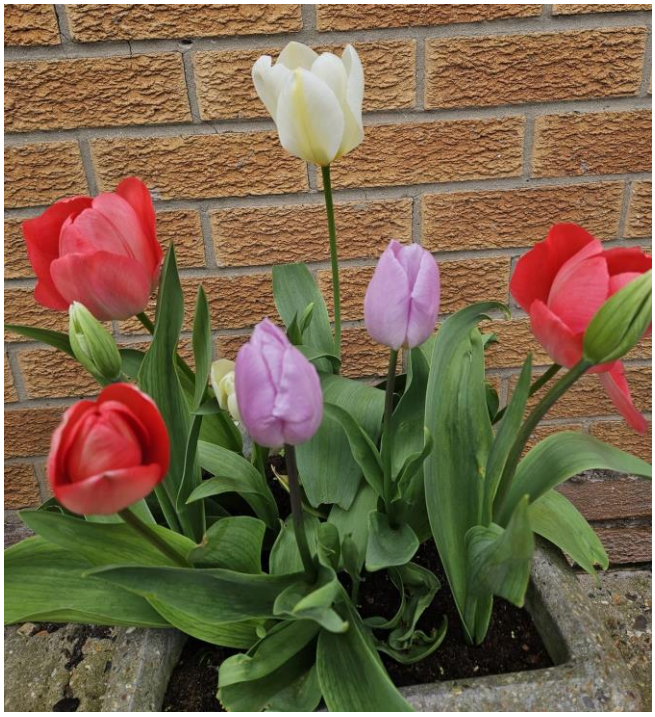
Within Reach



April/May 2024



Courtesy of Lisa Edwards





Thanks go to John and Jane Covill







Courtesy of Lisa Edwards

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From the Editor



Spring has well and truly sprung, for which I am sure we are all thankful for. As I write this, we have blue skies, sunshine and plants galore are coming out to enjoy it. We're also seeing our animals either coming out of hibernation or returning from foreign lands and we thank Nick Acklam for his excellent first edition of Nature in Reach on page 9.

One exciting announcement for all of us who love this village is the formation of the Hythe Restoration Group whose aim is outlined in an article on page 18 of this issue. The first open meeting will take place on Monday 8th April at 7pm in the Village Hall and all villagers are encouraged to come along. Village ventures as significant and inclusive as this one don't come along very often.

And, of course, this is the last issue before Reach Fair comes along on Bank Holiday Monday 6th May. Please have a read through the article by Claire Halpin-McDonald on page 5 of this issue and be prepared to offer help. It doesn't have to be much; every small contribution helps to make the Fair the outstanding event that it is.

The cricket season is about to start with the team's first home game taking place on Sunday 28th April starting at 1.00pm. Ross's article on the subject is on page 6 of this issue. Our cricket ground is another superb village amenity and we have a team to be proud of, so why not go along and enjoy the occasion.

And finally, its good to see an update from Eleanor regarding our church clock and bell both of which are in need of repair. You can see her comments on the subject as part of her article on page 16.

David Parr

Front Cover Picture courtesy of **Paul Avery**



About the Magazine

The purpose of *Within Reach* is to serve the whole village by circulating information and interesting articles free to every household. Additional copies are available at a charge of £3.00. Issues are published bi-monthly covering the months of Feb/Mar, Apr/May, June/July, Aug/Sept, Oct/Nov and Dec/Jan.

Copies of *Within Reach* magazine and its predecessor *Out of Reach* can be found on the village website www.reach-village.co.uk. This magazine (which is fully funded from advertising) is printed by Burwell Print Centre, an excellent social enterprise which trains and supports adults with learning disabilities and provides high quality design and print capabilities.

The Team

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Neighbourhood Watch	Kevin Evans
Reach Riders Group	Sue Cameron
Rosanna's Ramblings	Rosanna Moseley Gore
Then and Now	Chris Patterson
Village Hall	Sue Elliott
Village Matters	Alex de Giorgio-Miller
Wicken Fen	Julia Hammond
Wildlife	Nick Acklam

Village Update



Hurrah – the daffodils are up and my morning dog walk is in daylight again (just!). Now all we need is less rain and less mud and I'll be a happy bunny!

Art Competition for Children

Young people across East Cambridgeshire are being given the opportunity to design artwork for our new fleet of waste and recycling lorries. The competition is being run by East Cambridgeshire District Council to help launch the council's new Love Your Street campaign. Love Your Street is all about making East Cambridgeshire a cleaner, greener place to be by encouraging people to reduce littering, recycle more and report environmental crime such as fly-tipping or graffiti. Keeping streets clean also helps the environment and keeps streets safer, especially for children and animals. Nine designs will be shortlisted and transformed into artwork which will pasted onto the sides of the nine lorries.



The council hopes colourful artwork on the side of lorries can be used to encourage people to:

- not drop litter
- clean up after their dog
- take part in organised litter picks
- pledge to keep the area outside the front of their homes litter free
- report anyone who commits an environmental crime, such as graffiti, fly-tipping or setting fire to commercial waste
- recognise that cleaner, greener streets are safer for humans, especially children and wildlife.

The competition is one of a number of activities being organised as part of the Love Your Street campaign.

Other initiatives include community clean ups, a Love Your Street survey and education packs for schools or community groups. The council is also encouraging residents to become a #LoveYourSteetHero by taking part in local litter picking initiatives.

Designs need to be in landscape format but can be created out of any media. The council is accepting entries until 8pm on Friday 3 May. Entries can be submitted to the council office via post or by emailing comms@eastcambs.gov.uk. Postal entries will need to be addressed to Communications Team and sent to East Cambridgeshire District Council, The Grange, Nutholt Lane, Ely, CB7 4EE. Remember to include your name, age, address and contact telephone number or email. Terms and Conditions and further information can be found at https://www.eastcambs.gov.uk/press/love-your-street-lorry-artwork-competition

Volunteering Opportunities

Could you spare some time to volunteer in East Cambridgeshire? Since the Covid pandemic, the number of people volunteering has seriously declined leaving organisations and charities without the necessary capacity in some cases to support the services required by the most vulnerable across the district. The council has joined a team of organisations to work with Voluntary Community Action East Cambridgeshire (VCAEC) to raise awareness of the importance of volunteering.

If you are interested in becoming involved, please contact Angela Haylock at: angela@vcaec.org.uk or call: 01353 666166.

Keep well and dry!

Alex de Giorgio-Miller

Mobile Library

The mobile library is visits Reach on the 3rd Tuesday of the month from 10.10 to 10.30am. This is route F16 and it parks at the Fair Green Bus Stop. They have a great selection of books for all, free NHS hearing aid batteries and walking stick ferrules. You can join Cambridgeshire Libraries on the bus if you are not already a member.

Village Hall



Thanks go to Tony Fordham who organised with Andrew Trump, the Wine Tasting Evening in February and Matt Marian and Charlotte Cane and Tony who asked the questions, was a huge success and an amazing evening with so much laughter. Thank you to all who made it happen and came and supported the Village Hall.



There will be many appeals for help to put on another REACH FAIR which just would not happen unless people come forward to offer help and the proceeds coming back to the village for community projects.

The Village Hall really needs help ALL the year to continue the work of the committee in running the hall. As a charity we have to have a committee to oversee this work and make decisions and keeps the VH open and functioning, many people over the years have made huge contributions to this building being enjoyed and well used but without that precious input the VH will not function. We are a small committee of 6 and only meet every other month and we need some new ideas to go forward and help plan the new alternative energy needof the VH. Having been involved with the VH for so long and seen what has been achieved with great volunteers to keep it open and thriving can you consider joining us, please give me a ring Sue Elliott Hon Sec 742268

Thanks to Natasha Bridgeman

Many of you will know Natasha who has been a long-standing member of the Village Hall Committee, serving in the critical role of bookings manager.

Due to family commitments – including being mother to four daughters under the age of 16 – Natasha has decided to step down from this role.

Her efficient and effective support for the village hall has been outstanding and the committee would have been quite lost without her.

So, on behalf of the committee – indeed on behalf of the whole village – thank you Tash, for all the time, energy and thought you have put into helping preserve, run and improve this vital village asset.

David Thomas

From David Thomas

Chair of the VH Committee

As a result of Tash stepping down, the VH Committee is urgently seeking one or more people to share the support to the village and this important village amenity by joining the committee to help manage bookings. This is mostly automated through the Hall Master Booking system but does require some oversight. If you are interested and would like more details please speak to Tash or one of the committee members.

CentrePeace

Tuesday 10 - 12.30
Wednesday 2 - 4
Thursday 10 - 12.30
Friday 10 - 12.30
Saturday 10 - 12.30

CentrePeace is run by volunteers and supported by our churches. Opening times may be extended as more volunteers feel able to come forward.
If you wish to volunteer, please get in touch with Hazel Williams (743897), even if you have worked in the shop in the past.

The countdown is underway for Reach Fair on Bank Holiday Monday 6th May 2024

Check out the website at www.reachfair.org.uk.html to see who will be attending.

Our musicians are Mark Stevens and Matt Newman and The Numbers. Jezo will be giving a magic performance and Performance Without Limits are sure to delight us once again. The incredible Artisan and Craft Stalls will be on the Top Field and our own Dan Marsh of the Dyke's End will be running the Beer Tent.

This year we will have a new village stall and it will be a Tombola Stall. In addition to our usual requests, we will be collecting prizes (new or very nearly new items) for this stall. Thank you.

We have been delighted and inspired by the support Reach villagers give to the Fair. You will be familiar with our requests: we require cakes (contact Alex de Giorgio-Miller); salads (Cris Fletcher); scones for the cream teas in the church (Pat Chalmers: administrator@stmarysburwell.org.uk), books (Charles Moseley); and tombola prizes and bottles (Alex de Giorgio-Miller and Claire Halpin).

We're looking for help on the village stalls and car park, and assistance to set up the Fair and clear away after the event.

Collections for the new Tombola Stall and the Bottle Stall will take place early evening the week commencing Monday 15 April. Prizes should be new or very nearly new items and bottles may be alcoholic or non-alcoholic. Thank you.

Don't forget Quiz Night on Sunday 5th May at 7.30pm in the Village Hall, with Ross Clark as our ever popular Quiz Master.

Road Closure

Reach Fair will be held on Bank Holiday Monday 6th May 2024. Please remember that on Fair Day Swaffham Road, Fair Green and Burwell Road will be closed to traffic from 10am to 5.30pm. This closure applies to all vehicles except authorised vehicles. If you require a Car Pass please contact Claire Halpin. All cars should be removed from these roads to the car park before 10am for safety reasons. Thank you. A controlled one-way system will operate on Burwell Road giving access to the Reach Fair car park between the above times.



Also please note, a significant no waiting area on the approach roads (Weirs Drove and Reach Road, Burwell) to the Fair has been introduced. There will be no parking on these roads.

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Oliver Rausch 48 Great Lane
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Claire Halpin-McDonald

Reach Riders



Sadly, the arena has had to be closed for the past few weeks due to being waterlogged but hopefully some dry weather will ensure and we will be back in action soon.

Membership for the year is now due at a cost of £35. Everyone will need to complete a new membership form and please don't use the old bank details!

On a more social note, we have a talk coming up from Lucy Grieve - a high profile vet and Imogen Trump, our local vet physio.



How to keep your horse healthy

Thursday 25 April 2024

7.00pm, Speakers commence 7.30pm

Village Hall, Reach CB25 0JD

SPEAKERS

Lucy Grieve (Equine Vet and Projects Officer at BEVA)

Imogen Trump (Reach Veterinary Physiotherapy)

PLUS INFORMATION STANDS AND A RAFFLE

Tickets: £8 RRG members, £10 non-members, includes a glass of wine

50% of ticket sales to World Horse Welfare

Tickets (to be purchased in advance of the evening)

Contact Helen Oliver 07763 201786 / helenoliver01@btinternet.com

Sue Cameron

Cricket Report

No cricket yet, but we are gearing up for another season.

As ever, we are always looking to welcome new players of any standard. We're a very mixed ability XI, so don't worry if you have never played before, some of us look as if we've never played before either.

We are still looking forward to hosting a women's game, if we can get enough interest. There is a chance to play this with a softer ball. So please do get in contact if you would be interested, at rossjclark@aol.com.

Even if you don't want to play, you could always come down and watch. We are always to keen to welcome spectators down at the 24Acres field.

