

Living Villages



January 2017

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EDITORIAL

So, I wonder what sort of year 2017 is going to be? Did anyone make any New Year resolutions? If you did have you managed to keep them?

Our front cover of Coopers Cottage on Old North Road was taken a few year ago. It's lovely to see that the renovations now seem to be nearing completion. It must be some years since the house was last occupied.

Christmas celebration's and parties feature on quite a few pages, it was great fun being involved with some of the activities. My personal thanks goes to everyone who has been part of the organisation of all these events.

Our Local History article covers an interesting topic regarding our village boundaries. Having lived in Wansford (Peterborough Council Tax area) for over 30 years, I have regularly found it interesting how many 'locals' are not aware of where one village stops and the other begins. Both our Post Office and the Rail Station do confuse matters though.

A reminder about Distribution and Deadlines. For the February edition we will be publishing a few days into the month with distribution happening around the 8th or 9th. The copy deadline will be 28th January.

Tracy Sortwell

Editorial team *For contact details see p 4*

Editor: Tracy Sortwell
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Distribution manager: Rod Sortwell
Advertising Manager: Kate Hopkins
Printing and collation: PPS/ Print

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Local History: David Stuart-Mogg
Nature Notes: Graham Blagden
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CONTENTS

Contacts	4
Worship Lists	5
Reflections	7

NEWS REPORTS:

Friends of churches:	
Stibbington	9
Water Newton	9
St Mary's Church	11
Stibbington Centre	15
Communicare	18
Horticulture Soc.	19
WI	27
WUF	28
Lottery	31

PARISH COUNCILS:

Tornhaugh	22/23
Wansford	24/25

SPECIAL FEATURES:

Local History	20/21
Nature Notes	35

Letters to the Editor	36/37
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Diary Dates	38
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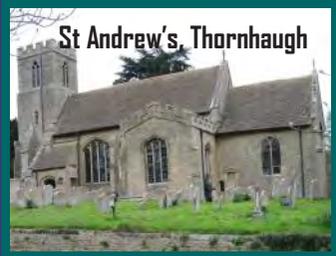
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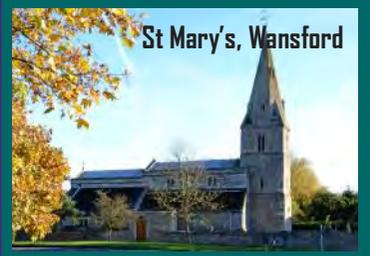


St Andrew's, Thornhaugh

WORSHIP

January

2017



St Mary's, Wansford

Date	Time	Location	Service
1 Jan	9.30am	St Andrews, Thornhaugh	Holy Communion
	10.15am	St Kyneburgha, Castor	Holy Communion
8 Jan	9.00am	St John the Baptist, Stibbington	Morning Worship
	9.30am	St Marys, Wansford	Holy Communion With Choir
15 Jan	9.30am	St Andrew's, Thornhaugh	Holy Communion
	10.15am	St Kyneburgha, Castor	Holy Communion
22 Jan	9.00am	St John the Baptist, Stibbington	Holy Communion
	9.30am	St Marys, Wansford	Morning Worship
29 Jan	9.00am	St Kyneburgha, Castor	Holy Communion
	10.00am	St Andrew's, Thornhaugh	Benefice Service
5 Feb	5.00pm	St Remingius, Water Newton	Candlemass Service and Supper



St John the Baptist, Stibbington

Wednesdays at Wansford

10.00am
Morning Prayer



St Remigius, Water Newton

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21 and 22 January

Big Bird Weekend
28 and 29 January

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The decorations have been packed away, the lights taken down and the Christmas tree needles have been hoovered up - that's it for another year! I wonder how you feel after Christmas is over; a sense of relief that all the rush is finished or do you miss all the fun? And what about the start of another new year; do you approach it with anxiety and look back to what has been with a sense of loss, or do you look forward with anticipation and excitement? Certainly, 2016 has been a troubling year in many ways, how do we now turn our attention to 2017?

Hopefully not everything from Christmas has been packed away - hopefully there is at least something to take with us into the new year.

