The Old Bell	The Rose and Crown
The Queens Head	Uppers
Wood Grill	Yeomans

Daphne Lunnon

Email: drlunnon@gmail.com

WAR MEMORIAL FLOWERS

I do hope you have noticed the two beautiful arrangements of flowers on the War Memorial that are arranged every week from Easter Day to Remembrance Sunday. Stansted is incredibly lucky to have such a handsome War Memorial in a stunning open setting in front of St John's Church. Do have a walk in these lovely gardens if you have not already done so; they are beautifully maintained by the Parish Council. The flowers are arranged by a wonderful band of over 35 keen and willing volunteers. They usually arrange the flowers just once a year but some are happy to do more. I thank them all most sincerely; their willingness makes my job of doing the rota so much easier. I am always delighted to hear from people who may like to take a turn so please get in touch. This year, flower arranging starts on 20th April.

The Remembrance Sunday Service is attended by an ever-growing number of people of all ages; it is very important to remember the people of Stansted who sacrificed their lives in two World Wars.



Janet Hollis
Tel: 812073

CARIBBEAN ADVENTURE

In late November we travelled to Gatwick with my school friend Jo and her husband Gavin for our eight hour flight to Barbados, where we boarded P&O Arvia for the start of our wonderful Caribbean cruise. Mike and I went there in 2013 and had always wanted to return. Arvia is a new ship and is massive; it is 345 metres long and has 19 decks. We visited eight islands: Antigua, Martinique, and St Kitts which were new to us, and Barbados, Tortola, St Maarten, St Lucia and Grenada which we had visited previously. We spent a day at each island apart from Barbados and Antigua where we spent two days to enable around a quarter of the 5200 passengers to disembark and another group to join the cruise. The island stops were interspersed with four sea days, when there were lots of activities to choose from. Mike and I went to several art talks and joined the fun choir.



Arvia (right) towered over the other ships in port



The view from an old Colonial House on St Kitts



Jolly Beach, Antigua



The beach at Bathsheba, Barbados




Looking out over Grenada from the ship



One of the many beautiful sunsets we saw

The daily temperature in the Caribbean was around 30 degrees, and everywhere was air conditioned. Returning to England, the temperature was just above freezing. We were cold and exhausted after our long flight home and journey back from Gatwick, but so pleased that we had made the effort. Our memories will stay with us for a very long time.

Marion Dyer



Stansted Pilates & Osteopathy

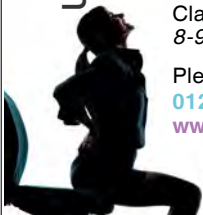


the osteopath

Hazel Williams is one of the few osteopathic practitioners who specialises in both structural and cranial osteopathy to treat a wide range of patients from babies to the elderly, from the immobile to athletes. Her treatment can help with: back, neck, joint, arthritic, muscle and sciatic pain, trapped nerves, sports injuries, headaches and migraine.

She also incorporates acupuncture to aid pain relief and provides specially formulated pilates classes to help improve and maintain fitness.

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www.birchanger.essex.sch.uk

Starting the Term with a Friendship Day

The children returned to school with boundless energy and enthusiasm, ready to embrace the new term with positivity and amazing attitudes. To kick off the term on a high note, we celebrated a special *Friendship Day* as part of our well-being initiatives. Each class participated in a variety of engaging activities designed to deepen their understanding of friendship.



From listening exercises to becoming better friends, to exploring emotions through imaginative activities like the exciting exploding Coke can in Marlins, the day was both educational and fun. Rainbow Fish stories taught us the value of kindness, while collaborative art projects and the creation of friendship bridges helped us focus on qualities like support, trust and helpfulness. It was truly inspiring to see the children embrace these activities with such enthusiasm, setting a wonderful tone for the year ahead.

Sharon Vessey
Headteacher
Tel: 812362

Email: admin@birchanger.essex.sch.uk



THANK YOU

To Linda and Tony Gurr, many thanks from Norman Court Sheltered Housing for planting so many pots of bulbs to give us something to look forward to in the spring; there are more than a dozen pots and troughs. We had a number of good ceramic pots, but a dreary back garden, so a few of us decided to buy a lot of bulbs of varying heights and colours, to give us a more cheerful outlook. However, we had over-estimated our physical ability to move pots, fill them with compost, and, after planting, move them to their best sites. Just before Christmas, when sadly some of the bulbs had deteriorated and were beyond saving, Tony and Linda offered their help.

To quote Joseph Addison: you have *lightened our burden* and *given us something to hope for* and that means a great deal to us.

Audrey Rodgers



www.saffronsymphony.org

Film Music Concert

The orchestra's popular film music concert returns on **Sunday 16th February** at 3.00pm in Saffron Hall. Join the orchestra in a tour of some of the greatest films ever made with music by some of the greatest composers ever to write for the silver screen. Tickets: adults £18 and £21, 18-25years £11, under 18s £6 available from www.saffronhall.com or tel 0845 548 7650.



Marion Dyer

.BRAIN TRAINING

How to survive the winter Blues

Rhythm! Draw the curtains on the dreary winter sky, turn on your favourite music and go for it. If you are filled with the horror of Dad Dancing, then instead just sit and tap away with your hands, fingers, feet, toes, nose or the cat's paw. Let us explore the neurology behind this apparent daftness. The magic happens when we hit the beat with instant positive feelings. We danced or tapped, co-ordinating our movements to land on that beat; that positive reinforcement is why moving rhythmically improves co-ordination. For Parkinsons' patients, moving to a rhythm is great therapy. To make it more powerful, add a very heavy bass.



When we move rhythmically, nicely on time, we get bursts of the positive neurotransmitters dopamine, serotonin and endorphins. Dopamine is motivating, serotonin regulates our moods and endorphins give an exercise high. The rhythm we are moving to stimulates the brain areas related to speech and language, so is an important part of cognitive maintenance and rehabilitation, as well as helping us learn stuff. Instead of music, you can work with a metronome. You can buy one cheaply or download one. If you have an iphone or ipad, there is the paid-for app: *Prometronome*. This can be set to random. For example, tap a hand and a foot at, say, 100 beats per minute, in 2/4 time. After a little while, the beat stops but you carry on tapping away and, after a bit, the beat returns. Did you hit it? Having mastered this, to give an even bigger burst of the good stuff, when the beat stops, switch to lifting your toes whilst your hand taps so they are moving in opposite directions. When the beat resumes, return to the same direction. Brain fuddling.

Clare Harding
Z-Health Master Practitioner
Tel: 07802 872919



Join our
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event

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Thursday 20th February, 5pm - 7pm

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RANDOM JOTTINGS

Driving me round the Bend

I have always hated roundabouts. Back in the dark ages when I first started to drive, coming across a roundabout was a rare occurrence; so rare that when I did encounter one, I panicked and blindly followed the car in front of me. If there was no one to follow, I would go round and round several times before taking what I hoped would be the correct exit. Most times I picked the wrong one; still do. Of course, life is a lot easier now with Sat Nav but I still experience a slight panic attack each time I see a roundabout looming.

The problem is there are an awful lot of them now; mini ones, double ones and some huge ones with the added complication of traffic lights thrown in. On a recent six-mile journey I had to negotiate nine of the blighters en route!

