

# *Living Villages*

A photograph of two Cedar Waxwings perched on a branch of a shrub. The birds have greyish-brown bodies, black masks, and distinctive white and red wing patches. They are surrounded by green leaves, small yellow flowers, and clusters of bright orange berries. The background is a dense thicket of similar foliage.

*February 2017*

*Water Newton, Thornhaugh,  
Stibbington, Sutton & Wansford*

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# EDITORIAL

If you need a job doing around your house or garden, do you ever consider using one of our advertisers? Recently I've been looking through a number of our back editions and some of our advertisers have been supporting this free magazine for many years. Please think of contacting them if you need a job done, as it's always good to keep money within our communities by supporting local businesses.

Our front cover is of a couple of Waxwings, it's difficult to say whether they a pair or not as both male and females have the same plumage. They do not breed in the UK and we are at the western edge of their winter migration area. Some of their wing feathers look like the ends have been dipped in red sealing wax and hence their name.

Page 29 has an interesting feature about wild swimming, something certainly not for the faint hearted! Do you have an interesting or unusual hobby or past-time that you would like to tell us about? The centre pages takes you on a walk from Wansford. Do you have a favourite walk from your village that you would like to share with us?

Oh and for those who know where we've recently been—I can confirm the water does spiral down the plug the opposite way :-)

*Tracy Sortwell*

## CONTENTS

Contacts	4
Worship Lists	5
Reflections	7

### NEWS REPORTS:

Friends of churches:	
Stibbington	9
Water Newton	9
St Mary's & St Andrews	11
Watersmete Benefice	11
Lottery	13
Stibbington Centre	15
Communicare	18
Horticulture Soc.	19
WI	27

### PARISH COUNCILS:

Thornhaugh	22/23
Wansford	24

### SPECIAL FEATURES:

A Village Walk	20/21
Wild Swimming	29
Nature Notes	35

Letters to the Editor	36/37
--------------------------	-------

<b>Diary Dates</b>	<b>38</b>
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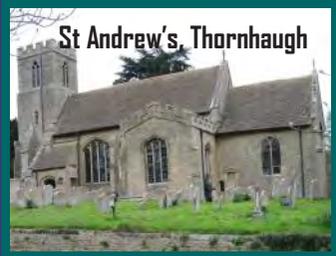
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## Other useful contacts

Neighbourhood Policing 101		P'boro City Council	01733 747474
Wansford Surgery	01780 782342	Royal British Legion	01780 782200
(Out of hours	111 option 4)	Stibbington & Wansford WI . .	789996
Wansford Pharmacy	01780 781616	Cricket Club	01780 782109
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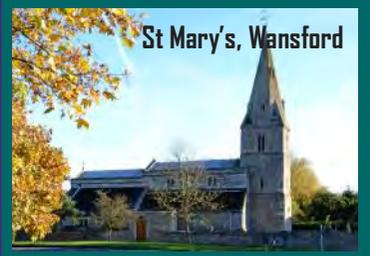
## Website

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St Andrew's, Thornhaugh

# WORSHIP FEBRUARY 2017



St Mary's, Wansford

Date	Time	Location	Service
5 Feb	9.30am	St Andrews Thornhaugh	Morning Worship
	10.15am	St Kyneburgh, Castor	Holy Communion
	5.00pm	St Remingius, Water Newton	Candlemas Service and Supper
12 Feb	9.00am	St John the Baptist, Stibbington	Morning Worship
	9.30am	St Marys, Wansford	Holy Communion with Choir
19 Feb	9.30am	St Andrews Thornhaugh	Holy Communion
	10.15am	St Kyneburgh, Castor	Holy Communion
26 Feb	9.00am	St John the Baptist, Stibbington	Holy Communion
	11.00am	St Mary the Virgin and All Saints, <b>Nassington</b>	Benefice Service with Bishop of Peterborough
1 Mar	10.00am	St Kyneburgh, Castor	<b>Ash Wednesday</b> Holy Communion with imposition of ashes
	7.00pm	St Marys, <b>Woodnewton</b>	Holy Communion with the imposition of ashes
	7.30pm	St Kyneburgh, Castor	Sung Holy Communion with imposition of ashes
5 Mar	9.30am	St Andrews Thornhaugh	Morning Worship
	10.15am	St Kyneburgh, Castor	Holy Communion



St John the Baptist, Stibbington

## Wednesdays at Wansford

10.00am  
Morning Prayer



St Remigius, Water Newton

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February always seems a very long dark month. The fun and joy of Christmas seems well past and during February it seems as if Winter is never going to come to an end. Despite the fact that we associate February with dismal dark days the month actually begins with a Festival of light.