So what can we take with us from the festive season on into 2017? (And I'm not just thinking of the presents!) Those contacts with friends and neighbours, people you haven't spoken to for a while until you popped a card through their door; that sense of friendship and welcome we seem to rekindle at Christmas is surely worth taking on into the new year. For the needy in our country, and abroad, that greater sense of generosity and giving is something else that surely shouldn't be packed away with the tinsel. For so many, it isn't just Crisis at Christmas, it is Crisis Every Day, and their needs have not gone away. Has something touched your heart in this last month, have you helped out with something that you could continue doing? That spirit of care and generosity is something that can continue to brighten our lives and the lives of those around us.

I love the many outdoors lights we see at Christmas now, and I'm always sorry to see them disappear as January begins. As well as the jollity and fun, they represent for me a willingness to share the joy of the season with those around us, not just to keep the lights and decorations for ourselves. Perhaps there are ways we can share in new ways with those around us as the new year moves on.

Those Christmas lights also remind me of the light of Christ that shines in our world, even in the most dark places. The heart of the Christmas story is the coming of the light of God's love into our dark suffering world, in the form of a tiny child who was to be our saviour. My prayer is that whatever of God's love has touched your hearts as you celebrated Christmas, goes with you into this new year. God's love is not just for one day of the year, not just for the carol service or the crib service or midnight mass. It is there for us at every moment of every day. God longs to share his love us: in our daily lives, in worship in church, in our friendships and in those times when our hearts are simply lifted in wonder or joy at the beauty of our world. And when our hearts are weighed down with the sadness and grief of our world, either personally or in what we see around us, that love is there too, a light shining in the darkness. That light, above all is worth taking with us on our journey into the year to come - God is not something to be packed away with the Christmas decorations.

May we have the grace and wisdom to leave behind what needs to be left behind, and may we take light and hope into this new year, and may the love of God shine on us.

Happy New Year! Rev. Jane

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FRIENDS OF STIBBINGTON CHURCH

The Friends of Stibbington Church would like to thank everyone who has supported our group and events during 2016. The Carol service on Sunday 11th saw a wonderful turnout with the Church full and with dogs as well as congregation! Everyone was welcomed and the mince pies and mulled wine added to the convivial atmosphere. A lovely way to round off the year with a delightful and engaging service from David Ridgeway.

We all wish you a Happy Christmas and prosperous and healthy 2017.

Helen Facer



FRIENDS OF ST REMIGIUS WATER NEWTON

Candlemass Service and Supper - 5th February 2017

On Sunday 5th February 2017, we will be holding a 'Candlemass' 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

Stibbington 101 Club

The winner of the December draw is;

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Suzy Story

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The true message and spirit of Christmas was present in the Community Carol Service at St Mary's Church Wansford. The beautifully decorated Church was full to capacity and the service was led by our new Benefice Vicar Reverend Jane Tailby. The nine lessons were read by representatives of local organisations. St Mary's Church Choir directed by Eddie McDonnell performed four set pieces culminating in 'And the Glory of the Lord' from Handel's Messiah their most ambitious venture to date was well received.

As ever the highlight was the Children's Choir who sang The Virgin Mary had a Baby Boy and Away in a Manger.

Afterwards wine, mince pies and other Christmas treats were enjoyed by all. Thankyou to everyone who made this a special event.

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We acknowledge that the loss of the scheme will adversely affect some patients, but with new services which allow patients to arrange appointments within extended surgery opening hours at Wansford and other practices in and around the local area, it is hoped this will help with organising transport from other sources. Requests for hospital transport can also be made to the relevant location prior to attendance.

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We look forward to hearing from

STIBBINGTON CENTRE NEWS



Have you booked your tickets for **QUIZ NIGHT** yet



Friday 3rd February 7:30pm £8 per person

We had a full house last year so contact the Centre to ensure you don't miss out on this excellent social event with a tasty supper included. Remember the cheesier the team name the better -there may even be a prize for it!

Stibbington Community Classes

Seven fine geese and some stylish decorations left our workshop on 4th December and bookings have already started coming in for our **next willow workshop on 19th March**.



If you are feeling jaded in January, perhaps flagging by February it is time to book onto

our **chocolate workshop on 5th February (2-3:30)**. Becky Taylor will give an interesting and, as you can assume from the picture, entertaining talk with tasting samples and a truffle making session to finish off. You **could** give the fruits of your labour to a loved-one as a present or maybe just

enjoy them yourself! What a great way to spend a Sunday afternoon.! Price £15.