Home Fixtures - April/May 2024

Sunday 28 April 1.00pm
Teluga Association of Cambridge

Sunday 5 May 1.00pm
Barrow

Wednesday 8 May 6.00pm
Wratting Lions

Sunday 12 May 1.00pm
Sharks

Sunday 19 May 1.00pm
Histon

Wednesday 29 May 6.30 pm
Cam Kerala

Ross Clark

Rosanna's Ramblings



Of course, this starts with a dog walk. Or more accurately, given the subject of my last Ramblings, a slipping and sliding slow progress around Reach Wood, hoping against forlorn hope that I wouldn't fall into the mud – again. The date was 11 Marcha and said slow progress enabled me to notice my surroundings more accurately than if I had been charging ahead at speed.

What I saw everywhere were tree branches in various stages of coming into leaf – some just a thought, still, as it were … a swollen bud with a sense of incipient greenness. Some much further ahead – bright miniature leaves braving the endless rain. And there was birdsong including, sadly, my nemesis species the wood pigeon. And I thought to myself, "Well, I have to acknowledge that it is now, actually, spring". The acupuncturist in me does not decide it's spring on 1 March, like the weather forecasters do, as if a switch gets flicked. It depends on what's actually happening in nature, one daffodil definitely doesn't make a spring in my world. The light levels start increasing well before the soil starts to dry out (though, frankly, will that even happen this year?). There needs to be a real feeling that winter is definitely gone, so that a delayed spring feels rather like an unseasonably chilly spring that has actually got going. Not sure if that will make sense to you, but I know what I mean!

Anyway, having decided it was spring, my thoughts turned to the trees around me, how differently the species get going. Some early to leaf, some late. Some blossoming first before leaves, some the other way round. And thinking about trees always makes me think of my beloved Charles, venerable oak or gnarled hawthorn that he is. And my first thought about him and trees and my ramblings was that, one day, if he were to die before me, I would write a Rambling for the magazine about Charles and the Trees of Reach because, dear reader, trees have been so important to him and he has been so important to the trees. And then I thought, why wait until a day when I might be too sad to write what should be a celebratory piece?

So here it is.

Charles and his late first wife Jenny moved to Reach in 1963. A few current Reach residents will know this, but most readers won't, that the village and its surrounds were virtually tree-less. Hard to believe, given our bosky wood, the tree-filled gardens, the tree-lined approaches to the village.

But, as Charles tells me, the attitude to trees then was that they took up valuable space that could be used for growing crops, or food in the gardens. Some fruit trees were useful, but other than that, they were despised and rejected. The winds had nothing to break them and when a fen blow happened, there was nothing to stop the topsoil travelling for miles. It must have been tough in the winters, what with the mud AND the wind!

Remembering his childhood distress, up in Lancashire, when a whole line of trees on the edge of his village were cut down for no reason, Charles began a secretive campaign to plant trees wherever and whenever he could. A likely sapling in an inauspicious location would be dug up and replanted behind a hedge somewhere where it might go unnoticed until it had grown to be a proper tree that might be allowed to stay. They weren't always allowed to stay, though. Sometimes he would find his plantings had been pulled up overnight. But he persevered, filling his garden with many trees, looking after their babies and taking them to new locations when they were ready to go out into the world.

I once asked him how many trees he thought he had planted in Reach and then sat back amazed as he started recalling them one by one, tens by tens, well over a hundred of them. The ones that have thrived to grow into magnificence like the spectacular spreading oak tree by the river as you head into the pocket park (and its smaller sibling that seems contented to live in its shade). The ones that Charles planted in the spinney on Barston Drove on the right as you head towards Swaffham Prior, fourteen of them, now big mature trees. He goes to talk to those trees from time to time and can tell tales of the ones damaged by, shall we say, traveller kids who stripped their barks … but who managed to survive against the odds.





They don't exactly all have names, but they certainly have identities. They also haven't been just left to their own devices, they've been tended and nurtured and moved to better locations if they haven't been thriving. They've been respected and appreciated, mourned when they've died and sawn up with gratitude for firewood.

A couple of months ago, Charles got some chaps in to cut down an old plum tree at the bottom of the garden which was dying. This same tree, decades ago, had started leaning heavily over the river as the bank was slipping and he and his son had set it back upright using ropes and given it a new lease of life. It wasn't a tasty cropping plum tree, but it was an individual. And, in the same way as he has nurtured young human in their academic and personal lives, so too with the trees. I suspect he'd say they were people, really, those trees.

The other day, while sitting in the living room having a cup of tea together and looking out across the garden, he suddenly said, "Isn't it lovely how that young sycamore and young ash by the dock perfectly frame the sycamore across the drove?"



He'd planted them all and his eyes had the look of the proud grandfather. The ash is doubtless doomed, but he still plants them because the die-back doesn't affect young trees and you never know, one might turn out to be disease-resistant and hold the key to saving future generations. (Rather like the ancient elm tree that has survived in the garden of Queens' College, Cambridge – a tree he showed me with delight the first time we ever took a walk together).

So, next time you walk in Reach Wood (Charles reckons he planted at least a hundred saplings that weekend the village got together to create it), next time you enjoy a tree-filled view on a walk, just know how happy your happiness makes my marvellous man.

Rosanna Moseley Gore

Cambridge Light Opera

Formerly Swaffham Bulbeck Summer Theatre, Cambridgeshire Light Opera is opening a new chapter as a friendly, amateur light opera group based in East Cambridgeshire. We perform to a high standard and are keen to involve all members of the community who share a love of or would like to learn more about light opera and operetta. We perform regular charitable concerts and an annual staged production in the summer in a local venue. Rehearsals take place in Swaffham Bulbeck.

Our aim is to support and develop light opera and operetta, particularly the works of Gilbert & Sullivan, through modern performances but grounded in the best traditions. We seek to further the appreciation of the wonderful funny, satirical, poignant and entertaining world of light opera in a way that is relatable and easily accessible to all.

Iolanthe - The Plot

Iolanthe, a fairy, commits the ultimate crime by marrying a mortal and is banished from fairyland. Twenty-five years later and her illicit half-human, half-fairy son (a fairy from the waist upwards) now wishes to marry a mortal – but it's a crime against fairy law. Having fallen foul of this law herself, Iolanthe sets out to help her son; and obtain a pardon for herself from the Fairy Queen.

Strephon loves Phyllis, a ward of the Lord Chancellor who is not keen on the young lovers' proposed marriage. Chaos ensues driven by misunderstanding, snobbery, misdirected jealousy, a bit of romance and a healthy satirical dose of poking fun at the law, parliament and the establishment, including a fairy takeover of the House of Lords. All ends happily, as always - with Lords and Fairies, Peers and Peris, united.

See Adverts page 16 for Booking details

Bottisham and Burwell Photographic Club

We were treated to a great Zoom presentation by Glenys Garnett BA(Hons) RPS who encouraged us to 'Get Creative'. Glenys is a visual artist and uses photography as her primary medium to realise her creative ideas around nature and the natural environment. Glenys will visit us again next year to give her next instalment 'Developing a Creative Approach'.

The highlight of our year so far was a print lecture by Clive Tanner FRPS MPAGB APAGB AWPF visiting us from Kent. He talked about church interiors which gained him a prestigious Master Award. Church interiors is not usually a popular subject as photographers tend to think the subject is boring, but Clive showed us that it is far from boring and with research and the right camera equipment and technique it can create stunning images.

On the 24th February 2024 the club took part in the St Ives Interprint Competition held in The Free Church, St Ives. Each club submits 6 prints which are displayed in an Exhibition during the day and are judged in the evening by a guest judge. Out of 23 clubs we came a commendable 13th, with one of our members, Jim Bennett, scoring a top mark. We also took part in a Print Championship held by our East Anglian Federation in which we came 11th out of 28 clubs with 171 points, with top spot going to a Peterborough club scoring 192 points.

Our last meeting on 12th March was a Portrait Workshop led by our member John Wilderspin who set up studio lighting and arranged a model for the evening. Members always enjoy these practical sessions as it gives first hand a chance to learn portraiture techniques and to discuss their ideas and equipment with our members. Our next meeting is a Zoom presentation by a well known photography from Ipswich, Roger Hance FRPS AFIAP DPAGB BPE5, entitled 'All the Gear No idea'. Roger will include all sorts of ideas and methods for taking all manner or images, from wildlife, sport, music/band photography and much more.

We meet Tuesday evening from 7.30 pm to 9.30 pm at Swaffham Prior Village Hall (except the third Tuesday in the month which is a Zoom meeting) and new members are always welcome. Visitors can attend a lecture for a small entrance fee of £4.00, which includes refreshments. Our annual subscriptions are £55.00 for Adults, £30.00 for Students, plus a weekly attendance fee of £1, which includes refreshments. If you feel you would like to join us, please get in touch with our Secretary, Debra Bennett for further information (secretary.bandbpc@gmail.com 07722 388770 or you can just turn up to enjoy one of our lectures.

Daphne Hanson DPAGB HonPAGB

Chairman

Nature in Reach



It's This is my first report and I am pleased to be continuing the excellent work of my predecessors, Cath and Joss. It is great to share the joy that many villagers experience in observing the natural world around us. For some of us, the sights, sounds and rhythms of the natural world really do help in getting through the winter months.

I also hope that, over time, the ongoing collection and recording of sightings in and around Reach will make a small contribution to understanding how the natural world is adapting to pressures of climate change and human activity. For many years this magazine has recorded first swallows, swifts and cuckoos of spring. There is variability in the dates and I can't yet see a trend but, provided we keep recording our sightings, we are producing something useful for researchers of the future. Perhaps we should add chiffchaffs to our arrivals list as they are our first spring migrant (they are here already) and their call makes them easy to spot.

Over the years the sightings in this magazine show that the natural world is dynamic. One example is the now regular sightings of red kites over Reach. A decade ago there were none. Ron Greenhill also mentions that a generation or so ago there were no jackdaws in the village. Now we have a sizeable and noisy presence.

Reach Nature Recovery Plan

In Cambridgeshire the natural environment has struggled to cope with decades of intensive farming, especially wetland clearance and deep drainage. Despite pockets of international importance, Cambridgeshire has one of the lowest levels of land designated for nature in the country.

However, whilst the parish of Reach is small (at just over 1,000 acres, one of the smallest in England) we have biodiversity levels above the average for the county. In part this is because we sit at the junction of two landscape types - those of chalk and fen. We also benefit from the presence of the Devil's Dyke Site of Special Scientific Interest. Its semi-natural dry chalk grassland and scrub includes nationally significant species and boosts local biodiversity. The extensively managed areas of the Wicken Vision also helps.

The community of Reach is also making a positive contribution and has an excellent track record of preserving and improving the biodiversity of our neighbourhood by creating nature-rich habitats.

Obvious examples are the planting of Reach Wood in 1994 and the 24Acres Wood in 2013. However, whilst Reach is a reasonably good place for nature, there is plenty of scope for improvement.

The PC has recently detailed its aspirations in a Nature Recovery Plan which can be found at: http://www.reach-village.co.uk/NATURE%20RECOVERY%20PLAN%20-%20JANUARY%202024.pdf .

The Plan lays out a range of opportunities for improvement. The PC is keen to see and support proposals from villagers to turn these aspirations into reality.

Sightings Log

I begin the log by noting that the country has had its wettest winter in 130 years and the soggiest February on record. Old springs are re-emerging around the village and on Tubney Fen standing water outlines the courses of pre-agricultural rivers (see photo).



The various temporary ponds and scrapes attract a wide range of gulls and wildfowl. It has also been a remarkably mild season. The impact on local wildlife is not yet clear but it is almost certainly less damaging than a harsh winter.

Joss observes that at dawn on most mornings of this period jackdaws and crows visit her Great Lane garden. Noisily they raid her bird feeders before moving on.

31 January: I watch 80 or so swans on newly ploughed fen soil by Burwell Fen. Their white plumage stands proud against a black backdrop. The swans are too far away for firm identification. Dafila has suggested that the swans were probably whoopers in view of the number. The sightings of swans in large numbers in our neighbourhood seems down on recent winters. What remains in the fields of the previous year's crop seems to be a factor in encouraging large groups - sugar beet debris appears particularly attractive to swans. Later in the day, a red kite hangs over the village for ten minutes.

1 February: Claire and I watch a beige-coloured barn owl hunting at length by the tall hedge at the base of the west bank of Reach Lode.

Although without binoculars, from the bank top we are close enough to see its heart shaped face in detail. It drops to the ground on two occasions but emerges without prey. Shortly afterwards we disentangle a muntjac fawn trapped in the wire fence at the base of the same hedge. In the abstract I dislike these alien invaders for the damage that they do but, faced with a creature in distress, we still rush to its aid.

Joss sees countless earthworms on the surface of her waterlogged field in Great Lane. She also notes groups of roe deer in village fields and the common sight of muntjac deer on tracks and in gardens. The muntjac boldly navigate Great Lane in daylight. Joss also observes grey squirrels active and chattering in Reach Wood and comments that midges and flies are evident following the warm, wet weather.