In the Gospel of Luke we can read a story about the infant Jesus being taken to the Temple at Jerusalem by his parents. They did this because his mother needed to make the traditional offering to purify herself, forty days after the birth of her baby. We are told that when they arrived the young child was recognised by an old man named Simeon who hailed him as the Messiah. Simeon described the baby Jesus as a "light to lighten the Gentiles." St. Luke saw this event as vitally important because for him it revealed the fact that Jesus had come to save all humanity and not, as some early Christians had thought, only the Jews. As the non-Jewish Gentile churches very quickly began to outnumber the Jewish Christians, the significance of the story became even greater. As this encounter in the Temple took place forty days after Jesus's birth it came to be commemorated forty days after Christmas on 2nd February by a celebration that developed into the Feast of Candlemas.

Candlemas is a very ancient festival which we know was being celebrated in Jerusalem as early as the fourth century. The earliest account of the feast is described by a fourth century pilgrim from Spain named Egeria . She visited Jerusalem around the year 380 and wrote about this feast day in her diary, recording that a solemn and magnificent celebration of the Holy Sacrament was held at the Basilica of the Tomb of Christ. As time went on Candlelit processions became part of the celebrations and the festival became known as Candlemas.

The Festival of Candlemas is always fun to celebrate. I remember looking forward to it as a child, because I was allowed to hold a lighted Candle. But the Church doesn't just mark this festival to provide fun and entertainment: Candlemas celebrates a profound and important truth that seems particularly appropriate in the dark days of February. The light of Christ shines for all people to overcome the evils of pain and suffering. The Candles we use at Candlemas shine brightly but unlike the candles Christ's light is a light that no darkness can extinguish. He is truly a light to lighten the Gentiles.



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# FRIENDS OF STIBBINGTON CHURCH

## Stibbington Churchyard Clear Up

It's that time of year yet again to do the churchyard "clear up" pre the cutting, the date is the Sunday, the 30th of April, 10 am until noon, or for as little time as you can join in.

Please bring along rakes, wheel barrows and secateurs if you have them, and of course the children, who are a great help and always enthusiastic .



We shall have refreshments as usual on hand for a well deserved break.

Looking forward to catching up then.

**Suzy Story**

### Stibbington 101 Club

The winner of the January draw is;

Helen Facer

Well done and your cheque is on it's way to you.

**Suzy Story**

## FRIENDS OF ST REMIGIUS WATER NEWTON

### Candlemas Service and Supper - 5th February 2017



On Sunday 5th February 2017, we will be holding a 'Candlemas' service at 5pm followed by a delicious hot supper - all washed down with a glass or two of wine. Everybody is welcome so make it a date in your diary - come along and enjoy some great company. A small contribution of £5 will be requested towards your supper and wine.

**Tony Capon**

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# FRIENDS OF ST MARY'S AND ST ANDREW'S

**The meetings in February** will take place on the first and third Wednesday of the month, the 1<sup>st</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> at 10.30 in the Community Hall and will be preceded by Morning Prayer at 10 a.m. at St. Mary's.

During March we will be holding our LENT LUNCHEs again. (see Poster).

They will start on the Wednesday after Ash Wednesday, the 8<sup>th</sup> March and run for 5 weeks. We will vary the menu between soup and bread and cheese and the Charities between Christian Aid and others, where there is a pressing need.

Please, support these again. They provide a lovely opportunity to meet with friends and neighbours and help in a small way to make this world a more cheerful place.