The answer to any traffic issue seems to involve putting in yet another roundabout and it does not always solve the problem, often causing more (the mini roundabout at the bottom of Chapel Hill is a prime example). However there is a faint glimmer of hope. After the long and extensive road works on the approach to the M11 roundabout at junction eight, a roundabout has actually been removed. Hurrah! It has been replaced by traffic lights, but nothing is perfect, is it?



February blues

This is the time of year when everything is gloomy and a bit depressing. Christmas is a distant memory and long summer days seem a very long way off. It may be the shortest month, but February just seems to go on and on.

Wouldn't it be nice to be able to hibernate? To snuggle down under the duvet and sleep until the warmer weather arrives, oblivious to the cold dark days. Although, knowing my luck I would probably oversleep, miss out on Easter and all that chocolate.

Loki

IN OPPOSITION TO THE SLIPPER SOCK

This article is not written in opposition to the slipper sock itself, but its ridiculous name. Let me begin by expressing a general annoyance at crossover clothes of any kind, or, at that, anything. What is a cronut? Why could we possibly have any use for a food-



Cronuts

stuff that is a croissant smashed carelessly into a doughnut; and why, to pay this already terrible price, would we ever want to give up on the proper French pronunciation of croissant or the proper spelling of doughnut?! Or spork? Why do we need sporks? Who uses sporks as part of their daily life if they are not buying a plastic one from a fast-food place? Why do we need forks that bulge? What about things that are not evidently anything put together? What is a zoodie and why does it exist? Who goes out to a clothes shop intending to buy a zoodie? Nobody knows what they are, or has even heard of them, and yet they are just there, being all smug and existing.

Now onto the main event, slipper socks. What is a slipper sock? Is it a slipper that aspires to be a sock, or a sock that aspires to be a slipper? Is it a mutant compromise, or is it a shoe undergoing a midlife crisis? Not only is it a ridiculous combination to begin with, but why does it not have its own name? These two things have not had their names combined; they are clearly not for each other! If the loony who named these evidently loved having two of everything, then why stop at slipper sock? Why not go to sock shoe slipper shoe? Why not continue to slipper shoe leather sock sock shoe leather sock? It is all just too much, so goodbye.

The Funky Chicken
Aged 11

ST JOHN'S 300 CLUB

Many congratulations to the winners of the recent draws:

November

£100	No 203	Christine Meachin
£ 50	No 120	Liz Jennings
£ 25	No 139	Alan Corbishley

December

£200	No 242	Edmund Wilkinson
£100	No 97	Sarah Ludlow-Elston
£ 50	No 117	Isabel Thwaites
£ 25	No 54	Matt Cope

The draw for February will be held on **23rd February** in St John's Church, following the 9.30am service. Numbers at £2 per month for each number are still available to anyone who may wish to join the Club and be in with a chance of winning one of the 38 prizes totalling £2,500 given away this year. The Club raises vital money to help cover the heavy maintenance costs and work of St John's Church.

Jean Newson
Tel: 819062
Email: jean733@btinternet.com

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Tel: 01279 814052 Email: ugleyvillagehall@gmail.com



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SHOE BOXES

www.teams4u.com



Although there was no village packing session in 2024, St Theresa's Wednesday group filled 80 shoe boxes and Manuden Guides over 30. These boxes and donated items which did not make it into the boxes, were taken to Loughton Methodist church, where the left-over fillers were used to make up more shoe boxes. All the boxes were destined for Romania and Ukraine. The list of people to thank is a long one: the Wednesday group members for providing items and for packing; Manuden Guides for their well-filled boxes, some of which were bursting at the seams; Stansted Tennis Club for donating tennis balls as they have for many years; all the people who generously donated fillers and money for shipping the boxes and the knitters, who spend all year making hats, gloves, scarves, bags and hand puppets. As Dave Cooke, founder of Teams4u says: *It is all about drawing alongside children, showing them someone cares about them and believes in them.*



Knowing that each shoe box will be opened by a child who may not get any other Christmas presents is indeed very satisfying. To see the smiles on children's faces and to learn about the other projects that Teams4u are involved in, please see their website. If you would like to play a greater role, please come forward so that you can help us oldies who have organised the shoe box packing for several years; we are looking forward to eventually handing over to younger people with more energy! If you can help, please email me, helentheresebaker@gmail.com or brianandeileen@icloud.com. Thank you.



Catherine Dean

Email: catherinemarydean@btinternet.com

ROYAL BRITISH LEGION POPPY APPEAL

Thank you to all the volunteer collectors and those who kindly donated to my 2024 Poppy Appeal. Not only did we manage to break the record for the Airport Terminal collection, which raised £21,468 in itself, but our district raised just over £37,000, an overall increase of £7000 on last year! Thank you to all those who supported the RBL, whether by collecting or donating. Immense gratitude to you all.

Simon Bambridge

Tel: 07768 955454

Email: sibambridge@icloud.com



GUESS THE OBJECT ANSWER

Thank you to all those readers who sent in their ideas about the object below which was found by Tony Wellings in the Lime Kiln Lane area in the early 1970s.



Well done to Rosina Down and Carol Jennings who correctly identified that it is the skull of a very old badger. Look out for more unusual objects in future editions of The Link.



Meet Alex, our Super Volunteer

Alex started volunteering at Human Roots in 2021; her day job, as an Emergency Medical Technician for East of England Ambulance service, together with being mum of two, keeps her extremely busy. It is amazing how she manages to fit us in, especially as she often cycles to us from Little Canfield. She says that she loves the community spirit and teamwork of the like-minded volunteers and that her confidence has really grown. She feels being part of a group makes gardening less intimidating. Alex often brings along her son Sam, who loves helping when he can. Grass strimming on the allotment is certainly a thankless task, but Alex does it with real pride. A first for her was growing cucumbers from seed early last year, she then transported them to the plot in late spring. Alex was amazed how they produced such a great crop and cannot wait to try again next year.



Without volunteers like Alex, Human Roots would not survive. Working together on the allotment is good fun, great exercise and brilliant for picking up hints and tips from each other, as well as having a cuppa and a natter. Our aim is to put a bit back into the local community, we are always happy to welcome new volunteers. If you are interested in joining us, please email Cathy at cathymizzard@gmail.com.

Ashley Huggonson
Volunteer

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

A friend told me this morning of a gift she had been blessed with earlier in the week on a particularly cold January morning. Her car had been parked outside her house all night; the windows were covered in ice. She needed to go out so she sat in the driver's seat and turned on the heater. Being used to sitting still (as in Quaker meetings!) she patiently closed her eyes for a while. On opening them a few minutes later her breath was taken away; she was completely struck in wonder and amazement by the un-melted frost pattern on the windscreen in front of her, making her aware of the *positive* aspects of the frost, as a thing of beauty rather than a problem to be dealt with.

To her mind came these words from the Quaker book of Faith and Practice: *be aware of the Spirit of God at work in the ordinary activities and experience of daily life*. The feeling she was given was that this creation was a gift to her alone and for that time only, something astonishing and surprising, and which we can all locate at some point in our daily lives, if we are able to be still and open to the encounter, *when the observed and the observer are one*. Sometimes, as in the story above, we have no choice and are made to be still before busy life can continue, but at other times maybe we can have a choice. At this time of year when resolutions are often made, how about a resolution to try to make pauses in our daily lives? With the bountifulness of Christmas present-giving behind us for another year, perhaps we can strive to be present-minded in this New Year.