During the morning of **25th February** we will have a **pottery workshop** producing coasters using different decorative techniques with ceramic slip such as "Sgraffito".

In the afternoon of the same day things will turn musical with a **harmonica workshop** run by Steve Lockwood, a Cambridge based virtuoso player experienced in teaching and performing worldwide. This workshop will be suitable for all levels of player **including complete beginners** and will help any harmonica player to improve blues and pop playing to get the best from this deceptively humble instrument. Price £30 to include harmonica.



CONTACT DETAILS:

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Email: cees.stibbington@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

You can also use the following links:

Private hire: www.groupaccommodation.com/properties/stibbington-centre-peterborough-cambridgeshire

Community classes: www.facebook.com/stibbingtoncommunityclasses

Profits from these events go to Stibbington Centre Greener Future Trust (Charity No. 1097019) which raises funds to improve the Centre's facilities and provides bursaries for disadvantaged children.

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COMMUNICARE

The quarterly patients' general meeting was held on 30th November with the main agenda item being a question and answer session regarding future plans for the practice. Dr Nally was extremely forthcoming about her and Dr Takhar's thinking on what might be the right way to take the practice forward – there are several options under consideration - staying within the Peterborough and surrounding area network, joining the super practice now operating at Lakeside Corby, or for the moment remaining as they are until the best outcome becomes clearer. There were obviously concerns expressed about how and where primary care would be delivered, but she was adamant that patients would not be affected by any future changes and would continue to access secondary care at both Peterborough and Stamford hospitals. She also stressed the possible advantages which could evolve from the practice joining forces with other organisations. It would appear that no firm decision will be made until the middle of next year but in the meantime Drs Takhar and Nally greatly value patient feedback and would welcome any comments and views you may have.

Other matters discussed included the voluntary transport scheme which unfortunately has now come to the 'end of the road'. Lack of drivers, the necessity for DBS checks, the organisational workload placed on surgery reception staff, as well as burdening the small number of available drivers with numerous requests, has prompted this decision. After many years operation it is a sad but inevitable course of action. However it is hoped that patients will benefit from extended surgery opening hours and the ability to have appointments at other practices at times when they can organise transport with family or friends.

The PPG have agreed to fund the purchase of an INR machine for use both in the surgery but mainly for district nurses to take out to housebound patients to monitor their blood levels in respect of administering warfarin medication.

The next general patients' meeting is scheduled for Wednesday 8th March 2017 at 1.00pm – at Wansford Surgery – in line with our usual winter programme we are holding this meeting during the daytime to allow older patients to attend who may not like to venture out at night. We hope to organise a guest speaker – details will be announced at a later date.

There is no social group coffee morning in January – these will commence again in February. The group will be holding their post-Xmas lunch on Friday 13th January at Yarwell Village Hall – places have already been booked but if you require further information please contact Clare Wagstaffe 01780 470437 / superfoguk@aol.com

Wendy Spencer

HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY

Another successful year ended for the Horticultural Society with our A.G.M. and Christmas Party on 10th December. Around 60 members joined us in the Christie Hall to hear a review of the year's activities and to enjoy a splendid three course meal, courtesy of the amazing committee without whose enthusiasm and hard work none of the activities would take place. We were sorry to say goodbye to Neil Hoffmann, who has injected many new ideas into our programme and been our contact with both Sacrewell and the Nene Valley Railway, but the rest of the committee remains as last year



In addition to the usual quiz we had a rolling slide show of the year's events as a reminder of the beautiful weather on all our excursions, and a highly entertaining video of the monsoon which hit our annual show in August, drenching the band but failing to deter the dancers on the committee!

There was discussion of a possible new venture in 2017: a 2 day coach trip, probably to Sissinghurst and Great Dixter near the south coast with an overnight stop in a nearby hotel, between visits. This suggestion met with approval from many of our guests and will be put to the membership as a whole. In addition we will definitely be revisiting the R.H.S. Garden at Wisley after a 3 year absence and a return visit to Beth Chatto's wonderful garden near Colchester is on the cards, as it is 9 years since we last went there.

We are still finalising the 2017 programme and have George Stevenson speaking to us on 9th March about the National Gardens Scheme followed by Ann Bird, a rose expert and R.H.S. judge on 6th April, but the full schedule of events will be published very shortly. You can be sure that we will try to make it a varied and exciting year for our members.