**Dora Baker (secretary).**



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## Watersmete Benefice Lent Groups

Our attention is already turning toward Lent, which begins on Ash Wednesday, March 1<sup>st</sup>. On that day, there will be a service at 10.00 a.m. at St. Mary's, Wansford in the morning and at 7.00 p.m. at St. Mary's, Woodnewton in the evening. All are most welcome to begin our Lent journey together.

Our Lent groups will meet on Tuesday evenings at Yarwell Village Hall, starting on 7<sup>th</sup> March and Thursday afternoons, starting on 2<sup>nd</sup> March at the Prebendal Barn in Yarwell. Everyone from the benefice is warmly invited to join us. This year we will use the film *The King's Speech* as a focus; drawing out thoughts and ideas about our life with God from situations and events in extracts from the film that we will watch together. If you haven't tried anything like this before, why not give it a try? Details from Rev Jane or the church wardens.

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Our collectors have been busy calling round all the houses during January in the wintry conditions but, if they haven't been able to contact you and you would like to join in this year, please give me a call and I will arrange to visit you and get a ticket to you.

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We look forward to hearing from

## STIBBINGTON CENTRE NEWS

It may be cold and blustery outside but it's business as usual at the Centre and the saying of *"There is no such thing as bad weather, just unsuitable clothing"*, is thoroughly tested out!

If you have only recently moved to the area you may be unaware of the variety of activities that take place here during the week. We have children visiting from Cambridgeshire and neighbouring counties, either for one of our Historical Experience Days or short residential breaks. When passing, you may look twice and find that yes, you really did see children from what appears to be one of the World Wars, Victorian, Roman or even Viking times!



A short stay in the cosy residential block behind the old school is often the first time children have slept away from their family. They return with tales of marshmallows toasted around the campfire and den-building. They will also have been learning about things such as rivers, rocks or even owl pellets using the wonderful local countryside we are so fortunate to have surrounding us.

Use by non-school groups has expanded. For example, our most recent New Year family hirers loved combining cycling in the area with indoor music sessions and plenty of space to natter. We can also tailor our Historical Experience Sessions to suit adults and of course many people have already come along to the old school for one our community classes .....

### Stibbington Community Classes

We still have a few places left on our decorative pottery techniques workshop on the morning of 25/2/17 (great, if you are a fan of "The Great Pottery Slam Down") There are also some spaces at the harmonica workshop in the afternoon on the same day. Summer dates will be released as soon as possible so contact us if you want to go on our mailing list to avoid missing out.

#### CONTACT DETAILS:

Tel: 01780 782386

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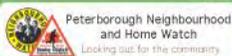
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## HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY

The programme for this year starts on Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> February with a talk by Michael Brown on the gardens which influenced Jane Austen and appeared in her works. 2017 is the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of her death, and Mike, a Garden Historian with close links to Prebendal Manor in Nassington, promises to enlighten us as to how Jane Austen used gardens to set the scene as her characters went about their daily lives. He looks at the gardens of taste, where size did matter and how they were tended by the invisible gardeners.

It is unfortunate that the later publication of Living Villages this month means that some may miss this talk, but our second talk is far enough ahead to put on your calendars. We have George Stevenson speaking to us on Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> March about the Open Gardens of the National Gardens Scheme. This is followed on Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> April by Ann Bird, a rose expert and R.H.S. judge who will speak on "The World of Roses".

Our coach trips, after a 3 year absence, start in May with a visit to the R.H.S. Garden at Wisley. This will be on Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> May to coincide with the Camellia, Rhododendron and Azalea show there, and, we assume, their own wonderful displays of shrubs in the Rhododendron family will be in full bloom at the same time.



We are compiling our list of participants in the new venture for 2017 - a 2 day coach trip which will take place on the weekend of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> July with visits to Sissinghurst and Great Dixter near the south coast and an overnight stop in a nearby hotel between visits. If you are interested, please contact me for the costing, which will depend whether you are a National Trust

member or not, and whether you need a single, double or triple room.

As always, a reminder that membership of the society is only £2.50 per annum and is not restricted to those living in Wansford, so please do consider joining us.