Sue Moloney and Heather Kent
Quakers



STANSTED QUAKERS

Quaker Meeting House, 71 Chapel Hill
Stansted CM24 8AE
www.stansted.quakermeeting.org

Contact Sue Moloney
Tel: 07759 532115
Email: suemol@uwclub.net

Lettings Yvonne Estop Tel: 07595 087207
Email: yvonne-wood@outlook.com

Sunday worship 10.30am. Visitors are always welcome. We join together in stillness for an hour, followed by coffee and chat. Quakers allow each person to explore their own experience of the divine. We try to live our faith in everyday life, with a dedication to peace, simplicity, truth, equality, and nature.

Light Group This is a guided Quaker meditation. There is more information on the noticeboard outside the Meeting House or do contact Sue on 07759 532115. We generally meet on the 2nd Saturday of each month.



ST THERESA OF LISIEUX CATHOLIC CHURCH

High Lane, Stansted CM24 8LQ
www.sttheresasstansted.org

Parish Priest Fr Clement Orango
Tel: 814349
Email: frclementorango@brcdt.org

Parish Administrator Tel: 816889
Email: stansted@brcdt.org

Masses
Saturday 5.15pm-5.45pm Confessions 6.00pm Mass
Sunday 8.30am Mass
10.00am Mass
Wednesday 12.30pm

Baptisms By appointment

Mass times can be subject to change so please refer to our website and newsletter for updated information, including weekday masses. Confessions are at 5.15pm every Saturday before the Vigil Mass and by appointment.





STANSTED FREE CHURCH

Methodist / URC

Chapel Hill

www.stanstedfreechurch.org.uk



**ST JOHN'S
STANSTED MOUNTFITCHET**
THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND

Minister Rev'd Gill Hulme
Tel: 504157
Email: gillian.hulme@methodist.org.uk

Secretary Catherine Dean
Tel: 813579
Email: catherine@stanstedfreechurch.org.uk

Lettings Marion and Mike Dyer
Tel: 814059
Email: lettings@stanstedfreechurch.org.uk

Preachers for February

2nd 10.30am The Worship Team - New Directions
9th 10.30am Rev'd Gill Hulme - Communion
16th 10.30am Jeremy Flack - Eco Talk
23rd 10.30am Rev'd Stuart Veitch

Gift Service

It is our tradition to hold a *Gift Service* every December when members of the congregation are invited to bring gifts or make a donation for those in need. This year we collected for the Whitechapel Mission, which has been run by the Methodist Church since 1876. It is open every day of the year, including Christmas, from 6.00am providing free food, showers and clothing to over 400 people. In addition they provide free access to medical advice, educational classes, benefits advice, job club and housing advice.



In addition to the gifts shown above, we received over £160 in donations. A very big thank you to everyone.

ST JOHN'S REGISTERS

There were no Register entries for November and December.

All enquiries: The Church Office, St John's Hall,
including Church St John's Road, Stansted CM24 8JP
Hall bookings Tel: 815243 (with answerphone)
Office hours: Monday, Wednesday, Friday
10.00am-12 noon
Email: stansted.church.office@gmail.com
Website: www.thefivechurches.org.uk

Priest in Charge Rev'd Dr Colin Fairweather
Tel: 816721
Email: revdrcolinfairweather@gmail.com

Associate Priest Rev'd Helen Flack
Email: revhelenstn@gmail.com

Pastoral Assistant: Kathryn West
Tel: 816293
Mobile: 07880 602717
Email: kewest@btinternet.com

Director of Music Anne Brooks
Email: anne.brooks22@yahoo.co.uk

Services Together on Sunday (1st Sunday) 9.30am
Holy Communion (2nd-4th Sundays) 9.30am

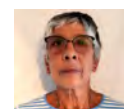
St John's is open most days during daylight hours. There is a special section in the Lady Chapel for private prayer.



FRIENDS OF ST MARY'S CHURCH

It was our absolute pleasure to welcome the Scouts, Cubs and Beavers for their Christingle service on 7th December. Special thanks to the scout leaders and Rev'd Colin for a wonderful fun-filled afternoon. The memory tree was full of messages for loved ones, and these will be kept on the altar all year.

The planning of this year's events begins now. This is a special year as it is the 35th anniversary of the church being vested to The Churches Conservation Trust. St Mary's is one of the 356 churches in the care of the trust and the aim is to keep these amazing buildings open and welcoming to all. My main challenge this year is to find a solution to heating the church and any help with this would be greatly appreciated. Without heating it is not possible to run events comfortably in colder months. Lots of things are already planned for the year and I will give you details soon. I look forward to welcoming you to St Mary's over the coming year.



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www.sustainablestansted.org

Are you wasting energy and money heating the space outside your house, rather than the people in it? Many people are. If you think this may be your situation, we can help by preventing you from doing this. This wasted energy can be viewed using a Thermal Imaging (TI) camera, which can show and measure the heat escaping from your house. Thanks to a grant from Uttlesford's Zero Carbon Fund, we now own a TI camera, available to local residents to use to monitor heat escaping from their house. This can help you to see the best ways you can reduce or stop this heat loss.



If you want to know more about how we can help you, please come to our meeting on **Thursday 6th February** at 6.30pm in the Quaker Meeting House. We will explain how heat pumps, solar panels, batteries and a TI review of your house can benefit you, and make a booking for a visit from our TI camera to come to your house. Look out for further details on our Sustainable Stansted Facebook page, or on our website.

Bob Burlton

Email: bobburlton@outlook.com



Citizens Advice
the charity for your community

MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR MONEY

www.uttlesfordca.org.uk

The start of a new year is the perfect time to carry out a financial health check.

Blitz your budget

Get a clear idea of how much you spend. Take an average of these outgoings and use it to build a realistic budget. There is a free budget planner to get you started at www.moneyhelper.org.uk.

Sort out your debts

Make a list of who you owe money to. Look at your monthly budget and see what you can pay. Call us for advice or go to www.citizensadvice.org.uk for information on which debts should take priority.

Maximise your income

Check you are claiming all the benefits you are allowed. This may in turn entitle you to reductions in council tax and water rates as well as help with NHS costs, healthy start vouchers, free school meals and pupil premium funding. Ask our friendly advisers to carry out a benefit check on your behalf or use the online benefits calculator at <https://uttlesford.entitledto.co.uk/home/start>.

Cut your energy bills

Use an energy comparison website such as www.uswitch.com to check you are getting the best energy deal for you. Contact our energy specialists for advice.

Switch and save

If you are coming to the end of your contract for phone or broadband, take a few minutes to see if you should stay or switch. Check you are not paying for unused services or exceeding your allowance resulting in expensive bills.

Get a better deal

If you claim benefits, you might be able to get a cheaper internet, mobile or phone deal called a *social tariff*. If your provider does not offer a social tariff, switch to another one that does. For help go to www.ofcom.org.uk/phones-and-broadband/saving-money/social-tariffs.

Claim childcare costs

Funded childcare is now available to families with children from 9 months old. To find out more go to www.childcarechoices.gov.uk.

Jo Hancock

Tel: 01799 618840

Email: help@uttlesfordca.org.uk



www.mencapgrovecottage.org

Buy a Brick Campaign

We are thrilled to tell you that demolition is almost complete on our home at 151 London Road, paving the way for a bigger, safer, and more inclusive space for people with learning disabilities and additional needs. To help us rebuild Grove Cottage, we are launching our **Buy a Brick** appeal, and we need your support. Buy a brick and add your name or a personal message to our virtual brick wall, showing your commitment to Grove Cottage's future and helping us raise the final £250,000 of our £2.5 million rebuild goal.