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

While awaiting a guest at a restaurant recently, I overheard an increasingly animated conversation close-by argue the hoary old chestnut of the Great Wansford Divide: the whys and the wherefores of the communities situated to the north and south of the river. It remains a perennial topic which although interrogated and written about myriad times seemingly never ceases to attract new interest. To those who know little of the historical background and specifics, the differentials in Council Tax levied by Peterborough City Council to that levied south of the river by Huntingdonshire District Council, for the purposes of which 'Wansford' is an unidentified integral within Sibson-cum-Stibbington, is often high on the agenda.

At this late juncture nothing is likely ever to be done to clarify matters, due principally to the cost and complexities of any such action in the 21st century, as well as probably any willingness to address it and reach any agreement. As recently as the turn of the century when I published *Wansford at the Millennium* Wansford Parish Council felt unable to support my initiative if I included narrative on the community south of the river; probably well-meant advice which I nevertheless ignored. It clearly mattered then - if not so much now. For me, a far more interesting conundrum to muse upon is what might have been done in the past to resolve the issue?

What have other similarly adjacent villages and communities elsewhere in the country done, or more likely have had done to them, to avoid similar confusion? The most common solution appears to be to append the prefixes Upper and Lower to either community. I believe that particular solution would not likely find favour locally as some would undoubtedly fear that it might further skew property prices with residents in the perceived 'Upper' echelon benefitting at the expense of those in

the 'Lower'. Of course, one could always conceal such an erroneously perceived status advantage by couching the differentials in Latin, as has also been done elsewhere: calling each respectively Wansford Magna and Wansford Parva. That has a certain ring about it, I feel! However, at the present time, and subject to whimsical change, I think my favourite solution would be to adopt the respective parochial patronymics and offer 'Wansford St. Mary' and 'Wansford St. John'. But, then some official body would doubtless find such denominations discriminatory and not sufficiently reflective of the multicultural and ecumenically diverse nature of today's Britain.

Personally, I was sad to see the recently renewed main Wansford Church sign drop the suffix 'the Virgin' from St. Mary's name in order, presumably, to make room for the self-evident, given the location, designation 'Wansford'. This recently discarded suffix, if nothing else, clearly differentiated Wansford's 'St. Mary the Virgin' from the church in the immediately adjacent village of Yarwell, which venerates St. Mary Magdalene. It also surely served to inform the curious, but unversed in the scriptures, who might care to seek enlightenment on the lives of these two women of such markedly different and diverse backgrounds?

Interestingly, both St. Mary the Virgin, Wansford and St. Mary Magdalene, Yarwell served formerly and as 'chapels of ease' to their respective parish churches of St. Andrew's, Thornhaugh and St. Mary (the Virgin) and All Saints, Nassington. A definition of a 'chapel of ease' is a supplementary church to a parish church, built within that parish church's boundary, which serves the needs of members of the congregation who cannot reach their parish church conveniently.

& A Northampton Peasant

John Clare - 'A Northampton Peasant'.



As far back as I can remember I have harboured a fascination, even perhaps at times have held in a certain awe, those seemingly blessed with an apparent inherent ability, bent, drive or determination to achieve an almost otherworldly beauty in their chosen art or talent despite their hugely disadvantaged, sometimes almost unimaginably difficult, beginnings in life.

Such a local man who surely far transcended anything that could ever have been predicted, given his birth and status, was the pastoral poet John Clare of Helpston (1793-1864). His father was a farm labourer and occasional wrestler, probably fighting for a negligible purse at local fêtes and fairs. His mother, née Stimson, like most others in their milieu, was illiterate. John Clare attended a local 'dame school' in Helpston, probably run like many of its kind by a mature woman of very limited education, and later attended the vestry school at Glinton where he learned very rudimentary reading and writing skills.

What marked out John Clare from his fellows was his extraordinary observational skills for the countryside in which he lived, and an inexorable desire to commit those observations to

paper in lyrical form; a literary style to which he would not have been exposed other than in brief glimpses through bible or liturgical readings. Starting general work aged about 7 years, as would have been the custom given his background, he worked variously as a pot-boy at the local Blue Bell Inn, a plough boy, a garden lad at Burghley House, a step up as a clerk with a local lawyer and joining the Northamptonshire Militia. Always jotting down his musings on scraps of paper, it was a Stamford bookseller who introduced him to the English Romantic poet John Keat's London publisher, John Taylor. John Clare's first book of poetry, *Poems Descriptive of Rural Life & Scenery* was published in 1820. The title page described John Clare as 'a Northampton Peasant' by way of introduction.