***Gill Fisher, 01780 782446 fisher.gill@yahoo.com***

## A VILLAGE WALK by Rod Sortwell

# EXPLORING THE

Many residents may remember that our good friend the late John Bennett produced some notes for the magazine for the benefit of local walkers. The time has come, we think, to update these to inform any new residents and of course dog walkers, many of whom use them already

This month I would like to remind you of the nearest and most accessible to Wansford, namely the Old Sulehay Nature Reserve, which is a fragment of the ancient Rockingham Forest, which used to cover over 200 square miles between the River Nene and River Welland and stretched from Stamford to Kettering.

### The Walk

Begin at Wansford church, the route takes you on the Yarwell Road, past the surgery and up the hill using the roadside footpath. As soon as you are in open countryside a sign to the right hand side takes you directly into the wood (Old Sulehay Forrest).

The central ride is normally walkable throughout the year with stout footwear and wellingtons are not required. The outside paths are fine in summer but become rather waterlogged in winter. A complete circuit is a joy in spring when bluebells and wild garlic are in full bloom.

*Map courtesy of Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Northamptonshire and Peterborough Wildlife Trust*



# ANCIENT ROCKINGHAM FOREST

The north-western boundary path runs parallel to the quarry behind Rutland Oil which has recently been filled and turned into a lake and calcareous meadow by Mick George. Clearly this is private land and not accessible, its future evolution and development is not clear.

Similarly, the quarry along the south-western border has been developed, but for a less peaceful purpose. At present off-road vehicles and their drivers are permitted to practice their capabilities in deep mud and water a few days each month. They can be seen from several vantage points in their muddy 'paradise' but must be cleaned before exiting the site. Car washing can be fun!

The woods are managed by a Wildlife Trust (see map) and occasional coppicing is carried out by volunteers. Otherwise nature is allowed to take its course and fallen trees are only moved if they block a path. Quiet observation also enables you to enjoy the wildlife which includes, kites, jays, squirrels and small woodland birds. There is also a very large active badger sett which has much evidence of continuous habitation. On rare occasions you may be lucky to see a herd of deer in neighbouring fields.

Some relics of wartime habitation by Kings Cliffe airfield personnel can still be seen if you look carefully. Floors from showers or toilet blocks together with drains and manhole

covers are seen adjacent to the paths. Also remnants of hut walls can be seen and we can imagine the US servicemen being well hidden in the woods from potential air-raids. At the far end is a separate site of a disused stone quarry which is currently being allowed to regenerate with some help from occasional grazing by sheep. Spoil heaps and workings are being recolonised by birch and brambles.

A complete circuit of both areas brings you back to the Wansford end. Using an exit at the north-east corner a footpath leads you behind Hill House and through the grazing meadows to emerge on Old Leicester Road near to Paws and Claws.

The total length of the walk is around four miles if a circuit of both reserves is undertaken. The beauty of this walk is that there are several access points from the Yarwell and Sulehay roads enabling a variety of circuits and distances to be walked.

Of course this wonderful natural facility is also enjoyed by mountain bikers and horse-riders, so don't be surprised if some users are moving quicker than you!

Parking is available in four places on the surrounding roads, so you don't need to worry about walking to the area from one of the other villages. People often travel from Peterborough and beyond to enjoy this lovely area.

# THORNHAUGH PARISH COUNCIL

The Fifth Meeting of the 2016/17 Thornhaugh Parish Council took place on 16<sup>th</sup> January 2017. It was chaired by Brian Watts, present were Liam Higgins, Louise Molesworth and Chris Smith and in attendance were two Members of the Public and the Clerk.

There were apologies for absence from Diane Lamb.

**Declarations of Interest** There were no declarations of interest.

## **Public Participation**

The Members of the Public mentioned the following issues:-

One requested an update on repairing the stone wall situated on the left hand side at the top of Russell Hill when accessing Thornhaugh from the A47. See below.

One requested an update about Peterborough City Council's proposal to introduce a 40 mph speed limit on the Old Oundle Road from its junction with the A47 to just west of its junction with Hillside Gardens. The Clerk will contact Peterborough City Council.

**Police Matters** There were no police representatives present.

## **Home Farm Matters including Dog Foul Bin**

Ashleigh Kewney was not present so Home Farm Matters were not discussed.