Ron mentions several goldfinch nests are visible in the Greenhill garden. Ron and Penny regularly see red kites and buzzards from their garden.

Joss reports her participation in the RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch: a good variety of birds but low numbers of each: robins, wren, house sparrows, dunnocks, starling, blackbirds, blue, great and long-tailed tits, woodpigeons, collared doves, reed buntings and a blackcap.

9 February: Hilary Fielding notes a great spotted woodpecker on her bird feeders on Little Fen Drove.

10 February: A corn bunting perches on a fence post on Tubney Fen. These birds were once common in arable areas of the UK but have gone into steep decline due to changes in farming practice and are now red listed. Locally it is likely to benefit from the National Trust's plans to improve the environment for turtle doves on land by the 24Acres.

16 February: I disturb a large flock of wood pigeon feasting on ivy berries in the small clunch pit by Joss's donkey paddock. The sound of their wings is remarkably loud and reminds me of the noise of a bonfire as the flames take hold.

20 February: I watch four shelduck fly over Reach Lode towards Tubney Mere. The body of a wood pigeon lies in the field next to the 24Acres. It looks to be the victim of a peregrine strike. The breast has been plucked and the meat removed with surgical precision. The crop has been opened to reveal bright green wheat shoots and germinating wheat grains. Otherwise the bird is untouched.

21 February: Joss is surprised to see a sparrowhawk perched on her garden bird bath, vivid orange breast feathers. She also reports the presence of field mice and brown rats at her field. She comments that the latter can forage up to a mile each night in search of food but put down roots if a permanent source is found.

She reports that rats have developed a technique of only eating the heart and liver of the common toad to avoid a poison which toads secrete through skin.

Joss spots two kestrels near Reach Wood.

29 February: Joss rescues a bumblebee from the piece of straw she places in water buckets at her field. At the same location she records pied wagtails, robins, wrens, crows, magpies and a dead rabbit by the muckheap with no visible injuries.

3 March: I inadvertently uncover a juvenile smooth newt, with a striking orange underside, whilst clearing leaves from the base of a garden wall (see photo). It is sluggish and perhaps barely out of hibernation. It is quickly returned to a place of safety but this is a lesson for me on the wildlife value of untidy patches in the garden.



7 March: Joss notes that a change of seed in her garden feeders attracts reed buntings. They dominate the ever decreasing number of house sparrows.

Julia Rogers mentioned skylarks in her field near Tubney Fen. Their lovely song heralds spring's arrival.

9 March: Joss sees two yellow brimstone butterflies in Reach Wood and ladybirds in her garden.

9 March: Hilary sees a red tailed kite from her stables, Little Fen Drove and, on 12 March, three herons 'flying in convoy calling to each other'.

10 March: Joss spots brown hares running in outlying village fields.

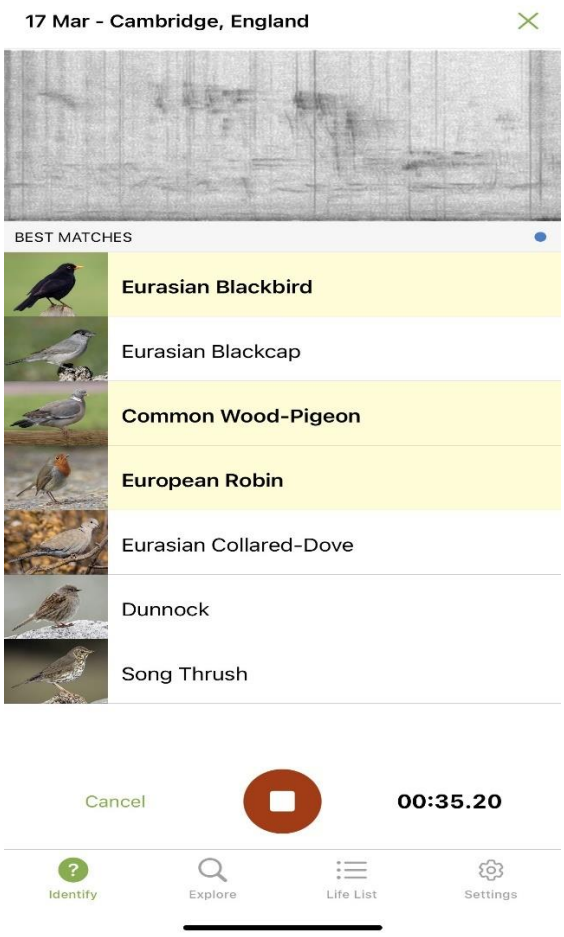
11 March: Joss glimpses a fox at dusk in the fen, its green-yellow eyes shine, the pupils are vertically slit, unusual for the dog family.

11 March: I get very close to a male yellowhammer calling from a hawthorn at the top of the 24 Acres. Its plumage is staggeringly bright in otherwise bleached surroundings. Nationally this bunting is classed as endangered although the numbers around us seem to be holding up.

In mid March Jonathan Latchford reports the presence of at least three water vole burrows in the Catchwater bank behind his house.

15 March: An oystercatcher circles the flooded scrapes by the cycle bridge. It is a strong and distinctive cry which I hear long before I actually see the bird.

16 March: David Parr sees 2 buzzards from his garden, identified by the use of the "Merlin" app on his Apple iPhone which he highly recommends to villagers. Simply go to the App Store and download it for free. When you activate the app, it listens out for birdsong, for as long as you want it to and tells you what birds it is hearing (see image below).



On reflecting on the sightings of the period Joss is prompted to share the following quote 'If you love wildlife, neither despair nor wild optimism much help - it's about doing what you can to make things a little better'. (Simon Barnes On The Marsh).

Nick Acklam

Wicken Fen



Courtesy of Mike Selby

With the arrival of spring, we're enjoying being greeted by blossom and daffodils on the walk down the lane to Wicken Fen. The first few brimstone butterflies have been spotted and despite the rainy weather, March has brought lots of joy with the birth of new Konik foals. Fen Cottage is now open and our cycle hire is open daily from 10am. If you'd like to enjoy a peaceful boat trip along Wicken Lode, please call us in advance on 01353 720274 to book your space on the Mayfly.

We recently enjoyed welcoming members of the community to an archaeology drop-in day at Wicken Fen where we washed recent finds from test pits at Reach 24. We were joined by archaeologists from the National Trust and Oxford Archaeology as well as our community archaeology volunteers. This was the final public event in our 3-year Footprints community project funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund and supported by National Lottery players.

Thank you to everyone who has attended Footprints events over the last three years – we've thoroughly enjoyed seeing more people engage with and enjoy the space we care for at Wicken Fen. Of course, our community work doesn't stop here – far from it! We look forward to running more community events, walks and workshops at Wicken Fen throughout the year.

Next up, it's time for **Easter at Wicken Fen**. We'll have our Easter Adventures trail along the boardwalk with lots of fun for all the family from **23 March to 14 April**. We're also running some art and craft workshops that you can book for both children and adults: a mixed media Highland Cow workshop on 3 and 11 April as well as a watercolour workshop on Friday 5 April called Painting the Fens.

In May, we are looking forward to celebrating our **125th anniversary at Wicken Fen** as well as 25 years of the Wicken Fen Vision Project. You are warmly invited to join us on **Saturday 4 May** for a community day. There will be a butterfly, birdsong and deep listening walk, some pond-dipping, pizza in the evening and the opportunity to meet some bird ringers and local moth recorders. Please head to our website nearer the time for more event details and timings. We hope to see you there!

Throughout the summer from May to August, we will have some **evening openings** – every Thursday evening the visitor centre and boardwalk will be open until 8pm and food and drink will be available. We will have a **dusk chorus walk on 16 May** and plenty of activities during May half term including pond dipping, cuckoo clock workshops and family book and build workshops with everyone's favourite building bricks! Please visit our website for more information and further evening opening times throughout May.

Issy Vetoshkina

Senior Communications and Marketing Officer

Anglesey Abbey



Courtesy of the National Trust/Issy Vetoshkina

The gardens at Anglesey Abbey are bursting with colour and our specialist daffodil tours are well underway, continuing until 21 April. You're welcome to come and join one of our knowledgeable garden guides if you'd like to find out more about the 40+ varieties across the estate. Among the swathes of daffodils, we've been treated to a delightful display of hellebores, hyacinths, scillas and now tulips so far this spring.

We're super excited about Easter at Anglesey Abbey this year and are delighted to be hosting free face-painting, bubble performances and volunteer-led art and craft activities as well as our fun-packed Easter Adventures trail for all the family. The trail runs from **29 March to 14 April** and includes welly wanging, egg and spoon races, a GIANT bird box, lots of interactive stations and a chocolate egg at the end. And as usual, little legs can enjoy climbing the treehouse and exploring the new den building area and play equipment. Please head to our website for more details and timings for the other activities which will be on different days throughout the school holidays.

And don't forget to look out for the beautiful blossom when you're next visiting us. The heritage orchard, planted in 2018 with 16 heritage varieties of plum, apple, pear and gages will come into blossom during April, surrounding an 80-year-old Bramley seedling apple tree. We will be celebrating the Festival of Blossom with some blossom-inspired poetry, music and even an origami making tent making an appearance **from 20 to 27 April** – do drop by to engage with nature this springtime.

We have a fun week of activities lined up for May half-term. For those with an interest in science and animals, come and join us for some interactive sessions with real animals and creepy crawlies, delivered by **ZooLab**. Please check our website nearer the time for more details.

We're also delighted to announce that **The Lord Chamberlain's Men** are coming to Anglesey Abbey this summer to perform Shakespeare's **HAMLET**. Join us for an evening of outdoor theatre on **Saturday 17 August**. Tickets are on sale now.

Issy Vetoshkina

Senior Communications and Marketing Officer



Burwell Surgery Patient Participation Group

WHY VACCINATION MATTERS

Vaccination has been an increasingly important part of the care that Burwell Surgery provides. This includes childhood vaccinations but also Flu vaccinations and more recently Covid jabs. Burwell Surgery has very high vaccination rates generally, below you see the rates over the last 12 months:

Completed 3 doses of Diptheria Tetanus and pertussis by 8 months	97.6%
First MMR given at 12 months	93.5%
Second MMR given preschool	94.3%
Eligible >80 year olds and shingles	94.9%

Despite this there is still work to be done. For example, the Surgery have identified 61 patients under the age of 15 who have an incomplete course of MMR and 120 from the ages of 16 to 29 years.

There are a number of reasons why some members of the community might have concerns about vaccine safety, so members of the PPG have asked the Surgery to respond to a range of questions on the subject.

Aren't vaccine-preventable diseases just part of life? Is it not better to have the disease than become immune through vaccines?

Because of the effectiveness of vaccinations, we have perhaps forgotten how much trouble can be caused by the diseases that we vaccinate against. At the time of writing, there is particular concern regarding the current measles outbreak with more than 200 cases in London, the West Midlands and the Humber. Measles typically causes an unpleasant illness from which most children fully recover. However, one in 15 children can develop more serious complications from measles (e.g. ear and chest infections, fits, diarrhoea and brain infections). These symptoms and complications are all almost entirely preventable with 2 doses of vaccination.

Why should I vaccinate my child? Aren't most of the other children around them are already immune?

There is a benefit to the individual child by being protected by vaccination, but also to others by preventing spread (so called 'herd immunity'). With measles it is quite hard to achieve herd immunity because the virus is very contagious. It is therefore recommended that vaccination rates should be at 90 to 95% to achieve this.

Will a vaccine give me or my child the disease it's designed to prevent?

10% of children will get a high temperature 6-12 days after an MMR vaccination. In children with a normal immune system, you will not get measles from a vaccination.

A tiny percentage of children with severe immune deficiency can get a measles-like illness. These children should not be vaccinated with MMR.

Are there microchips in vaccines?

No

Will vaccines alter my or my child's DNA?

No

Do childhood vaccines cause autism and sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS)?

No they don't. There was a scare about autism in the late 1990's, however, there is no credible evidence to support the link between MMR and autism. MMR vaccination has been used around the world effectively for 30 years. Over 500 million doses have been given in over 100 countries. Numerous studies have failed to find a link between MMR and autism.

There is no evidence that any vaccination causes Sudden Infant Death syndrome. In the case of MMR the first dose is given at about 12 months of age which is older than most SIDS cases.

I'm in an older or vulnerable age group and I've already had flu or COVID-19 and recovered. Why should I continue to have these vaccinations when they're offered to me?