Bricks cost just £10 and every brick counts. By buying a brick, you are not just making a donation, you are laying the foundation for a brighter future. Remember to share this with your friends and family. Your support really makes a difference! You can add your name to the wall or remain anonymous; please see www.grovecottagebuyabrick.org.uk.

Alison Cameron

Email: fundraising@grovecottage.org.uk



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www.thecockinnhenham.co.uk



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STANSTED MOUNTFITCHET WINDMILL

www.stanstedwindmill.co.uk

At the beginning of the year, the mill was still clad in scaffolding; work stopped for the festive season but hopefully will have restarted by the time you read this. So far 600 bricks have been cut out and replaced. It remains only now to finish the actual re-pointing. How long that will take is dependent on the weather, but the project is well on the way to completion. After that we will have to carry out a major spring clean to clear the dust and dirt that has accumulated throughout the windmill before it will be fit for visitors again. We always have a spring clean but this year it is far worse than usual as the mortar dust has spread everywhere! That will be a big job and we would welcome help from anyone who can spare some time. We will also need to do some work on the displays in the mill.



The repointing work has been a once in a generation project which necessitated a big fundraising effort. We need to build up our reserves again so we can fund the replacement of the sails which is required roughly every 10 years. That is likely to cost around £65,000. We will post further news on the windmill Facebook page, on our website and local social media platforms. We will re-open again for our 2025 season at Easter. If you would like to support the windmill you could become a Miller. Membership is only £10 a year per family and includes free entry to the Windmill on Open Days. For new members there is a complimentary guide book and a window sticker like the one in the picture above.

Trevor Lloyd
Tel: 07739 428352

WHY SWITCH TO FULL FIBRE BROADBAND?

Do you bank or shop online? Perhaps you have useful apps on your phone and keep in touch with friends and family on social media? Perhaps you stream entertainment such as Netflix or Disney+ on your TV, use digital technology to secure your home or make the most of money-saving smart gadgets? Whichever way you currently use your broadband in Stansted, the chances are your need for faster and more reliable broadband is only set to increase. That is because as the digital world expands, the less likely it is that your existing part fibre broadband will cope with the demands on it.

The reason is that part fibre is inherently slower and less reliable because fibre optic cables only go as far as a cabinet in your locality, such as the end of the road. After this your broadband travels to your home along out-dated Victorian-era copper telephone wires. In contrast, suppliers such as ourselves are now installing 100% full fibre which is much faster and more reliable because our fibre optic cables go direct to your property. Many of you reading this will be pleased to learn our full fibre cables are already outside your property, so all you have to do is call our friendly team to arrange an installation. For anyone with a landline telephone, we offer Home Phone, our low price digital phone service with no monthly line rental charges, and you can keep your existing telephone number. Please note that we do not recommend you purchase Home Phone if you are reliant on your landline due to disability or accessibility requirements and do not have alternative means, such as a mobile phone, to contact emergency services in the event of a power outage. For more information and contact details please see our advert on page 18.

Richard Arquati
Communications manager
Gigaclear

CAPTION COMPETITION

Here you see my dear old labrador, Suki, and a very young Ridgeback pup named Coco. This photograph was taken about three years ago when the pup was four months or so. She is now twice Suki's size! Coco had a dim view on being polite to her elders, as you can tell. What do you think Coco is saying to Suki? Or perhaps the other way round; what is Suki saying to Coco? If you have an idea about what either dog (or both, perhaps) is thinking, we would love to hear your suggestions. We were really pleased and amused with your submissions to our Caption Competitions last year and we look forward to hearing from you. The deadline for entries is noon on **Sunday 9th February** and they should be sent to editor@stanstedlink.org.uk. As before, the ideas will be judged, completely impartially, by the Link Chairman, Mike Dyer, and these will be printed in the March issue of The Link.



If any of our readers would like to take an appropriate photo which lends itself to a caption for future editions, we would love to hear from you, using the editor email address shown in the first paragraph. The photo should ideally be landscape and at least 250 KB in size. We look forward to reading your ideas for a caption for the picture above, as well as suitable pictures for future months.

Ed

Stansted Network

NEWS FROM YOUR LOCAL COUNCILS



Stansted Mountfitchet Parish Council

...with news of yet more road closures, a warm welcome to our newest councillor, funding of repairs at the windmill, donations made to village organisations thanks to the success of the November fireworks

Road closures to continue

Grove Hill Closure — February 10 until March 7

No let up in long road closures as a second permit granted for Cadent to return to Lower Street in March



Cadent's work to replace gas pipes in Stansted will see the closure of Grove Hill for four weeks, starting from the second Monday in February. The road will be shut from the junction where the B1051 meets with High Lane and Lower Street. The utility provider says the closure is needed to keep their workforce safe while they fit new plastic pipes and remove old copper ones. Setting up temporary traffic lights instead of a closure is impractical due to the narrowness of the road along Grove Hill.

The Grove Hill roadworks will overlap until February 28 with Essex County Council's running of traffic lights along Church Road. These are currently in operation to allow the local authority to carry out improvements to the pavements and road surface in the area. The misery to villagers will not end there. Cadent are shutting Lower Street for a second time from March 3-28, along a section towards Brewery Lane. This follows the street's first month-long shut down of the year in January.

The Parish Council as a lower tier local authority has no input into the planning of roadworks. This is a responsibility reserved for Essex Highways. We would ask residents concerned about the inevitable disruption caused by the closure of Grove Hill to contact Essex Highways. You can do so by visiting the agency's website where you can also find details of all roadworks affecting Stansted.

► <https://www.essexhighways.org>
► <https://www.essexhighways.org/live-traffic-map>

ESSEX HIGHWAYS have revamped the way you can report road defects online at the start of the year. They say their 'Tell Us' webpage has been reconfigured to make it "easier than ever to report highways defects in Essex." There are options for different types of emergencies and if issues have worsened over time. But what Essex Highways give, they also take away — you will no longer be able to raise issues using third party sites such as Fix My Street. The agency says this is because issues logged on such sites are often duplicates of reports already submitted via Tell Us. Or such issues are unrelated to roads maintained by Essex Highways. You can see if it is as plain sailing as suggested by heading to:

► <https://www.essexhighways.org/tell-us>

Say hello to our newest recruit!

The timing of production deadlines combined with staff and councillors being laid low with winter bugs before Christmas means this is the first chance we have had to introduce our newest Parish Councillor to you. Long-time Stansted resident (and former BBC reporter) James Hardy was co-opted on to the Parish Council to represent the south ward of Stansted at a Full Council meeting in late November. Besides working as a broadcast journalist, James has held several senior communications roles, including for his alma mater, the University of Cambridge. He has lived with his family in the village since 2002 and is particularly interested in enhancing Stansted's amenities and environment. For now though you will find him pulling up a seat next to colleagues on the Finance & General Purposes committee. You can contact James by emailing



► jameshardy@stanstedmountfitchet-pc.gov.uk

Windmill Repairs 2024/5

Funds from SMPC keep Stansted Miller's re-pointing project heading in the right direction

Last November the Parish Council agreed to provide thousands of pounds of extra funding to shore up the brickwork of the village windmill.

The Parish Council is one of two trustees of the windmill and pays money into its Windmill Capital account each year to cover the cost of repairs. The Parish Council works closely with the Stansted Millers, and without the voluntary group's expertise and dedication it could be unable to look after the Grade-11* listed structure.