## **The Old Rectory Wall**

Brian Watts had inspected the Old Rectory Wall and confirmed it needs attention. He will speak to Karen Rutter.

## **Repair of the stone wall at the top of Russell Hill**

The Clerk reported that Peterborough City Council has requested details of the Parish Council's bank account so hopefully the Community Leadership Fund application has been approved. Brian Watts will obtain some quotes for the work.

## **Christmas Tree**

It was agreed that this had been an extremely successful, well-attended village event. Thanks were expressed to Brian Watts, Penny Lewin-Watts and Nicki Rogers for their hard work. It was agreed that next year the lights will be powered by mains electricity and be on for longer. Also, it is hoped that the switching on of the lights ceremony and singing of carols will be followed by the village party.

## **Cutting of Back Lane Hedges/Home Farm Entrance**

It was noted that this work has now been completed.

## **Improvements to Access onto the A1 Northbound**

Marcia Eastman, Assistant Asset Manager of Highways England had sent the following e-mail:

*"Thank you for your enquiry to the Highways England Customer Contact Centre on 14 November 2016 requesting a visit to discuss a slip road improvement to the A1 Thornhaugh junction with the northbound dual carriageway. Your email has been forwarded to me to respond to as I am a member of the Highways England team responsible for this area of the A1.*

*I am aware that the Parish Council has in the past contacted us on this matter. As you probably know, one of the main factors that influence our decisions on modifying junctions is collision data. I have checked over the five years 2011-2015 – and there was one injury collision on the northbound A1 in the vicinity of the Thornhaugh turn-off which was 'slight'. As far as I can tell, the incident resulted as driver was turning into, rather than coming out of Russell Hill junction*

*although I suppose it is possible that the junction might in some way have been a factor. But even if it had been, the numbers do not indicate that there is a particular problem there in terms of safety and would not warrant our spending the money that would be required for creating a slip road.*

*We accept that there are junctions along the A1 that we would build differently if we were starting from scratch today, and we have upgraded, and will continue to upgrade those that are most problematic. In some cases where neither collision nor congestion data indicate a need for extensive improvements, we can at least try to ensure that the junctions are clearly signposted.*

*As part of Highways England Delivery Plan 2015-2020 we are aiming to reduce Killed and Seriously Injured (KSI) casualties by 40% and as part of this we are identifying a number of locations along A47 as being justified for route treatment. I am aware that in the new financial year we intend to open up discussions to review and assess locations along the A1 from Peterborough to Stamford so I will make a point of bringing Thornhaugh junction to the table and will write to you again with any feedback.*

*You have kindly invited me to visit the Parish Council and Russell Hill junction, and while I am sympathetic and understanding of the issue you have raised, I will not be able to tell you anything different to what I have already written above. Therefore on this occasion I will decline your request and hope that you appreciate the reason why".*

### **Passing Places**

The Passing Places are in an extremely poor state and need attention. Chris Smith had seen a Highway Maintenance Officer on the back lane in December 2016 and he seemed to be checking out the verges, including the passing place and the entrances to the fields. The Clerk will follow this up with the Highways Division to establish whether any repair work is planned. If it is not, the Parish Council will consider funding the repair work out of its reserves subject to the approval of the Highways Division.

### **Precept 2017-2018**

After discussion and consideration of the current reserves and likely expenditure required for 2017-2018, it was agreed to set the Precept at £6,200.00 which is the same as 2016-2017 as proposed by Brian Watts and seconded by Chris Smith.

### **Footpath onto A47**

Since the gate via the chicken farm has been locked due to the avian flu risk, this is the only footpath connecting Home Farm to the village. Due to the overgrown bushes blocking the path, people have to walk straight onto the A47 which could lead to a potentially dangerous incident. The Clerk will report this to the Highways Division.

### **Christie Hall – New Lease**

Brian Watts confirmed that the final version of the new Lease is now ready to be signed. The Lease is for a period of ten years with a review after five years.