Unfortunately, there are many different influenza viruses and having had an infection will not give you much protection against many of the other virus strains. A flu vaccination will give you protection against the 3-4 viral strains that have been predicted to be circulating over a particular winter. Vaccination is generally thought to lower the likelihood of getting flu by about 40-60% and make the symptoms less severe if you get flu.

As regards Covid vaccination, the protection that you get both from an infection or from a vaccination, wanes over time. The protection is highest for the 12 weeks following vaccination and drops significantly by 6 months. It is therefore a good idea to have any booster that you are offered. It may not prevent Covid infection but is likely to significantly reduce the severity of any infection.

You will be able to find an immunisation schedule online if you wish to review this. If you are concerned that your child has missed any immunisations the Surgery can be contacted, ideally on AskmyGP and they would be very happy to arrange these for you.

The next meeting of the Burwell Surgery Patient Participation Group is at 6.30pm on 16th April 2024. If you would be interested in finding out more about the group and helping to support Burwell Surgery to give their patients the best service that they can then please contact admin.burwellsurgery@nhs.net.

Colin Warnock

Reach for the Future
The Reach Neighbourhood Plan

I am pleased to report that the Reach Neighbourhood Plan was approved by the village at referendum on 1 February. Nearly 60 percent of the electorate voted - an extremely high level of engagement for votes of this kind. Elsewhere in the district, neighbourhood plans have been approved on a turnout of less than 20%. In our referendum two thirds of voters (66%) supported the Plan.

Our Plan has now been formally adopted by ECDC as part of its district Development Plan. The vote by District Councillors to adopt Reach's plan was unanimous and it was clear how strongly all shades of political opinion support the neighbourhood planning process. Reach is the seventh community in East Cambridgeshire to have a Neighbourhood Plan adopted.

Our Plan, in its adopted form, can be viewed here https://www.eastcambs.gov.uk/sites/default/files/REACH%20Neighbourhood%20Plan%20Made%20Version%20February%202024.pdf.

Adoption of the Plan has already brought benefits to our village through enhanced protection of our local green spaces, some of which, such as the Drying Green, were previously entirely unprotected. Even Fair Green is better protected than it was.

The Plan also delivers a detailed summary of those things that make Reach a special place to live and which residents were very clear they wished to protect. Such things are largely absent from ECDC's Local Plan but must now be considered in any future planning application.

The Plan also gives the village a firm foundation on which to seek the improvements that many villagers said they wanted, such as improvements to biodiversity, the creation of traffic free routes to Burwell and Swaffham Prior and the removal of the redundant sewage works and restoration of the Hythe.

The Parish Council has decided to prioritise the latter objective and has set up a working group in preparation for negotiation with Anglian Water which owns the redundant sewage works. The working group will be holding an open meeting on Monday 8 April to capture in detail what the village wants on the site, accepting that this might evolve as the nature and extent of the land we are working with becomes clearer.

Catherine Gibson

Food Focus

Snacking



I can be a big snacker so I was interested to research if it is possible to be a healthy snacker and if yes – how? Unsurprisingly people who snack on sugary, starchy and processed snacks die younger…so it is worth exploring the science and recalling it when that pack of Doritos is tempting you.

Clearly, when you snack has an impact long term on your health too, with those people snacking, even on healthy things, after 9pm having much worse outcomes. In terms of blood sugar, sweet or starchy snacks of any sort will raise your blood sugar significantly if you eat them without first having had some sort of fibre.

Well known snack options:

- Apple, carrot, cucumber alone/with peanut butter/houmous
- A handful of unsalted/unprocessed nuts and or seeds (almonds are particularly good)
- Some chunks of cheese (great with apple or banana or with some simple crackers)
- Fruit
- Half an avocado
- Prepare some sunflower seeds toasted in a bit of soya sauce
- A hard boiled egg
- Yogurt or kefir with nuts and seeds

Now some exotic sounding snacks I am tempted to try:

Yogurt Bark

Ingredients

- 500g/1lb 2oz yoghurt, low-fat Greek, coconut, soya or thick kefir

For the berry and pistachio topping

- 150g/5½oz frozen mixed berries
- 30g/1oz pistachios, roughly chopped
- 1 tbsp honey or maple syrup

For the date and orange topping

- 100g/3½oz chopped pitted dates
- 25g/1oz almonds, roughly chopped
- 1 orange, finely grated zest only

For the fig and raspberry topping

- 3 figs, roughly chopped
- 150g/5½oz raspberries
- pinch ground cinnamon

Method

1. Line a large baking tray with greaseproof paper and spread the yoghurt over the paper in an even layer.
2. Add your chosen toppings, distributing them evenly over the yoghurt. Freeze for 2 hours or until solid.
3. Carefully peel away the paper, then break the yoghurt into shards and place in a freezer bag. Seal and keep frozen for up to 3 months.

Curry and Lime Spiced Popcorn

Ingredients

- ½ tsp cumin seeds
- 2 tsp light olive oil
- 45g/1½oz popping corn
- 1 tsp mild curry powder
- ¼ tsp ground cinnamon
- ¼ tsp finely grated lime zest
- pinch sea salt

Method

Place a lidded saucepan over a medium heat. Lightly toast the cumin seeds for 1–2 minutes, then tip into a bowl, add the oil and popping corn to the pan and stir well. Cover with the lid and cook for a few minutes, shaking the pan every few seconds, until the corn starts to pop. Keep shaking constantly while popping to avoid burning the corn.

Mix together the toasted cumin seeds, curry powder, cinnamon and lime zest. Sprinkle the seasoning and a little sea salt over the popcorn and serve immediately.

Chilli & garlic spiced kale crisps (actually not tempted by this one)

Ingredients

- ½ tsp dried chilli flakes
- 1 tsp garlic granules
- ¼ tsp sea salt
- 250g/9oz curly kale, leaves picked from stems, washed and dried
- 1 tbsp light olive oil

Method

1. Preheat the oven to 120C/100C Fan/Gas ½ and line two large baking trays with baking paper.
2. Mix together the chilli, garlic granules and sea salt.
3. Put the kale in a large bowl and massage the oil into the leaves. Toss with the seasoning.
4. Spread the leaves out in a single layer on two large baking trays. Bake for 20 minutes, turning the trays halfway through cooking.
5. Lift the leaves from the baking paper using a spatula. Return the trays to the oven, turn off the heat and leave for 12–15 minutes, or until crisp.

Catherine Gibson

Letter from the Vicarage



Easter lasts an awful lot longer than the Easter eggs usually do! The season of Easter begins on Easter Day and lasts 50 days, lasting until what used to be called Whitsun. We sometimes even talk about Christians being Easter people, which doesn't mean egg-shaped! For me, that means being shaped by hope – hope of resurrection, of new life.

At this time of year, we have our annual meeting and it's a time to look back on the past year and for me, it will be the 13th anniversary of coming to Burwell and Reach as vicar. As I look back, there has been a huge amount of change, in the world, in family life, in the church, but we're still here, sharing our Easter shaped hope.

Over the next few months, we hope to be doing more outdoors, with activities for children and families. We were delighted to receive Silver Eco Church awards for both St Mary's, Burwell and St Etheldreda's in Reach and are working towards a Silver Churchyard Conservation Award for St Mary's. In Reach, now that the building work has been completed, the aim is to create a beautiful, biodiverse garden. All are welcome to visit both churchyards and of course, the churches themselves, which are left open during the daytime. We hope to be serving cream teas in the church again at Reach Fair, so please do come and say hello.

Update on the bell and the clock at St Etheldreda's: we have been trying for many months to secure the services of contractors to finish renovation work on these. There are a limited number of specialist firms and the work required is too small for some to make it worth their while to travel long distances. We have now found someone to come and look at the clock and we hope to update on progress when we can.

To find out more about what's going on at St Etheldreda's in Reach, or St Mary's, Burwell, please see our Facebook pages and website. Most weeks, we aim to livestream our weekly 10am Sunday service on Facebook. Café Church is usually the first Sunday of the month at St Mary's, beginning with refreshments, time to chat and themed activities, followed by a short service. Next dates are April 7th and May 5th. Refresh Café is our group for babies, toddlers and their grown-ups, which meets on Friday mornings at St Mary's from 10.00am, with a simple sandwich lunch from 11.30am.

We offer a very warm welcome to any little ones and their parents/carers and continue during school holidays, welcoming older children as well for these extended sessions. Messy Church has a regular pattern of Sunday afternoon gatherings, and we welcome families with children of all ages who want to have fun, explore faith and share a meal. All Ages, All Welcome.

Please get in touch if you would like more information about these or any of our events or services, including weddings, christenings and baby thanksgivings, or if you would value an opportunity to chat. If you are struggling financially, or know someone who is, the Pop-up Pantry is open every Friday 2.00 – 3.00pm at Burwell Day Centre, in partnership with Ely Foodbank, and some Wednesdays 10.00am – 12.00pm, as advertised.

Revd Canon Dr Eleanor Williams
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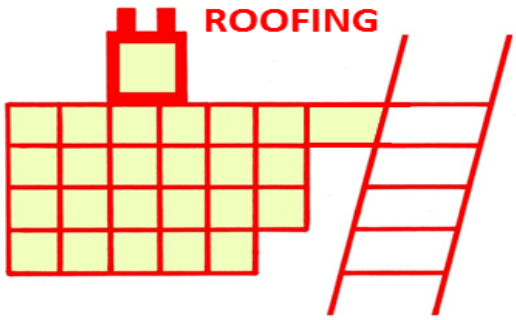

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Tales from a Reach Garden



March is a busy month in the garden in most years, there's a lot of sowing of seeds and planting out to do. Any winter pruning is best carried out before spring starts officially on 21st March. The near incessant rain and persistent gloom this February has given way to yet more rain in March as well as the occasional day of sunshine.

It's during the few sunny days we've had so far that we have been sowing seeds outdoors, plus planting garlic, shallots and onion sets. The weather has been mild though, even chitted potatoes can go in the ground, but our climate is fickle and the weather could still turn cold, so everything that has been sown and planted is covered in fleece to protect from potential frosts. Covering the newly planted onion beds with fleece also has the benefit of preventing blackbirds and robins from pulling up and tossing aside baby onions while searching for worms.

The mild wet weather has also encouraged our native plants to grow in unexpected places, so there is a lot of weeding to do. Luckily, also thanks to the rain, the weeds are relatively easy to dislodge while the soil remains damp and crumbly. Weeding will continue for much of the rest of the year unless we can mulch the borders in good time.

Not all native plants are unwelcome "weeds", native trees (like walnuts and hazels) sown by squirrels and jays can be transplanted and eventually provide much-needed height in the garden and shelter for birds (and more food for squirrels). Not all native flowering plants are unwelcome either, especially at this time of year. The bright yellow flowers of lesser celandine brighten up some of the shadier parts of the garden. Tiny clumps of sweet violets are also welcome in the borders, but none are welcome in the vegetable beds.



Lesser celandine



Sweet violet

There are various ways of dealing with weeds in the vegetable garden. The best method is to grow through dark, opaque fabric ("fabric mulch"). The fabric will allow water to penetrate allowing irrigation of plants while smothering any weeds that have germinated underneath it. This method is particularly useful for beans, cucumbers, courgettes, squashes, tomatoes, peppers and aubergines. The juvenile plants are grown from seed in pots indoors then they are transplanted outside into a prepared planting hole cut into the weed-suppressing fabric.

Other vegetable plants, such as lettuce, spinach, carrots are grown from seed sown directly into prepared soil. They can be sown indoors and then planted out through fabric too, but there is only so much room on a window sill or even polytunnel to do this. Sowing directly is easier, then I thin out the juvenile plants and add the thinnings to salads. The main concern around weeds is that they compete with vegetable plants for nutrients and this is a particular problem for shallow rooted crops like onions and shallots which need to be weeded regularly. Ideally the weeds should be hoed while they are still very small, e.g. when they are just a couple of leaves. However, the hoe has to be kept within the top few millimetres of soil; hoeing any deeper than that risks root damage to the crop.



There are always stinging nettles among the spinach

Green leafy vegetables like lettuce or spinach bulk out when growing and hide a lot of weeds flourishing among them, especially stinging nettles. Richard and I have to remember to wear rubber gloves when picking chard or spinach, we have been stung by nettles lurking among the green leaves. Mulching between the rows of vegetables with compost also helps to suppress weeds and the mulch may also add nutrients.

In addition to the weeds, our broccoli has also benefitted from the mild, wet winter weather. In the winter of 2022-23 our broccoli did not survive being freeze-dried by the prolonged frosts and arctic blasts of icy winds. This year we have been picking purple sprouting broccoli since the middle of February – this is the type of broccoli known as "tenderstem broccoli" in the supermarkets. It is delicious steamed and one of the joys of the vegetable garden so far this year.