Describing the cottage in which he was born and raised in 'My Early Home', he wrote:

The old house stooped just like a cave
Thatched o'er with mosses green
Winter round the walls would rave
But all was calm within etc.

Clare enjoyed a brief celebrity as a novelty on the London literary scene before the vogue changed and he returned home. His muse, his disruptive personal life and a sense of dislocation led him to a form of insanity causing him to become a voluntary inmate of the High Beach Asylum, Epping. He walked the 80-odd miles home, feeding largely on grass. The last 23 years of his life were spent immured in the Northampton General Lunatic Asylum where he continued to write poetry, some of which is today critically acclaimed to be his best and amongst the very best of its' genre. He lies buried in St. Botolph's churchyard, Helpston.

THORNHAUGH PARISH COUNCIL

The Fourth Meeting of the 2016/17 Thornhaugh Parish Council took place on 21st November 2016. It was chaired by Brian Watts, present were Ashley Kewney, Louise Molesworth and Chris Smith and in attendance were Diane Lamb, Ward Councillor, one Member of the Public and the Clerk.

There were apologies for absence from Liam Higgins.

Declarations of Interest

Louise Molesworth declared a Non Pecuniary Interest in Planning Application 16/02020 - Demolition of rear conservatory and erection of single storey extension at 2 Russell Hill, Thornhaugh.

Public Participation

The Member of the Public mentioned the following issues:-

- He thanked the Parish Councillors for organising the delightful hanging baskets which have been erected in the village and the residents who have watered them.
- He requested that the Parish Councillors discuss repairing the stone wall situated on the left hand side at the top of Russell Hill when accessing Thornhaugh from the A47. The top of the stone wall is crumbling and needs restoring. He is keen that the stone wall is maintained so that it doesn't deteriorate any further and continues to be attractive feature upon entering the village. Diane Lamb suggested that an application could be made for funding this from the Community Leadership Fund and she will check whether this would be allowed under the rules. Brian Watts will find out the details of the Poultry Company who own the field in which the stone wall is situated.
- He was disappointed that no further action had been agreed regarding the passing places and requested that this issue is revisited. It was agreed that the Clerk will contact the Highways Department at Peterborough City Council and request a site visit.

Police Matters

There were no police representatives present.

Home Farm Matters including Dog Foul Bin

Ashleigh Kewney suggested that the Dog Foul Bin is installed next to the grit bin at the Home Farm entrance on the A47. The Clerk will inform Amey accordingly.

Christmas Tree

Nicki Rogers has purchased the lights for the Christmas tree and a 10' Christmas tree has been ordered. The Christmas tree will be located on the triangle and inserted in a hole supported by a pipe. Nicki Rogers has produced an excellent flyer which she will distribute to all residents. Nicki Rogers will switch on the lights at 5.00 pm on Sunday 4th December 2016. Carols will be sung around the Christmas tree and Stuart Foreman agreed to provide Carol Sheets. Louise Molesworth agreed to purchase Mulled Wine and Mince Pies to be served afterwards. If it is a wet evening, the event will take place in Brian Watts' barn. There will be a collection for the Children's Society.

RAF Wittering Senior Citizens Christmas Lunch

It was agreed that Louise Molesworth and Ashleigh Kewney will ask local residents if they would like to attend. Stuart Foreman and Diane Lamb confirmed they would like to attend.

{ Beaux Amis }

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The Old Rectory Wall

Brian Watts will speak to Karen Rutter.

Tree near Public Footpath

Brian Watts has spoken to Mike Bradshaw.

Bus Stop

There was no further update on this issue.

Meadow Lane Drainage

There was no further update on this issue.

Cutting of Back Lane Hedges/Home Farm Entrance

It was agreed that the Clerk will contact Amey to request that this work is undertaken as soon as possible as it is now November and a request had been made earlier in the year. The Clerk will also request details of the hedge/tree cutting and grass cutting schedules.

Relocation of the Slow/Pedestrian Sign & Improvements to Access onto the A1 Northbound

Brian Watts had provided a map showing to where the slow/pedestrian sign needs to be relocated to Martin Benn of the Highways Department, Peterborough City Council and the Clerk had contacted Highways England about improvements to access onto the A1 Northbound but was awaiting a reply.