### **Sibson Village Garden Proposal**

On 2nd January 2017 the Government announced the location of the first successful garden villages. Sibson aerodrome was not one of these first wave of proposed garden villages. This was not a surprise as the ideas for Sibson are at an early stage. It is understand, however, that the Homes and Communities Agency offered support to Huntingdonshire District Council to explore the proposal further, recognising the potential of the site.

*Continued on page 24*



# WANSFORD PARISH COUNCIL

**Chairman: John Stannage**      **07879485312** **Clerk:**  
**Wendy Gray**      **01778 441312**  
**wendy7wansford@gmail.com**

*Meetings are held in the Community Hall on the second Monday in the month*

We serve the people of Wansford in the Unitary Authority of Peterborough i.e. north of the River Nene (all of the bridge is in Wansford Parish) and East of the stream at the bottom of the dip in Yarwell Road. South of the river is Sibson-cum-Stibbington Parish in Huntingdon (which comes under Cambridgeshire) and west of the stream is Yarwell Parish in East Northamptonshire (which comes under Northamptonshire). Having only one tier of authority above us is an advantage. Our suggestion that the few properties in East Northants, including the surgery, should become part of Wansford Parish met with some hostility from some inhabitants in Yarwell and hence the "Stop the Wansford Land Grab" sign on the Yarwell Road !

Over the years we have pursued many issues with Peterborough City Council, particularly with regard to planning issues. If you come to our next meeting you will hear our chairman and Richard Clarke report on their meeting with Simon Machen, the officer responsible for Growth and Regeneration, which includes Planning and Highway Services. As well as other issues, we intend to raise the following: PCC's decision to cancel the enforcement notice issued for the removal of the hazardous waste ramp and shoring up of the roadside at the property to the west of the A47 picnic site. The disgraceful state of the road markings in the centre of the village. PCC's failure to maintain drains, the bridge and the underpass. The introduction of a 20mph zone in the village and improvements necessary for the roundabouts on the A1/A47 junction, especially in the light of the upgrading of the A47.

At our January meeting we agreed to ask for an increase of £500 in the Council Precept from PCC to accommodate nominal cost increases in items of our budget plus the substantial increase in the rent we pay to the British Legion for the Christie Hall. PCC hold our purse strings and yet we are continually being frustrated with their lack of consultation and communication. All the Parish Councillors are volunteers and seek to improve the amenities and ambience of the village. The Chairman has to give great deal of time and energy to the role and we were saddened to learn of the death of David Baker, who spent 22 years as Wansford Parish Council Chairman.

**Tim Pearson**

*Thornhaugh Parish Council report continued from page 23*

## **Wall outside Seven Summers**

Despite Brian Watts contacting Larkfleet to request that they complete the listed wall outside Seven Summers, this has not been done. The Clerk will contact the Planning Department at Peterborough City Council for advice on how to resolve this.

## **Date of Next Meeting**

The Sixth meeting of the 2016/2017 Parish Council will take place at 7.00 pm on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2017 in St Andrew's Church.      **Deirdre McCumiskey, Clerk**



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## STIBBINGTON AND WANSFORD WI

This month we were delighted to be able to present a cheque to MIND for £450. Ladies from the branch in Stamford came to give us a brief overview of the help that MIND is able to offer. I am very happy to include some important telephone numbers. If you or someone that you know is in need of help, please do get in touch. MIND info line 0300 123 3393 (weekdays 9 to 6) or Text 86463; local MIND (Peterborough & Fenland):01733 262990. Our group also decided that we will be raising funds for the medical detection dogs charity in 2017.

Our 3C's craft group has also re-started, and will be knitting or crocheting tea cosies at our February 3 meeting to help raise money for Breast Cancer Haven – this is part of the Big Tea Cosy event. If you would like to come and knit with us or just to enjoy coffee and chat, please do join us at 10.00a.m.

On February 14<sup>th</sup> we will be visiting Heavenly Chocolates in Stamford for our monthly meeting and enjoy the opportunity to make some chocolate products ourselves, as well as hear a little about this successful business which has progressed from market stall to shop and workshops in a couple of years.

We will also be going to see the snowdrops and hellebores at Anglesey Abbey on February 24<sup>th</sup>.