To grow purple sprouting broccoli, we sow the seeds in April or May in one of two ways. They can be sown in shallow trays of compost indoors, pricked out when a few leaves high and transferred to larger pots of compost to grow on, prior to planting out when large enough to its final bed. Alternatively, the seeds can be sown outdoors in a seed bed. Then when the plants are about 15cm (6 to 12 inches) high, the best broccoli plants are lifted with root ball and transplanted to another bed – usually one that had been growing broad beans because they finish cropping early. The bed had been covered in weed-suppressing fabric with planting holes cut into it at least 30 cm apart. The broccoli plants have to be well- staked (they grow as tall as me) and they have to be covered in netting to protect them from cabbage white butterflies, curious pigeons and squirrels, hungry deer and ravenous rabbits. Apart from that they're easy to grow!



Heads of purple broccoli ready for picking

Danuta Gibson

Hythe Restoration Group



Villagers will have seen a notice about an open meeting of the newly formed Hythe Restoration Group. I thought it would be helpful to outline the background to the creation of the group and the purpose of the meeting.

A port has existed at Reach certainly from the Saxon period and probably from the Roman period. Its existence has shaped the village and would have been one of the factors that led to the founding of the Fair in 1201. At its commercial height during the medieval period, the port was regionally if not nationally significant.

The central part of the port, the Hythe, is an artificial promontory. Its archaeology is gradually being revealed, but for now remains partially understood. Today the Hythe is dominated by a redundant sewage works belonging to Anglian Water (AW). Its potential for recreation and conservation is not being realised.

It is clear that the Hythe is valued by residents and others. In a residents' survey of February 2020, 78% of those who responded (110), agreed that the Hythe was of 'major cultural and recreational significance to the village' and supported it being granted the protection of Local Green Space (LGS) status. 90% of those who responded (126) supported removal of the sewage works, improved access and more land being given over for recreation and conservation.

The adoption of Reach Neighbourhood Plan in February 2024 means that the Hythe now has protection as an LGS site. In October 2023 the Hythe was also designated a Local Geological Site because its peat sequence and overlying fluvial silt (under the artificial chalk wharves of the port) is of regional significance.

The deposits provide a securely dated record of changing vegetation and depositional environments over the Neolithic to Roman period.

The Parish Council now wishes to restore the Hythe and improve it as an asset for the village and the wider local community. It has set up **a working group which will hold an initial open meeting in the village hall on Monday 8 April at 1900.** Everybody is welcome.

At the meeting the working group will:

1. provide the geological, hydrological, archaeological, historical and cultural background to the Hythe. Dr Oscar Aldred of the Cambridge Archaeological Unit will be present to report on last autumn's dig on the Hythe. He will come with the finds that were made.

2. summarise past efforts to persuade AW to decommission the redundant sewage works and return some of the land it holds on the Hythe to the village

3. seek views about how any land returned by AW to the village should be used - the main purpose of the meeting

4. outline next steps

5. seek to recruit villagers to help with the work.

We hope to see you on 8 April!

Nick Acklam

Know Your Parish Council

Your Councillors are:

Charlotte Cane	Vice Chair
Rebecca Fordham	Councillor
Catherine Gibson	Councillor
Edward Hall	Chair

There are currently 3 vacancies, please contact Susan Bailey if you are interested in being co-opted onto the Parish Council.

Charlotte Cane	District Councillor
John Trapp	District Councillor
Joshua Schumann	County Councillor

Meetings take place in the **Village Hall** on the first **Tuesday** of each month. They start at **7.00pm** and all Reach villagers are welcome to attend.

Your Clerk is **Susan Bailey**
29 Great Lane Reach CB25 0JF 01638 743794
clerk@reachparishcouncil.org

Know Your District Councillors



Happy Easter!

Your bins will be collected a day later than normal in the first week of April because of Easter Bank Holidays. They will also be collected a day later than normal in the first and last full weeks of May.

The Administration's budget, including spending £9 million of Community Infrastructure Levy money on the crematorium at Mepal, was approved by a majority. We supported an amendment which would have:

- Removed all budget lines relating to the crematorium, returning millions of pounds to be spent on projects in local communities
- Added the costs to establish Civil Parking Enforcement in the district, paid for mostly from reserves
- Doubled the Council's Environment fund to increase the council's activity on decarbonisation and biodiversity
- Added an officer to support local communities making grant applications, and a sum for matched funding for bids.

This would have been funded from savings in staff costs from posts that are left vacant during the year. But the amendment was lost.

Both the motion and the amendment proposed a council tax freeze.

Council unanimously accepted changes in Councillor allowances put forward by the Independent Remuneration Panel. These included an increase in costs claimable by Councillors to cover their caring responsibilities when attending Council duties. This should help make Councillors more representative of the residents of the district. The proposals also include an increase in allowances for Planning Committee members, who meet more frequently and for longer than other Councillors.

Council approved a further £200,000 fee to ECSS for 2023/24, because they are overspending again although still not delivering the agreed level of service. We tried to get an external review of ECSS financial management and governance because this is the second year in a row that they have asked for large sums of extra money just before the year end. But the Administration voted against that. The fee for 2024/25 was increased by 26%, part of this was claimed to be for the extra costs of using HVO fuel, although this had already been included in the fee for 2023/24.

The Council also, with a majority rather than unanimously, agreed changes to its constitution. We opposed these on the grounds that while there were some sensible and welcome changes, some of the proposals were not acceptable. In particular, we wanted to establish an Audit Committee capable of functioning effectively and doing its job, which the agreed changes do not and we wanted to establish an additional policy committee to tackle the weighty planning and environmental challenges facing East Cambridgeshire. These will instead be moved into the Council's Finance & Assets Committee, which has enough significant business already.

Some agencies are not always accessible for residents to request foodbank Vouchers. But the Housing & Community Advice team at ECDC can issue food bank vouchers to ALL residents within East Cambs. Residents do not need to come into the offices, they can contact the team on 01353 665555 and the code can be issued by phone, text or email.

The Combined Authority will be introducing a new bus service between Soham and Cambridge, via Burwell, Swaffham Prior, Swaffham Bulbeck and Bottisham. This will restore the connection with Bottisham, lost when the route for the No 11 changed. Charlotte has pressed the officers to consult locally on the details of this new service. She has also suggested that rather than going into Cambridge Centre they consult on if it should go via the Wilbrahams and Fulbourn to Addenbrookes, Long Road and Hills Road 6th form colleges and Cambridge rail station. This is similar to the route suggested by the AtoB1102 Group, which we are supporting. We have asked the Combined Authority to ensure that Reach and Lode villages are included on the fast route into Cambridge as well as the proposed new route.

The Combined Authority has given ECDC £300,000 to distribute as grants to local businesses. The grant scheme will support local businesses who are looking to scale and grow within the District with capital and/or revenue grants. The scheme will target businesses from start up to a maximum turnover (2022) of £10million. Applications open on 1 April and funds will be allocated as eligible applications are received, so businesses would be wise to get their applications ready to submit on 1 April.

Our next Councillors' surgeries are on Wednesday 24 April 6.30-7.30pm in the small meeting room at the Bottisham Sports & Social Club and Tuesday 14 May 6.30-7.30 at The Fassage Hall, Lode.

Charlotte Cane and John Trapp

charlotte.cane@eastcambs.gov.uk 07976 607512
john.trapp@eastcambs.gov.uk 01223 812120

Cleaner for Reach Church

A Cleaner is required for Reach Church. The hours are flexible by agreement, to coincide with church services and will average about 3 hours per fortnight. Duties will include:

- Cleaning the church, including the kitchen and toilet, regularly
- Checking the dishwasher after a service or event and emptying it if necessary
- Additional cleaning when required, particularly when there are special events
- Working with others on periodic deep cleaning

The person must be self-employed and will be responsible for her/his own tax, NI etc.

The applicant will be required to provide references and other checks in line with the Church of England Safer recruitment procedures. For more details, please contact Wendy Smith, Churchwarden on 01638 741888 or email: administrator@stmarysburwell.org.uk



Minutes of Reach Parish Council meeting held in the Village Hall on Wednesday 6th February 2023 at 7pm

Attendance

Charlotte Cane	Vice Chair	Present	Susan Bailey	Clerk	Present
Rebecca Fordham	Councillor	Present	Charlotte Cane	District Councillor	Present
Catherine Gibson	Councillor	Present	Joshua Schumann	County Councillor	Not Present
Ed Hall	Chair	Present			

Apologies for absence – to receive and approve apologies.
There were none.

Forum for members of the public.
There were none.

Declaration of Interests – None.

1. Co-option of new Councillor
Rebecca Fordham had applied to join the PC. Councillor Cane proposed co-option of the new councillor, seconded Councillor Gibson. Approved. Rebecca joined the Council for the rest of the meeting.
The PC is still has three Councillor vacancies.

2. Planning – None.

3. District Councillor Report
Crematorium and Cemetery at Mepal
By 6 votes to 5, the Conservative majority on the council's Finance & Assets Committee pushed through a recommendation to the Full Council to build their crematorium at Mepal. This is the scheme that the Conservative administration removed from the council's corporate plan for two years so that they could work and spend public money on it in secret. John and his Liberal Democrat group colleagues on the committee voted against this for several reasons.
1. The council proposes to use over £9M of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) to build the crematorium. This is money handed over by developers across East Cambridgeshire to improve local amenities—money that could have been spent to enhance our towns and villages. The scheme will take these contributions and convert them into ready cash which can then be used to subsidise the council tax. This is not what CIL is meant for.
2. Most of the paperwork for the decision was confidential, but even in the public papers it is clear that the crematorium will only make money for the council if East Cambs launches a full-on price war against the existing crematorium in March, just twelve minutes away. It is not clear that the owners of the March crematorium will take this lying down, nor that the council will necessarily win such a battle, nor again that this is a purpose for which developer contributions should be used.
3. The public papers also suggest that East Cambs will seek to reach an arrangement with Huntingdon Town Council, which owns the other nearby crematorium, to minimise risks arising from competition with each other. Mark has queried whether this is consistent with the Enterprise Act 2002 which aims to root out and punish anti-competitive behaviour and even impose jail sentences for directors to deter the formation of cartels. (A cartel is a group of independent market participants who collude with each other in order to improve their profits and dominate the market.)
4. The public paper makes no mention of the impact on Parish Council Cemeteries.
5. One of the stated aims of the plan for a crematorium is to have a facility in the district, and to make it more convenient for residents in East Cambridgeshire. However, Mepal is at the very edge of the district, the nearest possible location to the council's major competitor at March, and for residents here in Bottisham will be less convenient than their current nearest provider. We are also not convinced that most people base their choice of provider on local authority boundaries.
6. The proposed crematorium is opposed by the vast majority (85 per cent) of residents who responded to the consultation about it. It is not needed, not wanted, and a waste of public money.

East Cambs Street Scene (ECSS)
ECSS is paid to sweep the streets in these villages every 6 weeks. We are not sure that they have been swept that frequently, so we have asked for the dates they were swept Oct-Dec 2023, Jan 2024 and when they are due to be swept in Feb-Mar 2024. More generally, we have asked that ECSS publish the dates when they will sweep the streets, as this would allow drivers to move parked cars on those days and allow Parish Councils to report on the standard of the work, or report that the work did not happen at all.

Earlier this year, the Chief Executive of ECDC (and Managing Director of ECSS) reviewed the arrangements for ECSS and introduced various changes to address the weaknesses which he found. Charlotte proposed an external review, but this was blocked by Conservative Councillors. Internal Audit have now reviewed the Governance Controls between ECDC and ECSS and found that there are gaps in the internal control framework which pose a medium risk to delivery of the objectives. These gaps are after the changes put in place by the Chief Executive of ECDC. ECSS were given a £500,000 increase to their fee for 2022/23 and 2023/24. Despite this increased fee, they are now asking for a further £200,000 for the year to 31 March 2024. This will be considered by Full Council in February.

Barclays Bank closure

The announcement that Barclays Bank intends to close its Ely branch on 11 April is bad news for local residents, especially as their branch in Newmarket has already closed. A physical presence by banks on our high street is very important for many reasons, providing in-person services for some of our more vulnerable residents, a place for services requiring attendance in person, and of course helping to keep our high streets alive and thriving. Charlotte has written to Barclays to make the case for a physical presence to remain in the centre of Ely. Anyone wishing to comment on the Barclays closure can do so by phone on 03457 345345 (charges may apply), or by email to lianne.coupland@barclays.com

New Bus Route

The Combined Authority will be introducing a new bus service between Soham and Cambridge, via Burwell, Swaffham Prior, Swaffham Bulbeck and Bottisham. This will restore the connection with Bottisham, lost when the route for the No 11 changed. Charlotte has pressed the officers to consult locally on the details of this new service. She has also suggested that rather than going into Cambridge Centre they consult on if it should go via the Wilbrahams and Fulbourn to Addenbrookes, Long Road and Hills Road 6th form colleges and Cambridge rail station.

