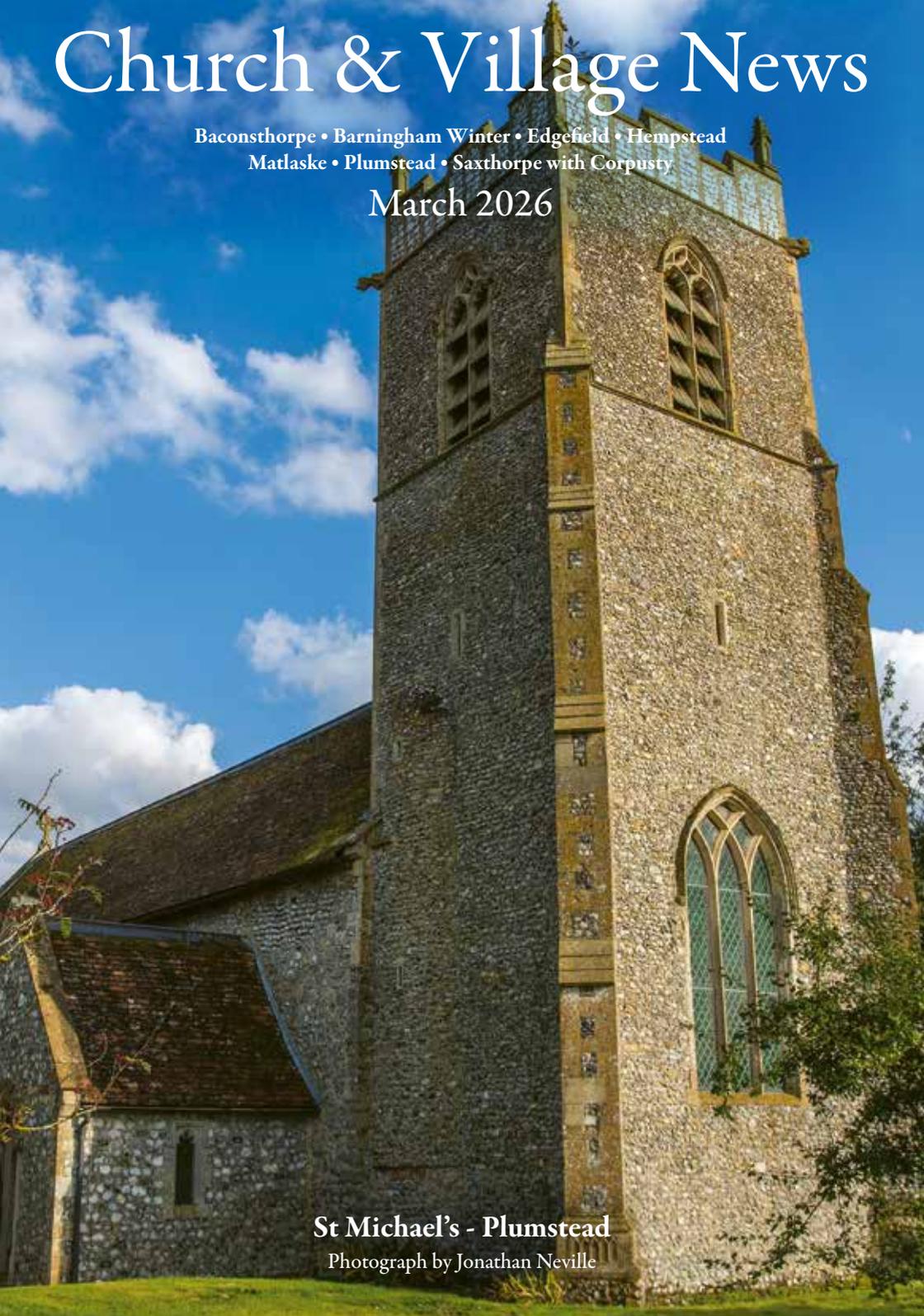


Church & Village News

Baconsthorpe • Barningham Winter • Edgefield • Hempstead
Matlaske • Plumstead • Saxthorpe with Corpusty

March 2026



St Michael's - Plumstead

Photograph by Jonathan Neville

Newsletter Team

Issue No 121 / March 2026

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Hempstead	Paul Sanders	01263 713217
Matlaske & Barningham	Lucy Raynes	07894 061571
Plumstead	Ruth Champion-Ridge	
Saxthorpe & Corpusty	Guy Hodgson	07771 575277