Keeping repairs on track and to budget is never plain sailing when you are dealing with a mill dating to 1787. And the current project has proved to be no exception.

Since October the windmill has been wrapped in blue tarpaulin and a forest of scaffolding while a builder that specialises in historic maintenance has got stuck into replacing over 300 damaged bricks. The current work was expected to be the first phase in the piecemeal restoration of the mill's pointing. The Millers hoped by tackling the repairs in stages project costs — conservatively estimated in 2022 to total over £55,000 (excluding VAT!) — would be more manageable.

Alas, early into the current repairs the Millers were informed that there were a further 600 damaged bricks in need of attention. With no other sources of funding immediately available, the Parish Council agreed to make £30,000 in the Windmill Capital account available to keep the project on track. The removal of the original pointing has been completed, but winter weather will likely mean scaffolding will not come down around the Mill before the spring.



The cold, wet winter weather has delayed repairs

Meeting the mill's bills

The Stansted Millers regularly apply for grants to pay for repairs from the likes of the Stansted Airport Community Fund, the Essex Heritage Trust, the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings and the Lottery Heritage Trust. As a trustee, the Parish Council works closely with the Millers on such applications. We also contribute financially to cover project costs. In so doing this partnership works to keep Stansted's 18th-century mill open to the public for years to come. For an idea of the project funding needed to keep the windmill upright (and the sails turning!), below are listed maintenance projects undertaken and heading the mill's way.

Recent repairs

2021

Overhaul of mill's striking gear and repair of 20 sail shutters (£10k)

2022

Stock clamps replaced (£14.5k)
New fire alarm (£4.5k)

2024

14 sail shutters replaced (£2.3k)
Repointing of brickwork (£55k)

Future fixes

Replacement timbers (£85m)
Replacement sails (£70m)



UPDATE Fireworks Community Event



It's been three months since the November fireworks display — time enough for organisers to take stock of what they are proudly calling, "the community event of the year."

David Arora, one of the two principal organisers of the event, said ticket receipts showed over 3,200 attended the fireworks. Mr Arora's company Tenacity Business Solutions, along with fellow organiser Maureen Caton, also underwrote the fireworks.

Mrs Caton added: "The fireworks took over 12 months of planning and cost over £10,000 to put on. As the event was so well attended, we have been able to cover the £10,000 that was needed to hold an event of this size and deliver on our goal of using some money from the event to support village organisations and individuals."

The fireworks committee, which is made up of local business leaders, the Stansted Business Forum and chair of the parish council, have agreed to donations from the fireworks to go to:

- **£1,000 to Stansted Youth Club**
— to help fund a trip to Rungis
- **£1,000 to Forest Hall School**
— which kindly agreed to host the event

A further £1,000 has been reserved by the committee to support a family in the village caring for someone undergoing hospital treatment for a serious illness. By making a direct contribution, rather than a donation, it is hoped all the money raised will be spent in the community, and not lost in charity administration costs or diverted to family outside Stansted.

As discussions begin for fireworks in 2025, organisers would like to thank sponsors of last year's show, many of which were local businesses. Among them are **AVS** garage, the funeral directors **Daniel Robinson & Sons**, the estate agent **Murdochs**, management consultancy **Tenacity Business Solutions**, housing developer **City and Country**, environmental services provider **SES**, property developer **Bloor Homes**, the broadband provider **Gigaclear**, as well as the **Stansted Business Forum** and **Stansted Mountfitchet Parish Council**.



The beginning of the end!

The government has announced the biggest reorganisation of local government in half a century. In Uttlesford we have two tiers of local government affected by the reforms: the county council and the district council. Stansted is represented by a county councillor and four district councillors, with the Stansted South ward also including Birchanger. We have been asked to present plans to move to a single 'unitary' authority that will be responsible for all local government services in the area. These unitary councils would have a population approximately of 500,000 people. This would be considerably bigger than Uttlesford's population of 91,000. The government has several rationales for scrapping district councils. One is efficiency savings. Another is removing fragmentation in service delivery. The white paper also touts reducing workforce pressures by removing competition for staff, and a reduction in the number of politicians. The local government landscape in England is undoubtedly complicated and confusing, making it difficult for local residents to know who is responsible for which service.

“It's vital that local government stays local. Councils need to be embedded in their communities, not remote and unaccountable.”

Uttlesford has had somewhat of a chequered reputation in recent years. Being a relatively small council it has issues of capacity and attracting skilled staff. Reform could be the right way to go. However, the government is proposing a one-size-fits-all solution. The size of the unitaries is an issue. There are currently over 70 unitary councils in England. We have two in Essex, namely Southend and Thurrock. Most unitary councils have considerably less than 500,000 residents.

It's vital that local government stays local. Councils need to be embedded in their communities, not remote and unaccountable. That means any new councils must not be too big or we risk alienating ourselves from the residents we serve. If we are to have unitaries, I would like to see an area committee established for Uttlesford. This would help ensure that some decision making is taken closer to the residents they serve.

What next?

The Council was due to meet on the 8 January to decide its reaction to the government's proposals. The County Council has requested the government to delay the elections scheduled for May 2025.

'StanHanger': wrong development, wrong place

House builder City and Country, who are based in Stansted, are proposing a new development on land between Stansted Mountfitchet and Birchanger (see image). It would deliver up to 1,050 homes. The site lies between Stansted Mountfitchet and Birchanger and consists of around 172 acres of land.

My first thoughts are that this is an opportunistic proposal. The site is not included in Uttlesford's Local Plan, submitted to the government in December. The site falls in green belt land. The developers are arguing that it is in fact greybelt low quality green belt.



City and Country's proposal to build on land between Stansted and Birchanger hasn't been submitted as a planning application yet

I have always been opposed to coalescence—i.e. the merger—between Birchanger, Stansted & Bishop's Cleeve. Clearly as Uttlesford is under special measures regarding its planning function, City and Country have the option of submitting a planning application directly to the Planning Inspectorate. I will do all I can to ensure that this proposal is not supported.

The developers recently met representatives of Birchanger and Stansted Parish Councils. They argued that the site is sustainable and meets housing needs. Councillors, however, were resolute in opposition to the proposal.

Where are we now with this? Clearly the developers have a lot of work to do in commissioning highway reports, etc. before they can submit a planning application. Their plans seem to be based on the premise that Uttlesford's Local Plan will fail at inspection, and they can step into the breach.

The following links online give more information

- ▶ <https://cityandcountry-stanstedbirchangervision.co.uk/>
- ▶ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cpqdg379dryo>

Uttlesford Food Bank

The food bank recently marked its 10th anniversary with a reception held at Saffron Walden Museum. The demand for its services is increasing. Its mission is to help relieve poverty. Although we live in an affluent area, poverty is here. We just don't see it. After the Saffron Walden Shire ward, the Stansted South and Birchanger ward is the second highest recipient of food parcels. The foodbank relies on donations. You can help them at

- ▶ <https://uttlesford.foodbank.org.uk/>

STANSTED MOUNTFITCHET PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk Ruth Clifford

Deputy Clerk Emma Philbrick

Committee & Projects Officer Laila Azure-Marxen

Communications Officer Dan Schlanker

Email: info@stanstedmountfitchet-pc.gov.uk

Tel: 01279 813214

Office Hours Mon-Fri 9am-4pm, Wed 9am-2pm

Reception: Mon-Fri 10am-2pm

Website: www.stanstedmountfitchet-pc.gov.uk

Facebook: www.facebook.com/stanstedcouncil

Instagram: [stansted@parishcouncil](https://www.instagram.com/stanstedparishcouncil) X: @StanstedMPC

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Geoffrey SELL | ☎ 815925

cllrSELL@uttlesford.gov.uk

Tom van de BILT | ☎ 07710426850

tomvandebilt@stanstedmountfitchet-pc.gov.uk

PARISH COUNCIL MEETINGS

Meetings begin at 7.30pm at the Mountfitchet Exchange.