Business Grant

The Combined Authority has given ECDC £300,000 to distribute as grants to local businesses. The grant scheme will support local businesses who are looking to scale and grow within the district with capital and/or revenue grants. The scheme will target businesses from start up to a maximum turnover (2022) of £10million. Applications open on 1 April and funds will be allocated as eligible applications are received, so businesses would be wise to get their applications ready to submit on 1 April (details attached).

Meet your councillors Our next surgeries will take place on

Monday 26 February, 6:30-7:30PM by zoom Meeting ID: 631 542 4066 Passcode: 938720

Thursday 21 March 6.30-7.30pm at Reach Village Hall

4. County Councillor Report

FULL COUNCIL Changes to composition of the council

Councillors were saddened to hear the announcement at the start of the year of the death of Cllr Mac McGuire, the councillor for Yaxley & Farcet in Huntingdonshire and the longest-serving member of the County Council. Mac served on CCC from 1985 to 1992, and then again from 1997 until his death over the Christmas holidays. An election to fill the vacancy on the council will be held in due course.

Meanwhile Cllr Ryan Fuller (St Ives North & Wyton) and the Conservative Party have parted company with one another. Cllr Fuller will remain on the council as an independent councillor.

The composition of the various committees on the council will be adjusted to take account of these changes, and then readjusted once Cllr McGuire's replacement in Yaxley & Farcet is known.

STRATEGY RESOURCES & PERFORMANCE Budget

At the time of writing, the county council's Strategy, Resources & Performance Committee is being asked to make its final budget recommendation at its meeting on Tuesday 30 January for Full Council to debate on Tuesday 13 February. The county council's various policy committees have scrutinised the draft budget proposals, and three of them—Communities Social Mobility & Inclusion, Environment & Green Investment (which I chair), and Highways & Transport Committee—have all asked that the Strategy, Resources & Performance Committee give consideration to increasing the funding available for Emergency Planning, in view of the increase in the frequency and severity of extreme weather leading to flooding.

ADULTS & HEALTH Measles

Measles cases have been rising since last November, with the West Midlands seeing more than 200 confirmed cases, the largest outbreak outside London. The UK Health Security Agency declared the outbreak a national incident on 19 January 2024. Measles is highly infectious. Nine out of ten unvaccinated children can catch measles if someone in their class has it. It can be severe, particularly in the immunosuppressed and infants, and can be more severe in pregnancy. It can be mild for some children, but one in five will require a hospital visit. At its worst it can lead to complications such as meningitis and pneumonia and can in rare cases be fatal.

Currently there are no confirmed cases in Cambridgeshire and in 2023 there were only eight confirmed cases across the East of England. But there is a strong likelihood that it will spread to Cambridgeshire. Uptake of childhood vaccinations has been low in Cambridge and parts of Huntingdonshire and Fenland. A target vaccination rate of 95 per cent is considered necessary to prevent outbreaks, and both Cambridgeshire and Peterborough have rates lower than this.

If the outbreak spreads to Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, control measures such as isolating unvaccinated school contacts for 21 days may be necessary. This will have an impact on school staff, parents and the economy, and an outbreak of any size will stretch health care capacity at the busiest time of year.

- Parents should have their children vaccinated if they have not already done so.
- Residents should call their GP or 111 if measles is suspected or if someone who is at risk has been in contact with a confirmed case. Typical symptoms include a high fever, sore red watery eyes and a blotchy red-brown rash.
- Isolating when asked to do so is important if any outbreak is to be contained.

- There are a number of measles myths—such as the idea that it is a good idea to deliberately infect children with the disease at 'measles parties'—which should be ignored.
- Information about vaccine outreach clinics can be found at https://www.cpics.org.uk/measles

ENVIRONMENT & GREEN INVESTMENT Carbon footprint

The Environment & Green Investment Committee last month received the council's carbon footprint report for 2022/23. As usual, this reports on the council' carbon emissions, and the carbon emissions of the county of Cambridgeshire as a whole. The Council's total known greenhouse gas emissions in 2022-23 amounted to 99,104 tonnes CO2e. The largest share, nearly sixty per cent, was from waste, with construction materials second at nineteen per cent, and transport third at ten per cent. This is 46 per cent lower than the council's baseline year of 2018/19.

For Cambridgeshire as a whole, the most recent year of data is 2021—the figures are published by Government. Total greenhouse gas emissions for Cambridgeshire that year were 6.78 million tonnes CO2e. Transport was the highest emitting sector in the county, accounting for 27 per cent of emissions, followed by land use, land use change and forestry (LULUCF), at 23 per cent.

East Cambridgeshire produced the highest volume of greenhouse gas emissions per person in the county, mostly from land use and agriculture.

There has been a twenty-five per cent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions in Cambridgeshire between 2005 and 2021. However, there was a 6.1 per cent increase in 2021 compared to 2020, because of the effect of covid in 2020.

HIGHWAYS & TRANSPORT Weeds policy

The council's Highways & Transport Committee has changed its policy on highways weed spraying. It will now be reverting to regular twice-yearly weed killing in the places where it used to do this before last year's policy change. Communities which do not want chemical weed spraying in their area will however be able to opt out in favour of manual weed removal by volunteers.

Cllr Alex Beckett, chair of the Highways and Transport Committee at Cambridgeshire County Council, said:

"I know we didn't get this change right, which is why I asked for a review of the policy. While some communities really appreciated the reduction in chemical weed killing, a large number did not. Local decision making is important, we have listened to that feedback and hope these new changes, if approved, will allow those communities who wish to continue without chemical weed killing to do so whilst allowing those who preferred the previous regime to go back to that."

Peat soil roads The Highways & Transport Committee approved a report on action to address the problem of Cambridgeshire's collapsing fen roads. The report identified 156 such roads which are increasingly failing due to historic lack of maintenance, and more extreme weather. Most of these roads were not constructed to carry the volume and weight of traffic they are now seeing.

In this area, these roads include:

- Barston Drove
- Ducketts Farm/Prior Fen
- Great Drove
- Harrisons Drove
- Headlake Drove
- Little Fen Drove
- Lords Ground Drove
- Lug Fen Droveway
- Mill Drove
- Sandy Road
- Slades Farm
- Split Drove
- Station Road, Swaffham Prior
- Straight Drove
- White Fen Droveway
- Whiteway Drove

In 2018 £5M was spent on ten roads, and in 2021 a further five received investment. Further crack and safety repairs have been carried out to a number of roads in 2023. However, the problem has been growing for years, and is now growing much faster.

Various repair types have been used, some more effective than others. Individual routes are being managed through localised repairs, more extensive patching, signage, and weekly inspections. The council's Highways Operational Standards have been revised to reflect the risks.

Short term measures being used include temporary speed limits including on the A10 Lynn Road at Littleport, traffic signals, and consideration may be given to temporary road closures or weight restrictions.

In the medium term a number of roads have been included in the council's capital programme for more extensive works over the next three to five years.

Longer term however, the primary focus must be lobbying together with partner organisations including parish councils to gain the required substantial amount of funding to provide a systemic solution. Council officers have already been working with the Department for Transport to raise awareness.

Active travel maintenance

The Highways & Transport Committee has approved changes to the Highways Operational Standards to improve recognition of, and response to, faults on cycleways and footways. These changes will help ensure a safe environment for cyclists and pedestrians, encouraging and facilitating active travel.

Meanwhile on the Combined Authority

The Mayor has proposed to increase his precept on the council tax from £12 to £36 per year for the average Band D property. This is intended to enable the funding of a number of new or improved bus services.
In this area these include an additional service between Soham and Cambridge, via Burwell, Swaffham Prior, Swaffham Bulbeck and Bottisham.
The Government has issued a revised Best Value Notice in respect of the Combined Authority. The revised notice recognises the significant progress the Combined Authority has made as an organisation since January 2023, and also that some elements need further work. More importantly it makes clear that it wants Board members to work together with common purpose.
I serve on the Environment & Sustainable Communities Committee of the Combined Authority, and we were recently asked about how to deal with the resale of one of the '£100K homes' in Fordham in which the
Combined Authority has an interest, whose prices are permanently capped. We asked officers to do more work on this, including considering whether we should seek to turn them into more usual forms of affordable housing on resale. I also asked the Mayor to reconsider whether the Combined Authority should declare a climate emergency or make a similar statement.

5. Minutes of previous Meeting
Approved as correct.

6.1 Reach Grant Fund
Nothing to report

6.2 Finance
Nothing to report.

6.3 Parish Council Members
Nothing to report.

6.4 Play Spaces
Nothing to report.

6.5 Rights of Way
Nothing to report.

6.6 24Acres Committee
Nothing to report.

6.7 Neighbourhood Plan
The referendum for acceptance of the Neighbourhood Plan took place on February 1st. The PC are very pleased to confirm that 66% of those who voted, voted for the plan. The turnout was the highest in the district so far with 57.58% of Reach eligible voters voting.
The plan will now go before EDCD to be adopted as part of their planning policy. ECDC will print copies for this meeting, ***Councillor Cane*** To ask for as many copies as possible for the village.
There are unfortunately two outstanding mistakes in the plan, in Appendix 3, 12,13 & 14 the property referenced as no. 42 is incorrect and should state no. 40. The second mistake is a property has the wrong name and should be Chapel Farmhouse not Chapel Farm Cottage. These are noted by the PC and will be correct in future.
The PC would like to thank all the members of the NP group past and present for their hard work and dedication during some difficult moments.

6.8 Friends Of Reach Wood
Nothing to report.

6.9 A to B1102 Group
Bank Account I am delighted to say that due to Sam Chambers-Turner's persistence and hard work, we at last have a bank account! The account details such that our Parish Council (and private individual) benefactors can pay in monies will come through shortly. Thank you Sam!
Fordham Parish Council – joining I went along to Fordham Parish Council's meeting on Monday and made a presentation. I am pleased to say that the Parish Council formally agreed to join our group, so Jill Worth (who you have all met at the recent Burwell meeting) will now join our core group. Welcome Jill!
CPCA Bus Routes – 2 new & improvements to B1102 Corridor The CPCA Board supported the Mayor's proposed budget for the next financial year which includes improvements to bus services. There are two new subsidised outline routes which go through our area and improvements to the B1102 corridor which we understand could pave the way for our Fast Bus concept – see attached document. I have contacted the CPCA bus team, as from our previous discussions, they see our data from the survey as a key element of defining any new services. In true CPCA fashion, I am waiting for a response! Great news, however. Liz Swift will also update us on a campaign she has been running, engaging with the Mayor regarding transport for post GCSE education students from this area at our next meeting.
This decision puts further pressure on us getting our data from the survey published as timescales to create and publish draft routes which will be subject to consultation is very tight given the proximity to the new financial year.

6.10 Nature Recovery Plan
ECDC had received the plan stating, “Absolutely wonderful”. They have asked if the PC are happy for it to be shared “as a good example to help other councils”. ECDC suggested several links to different website where you are able to share data of wildlife sightings.

7. 20 is plenty
Councillor Cane had completed the application for the 20 is plenty scheme for the entire village. Following discussion a few amendments will be made. ***Councillor Cane*** will conduct a Facebook poll to get the view of the village. ***Clerk*** to add to the next agenda and to ask Councillor Schumann for his support.

8. Armed Forces Covenant form approval
Councillor Cane had produced an Armed Forces Covenant document for approval. The document was approved ***Councillor Cane*** to send draft, prior to sending the signed copy.

9. Parish Council Communications
The present PC would like to improve its ability to communicate with village residents and the wider community. The PC IT package includes a website domain, and the PC would like to use this. Following discussion ***Clerk*** to look into other PC sites and who produced them and manages them. The PC Facebook page will be reestablished, and the email communications list updated. ***Clerk*** to add communications to the reports section of future agendas.

10. Payments

E.on Next – power on the green	£70.56

Approval of payments by online banking proposed by Councillor Cane, seconded by Councillor Hall. ***Councillor Hall*** to approve online.

DRAFT Minutes of Reach Parish Council meeting held in the Village Hall on Tuesday 5th March 2024 at 7pm

Attendance

Charlotte Cane	Vice Chair	Present	Susan Bailey	Clerk	Present
Catherine Gibson	Councillor	Present	Charlotte Cane	District Councillor	Present
Rebecca Fordham	Councillor	Not Present	Joshua Schumann	County Councillor	Not Present
Ed Hall	Chair	Present			

Apologies for absence – to receive and approve apologies.
Councillor Fordham had sent her apologies.