Parish Council Websites

Baconsthorpe
<https://baconsthorpepc.wixsite.com/baconsthorpepc>
Edgefield
<https://edgefield-pc.gov.uk/>
Hempstead
<https://hempsteadpc.wixsite.com/hempsteadpc>
Matlaske & Barningham
<https://matlaske-pc.gov.uk/>
Plumstead
<https://plumsteadpc.wixsite.com/plumsteadpc>
Saxthorpe & Corpusty
<https://corpustyandsaxthorpe-pc.gov.uk/>

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andrew.brown@north-norfolk.gov.uk

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John Birchall

01263 584290

Village Websites

www.baconsthorpe.org

www.corpustyandsaxthorpevillagehall.org.uk

www.hempstead-norfolk.co.uk

www.plumstead.org.uk

Church People

Rector Revd Canon David Longe 01263 577252

Asst Priest Revd Judy Rosser 07469 390178

Lay Minister Dr Jane McLarty 07791 870104

Church Wardens

Baconsthorpe Harry Steel 07711 890360

B Winter Amelia Courtauld 01263 577250

Rebecca Hill 07960 739593

Edgefield Emma Cletheroe 01263 587049

Alison Mawson 01263 587236

Hempstead Airlie Inglis 01263 577440

Matlaske Thomas Courtauld 01263 577250

Duncan Wood 01263 570293

Plumstead Vacant

Saxwith Corp Lesley Last 01263 587782

Jill Perry-Warnes 01263 584221

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Emma Youngs 07884 432412

safeguarding@matlaske.org.uk

Safeguarding concerns please contact the Police on 999 or

Diocese of Norwich Safeguarding Team

safeguarding@dioceseofnorwich.org or 01603 882345

County Councillor

Steffan Aquarone

steffan.aquarone.cllr@norfolk.gov.uk / 01603 327827

What's On

MARCH

Mon 2	2.00pm
Wed 4	10.30am
Fri 6	10.30am
Sun 8	9.00am
Fri 13	3.30am
Wed 18	10.00am
Thur 19	10.00am
Sat 21	10.00am
Sun 22	6.00pm
Thurs 26	3.30pm
Fri 27	6.00pm
Sat 28	10.00am
Sat 28	2.00pm
Sat 28	.tbc

Hempstead Crafty Creations

Baconsthorpe Coffee Morning

Hempstead Coffee & Catch-Up

Corpusty & Saxthorpe Breakfast

Hempstead Music

Hempstead Churchyard Spring Clean

Hempstead Crafty Creations

Baconsthorpe Craft Fair

Edgefield Talk Slatin Pasha

Hempstead Music

Baconsthorpe Pop-Up Pub

Corpusty & Saxthorpe Litter Pick

Hempstead Crafty Creations Easter

Corpusty & Saxthorpe Prize Bingo

Village Hall

Village Hall

Village Hall

Village Hall

Village Hall

Village Hall

Church

Village Hall

Village Hall

Village Hall

Village Hall

Village Hall

The Green

Village Hall

Village Hall

APRIL

Fri 10	10.00am
Fri 10	10.30am
Sat 11	7.30pm
Thur 16	6.30pm
Sat 25	10.00am
Sat 25	1.00pm

Plumstead Bric-a-Brac plus 11th and 12th

Hempstead Music

Edgefield Bingo

Barningham Hall Scrabble Evening

Barningham Hall Little Lifts Charity Run

Hempstead - Mike Thody Exhibition

Church

Village Hall

Village Hall

Barningham Hall

Barningham Hall

Village Hall

Clash Diary to add an event contact
 Corinne Youngs
 01263 577263 corinne@avyoungs.com

Holt Library

9 Church Street, Holt NR25 6BB 01263 712202

Staffed Hours

Tues 10am-7pm / Wed 2pm-7pm

Fri 10am-7pm / Sat 1pm-4pm

Unstaffed Hours

8am-7pm weekdays Sat 8am-4pm Sun 10am-2pm

accessible with Open Library Access

Post Offices

Baconsthorpe Mobile Post Office Van

Wednesdays 10.45am - 11.30am Village Hall

Corpusty Stores 587726

Monday-Friday 9.00am - 12.00noon

Iteringham Shop 587325

Monday + Thursday 9.00am-1.00pm

June 20	Baconsthorpe Fete
July 11	EdgeFest
Oct 17	Edgefield Craft Fair
Nov 21	Baconsthorpe Craft Fair