If you wish to attend virtually, look for Zoom details in the agenda documents on our website:

5th February Full Council

12th February Highways sub-committee

19th February Finance & General Purposes committee

26th February Full Council

UTTLESFORD DISTRICT COUNCILLORS

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Geoffrey SELL

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ESSEX COUNTY COUNCILLOR

Ray GOODING

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MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT

Kemi BADENOCH MP

House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA ☎ 0207 219 1943

email: kemi.badenoch.mp@parliament.uk

POLICE

PCSO 81764 Alex STEWART

email: alexander.stewart@essex.police.uk

Non-urgent incidents call: 101

Serious incidents call: 999 www.essex.police.uk/ro/report

Meet-up Events:

The Co-op 12.30-1.30pm **6th February**

The Library 6-7pm **19th February**

LIBRARY

The library at Mountfitchet Exchange opens:

Tuesday 9am-1pm **Wednesday** 2-5.30pm

Thursday 2-7pm **Saturday** 9am-5pm

ADVICE SESSIONS

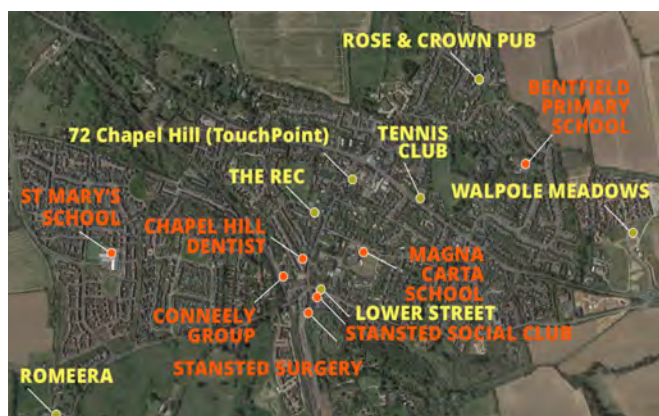
Uttlesford Citizens Advice run a FREE drop-in service every Thursday from 10am-2pm, except when Peabody operate advice sessions. You can also ask to speak to an advisor during SMPC reception hours via computer hook-up on Monday, Wednesday & Friday. Ask at our reception for details. **Peabody Trust** run a drop-in service on **Thursday, February 6th** from 11am-3pm. Advisors can help with benefits problems, housing, job training and support to overcome addiction

TOUCHPOINT, STANSTED

The community wellbeing project runs a variety of clubs, groups and activities from 72 Chapel Hill where you can socialise, get help, access training, and fill up your larder for free! **Food shares** Stansted Social Club Wed 2.30-3.15pm, Thursdays Crafton Green 10am-5pm, Fridays 1-2pm Saturdays 10-11am; **Community Cafe** Thursdays 10am-5pm, Fridays 8.30am-12pm; **Free hot meals** on Thursdays 12.30-2.30pm; **Breakfast Club** every Friday 9am-10am. Contact info@thetouchpoint.org ☎ 07572 114882

GARDEN WASTE SERVICE

The district council's garden waste recycling service in the Lower Street car park will return in Spring 2025.



Village Defibrillators

Defibrillators in yellow on the map are accessible 24/7. Call Emergency Services for an access code. Defibrillators in orange are only available during the working hours of the establishment they are sited at. The latest de-fib to be added to the local network can be found at the Stansted Social Club on Lower Street.

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THE HUNDRED PARISHES SOCIETY

www.hundredparishes.org.uk

Enjoying a winter stroll along any of the described walks within the Hundred Parishes provides an opportunity to view the landscape features visible from various vantage points, such as the view across the fields to Manuden shown in the picture below.

Much of this countryside has been farmed by many successive generations as these custodians of the land have raised livestock and garnered variable harvests of grain. The spring of 2024 was rather wet, and this resulted in poor establishment of autumn-sown cereals. Combined with the inclement conditions during harvesting, this resulted in disappointingly low yields. However, it seems that with dry weather in the autumn, the sown wheat, barley and oats have germinated well, with most fields now covered with fresh green shoots. Many farmers have decided to cut back on growing oil seed rape, and they may choose to plant alternative niche crops such as sunflowers or borage once the weather is warmer.



These farmed landscapes have traditionally supported assorted wildlife including skylarks, rooks, ladybirds, bumble bees, butterflies, badgers and foxes. In addition, well-maintained soils contain not just beneficial fungi, but a variety of earthworms and beetles which in turn provide food for many other creatures. Sadly, other less-welcome creatures such as slugs and root-eating beetle or fly larvae are also present. Seeing a sizeable flock of birds following a plough demonstrates this plethora of food!

Recent concerns about the loss of insect life, especially pollinators or those that eat aphids, is encouraging farmers to find ways of enhancing habitats for insects by leaving marginal strips round fields for wildflowers, planting new hedges or creating beetle banks within their fields. These features may be visible from footpaths during the winter months so make a note of where they are and plan return visits during the summer to observe them full of flowers and other wildlife.

Tricia Moxey
Trustee

Email: hundredparishes@btinternet.com

STANSTED MOUNTFITCHET EVENING WI



At our Christmas meeting we were entertained by *The Silver Darlings*, a female shanty group sponsored by our Essex Federation. They gave us a brief background to their formation six years ago and where they had performed: all over Europe, including the UK. We learned that there are different types of sea shanties as well as songs of the sea and at the end of their performance their rendition of the *Coventry Carol* was very moving. They were extremely entertaining and connected with us as an audience and we would be very happy to ask them back again.

Our February meeting is on **Thursday 13th February** at 7.30pm in Touchpoint when our speaker Tim Morley will be telling us about *The Joys of the English Language*. The competition will be a poem and we shall be having a Bring and Buy Sale. We welcome visitors and new members so please come and join us.

Linda Gurr
Tel: 07743 549241



Scouts

STANSTED SCOUTS

Stansted Scout Group Celebrates in St Mary's Church

On Saturday 7th December we held our Advent, Carols and Christingle service. This is always a lovely event which marks the start of our Christmas celebrations. Rev'd Dr Colin Fairweather opened the service by explaining the meaning of Advent and we lit the first candle. The church was full with over 90 Beavers, Cubs and Scouts, and their parents and grandparents. We sang Christmas carols and our Christingle oranges were assembled. Lights off and the Christingle candles lit; this is always a magical sight, accompanied by the sound of everyone singing the Christingle song. Afterwards we had mince pies and mulled wine, or squash, biscuits and hot drinks.



We would like to thank Rev'd Colin for running the service and Lynda Dale and the team for serving refreshments, including some delicious home-made biscuits. Tesco deserve a big thank you too as they were kind enough to supply 100 mince pies for the event.