Forum for members of the public.
Nothing to report.

Declaration of Interests – None.

1. A new village group - The Hythe Restoration Working Group
Following the success adoption of the Reach NP, the PC would like to set up a Hythe Restoration Working Group. To move forward on something where there is a very strong consensus in the village for improvement.

The objectives of the Group could be

a. to capture, in detail, what the village wants on the site, accepting that this might evolve as the nature and extent of the land we are working with becomes clearer.
b. detail the archaeology and history of the site, Dr Oscar Aldred led a dig on the site in the autumn of 2023 and a report on its findings is expected soon. The geology (including the recent Cambridge Geological Society listing) and hydrology of the site should be included here too. The history of the site should explain, perhaps using oral accounts, its social importance to Reach (venues for tugs of war and fireworks etc).
c. detail the ecology of the site (including iconic sightings such as kingfisher and otter). Points b and c together will demonstrate just what a special place the Hythe is and its potential for improvement.
d. record the history of the site as a sewage works and pumping station, notably the compulsory acquisition of what appears to have been common land from the village in the 1960s.
e. catalogue the PC’s unsuccessful efforts, over seven years or so, to persuade Anglian Water (AW) to remove the redundant plant and substantially reduce its footprint on the site. AW will, of course, still need to retain a pumping station, a sump and tanker access to the site - something that we are happy to accept.

f. develop a strategy to persuade AW that now is the time to decommission the plant and undertake other remedial works given the significance of the Hythe including archaeological and geological updates, the mandate we have from the village and from ECDC, in the adopted NP which, amongst other things, has secured Local Green Space status for the Hythe.

An open meeting, to lay out its plans and encourage input from the village, will be organised ***Clerk*** to book the village hall and arrange a date.

2. Planning – None.

3. District Councillor Report

Licensing Committee instructed Officers to produce an Inclusive Service Plan for taxis & private hire vehicles, to make sure that they are available to residents with disabilities from ease of booking through to the journey and making payment.

Full Council agreed the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel increasing members' allowances from 1 April. It is not easy voting for your own pay rise, but we take the view that if you ask an Independent Panel to make recommendations you should respect their work and accept their recommendations. As a result, our basic Councillors' Allowance will rise by 12% from £6,230.29 to £6,977.93 per annum. Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs) will rise by between 5% and 25% and we can now claim up to 3 SRAs, when we used to be able to only claim up to 2.

The Reach Neighbourhood Plan was adopted, with the Full Council congratulating Reach Parish Council on its preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan and a successful referendum outcome, becoming the seventh Parish Council to do so in East Cambridgeshire. Reach now joins Swaffham Bulbeck as the two Parish Councils in this ward with a Neighbourhood Plan and Bottisham is working on theirs.

Full Council confirmed the Business Case for the crematorium & cemetery on the site of the former Mepal Outdoor Centre. We argued & voted against it for many reasons, but principally because it was spending £9m of CiL money which should be for district wide benefit not for something on the north west edge of the District. We also are concerned that it will be an on-going financial drain of residents because it is within 10 miles of an existing crematorium at March and there is the Huntingdon crematorium just 16 miles away, neither of which are yet at full capacity, not to mention the many Parish Council run cemeteries around the District.

Council approved a further £200,000 fee to ECSS for 2023/24, because they are overspending again although still not delivering the agreed level of service. We tried to get an external review of ECSS financial management & governance because this is the second year in a row that they have asked for large sums of extra money just before the year end. But the Administration voted against that. The fee for 2024/25 was increased by 26%, part of this was claimed to be for the extra costs of using HVO fuel, although this had already been included in the fee for 2023/24.

Council Tax was frozen for another year. Our proposal to introduce Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) was rejected. We get a lot of complaints about illegal and dangerous parking. The police have explained that they do not have the resources to enforce parking restrictions. East Cambs refuses to accept responsibility for parking enforcement (CPE) and so the parking problems will unfortunately continue. We could have introduced CPE and still frozen the Council Tax and kept free parking.

A working party had unanimously agreed changes to the Council's constitution. But the Administration did not put all of these to Council, instead forcing through its own changes which incorporated only some of the working party's recommendations. There had been no agreement on bringing the Audit Committee in line with CIPFA guidelines, despite these being strongly recommended by government. Our amendment to bring them in line was rejected so the Audit Committee remains non-compliant, eg there are not 2 Independent members, the current Chair was Chair of Finance & Assets until he became Chair of Audit and we do not have routine attendance of relevant officers at Committee. We also proposed a new Committee to cover Environment and the Local Plan. But the Administration instead made these the responsibility of Finance & Assets, making this a very business heavy Committee and excluding members of the Audit Committee from contributing to these important policy areas (because members of the Audit Committee are not allowed to sit on Finance & Assets Committee).

Some agencies are not always accessible for residents to request foodbank Vouchers. But the Housing & Community Advice team at ECDC can issue food bank vouchers to ALL residents within East Cambs. Residents do not need to come into the offices, they can contact the team on 01353 665555 and the code can be issued by phone, text, or email.

4. County Councillor Report

<u>FULL COUNCIL - Budget</u>

The council agreed its budget on Tuesday 13 February, prioritising funding to improve the condition of roads and footpaths, social care, and support for vulnerable communities.

This was a difficult budget process as many residents continue to feel the squeeze from cost of living pressures, but the council also faces significant cost increases. Those on the lowest incomes are also those who are often most reliant on services provided by the council.

The county council had to close a gap of £37.4M, with 75 per cent of the Council's net spending now being funded from Council Tax. Councillors have prioritised a number of key areas, based on residents' feedback from last summer's Quality of Life survey. The budget

• Sustains critical adults' & children's social care services.

• Includes record levels of highways funding to strengthen and improve the standard of roads and pavements, including tackling potholes, weeds and gulleys—in direct response to residents' concerns.

• Prioritises support for vulnerable communities, including continuing to providing holiday supermarket vouchers for those children most in need.

The council agreed a Council Tax rise of 4.99 per cent—2 per cent for Adult Social Services, and 2.99 per cent for general services—raising £17.5M of local income to help maintain and protect critical services for the most vulnerable communities. For the majority of residents in Band A-D properties that will mean an extra 99p to £1.48 a week. A balanced council budget for the coming year is no mean feat after more than ten years of national underfunding, when so many county and unitary authorities are struggling. Some additional money from Government came in frustratingly late, well after most councils had set their budget. But this one-year funding does not address the longer term need for a Fair Funding Settlement in Cambridgeshire.

The council also expects the government's Household Support Fund to cease from the end of March. This is why the council's budget includes £3M to continue providing holiday supermarket vouchers for those most in need. Without this financial commitment from the council, this scheme would have had to stop when Government funding ended.

Councillor allowances

The council agreed to implement the council allowances scheme recommended by the independent panel set up for this purpose.

(More) changes to composition of the council

A by-election for the vacancy in Yaxley & Farcet will take place on Thursday 21 March. Meanwhile another change of party has taken place: Cllr Keith Prentice from St Neots has moved from the Conservatives to join the Independent group that is part of the council's Joint Administration.

STRATEGY RESOURCES & PERFORMANCE

Shire Hall back on the market - Bids are invited for the lease or purchase of part of the Shire Hall site in Cambridge, after the previous preferred bidder was unable to continue their interest.

Shire Hall had been the County Council's headquarters since the 1930s, but the site itself was the seat of government in Cambridge for over a thousand years. Previously the site of two medieval castles, the building was the county council's administrative centre from its completion in 1933 until 2022, when the council relocated to Alconbury as part of its planned savings programme. The property comprises the original Shire Hall, the Octagon, the Old Police Station, Castle Lodge and public car parking. Offers will be considered by the council's Assets & Procurement Committee in June, when councillors will review not only the financial bid made but whether the offer delivers environmental and social benefits.

The council expects strong interest from commercial bidders, with the building's prime position in Cambridge making it highly suitable for different uses. Due to the historic importance of the site all proposals will require full planning and listed building consents to ensure protection of the assets on site.

The council has applied to give part of the lawn between the front of Shire Hall and the Mound the legal protection of 'Town Green' status and has also invested in new interpretation boards and increased litter bins and maintenance to improve the visitor experience. These areas are not included in the disposal.

More information from Max Marston at BNP Paribas Real Estate (Max.marston@realestate.bnpparibas).
https://propertylink.estatesgazette.com/property-details/6943307-shire-hall-site-castle-street-cb3

ADULTS & HEALTH - Measles update

With cases of measles rising in some areas of the country, the council is asking everyone to check their MMR (measles, mumps, and rubella) vaccination status and get vaccinated if not up to date.

Measles is a highly infectious illness which can be very unpleasant and sometimes lead to serious complications. Two doses of the MMR vaccination give long-lasting protection against measles.

In the UK, the MMR vaccination is given as part of the routine childhood vaccination schedule. The vaccine is free, available from GPs, and anyone can catch up at any age on missed doses. An alternative MMR vaccination is available which does not contain pork products. Walk-in vaccination clinics are taking place across Cambridgeshire.

These are for anyone over the age of one year who is not up to date with their MMR vaccinations. More information at https://www.cpics.org.uk/measles

Individuals should check their vaccination status if possible before attending one of these clinics. Vaccination records are in a child's personal health record (red book). Adults can check if they have been vaccinated with their GP or vaccination records from childhood.

NHS dentistry under the spotlight

The county council's Adults & Health Committee will be scrutinising the provision of NHS dentistry in Cambridgeshire at its meeting on Thursday 7 March.

In recent years the availability of NHS dental care has shrivelled to almost zero, with many practices closing their doors to new NHS patients or ceasing to provide NHS dental care altogether. Dentists say that under the current contract, it is no longer financially viable to offer NHS procedures because of a lack of Government investment. One in five people have resorted to 'DIY dentistry' and 4.4 million children in England have not seen an NHS dentist in at least a year, leading to a 17 per cent increase in tooth decay-related extractions in children. East Cambridgeshire is one of the worst 'dental deserts' in the country. In February NHS England published a joint NHS and Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) 'Dental Recovery Plan' to try to address the growing crisis. This includes

- a 'new patient' payment of between £15 and £50 (depending on treatment need) to treat around a million new patients who have not seen an NHS dentist in two years or more
- focus on prevention and good oral health in young children and an expanded dental workforce
- advice for parents and parents-to-be on taking care of baby gums and milk teeth
- one-off payments of up to £20,000 for dentists working in under-served areas for up to three years.

The minimum value of dental activity under the dental contract will increase from £23 to £28. This will affect only a small number of contracts across

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, and any additional funding will need to be covered from the current dental budget of the local NHS Integrated Care Board.
Mobile 'dental vans' will be launched in rural and coastal areas, with at least one of these vans coming to Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.
Cambridgeshire NHS has put in place a local Dental Improvement Plan and identified the area's most in need as being Fenland, Littleport, Ely, and Peterborough.

Have your say on creating Healthy Places

Cambridgeshire's public health team is inviting residents to have their say on how new and existing communities can be healthy, supportive, and inclusive.
Work is currently under way to develop the Healthy Places Joint Strategic Needs Assessment for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. To inform this, the team has launched a survey asking for views on access to healthcare services, inclusive and accessible green spaces, opportunities for active travel and healthy play and leisure, and the provision of affordable healthy food options.
The survey is at https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/WNC1CB/ and is open until Monday 15 April at 5:00PM. It will take around 10-15 minutes to fill in and may be completed on behalf of yourself or someone you care for. If you would prefer to complete a paper copy, you can pick one up from your local library.
If you have any questions about the survey or the Healthy Places Joint Strategic Needs Assessment for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, please email healthinallpolicies@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE - More pupils get first choice of secondary school

A greater percentage of Cambridgeshire students will be going to their first choice secondary school this September. A total of 87.9% have been offered a place at their first choice school—up from 87.1% last year. The proportion offered a place at their first, second or third preference school has also risen, from 95.4% in 2023 to 95.8% this year. The total number of places offered this year was fewer than last – 7,220 compared with 7,413.

Supermarket vouchers

More than 23,000 supermarket vouchers were distributed during the February half term to eligible families in Cambridgeshire.

Free data SIM cards for low income households

A reminder that Cambridgeshire Libraries are part of Good Things Foundation's National Databank, O2 and Vodaphone scheme, which makes free data SIM cards or vouchers available to anyone aged 18+ from a low-income household. Recipients can self-declare as eligible, and the support is available for a maximum period of twelve months. The data can be used with any SIM-enabled device. This offer is available at a range of libraries including Ely. Ask library staff for more details.