Banking Hub

Barclays Bank, 16 High Street, Holt, NR25 6BQ

9am-5pm weekdays

Monday NatWest Thursday Santander

Tuesday TSB Friday Lloyds

Wednesday Barclays

Mobile Library Van

12 March / 9 April / 7 May

Matlaske 12:40 NR11 7AQ Old Post Office

Plumstead 13:00 NR11 7LG Walnut Farm

Baconsthorpe 14:30 NR25 6LJ Council Bungalows

14:50 NR25 6LE Hare & Hounds

Hempstead 15:05 NR25 6TL Telephone kiosk

Edgefield 15:45 NR24 2AL The Memorial

16:10 NR24 2AX The Street

Corpusty 16:35 NR11 7BU Great Farm Cott's

Times and dates sourced from Norfolk County

website: <https://bit.ly/2AJdSGA> / Route No CEN 411

Tel: 01603 222303

Disclaimer: The views expressed in this publication are not necessarily the views of the Church & Village News. Apologies if contributed material is not published due to space constraints. All facts are believed to be correct at the time of going to press.

Letter from The Rector, Reverend Canon David Longe
01263 577252 / 07881 950294 / rector@matlaske.org.uk

Dear All

I write this before Lent begins, aware you will be reading it somewhere in the middle of the season. I do not know whether you are observing Lent or not, but wherever you find yourself, I want to share a story from scripture that speaks into the relevance of the Lenten season.



Elijah receives food as he prepares to confront King Ahab and Queen Jezebel

It is the story of the prophet Elijah: a story Jesus would have known well, perhaps holding it in his heart during his own forty days in the wilderness after his baptism. Elijah lived at a time when King Ahab who influenced by Queen Jezebel, led Israel away from God and towards Baal, a Canaanite god believed to control rain and crops. With huge courage Elijah confronts Ahab and declares that there will be no rain except at God's word. This was a direct challenge to Baal's supposed power.

After years of drought, Elijah returns challenging the 450 prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel. Those prophets prepare a sacrifice and call on their god to burn it, but nothing happens. Elijah prays, and God answers with fire from heaven. Soon after, rain returns to the land.

Yet Ahab and Jezebel remain fixed in their ways. Jezebel threatens Elijah's life, and he flees into the wilderness. Sitting beneath a broom tree, he asks that he might die. Exhausted and afraid, he feels utterly alone - yet God provides food and strength for the journey ahead.

Elijah travels forty days and nights to Mount Horeb where he shelters in a cave. Here God tells him to stand on the mountain: "for the Lord is about to pass by." A mighty wind blows, an earthquake shakes the land, and fire sweeps by — yet God is not in any of these. Then comes "a sound of sheer silence." It is in this quiet that Elijah encounters God and receives courage and renewed purpose.

Lent invites us into something similar. It is not about dramatic achievements, but about making space. Making space to notice God's presence and grace.

Anthony de Mello tells of a man who searched the world for God- climbing mountains, visiting monasteries, fasting and praying. Exhausted, he cried, "Why do you hide from me?" A voice replied, "Hide? I have been here all along. You were looking somewhere else." He had been searching for fireworks, not for the quiet presence of God in the ordinary.

Our lives are often busy and noisy. We look for answers in the wrong places. Elijah reminds us that God is often found not in wind, earthquake, or fire, but in the silence that follows. Psalm 46:10 puts it beautifully: "Be still, and know that I am God." Whether or not you have been keeping Lent, I invite you to pause, step out of whatever "cave" you may be in, and stand still, open to the gentleness of Jesus' presence in your life.

With my prayers this Lent

David

Tuesdays 10am-12noon (term time) - Country Mice Toddler Group - Baconsthorpe Village Hall
Wednesdays 10am - Coffee, Cake & Chat - St Andrew's Saxthorpe
Details of all our services: achurchnearyou.com/benefice/26-271D/