Planning Application

Louise Molesworth left the room when Planning Application 16/02020 - Demolition of rear conservatory and erection of single storey extension at 2 Russell Hill, Thornhaugh was discussed. The Parish Councillors had no objections to the Planning Application.

Date of Next Meeting

The Fifth meeting of the 2016/2017 Parish Council will take place at 7.00 pm on 16th January 2017 in St Andrew's Church

Deirdre McCumiskey, Clerk



WANSFORD PARISH COUNCIL

Wansford Parish Council meeting on Monday 12th December

Illegal Development on Land South of the A47

Peterborough City Council (PCC) planning department have written to WPC saying that they will not take legal action to enforce the order to make good the work carried out without planning permission on this site. WPC have written back to PCC pointing out that part of this work endangers the stability of the road and that some of the material used is classified as hazardous. WPC has requested that either PCC pursues the owner to comply with the enforcement notice or carry out the work at their own expense.

Wansford Picnic Site:

Discussions about the state of the Wansford Picnic site are on-going and it has been established that the whole site is owned by Highways England. The police will maintain a visiting presence on the picnic site to discourage illegal activity. There was discussion on the future of the picnic site with a village resident who is interested in developing the site. This could solve many problems.

Planning:

2 storey extension to side at 6 Robins Field. WPC has no objection to this development.

Single storey rear extension and raised terraced area at Rivermead, Bridge End. This extension is on the river side of the house but does not change the apparent bulk of the house when viewed from the river side. It is understood that the neighbour whose land is potentially overlooked has no objection to the scheme. WPC decided not to object to the development.

Risk Assessment:

The WPC risk assessment was reviewed and agreed. The document focuses on WPC being totally transparent and getting the best deal for the Village.

WI Centenary Donation:

Following the earlier issues, the chairman is obtaining quotations for a continuous handrail along the approach to the Community Hall. The rail will be supported directly from the concrete paving and will incorporate low level lighting. At the hall end it will be attached to the wall of the hall to give support right up to the entrance door.

Christie Hall

Although it is understood that the lease terms have been agreed, the lease has not yet been forwarded for signing

Speed Signs/20 mph Zone in Wansford:

This scheme is being progressed with PCC and a map has been produced showing the area to be covered. The first stage is a traffic survey by PCC and then the detailed locations for the signs will be agreed. At the same time there will be a review of all road signs in the village to try and reduce the total number.

The police will also be encouraged to carry out speed checks in the village.

A47 A1 to Sutton Dualling:

The preliminary alignment study will be published in January. WPC and PCC continue to press for the inclusion of a dedicated cycleway along the south side of the road. This will connect the rural roads around Wansford to the cycle route through Castor.



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WPC is also pressing for a full review of the A47/A1 junction to be included in the project. Villagers will have noted some traffic count cameras in Wansford and people recording traffic flows on the roundabouts at peak hours. These are connected with the A47 dualling project.

Proposals for scrutiny of rural issues:

PCC has invited parish councillors to express an interest in joining one of the four PCC scrutiny committees. These committees act in a similar way to parliamentary committees. One Wansford councillor has applied for the role.

Peterborough Local Plan update:

The latest consultation for the revised Peterborough Local Plan runs from 16th December to the 9th February. The documents are available at www.peterborough.gov.uk/localplan. All residents are encouraged to look at the document and comment to PCC. The plan will be reviewed at the WPC meeting on the 9th January.

Items of particular interest to Wansford are:

- The proposed housing development on Seed's Field did not make it to the list of preferred sites.
- The site north of the A47 at Castor is included with 2500 houses and other facilities.
- There is no defined need for additional travellers' sites west of Peterborough.

Reports from Councillors:

The Peterborough Parish Conference included discussions about IT facilities for Parish Councils. These may include secure storage of data and the option to use .gov.uk email addresses.

There has been no decision yet from the Department of Communities and Local Government on the preferred sites for Garden Villages.

Cllr Graham Garner

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STIBBINGTON AND WANSFORD WI

December has been rushing by and the WI have been as busy as ever.

Last week we visited the Red Lion at Warmington for our Christmas meal which was very much enjoyed by everyone who was able to attend.