ENVIRONMENT & GREEN INVESTMENT -Weekly food waste collections

The Government is moving towards weekly food waste collections across the country, with financial support to district councils for changes to collection of the waste, but not to county councils for disposing of it.
Any councils not taking up the arrangements would be 'named in legislation' as being exempt from these collection arrangements, until such time as their existing waste contracts expired. In Cambridgeshire's case this is 2037, when the PFI contract at Waterbeach ends—a long time to wait.
After prolonged discussion between Cambridgeshire's county and district councils, they have been able to agree to move to weekly collections and avoid being listed in the legislation.

Community Flood Risk newsletter

The Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Flood and Water Partnership (CPFloW) which I chair has agreed to start publishing a Community Flood Risk newsletter to help support residents, businesses, and communities in relation to flooding. This will include input from organisations such as the Environment Agency, Internal Drainage Boards (IDBs) and water companies.

Reporting flooding

If you are in Cambridgeshire and have experienced flooding, please do report it, even if it is not internal flooding, and even if the immediate danger has passed. In the event of a flood, if there is a threat to life call 999. To report a non-life threatening flood emergency to the police, please call 101. Outside of those events, the County Council's flood reporting page https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/travel-roads-and-parking/roads-and-pathways/report-a-flood provides options to:

- Report a flooding problem on roads and pavements
- Report flooding in a property, home, or garden
- Report flooding from water pipes or sewers
- Report flooding from surface water, groundwater, or ordinary watercourses
- Report flooding from a main river or the sea

as well as information on how to prepare for flooding, and flood emergency contacts.

Crucifixion

The skeleton of a man who was crucified in Roman-era Cambridgeshire is on display as part of a blockbuster exhibition at the British Museum, after a loan of the remains was agreed by Cambridgeshire County Council. The British Museum's exhibition is called Legion: Life in the Roman Army and will run until 23 June 2024 in the Sainsbury Exhibitions Gallery. Discovered as part of an excavation in Fenstanton, the body is only the second confirmed example of the Roman use of this barbaric punishment ever unearthed, and the first found in Europe. It was possible to prove death took place through crucifixion, as a nail was found lodged in the man's heel. The find was the subject of a BBC4 documentary The Cambridgeshire Crucifixion which aired in January. It showed a facial reconstruction of the man as well as scientific analyses which indicated that he was likely to have been a lower status Briton who lived his whole life in Cambridgeshire.

Once the exhibition ends, the remains will be transferred back into the guardianship of Cambridgeshire County Council's Historic Environment Team.

HIGHWAYS & TRANSPORT -Gully clearing

The council's Joint Administration has reinstated the programme of regular, cyclical gully clearing that the previous Conservative administration ceased—a decision which had contributed to many local flooding problems.

A10 BP roundabout safe crossing

The county council's Highways & Transport Committee is being asked to agree to accept £550,000 from the Combined Authority to proceed with a feasibility study and develop a preferred option to make the crossing safe for pedestrians and cyclists.

20MPH in Ely … and this year's funding round

Ely's 20MPH scheme is being installed this month, covering most of the city.

Applications are open until Friday 15 March at 5:00PM for funding for the 2024/25 round of 20MPH schemes. The process is open for new applications, as well as providing existing long-listed applicants who were unsuccessful last year to review, update, and reapply if they wish.

Questions or comments should be directed to the Local Projects inbox at Local.Projects@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/travel-roads-and-parking/roads-and-pathways/improving-the-local-highway/20mph-funding

Highways capital programme

A draft highways capital spending programme has been put to the council's Highways & Transport Committee for comment. It remains in draft only, and further work will be done to prioritise the use of the council's capital funding.

Busway works

Safety works are under way on the Guided Busway to allow the busway to return to full, two-way operation.

Since February 2022, a section of the Guided Busway in one direction has been closed between Cambridge Railway Station and the Cambridge Biomedical Campus. A temporary fence was installed whilst an independent safety review was in progress and following ongoing communications with the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) and as part of continuous safety reviews on the busway. Since then, the county council has been working with the bus operators and emergency services to risk-assess and design a fence to be installed next to the upstand along sections of the southern busway. It has been specifically designed with removable sections to allow for safe evacuation. This work is being carried out in sections to minimise disruption to passengers. Contractors are working seven days a week and the busway and maintenance track are currently programmed to re-open on Saturday 30 March.

Rail upgrade plans for Ely remain unclear

The Minister of State for Rail has responded to a joint letter from across the private and public sectors which welcomes government's commitment to upgrading rail capacity at Ely and urges funding to be released as soon as possible so that its benefits can be realised for the country. The letter, co-ordinated by the England's Economic Heartland sub-national transport body, lists six core reasons why prioritising this would benefit the UK. In response, minister Huw Merriman MP said that the Department for Transport is currently engaging with the Treasury to understand when funding will be made available for progressing the scheme. Investment in Ely was highlighted by government as it announced its target to grow rail freight by at least 75 per cent by 2050.

5. Minutes of previous Meeting

Approved as correct.

6.1 Reach Grant Fund

Nothing to report

6.2 Finance

A couple of payments have disappeared from the authorisation part of online banking so were listed again on the agenda. The Clerk has been informed that they must be authorised within 48 hours. Payments will therefore only be set up on the day of the meeting and authorise at the meeting or immediately after, this should ensure all payments are made.

6.3 Parish Council Members

Nothing to report.

6.4 Play Spaces

Nothing to report.

6.5 Rights of Way

Nothing to report.

6.6 24Acres Committee

Six Oak trees had been given to Reach from ECDC in celebration of last year's Coronation. The 24Acres is seen as the correct location for their planting due to the soil requirements and space to allow them to grow. The PC thank Nick Acklam for arranging for them to be collected from Ely and thank the residents who assisted with this.

Following discussion, it was agreed that these trees would be planted on the 24Acres on the edge of the Reach section and the part retained by Wicken Fen. One of the tree, would however, be planted on the edge of the open meadow area

near to Rita's bench. Approval was given up to £100 to spend on deer guards for the trees. Once planted, a commemorative plaque will be put in place.

6.7 Neighbourhood Plan
Please see this report in full on page 14 of this magazine.

6.8 Friends Of Reach Wood
Nothing to report.

6.9 A to B1102 Group
A meeting will be held on Thursday 7th March and the PC will then receive a further update.

6.10 Nature Recovery Plan
Nothing to report.

7. 20 is plenty
Councillor Cane had conducted a Facebook poll to get the view of the village residents. Opinions were quite equally divided, and several comments and ideas had been put forward. The Council felt that further discussion was required. ***Clerk*** to add to the Annual Parish Meeting agenda for further village input.

8. Parish Council Communications
Three local Parish Council websites were looked at and discussed. ***Councillor Hall*** to contact the website builders and hosts to establish what service they offer and a cost.

10. Payments

E.on Next – power on the green	£14.70
Burwell print – NP	£385.66

The following payments were authorised at an earlier meeting but were not processed.

CR Contracting – 24 Acres paths	£42.00
E.on Next – power on the green	£70.56

Approval of payments by online banking proposed by Councillor Cane, seconded by Councillor Hall. ***Councillor Hall*** to approve online.

Burwell and Reach Car Scheme

The Burwell and Reach Car Scheme offers those with travel restrictions or mobility issues a drive to the doctor, dentist, hospital, optician, hairdresser, shopping or just a visit to a friend, at a cost of 30p per mile. Just leave a message on 07399 154913 with your requirements and someone will get back to you. Or contact me, Pam King in Reach on 07484 852889.



If anyone in Reach would like to volunteer to drive we are always grateful for extra people. Just leave a message on the answerphone 07399 154913. DBS certificates are required but are easy to obtain through the scheme.



Diary Dates and Bus Timetable

April	Event	Location	Time
Tuesday 2	Parish Council Meeting	Village Hall	7.00pm
Wednesday 3	Recycling Day (Brown/Green)		
Sunday 7	Holy Communion	St Etheldreda's, Reach	8.30am
Monday 8	Hythe Restoration Open Meeting	Village Hall	7.00pm
Tuesday 9	Recycling Day (Blue)		
Tuesday 16	Recycling Day (Brown/Green)		
Wednesday 17	Holy Communion	St Etheldreda's, Reach	10.30am
Tuesday 23	Recycling Day (Blue)		
Tuesday 30	Recycling Day (Brown/Green)		

May	Event	Location	Time
Sunday 5	Holy Communion	St Etheldreda's, Reach	8.30am
Tuesday 7	Parish Council Meeting	Village Hall	7.00pm
Tuesday 7	Recycling Day (Blue)		
Tuesday 14	Recycling Day (Brown/Green)		
Wednesday 15	Holy Communion	St Etheldreda's, Reach	10.30am
Tuesday 21	Recycling Day (Blue)		
Tuesday 28	Recycling Day (Brown/Green)		

Stephenson's No. 11 – no service Sundays/Public Holidays - NS not Saturdays, Sa Saturdays only

	NS	Sa	Sa	NS										
Newmarket, The Guineas Bus Station	--	--	700	700	820	920	1020	1120	1220	1320	1420	1520	1620	1745
Newmarket, Studlands, Park Avenue	--	--	710	710	830	930	1030	1130	1230	1330	1430	1530	1630	1755
Burwell, Ness Road	639	649	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Burwell, Hawthorn Way	641	651	723	723	843	943	1043	1143	1243	1343	1443	1543	1643	1808
Reach, Post Office	653	703	--	--	855	--	1055	--	1255	--	1455	1555	1655	1820
Swaffham Prior, Bus Shelter	658	708	737	737	900	957	1100	1157	1300	1357	1500	1600	1700	1825
Lode, Church	--	--	--	--	--	1004	--	1204	--	1404	--	--	--	--
Stow cum Quy, Station Rd Bus Stop	708	718	747	751	910	1012	1110	1212	1310	1412	1510	1610	1710	1835
Cambridge, Marshalls Airport	718	728	757	804	920	1022	1120	1222	1320	1422	1520	1620	1720	1845
Cambridge, Drummer St Bus Station	732	742	811	816	934	1034	1134	1234	1334	1434	1534	1634	1734	1859

Cambridge, Drummer St Bus Station	650	750	850	950	1050	1150	1250	1350	1450	1550	1715	1815	1915
Cambridge, Marshalls Airport	702	802	902	1002	1102	1202	1302	1402	1502	1602	1727	1827	1927
Stow cum Quy, Station Rd Bus Stop	712	812	912	1012	1112	1212	1312	1412	1512	1612	1737	1837	1937
Lode, Church	--	--	920	--	1120	--	1320	--	1520	--	1745	--	--
Swaffham Prior, Bus Shelter	723	823	926	1023	1126	1223	1326	1423	1526	1623	1751	1848	1948
Reach, Post Office	728	828	--	1028	--	1228	--	1428	--	1628	--	1853	1953
Burwell, Hawthorn Way	738	838	938	1038	1138	1238	1338	1438	1538	1638	1803	1903	2003
Newmarket, Studlands, Park Avenue	752	852	952	1052	1152	1252	1352	1452	1552	1652	1817	1917	2017
Newmarket, The Guineas Bus Station	802	902	1002	1102	1202	1302	1402	1502	1602	1702	1827	1927	2027

Then and Now *(see facing page for pictures)*

'Walton House' as it was in the early 1960's, a rather poor photo unfortunately. Chimney reductions have taken place since, along with the redesign of the dormer windows. The frontage, including the water tap and pole, seems to remain unchanged.

Chris Patterson

Contact Information

Parish Council – see "Know Your Parish Council"			
Village Hall			
	Chair	David Thomas	01638 742676
	Finance	Andrew Trump	01638 743335
	Bookings	Tash Bridgeman	07920 516586 rvhcb25@gmail.com
	Secretary	Sue Elliott	01638 742268
Tents and Village Games Bookings		Claire Halpin-McDonald	01638 743330
Church			
	Vicar	Eleanor Williams	01638 741262
	Curate (Duty days Wed, Fri and Sun)	Reverend Paula Spalding	07545 868549
	Priest in Retirement	Rev David King	01638 742924
	Churchwarden	Dr Stephen Martin	01638 611235
Emergencies			
	Electricity (Eastern Electric)		0800 783 8838
	Police (Emergency) Police (Non-Emergency)		999 101
	Water (Anglian Water)		08457 145145
Doctors, Burwell			
	Contact Phone Numbers	01638 741234, out of hours dial 111	
	Surgery Hours	Mon to Friday, 8.30am to 6.00pm	
	Website (Surgery)	https://www.theburwellsurgery.co.uk/index.aspx	
	Website (Patient Participation Group)	https://www.theburwellsurgery.co.uk/patient-group	

Then and Now pictures – see facing page







Courtesy of Lisa Edwards



Courtesy of Paul Avery