The supper club are going to Willowbrook Farm Café on February 17<sup>th</sup> for lunch following the second 3C's Craft meeting of the month.

Finally, the book club will next meet at the end of March at the Haycock Hotel, 7.30pm date to be confirmed next month. This is a lively group and always have interesting books to discuss.

More details of all our meetings and events, and more news can now be found on our blog [www.swwiblog.com](http://www.swwiblog.com)



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January is a particularly long and grey month. But my friend Claudine Garner and I have found a perfect way to ward off winter fatigue. So good, in fact, that we are completely hooked on our new-found activity. The only accessories are swimming costumes, neoprene gloves and boots, and the beautiful river Nene. The idea of cold water swimming first came to me via a BBC programme on the topic last autumn. I was intrigued, but knew that a swimming partner was vital to keep motivated for the duration of the winter. At an irrepressible and intrepid 68 years of age, Claudine seemed the ideal choice, as she was the only person "mad enough" to say yes.

And say yes she did! As the months passed and the mercury kept dropping, we fitted in two swims most weeks. Most surprising were the benefits: increased focus and vitality, elevated mood, and the disappearance of little aches and niggles.

A particular highlight (for lack of a better term) was the morning when the ambient temperature reached -4 degrees Celsius. As we dipped our toes in the water, we looked at one another in surprise, saying: "Oh, it's not that bad...!" On another occasion the three resident swans came thundering behind, and then past us – barely two metres away. They were "running" on the water, their wings flapping and their webbed feet slapping the surface noisily.



During this experiment, we have learnt to relish that initial shock when the icy water takes your breath away. We love the pleasure/pain tingle of water on skin, and laugh each time at the alarmingly hued pink lobsters we turn into when we come out. The best moments are after the swim, when we experience pure light-headed joy, and feel ourselves to be in possession of superpowers. The nature writer Roger Deakin puts it best: "I can dive in with a long face and what feels like a terminal case of depression, and come out a whistling idiot."

Finally, if you would like to join us, please get in touch!

#### Tips for cold water swimming

- Slowly get your body used to colder water by starting in the summer, and continuing through autumn to winter.
- Acclimatise by taking cold showers.
- Always swim with a partner.
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## NATURE NOTES

By Graham Blagden

# MOLES and OTTERS

Unlike other countries we do not commonly see wild animals living around us. Rabbits may be disturbed in the countryside; a house mouse may be found in a garage or outhouse; squirrels may scuttle up trees on a woodland walk. You may even see a dead badger by the side of the road. The presence of other 'common' animals though may only be indicated by the results of their activities. Moles are a case in point. Have you ever seen a live mole? You may have seen a dead mole, as gamekeepers and groundsmen often hang their dead bodies on wire fences after the moles are trapped. But moles stay almost always underground.

What you will see in any grassy field are earth mounds, or molehills, thrown up by mole excavations whilst feeding or creating a resting burrow. It always amazes me how quickly up to a dozen molehills can appear overnight in an area of hitherto fresh grassland. Moles are about 15 centimetres long, clothed in tight black fur. They dig with their feet whilst hunting earthworms and grubs and regularly thrust the excavated soil upwards into mounds. A large mound will house a sleeping area and shelter for young in spring. The mole's name is thought to be a shortened version of mouldiwarp by which it is known in the north of England and can live for up to three years.

Another mammal not often seen is the otter, but this is due to its rarity. Otters were all but wiped out in the postwar years due to the effect of pesticides and pollution of rivers. However they are making a comeback and it is now believed that they have returned to every river system in the country. The Wildlife Trust have long identified our local stretch of the Nene as ideal otter territory and I am pleased to report that a neighbour recently saw one cruising the river near the old stepping stones upstream from Yarwell Mill. He was not surprised as, whilst dog walking, he had previously seen a pile of freshwater mussels broken open on the bank as well as the remains of a large fish. Black droppings, or spraints, which mark an otter's territory on the riverbank are also a sign of the animal's presence.