This week we had our monthly meeting where the beading demonstration by Riverside Beads showed us and helped us to make Christmas tree earrings, a small angel and snowman. We also had delicious refreshments and a chance to reflect on the old year while also anticipating 2017 with the launch of our new programme. Exciting things in store!

The book group recently enjoyed 2 outings to the cinema to see film versions of books that they had read previously. "The Light between Oceans" and "Girl on the Train". Both films followed the books closely and were thoroughly enjoyed. More similar outings are planned for the New Year.

In November a group of ladies attended the national WI event at the National Gallery in London where we were treated to a very interesting day considering the role of women in art. Our members learnt much and have a long list of women artists to go and explore in one of those quiet moments. We very much hope that the WI will put on more such events.

Two of our members also went to Denman College (home of the WI) for a silver clay course and using the bursary that is available to our members every 2 years. The ladies had a lovely time, made some beautiful jewellery and we look forward to them sharing their new found skills with the rest of us!

Our first meeting of the New Year will be on Tuesday January 10th when we will have a presentation from MIND, the mental health charity. We have also been raising funds for this group during 2016 and will look forward to presenting them with a cheque. If you would like to join us at this event please do come along. We will meet at 7.15 at the Community Hall.

3C's will next meet on January 6th and 20th, 10 til 12. Please do join us if you would like some time for Craft, Community and Chat. If you would like to know more or join us at a meeting, please do contact me. Details of our meetings and more news can now be found on our blog www.swwiblog.com

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WANSFORD UKULELE FOLK

The recently formed Wansford Ukulele Folk made their first public appearance at a fun Christmas Party Concert at The Cross Keys Wansford. The band only started playing together in September following an initiative from Alan Jones and Elin Styles and are led by music teacher and well known local musician Lin Griffin.

There are now 20 members including Wansford residents and others from surrounding villages. The music featured some well known hits from the last 50 years and a variety of Christmas songs.

Ukulele bands are becoming increasingly popular across the country and W.U.F's as they are now known have come a long way in a short time in improving their performing skills. They meet every Monday evening in the Cross Keys and are planning to further widen their repertoire and horizons in 2017.





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£20	H Hardie
£10	S Warwick

This was the final draw for 2016 and we start collecting for next year's lottery in January with the first draw in March. Over £2000 will be given out in prizes with any remaining funds going to the upkeep of the Christie Hall, so I wish you all good luck.

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e: [fthistlethwaite@
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Readers may not be ardent birdwatchers but you may well have noticed there seem to be more blackbirds in the garden these days. Most gardens will host a pair or two during the year but commonly numbers will increase during the winter. This is partly due to the greater availability of food; fallen apples are a tasty snack for a blackbird and they also provide plenty of energy. But in winter we receive tens of thousands of visiting blackbirds from the continent, escaping the cold and frosty weather in northern European countries. Just today there were eight blackbirds in my garden but only two females - most of our visitors are males.

The male blackbird is jet black with a bright yellow bill and beady eye. The female is the same size but dark brown in colour with a slightly paler chest patch. The only other common garden birds where the two sexes display significantly different plumage are the house sparrow and chaffinch.

Blackbirds will find much to eat in the garden or hedgerow - seeds, worms, slugs and fruits. Now they can be seen pecking the ripe red berries of hawthorn and rowan (mountain ash). Then they will move on to pyracantha.

In time they will take the different coloured berries of other shrubs and trees. Is that because they are not keen on the taste or is it that the pink and yellow colours confuse them?



Also confusing are the lyrics of the well known nursery rhyme:-

Sing a song of sixpence, a pocket full of rye,
Four and twenty blackbirds baked in a pie,
When the pie was opened the birds began to sing,
Was that not a dainty dish to be set before the king!

How could the birds still be alive after being baked? In Tudor times it was the custom in well-to-do kitchens to cook the pie and insert live birds under the crust. Once at the table the pie crust was cut and out would fly the singing blackbirds as an entertainment for the guests!

Blackbirds were originally woodland birds, commonly found around the outside of a wooded area or in glades but they have successfully managed the transition to a human environment and particularly love suburban gardens. Here they can appear to be quite tame, coming quite close to humans, but like other birds and wild life, is this just cupboard love?

They are also known to tap on windows. Old country lore records this particular black bird's habit as presaging a death in the community and many people swear that this has happened shortly before such an event in their family. Nowadays we believe that the bird sees its reflection in the window and is deterring a potential rival from his territory.