The Benefice of Matlaske
Church Services for March

1st March	Lent II	
8.30am	Eucharist	Saxthorpe
10.30am	Eucharist	Matlaske
4th	Wednesday	
6.00pm	Meditation (about 30 minutes)	Hempstead
5th	Thursday	
8.30am	Eucharist	Matlaske
8th	Lent III	
8.30am	Eucharist	Edgefield
10.30am	Eucharist	Barningham Winter
15th	Mothering Sunday	
8.30am	Eucharist	Baconsthorpe
10.30am	Eucharist	Plumstead
10.30am	Eucharist	Edgefield
18th	Wednesday	
6.00pm	Meditation (about 30 minutes)	Hempstead
22nd	Lent V	
8.30am	Eucharist	Hempstead
10.00am	Breakfast Church	Saxthorpe
12.00noon	Christening	Bessingham
25th	Annunciation	
9.00am	Eucharist	Matlaske
	Please pray for Archbishop Sarah Mullay as she is enthroned in Canterbury Cathedral	
29th	Palm Sunday	
8.30am	Eucharist	Plumstead
10.30am	Eucharist with procession from Barningham Hall Gates	Matlaske
30th	Holy Monday	
6.00pm	Stations of the Cross	Hempstead
	This lasts about 30 minutes, as we reflect through Jesus's journey on Good Friday	
31st	Holy Tuesday	
5.00pm	Seder meal - everyone welcome - email to book administrator@matlaske.org.uk	Edgefield
1st April	Holy Wednesday	
6.00pm	Compline - short service to conclude the day with silence and readings	Plumstead
2nd	Maundy Thursday	
6.00pm	Eucharist with foot washing - Revd Lucy Dallas	Barningham Winter
3rd	Good Friday	
2.00pm	Veneration of the Cross - Procession from wooden church gates	Saxthorpe
5th	Easter Sunday	
6.00am	Dawn Service with fire and eucharist	Bessingham
10.30am	Eucharist	Baconsthorpe

Baconsthorpe

200 Club £50 J Warner, £25 E Youngs, £10 R Youngs



Item of Local History

Many thanks to Tom Worboys for sending me this little item of Baconsthorpe history. This is a painting of Keeler Dale who lived in Dale's yard in the village. Keeler died in 1919 aged 86. He is buried at Baconsthorpe church and his gravestone can be found in the south east corner of the churchyard.



Hazel Martin
07879 414577

A Warm Welcome

This month I am extending a warm welcome to Steve King who moved in to Pitt Farm last October. We hope Steve will be very happy and perhaps pop in to the Pop-up-Pub on the last Friday of every month or our monthly coffee morning which is on the first Wednesday every month. Steve is enjoying walks in Sheringham Park with his two lovely dogs – Dolly and Ruby.

A Sad Farewell

It is now time to say a sad farewell to John Hardy who as I write this is today packing up to leave Stonefield Bungalow. Many of you will know John as a retired vicar, he has helped out at many of our church services here in Baconsthorpe and in the other villages. John is moving to Ely to be close to family and friends. He tells me that he will miss events in the village – the Pop-up-Pub, coffee morning and the church community. I shall always remember John playing Egeus in Midsummer Night's Dream last August in the garden at the village hall.

Village Hall News

Coffee Morning Wednesday 4th Corinne's cheese scones on the menu and fresh filtered coffee. No charge. Lots of chat with nice people. Meet at 10.30am till 11.30am.

Pop-up Pub Friday 27 with fish pie on the menu from 6.30pm and the bar opens at 6pm. All welcome.

Looking Ahead

June 20th is the date set for the next annual Baconsthorpe Fete which is a date I know you will all be wanting to pop into your diaries. Once again I want to encourage everyone to get baking for the Great Baconsthorpe Bake Off. The two chefs from Byfords are looking forward to sampling at least 25 cakes. We would love to introduce some new stalls and we are looking for volunteers to man the stalls. Please do get in touch if you would like to help us.

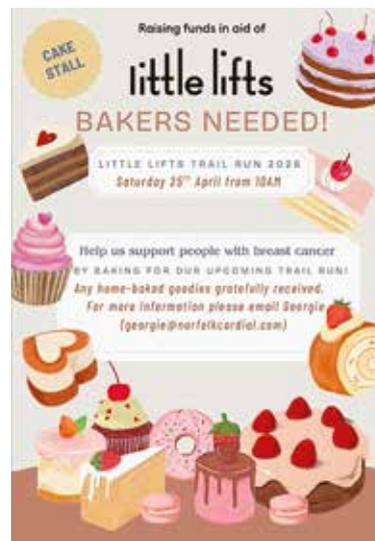
Looking Even Further Ahead

I am planning another outdoor performance of a Shakespeare play. Midsummer Night's Dream last August was so well received we thought it would be nice to do another. It will be Friday evening July 17th and more information to follow – when I have decided which play to do. Another date for your diary!

And Finally...

Warm welcome to Catherine and Niall Dew who have today moved in to Wayside Bungalow. We hope they will be very happy.

Barningham Winter



Little Lifts Charity Trail Run

On Saturday 25th April, our much-loved Little Lifts Charity Trail Run returns for its 4th year, kindly hosted once again by Thomas & Amelia at Barningham Hall. This special event brings our community together to run, walk, cheer and volunteer - all in support of people affected by breast cancer.