Judith Brand
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UGLEY WOMEN'S INSTITUTE

The speaker for our November meeting was unfortunately unable to appear due to ill health, so one of our Committee members stepped in and gave us an armchair tour of Paris in which we travelled from the Gare Du Nord station to the Arc de Triomphe in just 45 minutes. The talk was illustrated with a selection of items from her collection of Paris memorabilia: a varied mix ranging from a Baedeker guide to Paris dating from 1904 to a miniature cardboard model of a Euro Star train and a Christmas card issued to its guests by the Ritz Hotel in the 1960s. A talk about Paris would not be complete without a song or two from Edith Piaf and members were treated to two that were new to them: *Valse de Paris* and *Notre Dame de Paris*. The latter was particularly apt in view of the cathedral's recent renovation.



Happily the entertainers booked for our December meeting, *Three's Company*, were in good health and great voice and we enjoyed a great afternoon with them listening to their renditions of hits through the decades. The musical part of the afternoon at an end we all enjoyed a festive tea, complete with crackers, paper hats and silly jokes. Then came the presentation of the competition cup, won this year by our president Dorothy Wallace; the runner up was Sue Hitchmough. The drawing of a well-stocked raffle brought another happy year for our members to a fitting end. Tim Turner will be the speaker at our February meeting which will be held on **Wednesday 19th February** at 2.00pm in Ugley Village Hall. His subject will be *Audley End House*. Why not come along and join us for the afternoon? You would be most welcome!

Andrea Fitt
Tel: 815922

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STANSTED MOUNTFITCHET u3a

www.stansted.u3asite.uk

Dull one isn't it? However, it is going to come out this afternoon. Ah, enjoy it then! An alien might wonder what it is but as passers-by we do not need to articulate our reliance on the sun; we just monitor it constantly, appreciating the lift in our mood and sometimes recognising the miracle of growth it brings about. The u3a garden group is clearly attuned to growth and how it can be nurtured and guided to create plants and produce to gladden us all. Meeting on the second Monday of the month from 2.00pm-3.30pm, the group examines a broad range of topics reflecting its members' interests. As well as regular meetings there are visits to historic and beautiful gardens. Planned for February is a visit to Bennington Lordship gardens in Stevenage which boast an ancient family home and a diversity of garden types including a formal rose garden and walled garden, as well as drifts of snowdrops at this time of year.

The garden group is but one of many classes and activities in which you could participate if you join the u3a. Run by volunteers, the u3a is a nationwide movement which exists to encourage local people to continue learning by following their choice of activity in the company of friendly people. The range of activities to choose from is impressive. Take the monthly meeting with its 2025 eclectic mix of talks, including a second visit from Lindsay Whitehouse, former governor of Chelmsford Prison. This talk will take place on **Thursday 20th February** at 2.00pm in St Theresa's Parish Centre. To stimulate your brain further, Professor Anthony White will give a talk on *Rockets and Space* in early March, as part of the Saturday Seminar series. Each meeting offers tea and biscuits. For more information please see our website or call 07874 385541.

Julia Cook



www.tasbs.org.uk

Our next meeting is on **Tuesday 11th February** at 10.40am in South Mill Arts. Coffee is available from 10.00am. Our speaker will be Caroline Knight on *The Grand Tour: Travel and Collecting in the 18th century*. Young gentlemen in the 18th century completed their education by travel in Europe, especially Italy. This lecture looks at how and where they went, what they saw and what they brought back with them. This included antique sculpture and paintings of views of Venice, Rome and Naples. Many of these are still in the country houses of their descendants and in museums. Come and be entertained, enthralled and amazed.



Visitors are very welcome; suggested donation £7. Our membership secretary is Jenny Savage, tel 656065 or email: info@tasbs.org.uk. Please see our website for more details.

Michael Fitch

AUBREY BUXTON NATURE RESERVE

www.essexwt.org.uk

Surveys of the invertebrate life in our ponds have shown the lower two ponds are significantly below the quality of the top pond. So in December we carried out work to help improve the lower pond. There were three main tasks:

- 1) Removal of fallen branches and dead wood which was slowly decaying in the water. This involved donning waders and fishing out branches or for the largest branches dragging them out with a winch, as shown in the photograph
- 2) Pollarding some trees to improve the amount of sunlight reaching the pond surface to help improve the environment for aquatic plants
- 3) Opening up the route for the prevailing winds to put a breeze across the pond surface to increase the amount of oxygen that is dissolved into the water.



We left plenty of bankside vegetation overhanging the water to provide cover and nesting locations for our mallards and moorhens. We also left in place the fallen tree that spans the pond and provides a convenient resting spot for the mallards and their ducklings in the spring.

This winter we have also done some more coppicing of hazel stands, opening up the floor of the wood to another cycle of regeneration and continuing a hazel wood management cycle that has been practised for hundreds of years. We will soon be looking for the first signs of spring.

John Welham
Warden

Email: communications@essexwt.org.uk



www.rainbowstansted.co.uk

The annual Nativity play in December was very well attended by parents, family and friends. The children retold the story of the Nativity beautifully. The Christmas hamper raffle raised over £200. The Adventurers children visited Norman Court to share Christmas carols and nursery rhymes. Thank you so much to the residents for the lovely sweet bags the children were given. The school was visited by the *Shooting star Pantomime* group with their *Search for Santa Show*, which was thoroughly enjoyed by all the children and staff. We were all very sad to say goodbye to Yasmine at the end of term and wish her all the best for the future. She has been a major player in the Rainbow family for seven years and will be greatly missed. Her role has been filled by staff restructuring. The spring term is looking to be busy with Chinese New Year, looking at the weather and cooking activities.

The school takes children from 2+ years to rising 5. If you are interested in applying for a place for your child, please visit our website for details. You need to put your child's name down now, however young, to ensure a place.

Gill Pursglove
Administration Manager
Tel: 814242
Email: admin@rainbowpreschool.net



ST MARY'S PRIMARY SCHOOL

www.stmarysstansted.co.uk

Our littlest children in Acorn class are busy learning all about starry nights. They are reading *Astro Girl*, enjoying the new spaceship role play area and discovering facts about nocturnal animals. We continue to be impressed with how well our Year 1 children are coping with weekly swimming lessons too.

Our Year 5s recently took part in *Young Voices*, which is also known as the *largest children's choir in the world*. The children have the opportunity to perform in some of the world's greatest arenas; we were at the O2 alongside incredible artists. Singing helps with self-belief, self-motivation, confidence and the ability to communicate as part of a team. The concert is the culmination of a lot of practice in school and as ever, the children were impeccably behaved over a very long and rewarding day. If we do need to close due to snow, which is highly unlikely, the information will be on the website and the school answer phone message.

Matthew Curzon
Headteacher
Tel: 812212

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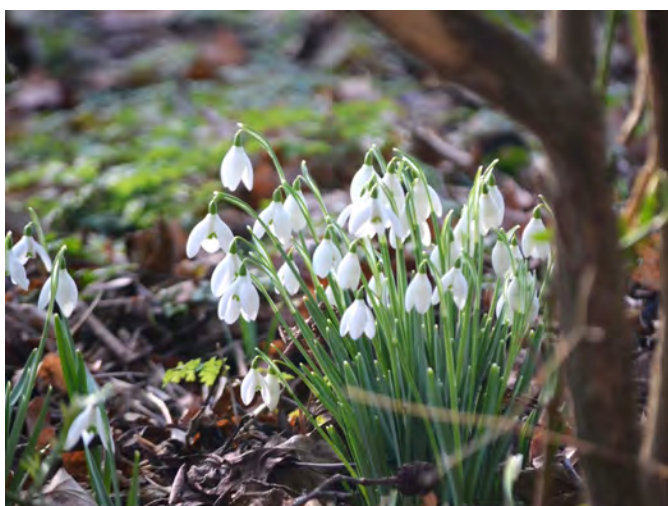
THE FORGOTTEN GARDENS OF EASTON LODGE

www.eastonlodge.co.uk

February is snowdrop season at the gardens. It is so wonderful to see those first flowers of the year, massed under the trees, on the banks and in the grass. Children love finding them around the gardens and climbing up into the tree-house; dogs on leads enjoy the space too.