Otters are large members of the weasel family and feed on eels and fish. As a result they are not favoured by fishermen. Fishing lakes need to be fenced in order to keep otters out to retain their valuable large specimens, particularly carp. But in open, public and wild river systems nature will find its own balanced communities and the otter has some catching up to do. Otters are the natural head of the river food chain and we should celebrate and encourage their return. So whilst walking along the riverbank look out for signs of otters on and beside the water - but don't tread on those molehills!



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

[editor@livingvillagesmagazine.co.uk](mailto:editor@livingvillagesmagazine.co.uk)

Dear Tracy,

We would like to take the opportunity to express our thanks and appreciation to the people of the local community for their many messages of condolence and acts of support and kindness shown to us after the death of David. It is a great comfort to be living in such a friendly and caring village.

With our thanks and best wishes

Dora Baker and family.

### ROYAL BRITISH LEGION – POSSIBLE BRANCH CLOSURE

At the Branch Annual General Meeting in November 2016, only 2 people stood for election to the Committee in the posts of Chairman and Treasurer. Whilst we would wish to continue the good and longstanding work of the Royal British Legion in this District, it is impossible to do so with such a small committee.

I am therefore appealing for people to come forward and join the Committee to fill the vacancies which will enable us to continue. Please contact me as soon as possible so that we can chat about what is involved. It is with regret that I must say that if no assistance is forthcoming by 28<sup>th</sup> February, I will apply formally to Headquarters to close the Branch. You share my hope that this will not be the case. Please contact me by telephone on 01780 782200 or by email: [sue@instepfootclinic.freereserve.co.uk](mailto:sue@instepfootclinic.freereserve.co.uk). Thank you

Sue Arnold  
Chairman  
Stibbington & District  
Royal British Legion”

Dear Editor

Could I use your magazine to publicise the Transition Kings Cliffe minibus which is available for local groups to hire for trips and events.

For further details look at

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Transitionkingscliffe/>

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Mike Henchy

## Pine Cone Bird Feeder

Find a nice open pine cone (or allow a closed one to dry out in the warm) and collect together bird seed\* raisins; grated cheese; suet or lard; a mixing bowl; scissors and string.

Let the suet/lard reach room temperature, cut up into small pieces and use your hands to combine with the other ingredients until the mixture sticks together.

Tie a string around the top of the pine cone then press the mixture into the sides and your pine cone feeder is complete.

\*Bird seed may contain peanuts -harmful to those suffering with peanut allergy).



## DIARY DATES – FEB 2017

5 Feb	Chocolate workshop	2 - 3.30	Stibbington Centre		782386	15
5 Feb	Candlemas Service and Supper	5pm	St Remigius Church, Water Newton	Tony Capon	01733 273500	9
13 Feb	Wansford Parish Council	7.30pm	Wansford Community Hall	Wendy Grey	01778 441312	24
14 Feb	WI meeting - Heavenly Chocolates	7.30pm	Stamford	Jan Armitage	789996	27
15 Feb	Friends of St Mary's and <b>St Andrew's Meeting</b>	10.30am	Community Hall	Dora Baker	782446	9
17 Feb	<b>WI 3C's Coffee</b> , Community and Craft	10.00am	Community Hall	Jan Armitage	789996	27
17 Feb	<b>WI 'Supper Club'</b>	Lunch	Willowbrook Farm	Jan Armitage	789996	27
24 Feb	WI Outing		Anglesey Abbey	Jan Armitage	789996	27
25 Feb	Pottery Workshop	Morning	Stibbington Centre		782386	15
25 Feb	Harmonica Workshop	Afternoon	Stibbington Centre		782386	15
2 Mar	Watersmete Benefice Lent Group	Afternoon	Prebendal Barn, Yarwell			11
7 Mar	Watersmete Benefice Lent Group	Evening	Yarwell Village Hall			11
8 Mar	<b>Friends of St Mary's and St Andrew's Lent Lunch</b>	12.15pm	Christie Hall	Dora Baker	782446	9
9 Mar	Horticultural Society - <b>National Garden's Scheme</b>	7.30pm	Christie Hall	Gill Fisher	782446	19

**Copy deadline next month: 23rd February 2017**

**[editor@livingvillagesmagazine.co.uk](mailto:editor@livingvillagesmagazine.co.uk)**

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