Amelia Courtauld
01263 577250

Last year, thanks to incredible local support, we raised over £25,000. In 2026, we're hoping to go even further.

The route winds through stunning countryside, with distances to suit all abilities - from seasoned runners to those simply wanting to take part for a great cause.

We're also looking for volunteers to help on the day, whether that's marshalling, registering runners or baking a cake for the cake stall. If you can lend a hand, we'd love to

hear from you. To enter visit: littleslifts.org.uk/events, and to volunteer please email georgie@norfolkcordial.com. Together, let's make it another brilliant year!

Join us for Scrabble by the Fire!

It is also the time to come and play Scrabble by the fire with delicious homemade nibbles. You do not need to be a brilliant player, it's just fun. The date for your diary is Thursday, 16th April, starting at 6.30pm. Tickets are £10 and there will be a raffle. Please email amelia@barninghamstate.co.uk to reserve a place.

Edgefield

Church News

We are thrilled with the new sound system which has been installed in Edgefield Church thanks to a very generous grant. We used it for the first time at the 10.30am service on 8th February and even those who had forgotten their hearing aids could hear every word, whilst those who'd remembered were able to use the loop system. It's a very impressive piece of kit; do come and try it for yourself.



Richard Peaver
01263 587486

Mothering Sunday is on 15th March and there will be a family-friendly service at 10.30am with children taking part and posies for all. We welcome everyone to celebrate their mothers on this special day.

During Holy Week on Tuesday 31st March, we will be hosting a traditional Seder meal in the Village Hall at 5pm. This is an opportunity to learn more about the Jewish Passover feast, what is eaten and why, and to partake of the food. It is suitable for all ages and should be a fascinating evening. It's free to attend but donations will be welcome. To find out more and to book a place (for catering purposes) please email administrator@matlaske.org.uk

Alison Mawson

Thai Evening

Friday 17th April

Baconsthorpe Village Hall 6.30 pm

Spicy Pork Green Curry with Rice

or

Colourful Chicken Cashew Nut

(vegetarian choices)

£12 cash on the night.

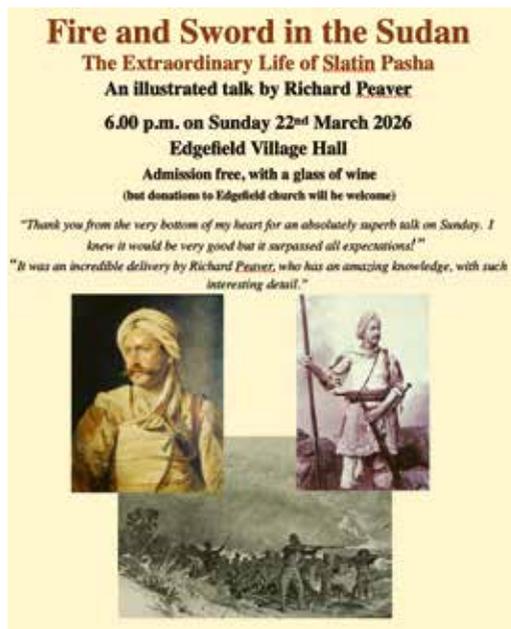
Please book on 07729972386

Talk in Village Hall

On Sunday 22nd March at 6.00pm, Richard Peaver will give an illustrated talk entitled "Fire and Sword in the Sudan – the Extraordinary Life of Slatin Pasha".

Rudolf Slatin was an Austrian Jewish Christian, later a Muslim convert, and finally a Christian once again. He was variously a bookshop assistant, explorer, civil administrator, soldier, governor, for 12 years a prisoner and servant of the tyrannical dervish leader, fugitive, author, British knight, Austrian baron, Red Cross official, Chief Scout and, in later life, single parent of a headstrong teenage girl. A favourite of three British monarchs, he became a general in two foreign armies.

The talk is open to all and a glass of wine will be provided. The talk is free, but donations to Edgefield church will be welcome.



Fire and Sword in the Sudan
The Extraordinary Life of Slatin Pasha
An illustrated talk by Richard Peaver
6.00 p.m. on Sunday 22nd March 2026
Edgefield Village Hall
Admission free, with a glass of wine
(but donations to Edgefield church will be welcome)

"Thank you from the very bottom of my heart for an absolutely superb talk on Sunday. I knew it would be very good but it surpassed all expectations!"
"It was an incredible delivery by Richard Peaver, who has an amazing knowledge, with such interesting detail."