In case you notice this activity I do so hope the latter view is correct.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

editor@livingvillagesmagazine.co.uk

Dear Editor,



I would like to let local people know about an exciting project I am involved which may be of interest: At the very back of the Elton Walled Garden Centre is a beautiful wrought iron gate leading to an area which until recently was covered by scrub and tree stumps. I have been given the exciting challenge of bringing this area back to life to create a working kitchen garden. The plan is to grow fruit and vegetables of both modern and heritage varieties together with border for cut flowers as would be typically found in all grand homes of the era.



So far tasks have involved scrub clearance, weed combat and uncovering the beautiful old walls. You can now see the gate more clearly and the charming little shelter against the far wall. Even better, I am now able to look forward to some planting in the New Year and am excitedly planning for this.

If you have some spare time and would like to get involved either as a gardener or particularly if you are a dab hand with a drill or paintbrush, do get in contact. I already have a few volunteers but a more would be fantastic and I have visions of sociable, working parties with tea and cake to go with satisfied smiles at the end of the session! Please see my contact details below or alternatively drop into the Walled Garden Centre at Elton and ask for me.

If you are interested to see how this project moves forward, do visit the Facebook page (www.facebook.com/thesecondgardeneltonhall) and again, drop in and take a look when you are in the area.

Many thanks,

Diane

Tel: 01832 280058

Email: info@thesecondgardenelton.co.uk

Dear Tracy,

I wondered if you could put a little notice in. As David has been the Chairman of the Wansford Parish Council for 22 years in the past, people might like to know.

"David King Baker, much loved husband, father and grandfather died peacefully at home on Wednesday 14th Dec. There will be a Thanksgiving Service of his life at St. Mary's, Wansford on Saturday, 28th January at 2 p.m. and Tea at The Haycock Hotel afterwards."

Thank you very much.

Dora and family.

We have a number of subscribers, who no longer live in our villages but still enjoy reading Living Villages. When their cheques arrive we often receive short notes from them. The most recent came from Mrs Mary Gilbert, who will be remembered by residents who have lived here since the 1980's. Her note read as follows :-

Mary still interested in hearing the news from Wansford and her friends even at the age of 94. Thanks.

No one has asked for the solution to last month's 'Puzzle for Fun' but here it is, just in case you wanted it.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
N	L	H	C	U	P	T	A	E	O	D	Q	G
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
W	Y	J	B	F	V	S	I	M	K	Z	X	R

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DIARY DATES – JAN / FEB 2017

9 Jan	Wansford Parish Council	7.30pm	Wansford Community Hall	Wendy Grey	01778 441312	25
10 Jan	WI meeting	7.15pm	Wansford Community Hall	Jan Armitage	789996	27
11 Jan	Sibson -cum-Stibbington Parish Council	7.00pm	Christie Hall	Wendy Grey	01778 441312	
13 Jan	Post Christmas Lunch - Commicare		Yarwell Village Hall	Clare Wagstaff	470437	18
16 Jan	Thornhaugh Parish Council	7.00pm	St Andrew's Church Thornhaugh	Deirdre McCumiskey		23
16 Jan	Watersmete Fellowship	7.30pm	The Vicarage, 34 Station Road , Nassington	Rev. Jane	782271	9
20 Jan	WI 3C's Craft, Community and Chat	10 - 12	Wansford Community Hall	Jan Armitage	789996	27
FEB						
3 Feb	WI 3C's Craft, Community and Chat	10 - 12	Wansford Community Hall	Jan Armitage	789996	27
3 Feb	Quiz Night	7.30pm	Stibbington Centre		782386	15
5 Feb	Chocolate workshop	2 - 3.30	Stibbington Centre		782386	15
5 Feb	Candlemass Service and Supper	5pm	St Remigius Church, Water Newton	Tony Capon		9
13 Feb	Wansford Parish Council	7.30pm	Wansford Community Hall	Wendy Grey	01778 441312	25
14 Feb	WI meeting	7.15pm	Wansford Community Hall	Jan Armitage	789996	27
9 Mar	Horticultural Society - National Garden's Scheme	7.30pm	Christie Hall	Gill Fisher	782446	19

Copy deadline next month: 28th January 2017

editor@livingvillagesmagazine.co.uk

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