In a changing climate we now have to keep our fingers and toes crossed that the snowdrops do not open early and that we will not have the extreme winter rains we had last year.

So far, so good on the latter; only time will tell on the former. Last year, after the wash-out snowdrop season we planted out lots of bulbs, so the gardens should be even more spectacular this year.



Our snowdrop days are **Sundays 9th and 16th February** 11.00am-4.00pm, tickets £7 on the day, £6 advance via our website; and **Thursdays 13th and 20th February** 11.00am-3.00pm, tickets £5.50 on the day, £5 in advance. Our volunteers will be ready to serve hot drinks and other refreshments.

Snowdrops in the green and other snowdrop merchandise will be available for sale. Please see our website for further details.

For our garden volunteers, there will be some really busy weeks in the run-up to the snowdrop open days. They will be finishing up the new fencing, tidying fallen branches and using them to strengthen and top up the dead-hedges and planting the last of this dormant season's new trees. Our cake and soup makers will also be preparing for the open days. We look forward to welcoming readers to the gardens in 2025.

Jill Goldsmith
Tel: 01371 876979
Email: enquiries@eastonlodge.co.uk



RECYCLING



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We have had a huge response to our request for foreign and old UK coins; they are sold by weight to raise funds for the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB), so please keep them coming. We are also still collecting spectacles with or without cases, along with ink cartridges (**not** toners), stamps, mobile phones, ipads and tablets (**not** laptops). We do not need chargers. Please make sure all personal data has been erased; the easiest way to do this is by a *factory reset*. It would be helpful if donations could be placed in a paper or plastic bag or envelope; please use a separate one for each category. Items can be put in the boxes outside the main blue door of the Free Church at the bottom of Chapel Hill. There is also a collecting box inside St John's church porch; alternatively please leave items in the porch of 7 Blythwood Gardens. Thank you.

A reminder that there are two organisations which refurbish laptops or printers and donate to schools and charities; both will collect from you free of charge. Contact Cambridge Recycling Centre on 01223 473875 email: sales@cambridge-computer-recycling.co.uk or Townstech in Harlow tel 898240 www.townstech.co.uk. If you have Dell equipment, including monitors, you can recycle directly with them; go to www.dell.com and search for recycling.



Marion and Mike Dyer
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STANSTED HALL & ELSENHAM CRICKET CLUB

www.shcc.hitscricket.com

With snow on the ground and very cold and frosty mornings there is still much to do within the Cricket Club. The general knowledge quiz was again very successful with a full house at Bishop's Stortford College. We continue to look for funds to ensure that we can keep standards up for the junior section. We are improving our Club website and have appointed a social media guru Gina to help to communicate to all what we offer as a club.

Indoor nets have already begun at the Herts and Essex Cricket Centre. We are hoping that some of our members will attend an umpire's course which has been arranged for March. If you want to join our Club or have any questions, please contact me.



David Brown
Tel: 831011 Mob: 07788 999663
Email: david1.r.brown@gmail.com





www.stanstedtennisclub.co.uk

Awards

The award for the most improved player was renamed last year *The Ollie Toms Cup*, in memory of our dear friend and coach. For the first time this was given jointly to two players, Grace Crossley and Jess Willdigg, pictured below.



This year promises to be another busy one for the Club. In addition to the regular sessions there will be numerous tournaments, league matches and social events. Please see our website for more details and for lots more information about the Club. New members are always welcome.

Coaching

On Sundays coaching sessions for children aged 4-7 years run from 8.00am-9.00am and adult group sessions for beginner to intermediate players are from 9.00am-10.00am. These adult sessions are perfect for anyone wishing to get back into tennis if they have not played in a while, or to brush up on some basic tennis skills. If you, or your child are interested, please email Dan at danw.tennis@gmail.com. Junior after-school tennis sessions will resume on Wednesday and Thursdays 5.00pm-7.00pm from 26th February. If your child wishes to join any of these sessions, please email Phil at phil_tennis@outlook.com.

Fiona Kelly
Secretary

Email: contact@stanstedtennisclub.co.uk

STANSTED BOWLS CLUB

www.stanstedbowlingclub.co.uk

We wish Link readers a happy and healthy New Year. Your new year's resolutions will probably include eating less and perhaps joining a gym. Instead you could join the Club, make new friends and exercise on the bowls green; better than all that hard work in the gym and much more enjoyable. We have finally managed to put four tonnes of top-quality soil onto the playing surface; many thanks to the members who helped with this.

We are also planning a carpet bowls league and darts league plus a number of events such as quiz nights during the close season. Look out for details in The Link, on the village notice boards and on the fence outside the Clubhouse in Recreation Ground. All are welcome and we are always pleased to see new potential players come along to the Club. You will receive a hearty welcome and be able to see what we do, try it for yourself and get involved with the Club both on and off the green. If you fancy being part of a friendly club which offers a subsidised bar, lots of banter and other activities for you to get involved in, then come along on a Friday evening from 7.00pm and one of the players will show you around. Alternatively drop me an email and I will help answer your questions and get you started, or you could look on our website for further information. We are also on Facebook: Stansted Bowling Club.

Peter Beattie

Hon Secretary

Email: peterdavidbeattie@gmail.com



FOOTBALL CLUB

www.essexseniorleague.co.uk

The weather before and after Christmas certainly played havoc with scheduled fixtures having to be postponed; despite the best efforts of our volunteer ground staff, match officials deemed the grounds as being either waterlogged or frozen. This has now led to a backlog of home fixtures having to be rescheduled. We did manage to play our Derby Day post-Christmas fixture away at Saffron Walden Town. We felt that, given the performance the players put in, a point would have been well deserved. However two late second half goals by Walden saw them overturn our half-time lead and win the game 1-2. The result confirms our worst run of results in a number of seasons with seven defeats on the trot and a real battle in the second half of the season to avoid a relegation scrap.

On the plus side our youth team managers continue to report that they get numerous requests from local players who wish to join their squads. This is very encouraging as it continues to build a great foundation for the Club.

Fixtures at Hargrave Park in February

All are Premier League fixtures

1 st	White Ensign	KO	3.00pm
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8 th	Benfleet	KO	3.00pm
22 nd	Little Oakley	KO	3.00pm



Tom Williams
Tel: 07921 403842



DIRECTORY OF LOCAL CLUBS AND ORGANISATIONS

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Note: This list will be updated as and when we learn of any changes. If you would like your organisation to be added please let us know by emailing editor@stanstedlink.org.uk.

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If you would like to mark any occasion that is special to you or someone you know, by announcing it in the Link, please email a short message together with your name address and telephone number to announcements@stanstedlink.org.uk or send the details to 7 Blythwood Gardens, Stansted CM24 8HG. Details must be submitted no later than the 8th of the month for publication the following month.

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