Village Hall News

Dates for your diary: Bingo Night, Saturday 11th April. Tickets £5 from any committee member. Our next Edgefest will be on Saturday 11th July, so save the date for this ever-popular event! 200 Club winners for December were: 1st Joy Durkin (£50), 2nd Carole Hollick (£30) and 3rd Florence Dewar (£20). January's winners were: 1st Michael Chadwick (£50), 2nd Shirley Buck (£30) and 3rd Dave Berry (£20).

Jim Frost

Hempstead

200 Club March £50 A Lantaff; £25 P Hawkey; £15 Z Cranfield; £10 J Cooper

Village Hall

We have been touched by the number of Hempstead people who have asked why no Christmas party was offered last year. It shows how much it is appreciated by the village and encourages us as a Committee that our efforts are worthwhile. Our last magazine entry blamed lack of volunteers when it was really lack of an organiser. There are always volunteers, but two months ago two experienced committee members resigned because they were leaving the village.

In our Centenary year we need to strengthen the Committee to provide social events, maintain the fabric and raise grants for improvements.

Soon we must hold an AGM having completed our first year as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). The provisional date is Monday 20 April at 7.30 pm. This is an opportunity to elect one or more new Trustees as Committee members. It is notoriously difficult to recruit such



Jonathan Neville
07836 675369

people. There are about 4 meetings per year but the main expectation is that you take on some role in running the hall that suits your talents. If you want the hall to be there for the next 100 years please think whether you could fulfil and enjoy such a role. If you do, expect some thanks and also some criticism – it goes with the territory.

Richard Roy - Chairman, Hempstead Village Hall Trustees
01263 715851

Coffee & Catchup - Friday 6th - all welcome

Crafty Creations

Monday 2nd 2.00 - 4.00pm - Crepe Paper Flowers

Thursday 19th 10.00am - Midday

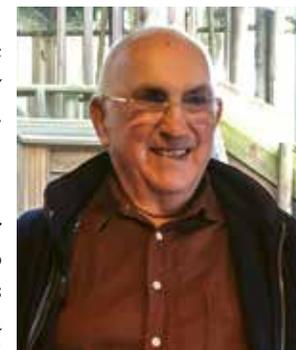
Saturday 28th 2.00 - 4.00pm Easter Theme Crafts

Music in Hempstead

Friday 13th at 3.30pm - music starting at 4pm / Friday 10th April at 3.30pm - music starting at 4pm

Mike Thody

You are warmly invited to celebrate 90 years of creativity Mike Thody - Paintings, Drawings & Sculpture with additional works by his family. In the Village Hall on Saturday 25th between 1pm-5pm. Join us for food and drink as we celebrate his life in art.



Litter

Person or persons unknown are leaving a large amount of litter on the Marlpit Lane, School Lane, Pond Hills Road circuit. Two villagers cleared it up and less than a couple of weeks later it was back. Two more villagers then cleared it again. Items include vodka bottles (very common), beer cans, lager cans, coffee cups, Red Bull cans, chocolate wrappers, pot noodle containers, MacDonalds cups (nearest is Cromer), KFC cups (nearest is Norwich) etc. Is this just a stop off point or do they live near here ...? Does anyone have any idea who is responsible?



Ann Udale Presentation

The PCC have presented the village with a framed picture by Ann Udale of houses and other buildings in Hempstead. Ann was a Church Warden for twelve years, retiring in 2009 and an accomplished local artist and craftswoman. In 2006 she drew a montage of many of the buildings in the parish of Hempstead, which she hand coloured. The Village Hall committee have kindly accepted her picture on behalf of the village and will hang it in the hall for everyone to enjoy.

Two other church pictures by Ann, and two by our other local artist, Mike Thody, have been generously donated by them and hang in the church.

Church Spring Clean

The annual Church spring clean and churchyard maintenance morning is set for 10am Wednesday 18th March. Please come along and join in the annual sort out of our parish church and its churchyard. Last year there was glorious sunshine and we had sixteen wonderful volunteers. Please

do bring along, if you have them, cleaning cloths/furniture spray/polish/Brasso/an extra vacuum cleaner/very long handled dusters etc for inside. For outside we ideally need a wheelbarrow/hedge/cutters/rakes/branch clippers and anything else you have that you think will be useful.

We hope to reduce the size of some of the box and yew balls which are now getting too big to reach without a ladder. We will provide delicious coffee and biscuits as a reward! Thank you all so much in advance

WhatsApp

Hempstead now has its own WhatsApp Group for those living in the parish. The object is to provide a quickly accessed, localised messaging group designed for residents to share information and report utility disruption, suspicious activity, lost pets, road closures etc along with general village news. If anyone wishes to join this community, please email Jonathan at jneville@hempstead-norfolk.co.uk giving your name and mobile number.

Jonathan's picture of a February visitor to Hempstead...



Matlaske

We are pleased to welcome our latest new resident to Matlaske - Ocean-Rae Shepherd, who was born at the Norfolk & Norwich Hospital, on Sunday 18th January, weighing in at 7lbs 6ozs. Both mother (Chanelle) and baby are doing well.

An Historical Note

The Norfolk Chronicle of Saturday 3 December 1785 reported that Christiana Fox of Matlaske, along with nine other Norfolk women, had been convicted of reeling false and short yarn.

This criminal offence was a widespread fraud committed by hand spinners – mostly women – against manufacturers in the English textile industries (particularly worsted) during the 17th, 18th and early 19th centuries. It involved delivering yarn that was shorter or less dense than required by agreed standards.

Manufacturers formed associations, such as in Yorkshire (1764) and East Anglia (1768), to hire inspectors to detect the fraud. However, cases were not typically tried as stealing at the Assizes. This was because legal possession of the wool had been transferred to the spinner. Instead, the fraud



Duncan Wood
01263 570293

was prosecuted under specific statutes, notably the Worsteds Acts (1777–1791), which allowed for quick, summary adjudication by magistrates.

Initially, penalties included 14 days of hard labour in the House of Correction, sometimes accompanied by a public whipping. Later Acts of Parliament reduced this to fines, (eg 5 shillings for a first offence) as the earlier, harsher punishments were thought to discourage prosecutions.

Plumstead

Bric-a-Brac (and cake) sale in Plumstead Church

Plans are underway for a bric-a-brac sale to be open on 10th, 11th and 12th April. We hope to raise even more money to support the changes and repairs planned for our church and to see plenty of visitors again. If you would like to contribute to this event in any way please get in touch with me, (Catherine McMahon 07799 422840), or the brains behind this (Nick Coulson 07422 722269).



Harriet Rossi
01263 577239

Saxthorpe with Corpusty



Dismay at Threat to School

The proposed closure of Corpusty Primary School by Synergy Academy Trust has dismayed the whole community, prompting an urgent public meeting held in St Andrews Church and the formation of a 'Save Corpusty School' campaign group.



John Birchall
07810 016976

In a letter strongly objecting to the proposal the Parish Council accuses Synergy of presenting the closure of the school as a 'fait accompli.' The letter says: 'The only options proposed are the amalgamation of the school with either of the schools at Reepham and Gresham. No consideration is given to the continuation of the primary school from its present site.'

The council calls for a fresh consultation that includes recognition of the wide long-term impact on the community that closure would bring, and proper consideration of alternatives to closure through measures such as sharing the site with a nursery or a Special Educational Needs facility.

The campaign group can be found on Facebook. The Parish Council's letter can be found in full at corpustyandsaxthorpe-pc.gov.uk. Click on 'Posts'.

Join the Great British Spring Clean!

All over the country litter pickers will be out and about for the Great British Spring Clean from 13 to 29 March, and you can help our villages look spic and span by joining a Corpusty & Saxthorpe litter pick on Saturday 28 March. Meet at the Village Green telephone box at 10am. Bags and some grabbers will be provided.

Bid for Bottle Bank Money

The Parish Council has almost £190 in bottle bank income to donate to a local charity. Requests on behalf of charitable causes can be made to the Parish Council Clerk by emailing clerk@corpustyandsaxthorpe-pc.gov.uk. The council will make a decision at its meeting on May 13.

The money has been raised by people using the bottle bank, opposite the Dukes Head, rather than putting bottles and jars in their green recycling bins. Keep it up!

Bus Shelter Go-Ahead

At its January meeting the Parish Council decided to go ahead with the provision of a bus shelter when improvements are made to the bus stops on the main road (Holt/Briston Road) in Saxthorpe. The County Council is providing new stops, linked by a footway, just to the north of St Andrews Church. The County Council will meet 80% of the cost of the shelter, which will be timber construction in keeping with the rural location.

Little London Allotments

The Little London allotment site is in much better shape after the removal of old tubs and bins and the levelling and cultivating the surface. The area nearest the road will be sown with a grass meadow mix so that it can be cut to control weeds. The back portion will be available for new allotments, although the plots have still to be defined. Anyone interested should contact the parish council clerk at clerk@corpustyandsaxthorpe-pc.gov.uk.



The Village Gardener - To Plant a Garden is to Believe in Tomorrow



Today as I write March's article, it's being such a typical February day, gloomy, chilly and murky with a side order of persistent drizzle. It somewhat fills me with incredulity to even think about setting seeds or waiting patiently for the soil to warm up. But contrary to the view out of my study window, the year is on the move. The dawn chorus is gaining momentum and having not heard a song thrush in our garden for months, like magic they were there yesterday morning as were the stoically cheerful grey wagtails who delightfully perch on the ridge of our roof, making their presence happily known. After weeks of worry and sadness over a close family member's devastating illness. To

hear sounds of comforting normality was a brief step off the desperate cycle of waiting and worry and a complete blessing. Bring on Spring with all its optimism.

Back to the garden, March is a determinedly busy month and after the necessary inertia of winter we can now only happily attempt to keep up! So it's the perfect time to set up camp in your potting shed, a good tip is to make sure your potting compost bag has been standing inside your potting shed for a few days (at least) so that the compost is not quite so chilly when you start setting. This just helps give your seedlings an easier start. However the most important thing to remember is to insure your seedlings have a good all round light source, its why I tend to wait until my greenhouse is warm enough (no heating) before I set seeds. Windowsills are all very well but if your light is limited then you can end up with leggy lanky plants that tend to struggle rather than thrive. March is also the last call for planting tomato seeds, any later and they just won't have enough time to get to maturity. Most gardening guides suggest you can sow courgettes at the end of March (under cover) but I feel that North Norfolk with its Baltic easterly winds means I am much more cautious. Courgette plants especially need to grow quickly and unchecked to make the most productive plants, so they can wait for warmer days.

This month's question is regarding growing chilli plants from seed and when it's best to set them. Sadly I think that for this year that boat has sailed, chillies do need a really long season (even more so than tomato plants) instead I'd recommend getting your young plants from either your local nursery or Simpsons Seeds they have the most amazing collection of chilli seeds, with a good selection available as plants. The best bit? They are gratifyingly analogue so whilst they have a basic website and online shop, you can still get a copy of their old school style seed catalogue, which ensures much happy kitchen garden day dreaming. Good Luck!



Please do also keep the questions coming in. Email us at redmaple@btinternet.com. As ever, the most interesting question will be published next month.

Michelle & Mick McCarter

History Watch - Hempstead Water Mill

Technically Hempstead Water Mill is not in Hempstead at all as the building is actually a few yards to the west of the parish boundary. Because of this, early maps show it as Holt Mill, but to all of us locals it has always been and continues to be Hempstead Mill.

The building has always had a somewhat chequered history which continues to this day. At the time of writing this yet another major refurbishment is taking place.

The mill dates back to 1830 and was built by a Richard Gurney. Locals were not impressed, saying somewhat disparagingly that he had built a barn when there wasn't enough corn to put in it, and a mill that didn't have enough water to run it! There was some truth in this latter statement as, despite there being several mill ponds, the machinery could only work for five hours a day due to lack of water. Because of this wheel power was changed to turbine power in 1905, this being a more efficient method when the amount of water was limited. Later a traction engine ran the mill via a pulley on the side of the building. This pulley can still be seen today.

In 1907 the miller was also a coal merchant and in 1911 a bakery was added, run by the Newell family from 1916 to 1953. They delivered bread to all the surrounding villages, including our



cottage in Baconsthorpe. That Sunblest stuff that followed never tasted as good as Hempstead Mill bread. Maybe the water from the Glaven made Newell's bread taste so lovely.

The mill endured at least two floods. The great flood of August 1912 caused great damage. The upper mill pool was swept away, and much of the road. And I was to witness another flood some 70 years ago when cycling to Holt. There was as great torrent of water rushing across the road into the river on the other side. The sluice gate had broken and all water from the mill pond, complete with large quantities of fish, were escaping down the river. Let's hope the current restoration will be successful and the mill will be back to how it should look.

Arthur Pentney

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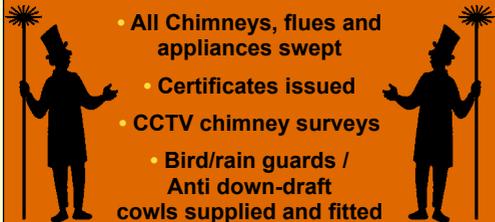
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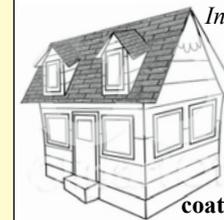
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